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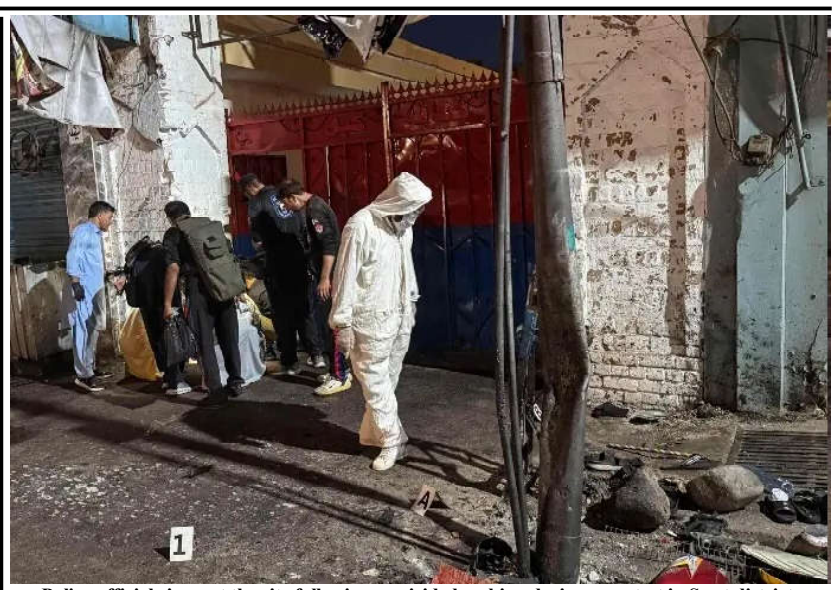
At least 14 killed, several injured in suicide blast near police station in Swat

SWAT, (Monitoring Desk): The death toll from the suicide attack outside Swat's Kabal police station on Sunday has risen to 14, police said. Swat police spokesperson Nasir Iqbal Karimi confirmed to media that 14 people lost their lives in the blast.
Earlier, Swat's Deputy Inspector General of Police Fida Hussain told media that seven people had died, which included four police officers, with 20 people injured.
According to the Swat District Police Officer (DPO) Umar Khan, the suicide bomber detonated explosives after police personnel attempted to stop and search him at the entrance of the police station. The DPO said that the police remained on high alert. "Security forces have cordoned off the area, and an investigation is underway to collect further evidence," he added.
The explosion occurred near the gate of Kabal Police Station while hundreds of people were participating in a public demonstration at the nearby Kabal Chowk, against the recent wave of terrorism in the Swat Valley. The powerful blast caused multiple casualties, prompting an immediate emergency response by police, rescue teams and local authorities.
The injured were shifted to nearby Saidu Sharif Teaching Hospital for treatment, while security personnel sealed off the area and launched a search operation. The protest had drawn a large crowd from across the district and the attack occurred as the final speaker was addressing the crowd, triggering panic among participants. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. Addressing the gathering before the blast, the speakers condemned the resurgence of terrorism in Swat and demanded that the government ensure lasting peace. They said their movement had a single agenda: the restoration of peace and the elimination of terrorism from the region. The speakers stressed that maintaining law and order and eradicating terrorism were the state's responsibility, warning that continued insecurity could trigger widespread public unrest, citing recent protest movements in other countries as examples of growing public frustration. The speakers also criticised the authorities for what they described as action against peaceful citizens while terrorists continued to operate in the mountainous areas of Swat.



Police officials inspect the site following a suicide bombing during a protest in Swat district.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti handing over the appointment letters for Shaheed Malik Shingal's son, Junaid Khan, and his brother, Malik Ajmal Khan, in the Agriculture Department.

Sacrifices of martyrs' great national asset:

Balochistan govt will never leave families of martyrs alone: CM

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, reaffirmed his commitment to the welfare and well-being of the families of martyrs by fulfilling the promise made to the family of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Harnai District General Secretary, Shaheed Malik Shingal.
The Chief Minister of Balochistan issued appointment orders for Shaheed Malik Shingal's son, Junaid Khan, and his brother, Malik Ajmal Khan, in the Agriculture Department and handed over their appointment letters to them.
On the occasion, Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that the sacrifices of the martyrs are a great national asset, and that ensuring the dignity, support, and rehabilitation of their families is the government's foremost responsibility.
He said that the Government of Balochistan will never leave the families of martyrs alone and will continue to provide them with every possible assistance. The family of Shaheed Malik Shingal thanked the Chief Minister of Balochistan, saying that the government not only fulfilled its promise by supporting their family during a difficult time but also set an excellent example of standing by the families of martyrs.
Meanwhile, Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, invited renowned folk singer Gul Mir Jamali from Nasirabad, who expressed his love and admiration through songs, to the Chief Minister's Secretariat, where he met with him.



QUETTA: Haji Ishaq Mengal, Vice Chairman of the Balochistan Reforms Social Network, and Ismatullah Qureshi, Secretary of Social Welfare, posed for a group photograph with Sohail Baig and others on the occasion of a visit to the Saylani IT Center, .

