Daily

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

ABC Certified

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Chief Editor: Syed Abdul Wadood Shah

Quetta

Jamadi-us-Sani 09, 1448 AH | Vol: XX No. 99 Friday November 20, 2026 | Pages 4, Price Rs. 5 | Ph: 2823307

PM Shehbaz, President Zardari vows to solve all issues through dialogue, mutual consultation

ISLAMABAD, (Monitoring Desk): President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday agreed to resolve all issues through dialogue and mutual consultation amid rising political temperatures over the new provinces debate.

The development came during a meeting between the president and the premier at the Aiwan-e-Sadr (President's House) in Islamabad.

In a post on X, the presidency said that the meeting reviewed the overall national situation, the current political landscape and developments in the Middle East.

"We will sit down together on all issues and resolve them through consultation," read the statement.

The previous constitutional amendments were made through mutual consultation among all allied parties, it added.

The ongoing debate over the creation of new provinces took a fresh turn on Wednesday night as PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari had taken a swipe at the Centre, saying that he would face opposition from the politicians as they lacked courage to hear the truth.

"It appears they [federal ministers] have decided to pick a fight with me for speaking the truth. The reaction [to his remarks] shows they are unwilling to tolerate criticism," Bilawal had said while responding to a series of statements by federal ministers earlier in that day.

The PPP chief had questioned how ordinary citizens could expect their voices to reach the government if politicians were unwilling to listen to him. The federal ministers had strongly criticised Bilawal's opposition to the proposed division of Sindh, arguing that the creation of smaller provinces was necessary for better governance and that public opinion should prevail in the matter.

The PPP chairman, on Tuesday, had warned that if Sindh is divided by force, questions would be asked about the blood spilled on the streets in Karachi and Hyderabad. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif had stressed that no political system could be changed without public support, while Federal Minister for Health Mustafa Kamal had described smaller provinces as inevitable, saying that the country could not function effectively without them.



TURBAT: Chief of Defence Forces, Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir being briefed during his visit to Turbat.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif witnesses the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Security Cooperation between the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) of Qatar and Federal Constabulary of Pakistan.

CM Bugti orders stern action against criminal elements without discrimination

QUETTA (VoM Report): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has directed relevant authorities to intensify coordinated efforts against criminal activities in Killa Abdullah, with a particular focus on extortion, smuggling, drug-related offences and organized crime. Presiding over a high-level meeting on the district's law and order situation, the chief minister called for action against criminal elements without discrimination and ordered government institutions and law enforcement agencies to work under a coordinated strategy to safeguard the lives and property of citizens. The meeting approved a package of measures aimed at improving the security situation, curbing organized criminal activities and restoring effective law and order across Killa Abdullah.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti also directed the Home Department to ensure implementation of the decisions taken at the meeting and submit a detailed report on progress within one week. Balochistan Assembly Speaker Captain (retired) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai, MPA Engineer Zmarak Khan Achakzai, Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan and Additional Chief Secretary for Home Affairs Muhammad Hamza Shafqaat attended the meeting. The divisional commissioner, deputy inspector general of police and concerned deputy commissioners were also present. The meeting reviewed the prevailing law and order situation and discussed measures required to strengthen institutional coordination and improve the effectiveness of action against criminal networks in the district.



ISLAMABAD: Hon'ble Chief Justice of Pakistan introducing the newly developed Advocate Portal to the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) at Supreme Court of Pakistan Islamabad.

Balochistan Assembly Speaker takes strong notice of unannounced power and gas load-shedding

QUETTA, (APP): Speaker of the Balochistan Provincial Assembly, Captain (Retd.) Abdul Khaliq Khan Achakzai, has taken strong notice of persistent public complaints regarding unannounced electricity and gas load-shedding, low voltage, and deteriorating utility services across Balochistan, particularly in Quetta.

An important meeting was held in the Assembly Committee Room under the chairmanship of the Speaker, where senior officials of the Quetta Electric Supply Company (QESCO) and Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGC) were summoned to explain the ongoing energy crisis and the measures being undertaken to provide relief to consumers.

The meeting was attended by Members of the Provincial Assembly, including Ali Madad Jatak, Hadiya Nawaz Bahrani, Farah Azim Shah, Salma Bibi, Kulsoom Niaz Baloch, Shahida Rauf, Zarak Khan Mandokhail, Malik Naeem Khan Bazai, Liaquat Ali Lehri, Safia Bibi, and Muhammad Khan Lehri.

During the meeting, legislators voiced serious reservations regarding QESCO's performance, citing widespread complaints from their constituencies. They stated that prolonged and unannounced power outages, extremely low voltage, and unreliable electricity supply have severely affected daily life across the province.

Members noted that citizens are being deprived of basic necessities such as electricity and gas despite the harsh winter season. They stressed that elected representatives are facing increasing pressure from constituents who demand explanations for the continued service disruptions.

Lawmakers further pointed out that several electricity-related development schemes funded through the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) remain incomplete despite the allocation of funds. They maintained that if project funds had already been released, responsibility for delays largely rested with the concerned utility authorities. They also expressed concern over the lack of responsiveness from some field officers, alleging that in certain areas Sub-Divisional Officers (SDOs) fail to answer calls from public representatives, while assurances given during official meetings rarely translate into practical results.

UN Panel unanimously adopts Pakistan's resolution reaffirming peoples' right to self-determination

UNITED NATIONS, (APP): A key United Nations Committee passed, by consensus, a resolution renewing the global commitment to the principle of self-determination for peoples still subjected to colonial, foreign and alien occupation, with Pakistan underscoring that this right is "one of the most fundamental principles" enshrined in the UN Charter.

Co-sponsored by 62 co-sponsors, the resolution, submitted by Pakistan's UN Ambassador Syed Haider Shah, was adopted without a vote in the General Assembly's Third Committee, which deals with social, humanitarian and cultural issues.

The resolution, which Pakistan has been sponsoring since 1981, serves to focus the world's attention on the peoples still struggling for their inalienable right to self-determination, including those in Kashmir and Palestine.

The text is expected to come up for General Assembly's endorsement next month.

Under its terms, the 193-member Assembly would declare its firm opposition to acts of foreign military intervention and occupation suppressing the right to self-determination of peoples and nations

PM Shehbaz, ASEAN Secretary General discuss ways to boost economic cooperation

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening its longstanding partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with a focus on expanding trade, investment and economic cooperation.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, who called on him in Islamabad, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

The two sides discussed avenues for enhancing bilateral and regional cooperation in trade, investment, food security, climate change, information technology and education.

The prime minister emphasised the need to translate the existing goodwill between Pakistan and ASEAN into concrete economic and development partnerships.

Atta Tarar for stronger institutional cooperation to counter misinformation

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday proposed establishing a joint working group comprising academics, think tanks and representatives of different segments of society from Pakistan and Türkiye to develop institutional cooperation in strategic communication and effectively counter misinformation and emerging information threats.

Addressing a public forum titled "Reshaping Regional Security Architecture: Strategic Partnership and Multilateral Cooperation from a Türkiye-Pakistan Perspective", organised by the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), the minister emphasised the need for a technology-driven, fact-based and coordinated mechanism to protect the longstanding strategic partnership between the two countries against emerging challenges.

He said the proposed working group would bring together stakeholders from both countries to formulate a comprehensive framework for strategic communication, enabling them to identify contemporary challenges and develop coordinated responses.

Tarar called for a new agreement on strategic communication between Pakistan's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Directorate of Communications of the Presidency of Türkiye, stressing that stronger institutional cooperation was essential to counter misinformation and safeguard the ideological foundations of their longstanding friendship.

He said the two countries needed to adopt a whole-of-government approach by bringing different state institutions and relevant stakeholders together under a unified strategic communication framework.

Highlighting the evolving nature of regional cooperation, the minister said Pakistan-Türkiye relations had deep historical roots and had grown stronger with the passage of time, extending beyond bilateral friendship into broader regional and multilateral cooperation.

He recalled that the spirit of solidarity between the Muslims of the subcontinent and Türkiye predated the creation of Pakistan, recalling the contributions of the Ali Brothers, Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar and Shaukat Ali, in mobilising support for their Turkish brethren.

He said the historical relationship had gradually evolved into institutional cooperation

Pak Army to stand with people of Balochistan in pursuit of peace, prosperity: CDF Munir

RAWALPINDI, (Agencies): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Asim Munir has commended the Pakistan Army's operational preparedness and professionalism amid challenging operational conditions, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Thursday.

The army chief made the remarks during his visit to Turbat city, where he was given a comprehensive briefing on the prevailing security environment, operational preparedness and successful ongoing operations against externally sponsored terrorism, the military's media wing said in a statement. The Corps Commander Balochistan received the army chief upon his arrival, after which he laid a floral wreath at the Shuhada Monument and offered fateha. During his interaction with the troops, Field Marshal Munir lauded their unwavering resolve to defend the motherland.

The army chief reaffirmed the Pakistan Army's commitment to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Balochistan in their continued pursuit of peace, prosperity and sustainable development.

During the visit, the army chief was also apprised of the progress of various ongoing socio-economic development initiatives for the people of Balochistan. CDF Munir's visit comes days after two Pakistan Army personnel, including a major, were martyred and eight terrorists were killed in Balochistan's Kolpur area. According to the ISPR, the India-backed terrorists targeted military vehicles on patrol using armed quadcopters on November 14, resulting in the martyrdom of Major Omer Minhas Nasir and Havildar Muhammad Adnan Khan.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti chairs a meeting to review law and order situation in Killa Abdullah and to completely eliminate criminal elements.

Pakistan, Qatar ink security cooperation pact, action plan to curb drug trafficking

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Qatar's Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, have agreed to expand cooperation between Pakistan and Qatar in police training, cybersecurity, counter-narcotics and internal security.

The Qatari Interior Minister visited the Ministry of Interior, where he held a one-on-one meeting with his Pakistani counterpart, Mohsin Naqvi. The two ministers also held talks at the delegation level and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening Pakistan-Qatar relations and taking bilateral cooperation to new heights. During the meeting, both sides agreed to expand the scope of the Police Officers Exchange Programme. They also decided to increase cooperation between Qatar's National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) and Pakistan's National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA).

The two ministries further agreed to improve coordination to promote cooperation in different areas. Qatar will also establish a modern firing range at the National Police Academy.

Mohsin Naqvi said the visit of his Qatari counterpart would play an important role in further strengthening relations between the two countries.

He thanked Qatar for providing modern scanners to Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF).

The interior minister said joint operations and information-sharing between the relevant agencies of Pakistan and Qatar were continuing. He added that cooperation between the two countries had led to the detection of 300 drug-related cases over the past four years.

Naqvi said Pakistan wanted to ensure that its territory was never used for drug smuggling. He also said cybercrime was an international issue and Pakistan was taking steps to address the challenge.

The Qatari Interior Minister said cooperation between the interior ministries of Pakistan and Qatar was exemplary and both sides would work to strengthen and expand it further.

He said Pakistan and Qatar could take their relations to a new level through joint efforts. He added that his team was always available and ready to support efforts to increase cooperation between the two countries.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses at a ceremony of the American Business Council-Pakistan.

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

Friday November 20, 2026

US underestimating strategic value of historic relationship

What Saudi Arabia can expect from the United States while under attack by Iran's allies is unclear today. The Saudi-Houthi conflict, which entered a period of relative calm after the April 2022 truce, erupted again in July, with Houthis recently striking what it describes as "sensitive sites" inside Riyadh while pressing its offensive along Yemen's Red Sea coast and deeper into the country's interior. The stakes are extremely high.

With the Strait of Hormuz already under intense pressure, the Houthis' new control over the Bab al-Mandab Strait threatens another vital artery of global commerce. The chokepoint is particularly important to Saudi Arabia because it provides maritime access between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, including a route for Saudi energy exports to markets in Europe and Asia that can bypass the Strait of Hormuz.

Yet as the fighting intensifies, Riyadh has found Washington unwilling to cross the line from providing intelligence and targeting assistance to conducting strikes of its own against the Houthis. The contrast with 1990–91 is stark. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and posed a direct threat to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members, the George H. W. Bush administration responded with overwhelming force, deploying more than half a million troops to Saudi Arabia and assembling an international coalition to drive Iraq's occupying forces from Kuwait.

Today, despite the close personal relationship between US President Donald Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the White House has resisted Riyadh's calls for direct American military intervention, raising questions about the limits of Washington's security commitment to its Gulf ally. Rather than expanding the US role in the conflict, the Trump administration appears to be weighing the strategic and political costs of further escalation with Iran, including the potential economic repercussions and domestic political pressures that could intensify as the November midterm elections approach.

In this instance, the Trump administration seems to be prioritizing the protection of core American interests, particularly freedom of navigation, while leaving Saudi Arabia and its Yemeni allies to confront the Houthis. Yet Trump has faced mounting pressure from Riyadh to assume a more direct military role. After Salman urged him to authorize US strikes against the Houthis, Trump reportedly considered military options before ultimately deciding against direct US action, instead expanding intelligence and targeting support.

For Riyadh, the deeper significance of Washington's refusal may therefore lie in what the episode reveals about the limits of the US-Saudi partnership. The Saudi leadership has long regarded Washington as the Kingdom's ultimate external security partner, and Trump's decision not to intervene directly has fueled much anger in Saudi Arabia. It has also reinforced a widespread view in Saudi Arabia that the White House is underestimating the strategic value of a historic relationship whose foundations date back to the Franklin D. Roosevelt presidency.

Nonetheless, even with no easy options at its disposal, Riyadh will have little choice but to act pragmatically in the face of continued attacks by the Houthis and other Iranian allies. The current hostilities between Houthis and Saudi Arabia are likely to reinforce Riyadh's longstanding efforts to diversify its international partnerships and reduce its dependence on Washington—a trend that was already well underway long before fighting with the Houthis resumed in July.

Yet Saudi policymakers also recognize the limits of that strategy. For all the uncertainties and shortcomings surrounding US security guarantees, there remains no credible substitute for Washington, as no other power in the world currently possesses both the military capabilities and willingness to assume the role the United States has long played as the GCC members' principal external security partner.

Ultimately, Saudi Arabia must realize the inherent risks of allowing its long-term security to rest indefinitely on the protection of an external guarantor. A more durable regional order would require the states of the Gulf and the broader Middle East to assume greater responsibility for their own security—anchored in mutual non-aggression agreements, confidence-building measures, and a shared commitment to preserving peace and stability in their immediate neighborhood.

As Trita Parsi has articulated, this vision calls for an inclusive, collectively governed regional security order that transcends rigid geopolitical blocs, moving beyond a system of externally backed alliances and deterrence toward durable regional institutions capable of managing and containing rivalries. Such a security order would include Iran as a full participant, while providing a pathway for Israel's inclusion contingent on an end to its illegal occupation of land outside its UN-recognized borders, alongside greater strategic autonomy for the GCC states.

At its core would be a framework bringing together Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf Arab monarchies through mechanisms for communication during times of crisis, military deconfliction, conflict prevention, mediation, arms control, confidence-building, and cooperation on shared challenges ranging from water scarcity and climate change to economic development. Under such an arrangement, the United States would remain a close diplomatic and economic partner of Saudi Arabia and the five other GCC members, providing security assistance when collectively requested by the regional actors, but would no longer serve as their permanent military guarantor. To be sure, the emergence of this order would not erase Saudi Arabia's security concerns regarding Iran or the Houthis. Nor would it eliminate the rivalries and mistrust that continue to shape the geopolitically complicated Middle East. It could, however, create the institutional mechanisms needed to contain tensions before they spiral out of control.

The Afghan chessboard - competition and challenges

INAM UL HAQUE

Last week we mentioned that in Afghanistan the 'Great Game' continues with changed players. The US would like to keep its engagement with the ruling clique – willingly or unwillingly – due to Washington's geostrategic interests in the region including counterterrorism, its ongoing competition with China and Russia, and, most of all, Afghanistan's proximity to Iran, China, Russia, Central Asia and a nuclear Pakistan. Pashtun IEA, reportedly, has been trying to be in the US good books again, irrespective of its propaganda.

Washington, on the other hand, has a history with the non-Pashtun Northern Alliance (NA) and other groups, and remained supportive of Afghanistan's pro-Western First Republic (2001-2021) during decades of Afghan nation-building. These avidly anti-Taliban Afghans may be down but are not out. Resistance by Afghan opposition to the IEA's obscurantist rule is intensifying in the non-Pashtun north, as mentioned previously.

IEA's recalcitrance on issues like human rights, women right to education and work, inclusivity in the government, and, more significantly, terrorism is not easily ignorable by the West Plus, even if ideological divergence is put aside. Deep-seated nexus among Al Qaeda, TTP and IEA and their overt jihadism keep the chances of another 9/11-type catalyst alive. In that event, the US re-focus on Afghanistan, with or without European Allies, cannot be ruled, to nudge or participate in regime change.

Short of that catalyst, the US would ensure a pliant IEA using leverages like NGO-level engagement, cash subsidies, diplomatic isolation, non-recognition, etc, but would otherwise leave Taliban alone. In West Plus's assessment (correctly), there is no viable alternative to the IEA at present. Afghan opposition gaining enough strength to challenge IEA militarily would be long drawn. Hence, the West Plus would keep nudging IEA towards self-reform and in-house change.

Russia has been sending mixed signals on Afghanistan using its regional framework like the Moscow Format. Russian motivation for engagement ostensibly stems from keeping Afghanistan-generated terrorism and narcotics trade in check; regaining lost geostrategic foothold in Afghanistan; denying space to the US/West; protecting its soft underbelly in Central Asia; exploiting Afghanistan's mineral riches; and presumably avenging the loss of Soviet Union, consequent to the Pakistan/West-supported Taliban jihad (1979-89).

Moscow has significantly ramped up its diplomatic and military engagement with Kabul. It is the first and only country to recognise the Afghan regime in July 2025. Militarily, both sides have signed a military-technical cooperation agreement to repair and restore Afghanistan's Soviet-era military hardware. Russia sees IEA indispensable in suppressing the IS-K, which is responsible for a deadly attack in Crocus city hall, Krasnogorsk (2024). Foreign Minister Lavrov, during Moscow Format consultations, committed to provide technical and intelligence support to enhance IEA's CT capabilities. Russia has repeatedly commended IEA for controlling narcotics trade from Afghanistan, and its ability to reduce opiate production by 90% since 2022. Most importantly, Moscow has issued strict warnings against Western military return to the region. Lavrov, on October 5, during Moscow Format, called 'categorically unacceptable' any US/NATO military deployment in Afghanistan, or in Central Asian countries. This ostensibly blocks any US move to reclaim or return to Bagram Air Base.

Diplomatically, Moscow has proposed reintegrating Afghanistan into SCO via a specialised contact group. Russian presidential envoy Zamir Kabulov offered to mediate between Islamabad and Kabul as an 'independent mediator' to de-escalate tensions. Other projects between Russia and Afghanistan include establishment of a dedicated trade working group to prioritise infrastructure development and jointly explore transport and energy connectivity to link Afghanistan with Central and South Asia.

Moscow's strategic motivation seems multi-layered. In CT, a softer approach secures Russia's soft Central Asian underbelly and southern flank against terrorism. Diplomatic and economic engagement enables Moscow to prevent Taliban regime from eventually tilting towards Washington, which Taliban deeply desire, the US willing. In an ostensible break with the US under Trump, India too rides the Russian bandwagon in its own competition with Pakistan. Indian manoeuvre to reduce Pakistan's space in Afghanistan may also be Russia's 'peripheral' interest, under its broader alignment with New Delhi and Modi. However, the Russia-India-Afghanistan Combine works under different geostrategic compulsions.

Russia leverages these trilateral ties against Washington; India plays to contain a resurgent China and keep Pakistan under pressure, besides protecting its Chabahar investment and its logistics for its base in Tajikistan; whereas Afghanistan wants diplomatic and economic space, both from India and Russia, and invite the US Plus's engagement in the process.

Although, New Delhi and Moscow see Taliban with weary eyes.

Regionally, the Sunni Gulf and Saudi Arabia compete for influence on the Afghan real estate, also under different motivations. Gulf and KSA want to limit Iranian influence; some in the oil-rich Gulf want to put Pakistan under pressure through insurgency-like situation in Balochistan; Iran vies for influence under its Shia credentials in Hazarajat, for example; whereas Turkey supports Turkic speaking Northern Afghanistan, especially the Uzbek enclave. Neighbouring Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan stand for respective ethnic minorities in the Northern Afghanistan.

China sees engagement with a recalcitrant Kabul, worthy of strategic payoff by: a) keeping the Uighur militancy by ETIM under check through IEA and pacifying its Muslim Turkestan (Xinjiang); b) helping stability along Pakistan's Western border to allow Islamabad greater attention towards the Indian border; c) protecting CPEC, its ambitious BRI's pilot project; and d) positioning itself to exploit Afghanistan's mineral riches beyond Aynak cooper mines.

In all this jockeying for power, IEA, even if under pressure, remains an attractive partner. Countries are induced to ignore Kabul's human rights record and political repression, for given reasons. IEA presently seems militarily and politically entrenched; however, its future consolidation and sustainment would largely depend upon situation in Northern Afghanistan and Kabul's relations with Islamabad. The Afghan North is in turmoil; and in the mid to long-term, the Pashtun South may join it, driven by economic desperation. The mute noise of discontent is already there, as reports after reports validate the increasing poverty under IEA rule across Afghanistan. That noise can become a crescendo. One will not put a timeline on it, as the trigger may be one terrorist attack, not even as spectacular as 9/11. So, IEA makes the next move on the chessboard. Meanwhile, Islamabad needs to be aware of the Indian money, Israeli technology and Afghan manpower arrayed against it.

The writer is a retired major general and has an interest in International Relations and Political Sociology. He can be reached at tayyarinam@hotmail.com and tweets @20_Inam

The Moscow test

DR. GUL.I.AYESHA BHATTI

The eighth Moscow Format consultations on Afghanistan concluded on October 5 without a joint communiqué. The immediate disagreement was between Pakistan and the Taliban over the language on terrorism. Russian envoy Zamir Kabulov admitted that participants could not agree on the final wording. Yet the disagreement revealed something more important: Afghanistan remains one of the region's most difficult security questions, with neighbouring states viewing the Taliban government through different lenses.

For Pakistan, the concern is explicit. Islamabad maintains that militant organisations operating from Afghan territory continue to threaten its security. At the Moscow meeting, Pakistan reiterated that terrorism remained at the centre of Afghanistan's problems. The Taliban have consistently rejected accusations that Afghan territory is being used to support attacks against Pakistan.

However, the problem stretches beyond this dispute.

The Taliban's relationship with militant organisations remains a complicated feature of Afghanistan's post-2021 security environment. For ordinary Afghans, this means apprehension and dread: never knowing which group's conflict might spill into their towns or whose interests might override their hopes for peace. The Taliban have fought Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), and Russia has acknowledged their efforts. Yet international monitoring continues to report the presence of other militant organisations, including Al-Qaeda, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and Jaysh al-Adl.

This raises a fundamental question about the Taliban's counterterrorism policy: does their failure to confront certain militant organisations reflect unwillingness, a tactical choice to tolerate groups whose interests overlap with their own, or an inability to control Afghanistan's fragmented militant landscape? Whatever the explanation, their continued presence concerns Afghanistan's neighbours.

Kabul's relationships with militant organisations develop their own organisational interests, networks and financing. Once they gain sufficient autonomy, controlling them becomes harder. The concern is not simply what these organisations are doing today, but whether they could eventually threaten the authority that has allowed them space to operate.

The narcotics question presents another reason for caution.

On October 1, Uzbek authorities intercepted a vehicle entering from Afghanistan at the Ayritom border crossing in Surxondaryo and seized more than 52 kilograms of narcotics. The seizure was reported on October 3, two days before the Moscow consultations. At the October 5 meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov praised the Taliban for combating narcotics and highlighted the substantial decline in Afghan opium production since 2022.

These developments are not necessarily contradictory. A decline in cultivation or production does not mean trafficking has disappeared. Existing stocks, trafficking networks and shifting production patterns can sustain cross-border flows. The Uzbek seizure illustrates why Afghanistan's narcotics problem cannot be assessed solely through production figures or official declarations.

This is where Russia's Afghan policy requires careful consideration.

Moscow has legitimate security interests in Afghanistan. It has moved from pragmatic engagement with the Taliban to formal recognition of their government in 2025 and increasingly close political and security cooperation. But engagement with Kabul must not become strategic tunnel vision.

Russia's growing concentration on the Taliban risks narrowing its relationships with other Afghan constituencies, particularly non-Pashtun political and social forces in the north and elements associated with the former republican order. Considerable resistance to the Taliban's Kabul-based rule persists among these constituencies. Afghanistan's northern politics are closely connected to Tajikistan's and Uzbekistan's security concerns. Instability does not necessarily stop at the Amu Darya. Ethnic, political, economic and security linkages connect northern Afghanistan with Central Asia, while militant movements and narcotics networks can cross borders.

The Taliban are not Russia's only Afghan interlocutors of strategic relevance. A policy centred overwhelmingly on Kabul could reduce Russia's visibility among northern constituencies precisely when instability there could threaten its Central Asian security interests.

Russia's military-technical cooperation with Kabul makes this question more significant. Moscow and the Taliban signed a military-technical cooperation agreement in May 2026, although its full scope remains undisclosed. Russia may have sound reasons for strengthening Kabul's capacity to confront organisations such as IS-K. But military cooperation carries risks that diplomatic and economic engagement do not. As military capabilities flow into Afghanistan, questions of end-use, regional stability and unintended consequences become more important.

This is particularly important while Pakistan and Afghanistan remain engaged in a serious security confrontation. Over the past two decades, Pakistan-Russia relations have moved beyond Cold War mistrust towards a pragmatic partnership, built through sustained diplomacy and mutual accommodation. Cooperation in counterterrorism, defence, energy, trade, education and regional diplomacy reflects this progress.

This hard-earned rapprochement should not become a casualty of the Afghan question. Russia's strategically significant partnership with Pakistan should not be sacrificed for the tactical necessities of engagement with the Taliban. Afghanistan should remain an area of policy coordination, not become a fault line that reverses two decades of progress in Pakistan-Russia relations.

Afghanistan is unlikely to become a simple problem. The Taliban may remain the unavoidable authority in Kabul, but their record demands caution, verification and diversified regional engagement.

The writer is a current affairs analyst and faculty member at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Islamabad. She can be reached at guleayeshabhatti@gmail.com

After the K-P emergency: rethinking confrontation

DURDANA NAJAM

With the imposition of emergency and governor's rule in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, PTI has lost the one provincial government through which it could still translate its public support into administrative decisions. For its supporters, this is another painful setback. For the party's leadership, it should also be an occasion to reflect on where its political strategy is taking it.

Before the intervention, there was at least an opportunity for dialogue. An important disagreement concerned counterterrorism policy. PTI wanted the K-P government to have a meaningful role in shaping the approach to militancy in the province. The federal authorities wanted assurances about cooperation in combating terrorism. Access to Imran Khan was another unresolved issue. The discussions ended without an agreement.

It is understandable that a party should hold firmly to a position it considers important. But political leadership also involves deciding how to advance that position when agreement proves difficult. Could some progress have been secured while keeping the remaining questions open? Was there room for an arrangement that preserved the provincial government's ability to function and allowed discussion on security policy to continue?

We cannot know that a different approach would have prevented the intervention. We can, however, ask whether permanent confrontation has helped PTI preserve its political strength or gradually deprived it of the means to use that strength. This question deserves a thoughtful answer because the attachment of millions of Pakistanis to Imran Khan is real. His popularity has survived imprisonment, restrictions and repeated setbacks. Yet the party's responsibility extends beyond demonstrating that its leader remains popular. People also place their trust in a political party because they hope it will make their lives easier.

For a family struggling to pay for medicine, the value of a provincial government lies partly in whether the public hospital works. For parents, it lies in the school their children attend. For a young person, it may lie in the possibility of finding employment. These expectations give political power its purpose. Losing the ability to meet them is a substantial loss, even when public sympathy for the party remains intact.

PTI's experience since 2022 needs to be considered in this light. After losing federal office, it had the option of becoming an organised parliamentary opposition. Its withdrawal from the National Assembly, followed by the dissolution of the Punjab and K-P assemblies in January 2023, reflected the belief that pressure would bring early national elections. That expectation was not fulfilled.

Those decisions may have been taken in the sincere conviction that they would restore the party's mandate. Looking back, however, it is difficult to overlook how much institutional space was surrendered. PTI retained a substantial following while losing opportunities to govern, scrutinise decisions and remain involved in the everyday business of the state.

There is a human difficulty here too. Once supporters have endured hardship for a cause, leaders can find it harder to recommend a compromise. They worry that an incomplete settlement will disappoint those who have sacrificed so much. But this is precisely when leadership matters. Someone has to explain why a limited gain may be worth securing, why a pause can be useful and why continuing within an imperfect system may offer more possibilities than withdrawing from it.

Pakistan's economic condition makes that judgment especially urgent. The World Bank estimates that Pakistan accounts for about 48% of those living below the $3-a-day extreme-poverty line in its Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan grouping. Nearly every second extremely poor person in this region lives in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal has described economic stabilisation as "stunted and borrowed". His warning concerns the country's capacity to grow and provide opportunities in the years ahead.

Given these circumstances, one would hope that political energies would increasingly turn towards finding a workable way forward.

The years spent in confrontation are also years in which children leave school, young people remain unemployed and households fall further into debt.

Other societies have faced the difficult task of moving beyond entrenched hostility. In South Africa, the ANC entered negotiations with the apartheid government despite a history of profound injustice. Agreements concerning prisoners, returning exiles and political participation helped make further progress possible. The Pretoria Minute also recorded the suspension of ANC armed action. Cooperation developed through practical commitments while deep disagreements remained.

The circumstances were very different, but the lesson is relevant: opponents must eventually allow each other room to negotiate. Some willingness to put aside hatred is necessary before a shared political future can be built.

PTI's repeated reliance on confrontation also raises a question about political training within the party.

Are its workers being prepared to remain disciplined under provocation, and are they encouraged to see negotiation as a legitimate part of political struggle? Without that preparation, anger can become difficult to contain, and compromise difficult to explain.

Martin Luther King Jr understood this challenge. In his Letter from Birmingham Jail, written in April 1963, to eight white Alabama clergymen who had criticised the civil rights demonstrations, King explained how participants were trained for nonviolent action and asked to consider whether they could endure abuse without retaliating. For Pakistani parties, the lesson is that leadership must cultivate restraint and prepare supporters for the negotiations through which political progress becomes possible.

None of this requires PTI to abandon its principles or follow the accommodations through which other parties have compromised civilian independence. It requires a strategy that keeps its supporters represented and its capacity for public service alive.

The loss of the K-P government makes this discussion painful, but necessary. PTI has shown that it can sustain loyalty through adversity. It now needs to show how that loyalty can be turned into lasting political influence and practical relief. Its supporters deserve a future they can help build, alongside a cause they are asked to defend.

The writer is a public policy analyst based in Lahore. She can be reached at durdananajam1@gmail.com

Pakistan, Bahrain vow to take bilateral trade to new heights, finalise FTA with GCC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Bahrain on Thursday agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in multiple areas, including trade, investment, industries, agriculture and food security, higher education, information technology, logistics and maritime affairs, besides committing to finalise the Free Trade Agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The bilateral ties and cooperation were discussed as Pakistan and Bahrain held the 3rd Joint Ministerial Commission, co-chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and visiting Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani.

Following the ministerial commission's meeting, both leaders told the media at a joint press stakeout that two sides reaffirmed their shared commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation across a broad spectrum of sectors, including energy, sports, tourism, and business-to-business dealings, besides achieving the target of doubling trade in three years.

Deputy Prime Minister Dar said the two countries signed the protocol of the third session of the 3rd Joint Ministerial Commission and committed to holding the 4th ministerial commission's meeting within a year.

He said that the key outcome of the "very comprehensive and productive" meeting was the strengthening of the institutional framework through the operationalisation of several joint working groups for regular engagement and effective implementation of the decisions.

He said both sides welcomed the closer engagement between the business communities of the two countries, and acknowledged the contribution of the Pakistani community in Bahrain, serving as a strong bridge between the two countries.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation in labour mobility, vocational training and human resource development, with a view to creating new opportunities for skilled Pakistani professionals and workers. The deputy prime minister told the media that the two sides also exchanged views on the evolving situation in the Gulf and emphasised the importance of restraint, de-escalation, dialogue and diplomacy, besides discussing the need to ensure the safety and freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab-ul-Mandeb.

Reiterating Pakistan's commitment to playing a constructive role in supporting diplomatic efforts for peace and stability in the region, he also reaffirmed the principled support for the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights.

Two sides also stressed the urgent need for unhindered humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza and reiterated their support for a just and lasting solution in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions.

Discussing the Indus Waters Treaty, Deputy Prime Minister highlighted that India's unilateral decision to place the treaty in abeyance constituted a breach of international law and represented a dangerous attempt to weaponise shared water resources and jeopardise the water, food and energy security of Pakistan's 250 million people.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State / SAPM on Digital Media Fahd Haroon with the head of the visiting Turkish delegation, Prof. Ferhat Pirinççi, Deputy Head of Communications at the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, Dr. Irfan Neziroglu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Pakistan, Ms. Ambreen Jan, Chairperson PEMRA, and other members of the Turkish delegation and Pakistani officials.

National security cannot be fully ensured without ensuring food availability in country: Rana

LAHORE (INP): Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain has said that food security is of paramount importance and that national security cannot be fully ensured without ensuring food availability in the country.

Addressing the concluding ceremony of the National Rescue Challenge 2026 here on Thursday, he said, "Food security is directly linked to national security, stressing that ensuring the development of the agriculture sector is the government's top priority."

He said Pakistan was an agricultural country and, by the grace of Allah, The Almighty, was not only meeting the food requirements of its population of around 260 million but also exporting various agricultural commodities, including rice, maize and potatoes.

The minister said Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was according special attention to the agriculture sector and that concerted efforts were being made for its development.

He said modern technologies were being introduced in agriculture, livestock and other allied sectors, while work was also under way to develop improved and climate-resilient seed varieties to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Rana Tanveer said Pakistan had been significantly affected by climate change despite having a negligible share in global carbon emissions.

Pak, UK explore investment partnership to advance trade, business cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and the United Kingdom (UK) on Thursday discussed ways to further enhance trade and cooperation in priority sectors and deliver concrete outcomes through the next bilateral Trade Dialogue.

During a meeting between Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriottat here at the Ministry of Commerce, the two sides focused on expanding trade and investment cooperation in healthcare and life sciences, information technology, agriculture and livestock, financial services, aviation and minerals-related services, said a news release.

The British side outlined the possibility of a long-term, non-legally binding investment partnership, supported at ministerial level, to provide a framework for cooperation in mutually agreed sectors. Potential areas included regulatory reforms, trade facilitation, education and workforce skills, and investment financing.

Jam Kamal Khan highlighted livestock as an important area for cooperation, noting the Prime Minister's keen interest in strengthening the sector, improving animal productivity and increasing value addition and meat exports.

He underscored the opportunities for British expertise, technology and investment to support modern livestock practices and stronger commercial linkages.

PSX loses 1,138.50 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Thursday, shedding 1,138.50 points, a negative change of 0.68 percent, to close at 167,441.91 points against 168,580.41 points recorded in the previous trading session.

The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 365.869 million shares, compared to 586.861 million shares traded in the previous session, while the traded value decreased to Rs 17.722 billion from Rs 22.365 billion.

Market capitalisation decreased to Rs 18.597 trillion from Rs 18.747 trillion recorded a day earlier.

Out of 496 companies that traded in the ready market, 130 posted gains, 324 suffered losses, while 42 remained unchanged.



Golden State Valkyries players participated in a parade along The Embarcadero in San Francisco, USA, in an open-top bus to celebrate the team's first WNBA championship. Thousands of fans gathered along the waterfront during the parade, cheering and celebrating the victory.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal chaired a meeting and directed Federal and provincial governments to take urgent measures to reduce passenger and freight transport fare.

WB reclassification of Pakistan purely administrative: Khurram

ISLAMABAD (APP): Advisor to the Finance Minister Khurram Schehzad on Thursday said the World Bank's decision to include Pakistan in its Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan (MENAAP) reporting region is merely an administrative and statistical reclassification and does not affect the country's geographical identity or income classification.

This distinction was important as regional statistics changed whenever the composition of a statistical group changed, he said in his official X handle.

Once Pakistan's large population is added to MENAAP, indicators relating to poverty, population and per-capita income will naturally look different from those of the traditional Middle East and North Africa region. Regional averages are usually population-weighted.

A large country therefore pulls the regional figure strongly toward its own values. Pakistan's population is large relative to most MENA economies, so its inclusion will noticeably shift any regional average it joins.

Giving an illustration, he said if a region of 100 million people has a 10% poverty rate (10 million poor). Add a country of 100 million with a 30% rate (30 million poor). The regional rate becomes 20%. Nobody in either country became poorer. The regional rate doubled purely because the group changed.

Therefore, the statements suggesting that a large proportion of "MENA poor" now live in Pakistan creates a misleading impression, he said. Pakistan has been added to the statistical region itself; consequently, its population and poverty figures are now included in the regional totals.

He said the same caution applies when comparing the new MENAAP figures with historical MENA data. An apparent increase in regional poverty may partly reflect the addition of Pakistan and Afghanistan rather than deterioration in the economic conditions of countries traditionally considered part of MENA.

Similarly, Pakistan's removal from the World Bank's South Asia reporting group will change South Asian averages.

This does not mean that poverty has suddenly declined in South Asia because conditions improved; part of the statistical change may simply arise because Pakistan is no longer included in that particular regional aggregate.

The correct interpretation is therefore that Pakistan has been reassigned to the World Bank's MENAAP reporting region.

He said that the comparisons of poverty between Pakistan, India and other countries should consequently rely on country-level data, the same poverty threshold and the same reference year, rather than statistics taken from changing regional groupings.

The central point is simple a change in the statistical basket can change the regional picture without changing the economic reality on the ground, he concluded.

He said the same caution applies when comparing the new MENAAP figures with historical MENA data. An apparent increase in regional poverty may partly reflect the addition of Pakistan and Afghanistan rather than deterioration in the economic conditions of countries traditionally considered part of MENA.



ATHENS, GREECE: Students take part in a protest against the rising cost of living.

TENDER NOTICE

TSE-2627111225943 Only electronic bid will be submitted, No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PROVINCIAL B&R DISTRICT QILLA SAIFULLAH invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2026 based on Composite schedule rates 2023 on Percentage Rates **Tender Fee 1500 PKR and Bid Security 3%**

S.No	Name of Work/s	EICost
1	REHABILITATION OF BT ROAD KILLI NAALAI NISAI KILLA SAIFULLAH PSDP NO.1396 (Z2026.1704)	39,801,134

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules – 2014. **Eligibility of Bidders:** Presence in Active Tax Payer List The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required The bidder must have completed 4 Assignment of similar nature of work Turn over of at least 27,860,793 PKR Amount in1 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm The bidder must have completed 4 Assignment of 100 % of the Estimated Cost similar nature of work in last three years Bidder is not blacklisted, Blacklisting means: "Barring a bidder, contractor, consultant or supplier from participating in any future procurement proceedings by the Pakistan Engineering Council/PPRA/any government, semi government, and autonomous body Green Challan of Rs 1500, Green Challan of Rs 1500,Attach BPPRA Challan must A CDRequivalent to3%otheestimatedcostmustbesubmittedThename of the firm must be clearlymentioned on the CDR otherwise it shall be liable to rejection SDR is notallowed The originalCDR must besubmitted to the office within 24 hours after the opening of bid Submission of audit balance sheet in the last Three years to demonstrate ICAP. The audit was conducted by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan [ICAP]. Certificate of audit execution by ICAP is attached for verification. Available Credit limit line of 100% of estimated cost Account statement by concerned Bank of last 1 year provided as latest registered with Pakistan engineering council with the require code **Procedure Of Procurement:** Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure **Bid Security:** The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Gurantee,Deposit at Call of 3 % specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. **Tender Documents:** The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gob.pk **Issuance of tender Documents:** Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gob.pk **Last Date of bid submission:** Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 07 December, 2026till 09:00 AM through supplier dashboard. **Tender opening:** All tenders will be opened on same day at 10:00 AM on EPPS System Address: main city Killa Saifullah Phone no: 0333637583 Email: xenroadksf@gmail.com

Executive Engineer Roads CWPP&H Department District Killa Saifullah

DPRQ/PRQ No.2539/19-11-2026

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Pak foreign reserves rise to $ 26.8 billion, SBP reserves cross $21.45 b

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan rose to US$ 26,797.4 million, while State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reserves further increased to US$ 21,453.7 million.

"During the week ended on 2-Oct-2026, SBP's FX reserves increased by US$ 15 million to US$ 21,453.7 million", the central bank Thursday reported in its weekly statement on the position of liquid foreign reserves.

Meanwhile, the foreign reserves held by commercial banks increased by $ 12 million to $ 5,343.7 million during the period under review, the breakup of forex reserves showed.

Gold prices increase by Rs600 to Rs435,036

ISLAMABAD (APP): The prices of gold witnessed an upward trend in the local market on Thursday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola increasing by Rs600 to close at Rs435,036, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold increased by Rs515 to settle at Rs372,973, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold also rose by Rs472, closing at Rs341,904.

Direct Europe shipping service restored to facilitate exporters: Junaid Anwar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Thursday said that direct shipping connectivity between Karachi and major European ports had been restored, providing relief to exporters facing longer transit times and increased freight costs due to disruptions on international shipping routes.

In a statement, the minister said that Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) had reinstated its PREMIUM IPAK service in response to the demand of exporters for a dedicated and direct Europe service. Under the restored service, the MSC will make a weekly call at Karachi Gateway Terminal International (KGTI), connecting Karachi with key European destinations through Colombo, Felixstowe, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Bremerhaven, Antwerp, Le Havre and London Gateway, he said and added, "The restoration of a dedicated Europe service is an important development for our export-oriented industries, particularly the textile sector, which has been facing increased transit times and logistics costs because of disruptions to international shipping routes.

He said that textile exporters had recently apprised him of the difficulties caused by changes in shipping routes, particularly those linked to the situation in the Red Sea. "Exporters told me in a recent that longer vessel journeys were increasing transportation costs and delivery times for shipments to European and US markets. These additional costs and delays have affected the competitiveness of Pakistani exporters," he said.

The minister said that the government was taking up the concerns of the export sector with shipping lines and other relevant stakeholders to improve maritime connectivity and facilitate international trade. "Reliable and predictable shipping connectivity is essential for Pakistan's exporters. Our focus is to ensure that the maritime sector supports trade, reduces logistical bottlenecks and strengthens Pakistan's access to international markets," he said.



People attend the funeral ceremony in the town of Navahermosa, for Jesus de Miguel Alameda, 30, a footballer of Spanish Segunda Division club Tenerife who had died, in Navahermosa, Toledo, Spain

Finance Ministry clarifies nature of Rs10.1tr SOE debt

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Finance and Revenue on Thursday clarified that the Rs10.1 trillion debt figure reported by the Central Monitoring Unit (CMU) of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) represents the consolidated stock of interest-bearing obligations of federal State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and should not be construed as fresh borrowing from banks.

Clarifying a media report on Federal SOE debt stock, titled "SOEs' debt soars to Rs10.1 trillion", it said that it has compared the consolidated debt stock reported by the Central Monitoring Unit (CMU), Finance Division, with State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data in a manner that is not on a like-for-like basis.

The comparison may create the incorrect impression that the increase in the CMU-reported stock represents an equivalent amount of fresh borrowing by SOEs, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Finance and Revenue.

The SBP series referred to in the media report is a narrower measure focused on borrowing/credit of public sector enterprises from the banking system. CMU, in contrast, reports the comprehensive consolidated stock of interest-bearing obligations of federal SOEs for fiscal-risk monitoring.

The two data sets therefore have different scope, coverage and reporting purposes and should not mixed together, it said adding that the SBP PSE bank debt is Rs 2.954 trillion while SOE combined debt is Rs 10.1 trillion as reported by CMU which has broader scope.

Rs10.1 trillion is not bank borrowing. Bank/private loans account for approximately Rs3.1 trillion of the consolidated stock.The balance principally comprises government lending, foreign re-lent loans, accrued markup/rollover costs and other interest-bearing liabilities.



JERICO, WEST BANK, PALESTINE: Israeli settlers, accompanied by their families and guarded by Israeli forces, raid Palestinian homes and seize eight residences in the village of Duyuk al-Tahta

Zong launches Pakistan's first 5G fixed wireless home broadband service-Z HomeFi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zong, Pakistan's Leading Technology Services Enterprise, is taking 5G beyond the smartphone and into the Pakistani home with the launch of Z HomeFi - Pakistan's first 5G Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) home broadband service, ushering a new era of future-ready, technology-led connectivity.

Z HomeFi marks another milestone in Zong's journey to transform connectivity into technology-led services, translating next-generation 5G innovation into a simple, accessible and customer-centric home broadband experience. By removing the need for fibre installation, fixed-line infrastructure and complex installations, Z HomeFi gives households greater flexibility and convenience while delivering high-speed, reliable connectivity designed around the evolving needs of today's digitally connected consumers. Z HomeFi is available across Pakistan's top 10 cities, bringing next-generation home broadband within reach of more customers. The service is available exclusively through Zong's Customer Service Centres, with plans to extend availability to franchises in the future.

Z HomeFi brings flexible home broadband options to households through 12 prepaid bundles, offering speeds ranging from 10 Mbps to 50 Mbps and monthly data allowances of 100 GB to 500 GB. Priced between PKR 4,500 and Rs. 11,000 per month.

Justice reform integral part of economic reform: Law Minister

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar represented Pakistan at the Law, Justice and Development (LJD) Forum 2026, held at the World Bank Group headquarters in Washington, D.C., where he highlighted the country's ongoing legal and judicial reforms as key drivers of economic growth, investor confidence and institutional strengthening.

The forum brought together more than 40 ministers and senior legal leaders from around the world to discuss ways to mobilize private investment, strengthen institutions and promote economic growth through legal and justice reforms.

On the first day, the minister addressed the financial sector session of the Ministerial Roundtable titled "What Legal Reforms Are Required to Mobilize Private Capital?" He emphasized that private investment depended on confidence, which could be strengthened through the prompt, fair and predictable enforcement of contracts.

Senator Tarar also participated in Leadership Lounge discussions with fellow ministers, exchanging views on commercial disputes, judicial reforms and development financing.

Presenting Pakistan's reform agenda, he said justice reform was an integral part of economic reform. He highlighted several initiatives aimed at improving the business environment, facilitating investors and strengthening the legal framework for economic activity. These included the Asaan Karobar law, which provides for a national one-window business portal and a single registry of licences and permits, the establishment of a one-stop shop for investors, and the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Act 2022 (FIPPA), which safeguards major foreign investments.

The minister also highlighted proposed amendments to the Companies Act, prepared by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) and the Board of Investment. The proposed changes seek to replace certain criminal penalties with financial fines and facilitate online corporate filings.

He further outlined efforts to improve the resolution of commercial disputes through specialised commercial courts, court-connected mediation and a new Arbitration Act based on the UNCITRAL Model Law, which is intended to replace the existing 1940 legislation.

He also highlighted the establishment of the International Mediation and Arbitration Centre (IMAC) in Islamabad and informed participants that Pakistan had signed the Singapore Convention on Mediation, while legislation required for its ratification was being prepared. On the second day, Senator Tarar participated in the MENAAP (Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan) Regional Ministerial Dialogue alongside ministers from Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif during a meeting in Aiwan-e-Sadr.



QUETTA: A delegation of Graduates those who completed their graduation under Barrick and RDMS International Graduate Program Phase-II meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

President Zardari for further expansion of Pak-Nigeria cooperation

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening its warm and friendly relations with Nigeria, saying the existing bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two countries would continue to deepen and expand in the years ahead.

"In his message to President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Nigeria's Independence Day, President Zardari said Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with Nigeria and expressed confidence that closer cooperation would serve the shared interests of the two peoples," President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release.

The president conveyed his best wishes for the continued peace, progress and prosperity of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Public-level solarization transforms into people-led revolution: Leghari

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari on Thursday said the share of clean energy in Pakistan's overall energy mix had reached 52 percent, with the government aiming to increase it to nearly 90 percent by 2036.

He was talking to Minister of State for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Kharal, who called on him at the Power Division, said a press release. The meeting involved comprehensive discussions on mutual strategies to promote clean energy, advance the green energy transition and address climate change challenges in the country.

Highlighting the ongoing revolutionary reforms in the energy sector, Federal Minister Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari stated that the share of clean energy in Pakistan's overall energy mix has reached 52 percent. He added that an ambitious target has been set to scale up clean energy to nearly 90 percent by 2036. The Minister further remarked that public-level solarization has transformed into a people-led revolution, with domestic, agricultural, and commercial consumers rapidly adopting solar energy, marking a major milestone toward a clean energy transition and self-reliance in the power system.

Leghari also informed that the government is expediting the plan to convert imported coal power plants to local coal in order to reduce power generation costs and alleviate the import burden.

Home Minister for coordinated approach, prompt action against criminal activities

QUETTA, (ANN): Balochistan Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove has reaffirmed that safeguarding citizens' lives and property is the provincial government's top priority, stressing that there would be no compromise on public security or enforcement of the law.

In an exclusive interview with ANN, the home minister said ensuring lasting peace, maintaining a secure environment and upholding the rule of law were among the government's fundamental responsibilities.

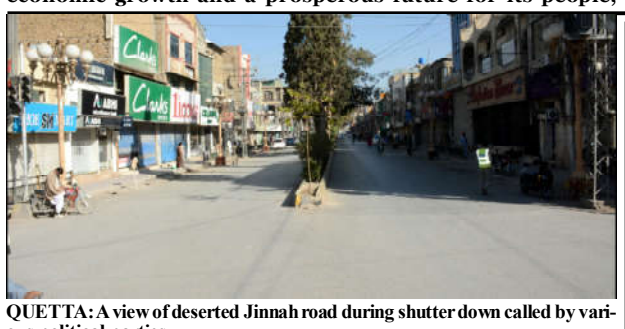
Langove emphasized that stronger coordination between police, district administrations and other law-enforcement agencies was necessary to improve security and maintain effective control over law and order across the province.

He called for a coordinated approach, prompt action against criminal activities and strict compliance with legal procedures, making it clear that negligence in carrying out responsibilities related to public protection would not be tolerated.

The home minister said maintaining peace and order required not only effective cooperation among state institutions but also a constructive partnership between law-enforcement agencies and citizens.

He stressed that public trust, responsible civic conduct and respect for the law were essential for creating safer communities and strengthening the overall security environment.

Langove also called for the efficient deployment of available resources and institutional capabilities to enhance crime prevention and reinforce measures aimed at protecting the public. Reiterating the provincial government's resolve to promote peace and stability, he said efforts to safeguard citizens, improve law enforcement and strengthen security arrangements would remain ongoing. "A peaceful and secure Balochistan is essential for sustainable development, economic growth and a prosperous future for its people," the home minister said.



QUETTA: A view of deserted Jinnah road during shutter down called by various political parties.

Health Minister reviews health complaint management system

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal on Thursday chaired a meeting to review the Health Complaint Management System and assess the performance and latest developments of health helpline 1166.

During the meeting, representatives of relevant companies briefed the minister on mechanisms for registering, monitoring and resolving public complaints related to healthcare services.

The meeting discussed measures to ensure timely redressal of citizens' complaints, improve coordination among relevant institutions, strengthen continuous monitoring and enhance transparency in the complaint management system.

Syed Mustafa Kamal directed the concerned authorities to make the system more effective, reliable and public-friendly to ensure that citizens could access prompt and convenient solutions to their health-related concerns. He emphasized the importance of an efficient complaint redressal mechanism in improving public service delivery and strengthening citizens' trust in the healthcare system.

Meanwhile, Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal on Thursday chaired the first meeting with representatives of three companies to review progress on agreements reached at the Pakistan-China Pharmaceutical and Healthcare B2B Investment Conference 2026. The meeting discussed implementation of the agreements, bilateral cooperation and the future course of action to advance investment and collaboration in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors.

The participants also reviewed the implementation of the medicine track-and-trace system and the introduction of 2D barcodes to strengthen monitoring and transparency in the pharmaceutical supply chain.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minsiter/Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Secretary General of ASEAN, Dr. Kao Kim Hourn at a Press Stakeout at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Pakistan warns Afghan Taliban over continued support to terrorist groups

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Spokesperson to the President Murtaza Solangi on Thursday issued a strong warning to the Afghan Taliban regime over its continued support to terrorist outfits by providing them with safe sanctuaries, training and logistical support.

"If the illegitimate Taliban regime thinks they will continue to provide safe sanctuaries, training and logistical support to a cocktail of terror outfits and act as a surrogate mother of terror, the global and regional forces of peace and civilisation shall surprise them," the spokesperson said in a statement on his X timeline.

He, however, said that the surprise by the global and regional forces of peace might not be too pleasant for the "beasts".

The statement by the president's spokesperson came after Pakistan carried out well-planned and calibrated aerial strikes against the hideouts and safe havens of terrorist organisations of Fitna al Khwarij and Fitna al Hindustan in Afghanistan, killing multiple terrorists, in continuation of operation Ghazab lil Haq.

Based on credible intelligence, selective targeting of terrorist camps and hideouts at two locations belonging to Fitna al khwarij, Fitna al Hindustan and their affiliates has been carried out in Afghanistan with precision and accuracy, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting announced.

"Targets were destroyed with precision, and initial reports suggest the killing of twenty-two terrorists. Large quantities of weapons and ammunition stored at these hideouts were also destroyed," it added.

No woman should miss treatment due to poverty, says First Lady

Asifa Bhutto calls for greater breast cancer awareness and timely treatment

ISLAMABAD, (APP): First Lady Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari on Thursday urged women to take breast health seriously and seek medical advice if they notice any unusual changes.

She said breast cancer is treatable and curable, and that early diagnosis and timely treatment can save lives.

In her message on the commencement of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, she said the month provides an opportunity to remind women that looking after their health also means knowing their bodies and taking action when something does not feel right. Regular self-examination can help women become familiar with normal changes in their bodies and recognise when they need to seek medical advice.

The first lady said women over 50 should consider regular mammograms at facilities that offer screening services. She also pointed out that more than 90 per cent of breast cancer cases are self-detected among those who do not undergo regular mammography screening, making awareness of body changes particularly important.

The first lady said what is most concerning is that many women, particularly in rural areas and low-income households, still reach doctors too late. Sometimes it is because of lack of awareness, sometimes because medical facilities are too far away and sometimes because the cost of diagnosis and treatment feels beyond reach. She said no woman should lose her chance of survival simply because she is poor, lives far from a major city or is afraid to seek help. Our government institutions and civil society must do more to ensure that every woman has access to the health education, screening and care she needs.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Muhammad Atta Tarar talks at a Public Forum on Reshaping Regional Security Architecture: Strategic Partnership and Multilateral Cooperation from a Turkiye-Pakistan Perspective at Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI).

Nation stands shoulder to shoulder with security forces in war against terrorism: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi praised the security forces for carrying out successful intelligence-based operations against Khawarij in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, saying the forces once again thwarted the plans of terrorists through their professional capabilities.

In his statement, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi commended the performance of security forces for successfully countering the activities of Khawarij and conducting effective operations in different areas. He said the forces demonstrated professionalism and commitment in the fight against terrorism.

Mohsin Naqvi said that security forces eliminated six Khawarij during an intelligence-based operation in the Kachhi district of Balochistan.

He noted that the operation was part of ongoing efforts to prevent terrorist activities and maintain security in the region.



BANGKOK: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani receiving souvenir at the Save The Children Policy Dialogue.

Reform unveiled to bring non-formal education at par with formal system

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training has unveiled major reform to bring non-formal education at par with formal system to activate a structured capacity-building and professional development framework to bring non-formal basic education on par with the formal schooling system across Islamabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB).

Under this initiative, a third cohort comprising 45 master trainers selected from among 1,400 non-formal education teachers in the federal capital successfully completed an intensive three-day training program.

The concluding session of the "Three Days Professional Development Training for BECS Master Trainers," organized under the aegis of Basic Education Community Schools (BECS), at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on Thursday.

Addressing the ceremony, Federal Secretary for Education and Professional Training Nadeem Mahbub stated that the Ministry had formulated a comprehensive road map a year and a half ago to modernize and streamline the non-formal education sector.

He emphasized that the primary focus of this road map is to hone the pedagogical skills and capacity of non-formal teachers serving marginalized segments, ensuring no compromise on the quality of education delivered in underserved communities. Mahbub highlighted that, unlike formal school teachers, non-formal educators historically lacked structured professional development. He noted that under the current initiative, standardized teacher guides were developed, and training sessions were conducted during the summer break.

Chief Editor: Syed Abdul Wadood Shah printed at Shah Printing Press, Quetta and Published from Al-Syed Building M.A. Jinnah Road Quetta Ph. 2843190 E.mail: dailyvomqta@gmail.com.