Balochistan Media Forum urges govt to ensure survival of newspapers, safeguard press freedom

QUETTA (ANN): In a statement, the Balochistan Media Forum declared that it would not tolerate any injustice, discrimination, or unfair treatment against media workers, journalists, or the newspaper industry in Balochistan. The forum said journalists are the eyes and ears of society and perform the crucial responsibility of delivering accurate and timely information to the public under the most difficult circumstances. Therefore, resolving their issues promptly and permanently is the government's foremost responsibility.
The statement said that regional correspondents serving in remote areas of Balochistan continue to perform their professional duties with honesty despite limited resources and harsh conditions, yet they lack even basic facilities. The forum urged the Government of Balochistan to provide a monthly stipend to all registered regional correspondents so they can overcome financial hardships and perform their journalistic duties more effectively. The Balochistan Media Forum also emphasized that the province's poets, writers, authors, and literary figures have always played a significant role in promoting Balochistan's language, culture, history, and positive image. However, they have not received the official support and encouragement they deserve. The forum called for the allocation of special funds, awards, scholarships, and publishing facilities for literary personalities to promote academic and literary activities.
The statement further said that media workers in Balochistan continue to carry out their journalistic responsibilities despite terrorism, insecurity, economic challenges, and limited resources, often risking their lives. Under such circumstances, the government should formulate a comprehensive and effective policy for journalists' welfare, protection, healthcare, insurance, and financial assistance. The forum urged the Government of Balochistan, the federal government, and relevant institutions to take immediate practical measures to address the financial crisis facing the media industry, ensure the survival of newspapers.

PM pays tribute to security forces for successful Khuzdar operation

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to security forces for successful intelligence-based operation in Khuzdar district. In a statement, he lauded the security forces for successful intelligence-based operation against Indian-sponsored Fitna-tul-Hindustan terrorists operating in Khuzdar District of Balochistan. The prime minister appreciated the professionalism, courage and timely action of the security forces for killing four terrorists during the operation and destroying two vehicles loaded with explosives, thus foiling a major terrorist plot.
He said, "Every nefarious attempt to spread terrorism in Pakistan will be foiled."
"The operations of security forces and law enforcement agencies should continue with full force until terrorism is completely eradicated from the country," he added.

US-Iran negotiations ongoing to de-escalate tensions: Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Pakistan said that negotiations between the United States and Iran were ongoing to de-escalate tensions in the Gulf region, emphasizing that the Islamabad MoU and the Pakistan-Qatar Joint Statement continued to serve as the vital framework for a durable peace process.
"Amid the prevailing tensions and hostilities, Pakistan reiterates that dialogue and diplomacy remain the only viable path forward… We are doing our utmost to bring the parties back to the Islamabad MoU… We encourage the parties to exercise maximum restraint and fully adhere to their commitment to resume technical-level talks," Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Hussain Andrabi said at his weekly press briefing here.
He said that despite a relative calm over the past few days, the overall security situation in the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz remained precarious, and that the attacks, particularly from non-state actors against Saudi Arabia, were utterly condemnable. "We remain hopeful for de-escalation and peaceful settlement of issues. We also remain hopeful that the parties will return to technical-level talks," he said. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, and DPM and FM Ishaq Dar, the foreign ministry and all relevant institutions are fully geared to handle all these nuances.

Balochistan govt taking every possible measure to protect public: Nosherwani

QUETTA (ANN): Provincial Finance Minister Mir Shoaib Nosherwani has said that, according to the prevailing circumstances, the government is taking every possible measure to protect the public. He stated that the government's writ will be established under all circumstances and that strong action will be taken against armed groups responsible for destabilizing the situation. He said that the entire government machinery would be utilized to restore public confidence and urged people not to consider themselves unsafe, as the government and security institutions stand with them. He made these remarks while speaking to a delegation of media representatives. He said that the need of the hour is for everyone to set aside personal differences and play their role in ensuring the stability and prosperity of the region. According to him, a few individuals wish to set the province ablaze and deprive the people of their rights, but they are mistaken.

PPP vows continued support for Kashmir cause, reviews polling process in Quetta

QUETTA (ANN): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) central leader and Provincial Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar, PPP Balochistan President Senator Sardar Umar Gorgage, General Secretary Rabbani Khan Kakar, Chief Minister of Balochistan's Focal Person Syed Iqbal Shah, Quetta Division President Khair Muhammad Tareen, Provincial Leader Hayat Khan Achakzai, along with other senior party leaders, visited a polling station established in Quetta for the Kashmir elections.
During the visit, the party leaders reviewed the electoral process, voting procedures, and other arrangements. The leaders said that the enthusiasm shown by the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in the elections reflects their determination to exercise their democratic right. They added that the Pakistan Peoples Party has always represented the rights of the Kashmiri people and their right to self-determination.
They said that the stance of the party's founding chairman, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto on the Kashmir issue remains a bright chapter in history, and that under the leadership of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the party continues to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Kashmir.

AJK polls' second phase ends amid PPP claims of rigging

MUZAFFARABAD, (Monitoring Desk): Polling for the second phase of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections ended on Sunday evening after authorities extended voting by one hour until 6pm across nine constituencies in the Muzaffarabad division. Similar to the first phase, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) alleged that there was rigging in the second phase as well. The polling process, originally scheduled from 8am to 5pm, was extended by an hour to facilitate voters in the Muzaffarabad division. The AJK Election Commission said in a statement that the decision was taken in view of the large number of voters arriving at polling stations and to facilitate them in exercising their right to vote. Voting took place in nine constituencies of Muzaffarabad division — five in Muzaffarabad district, two in Jhelum Valley, and two in Neelum — with 207 candidates contesting. Simultaneously, polling was held in all 12 refugee constituencies, including six seats reserved for refugees from the Kashmir Valley and six for refugees from the Jammu region. A total of 137 candidates are in the race for these refugee seats. PML-N leaders rejected allegations of rigging and claims that Azad Kashmir President Chaudhry Latif Akbar and MNA Salahuddin Junejo had come under attack during the AJK elections.
Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah said a democratic party had started alleging rigging from around 10:30am despite the polling process continuing. He claimed PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had been given incorrect information and was being misled into making false statements.
Sanaullah said only three incidents were reported during polling across Azad Kashmir. Referring to one of them, he said Latif Akbar had gone to cast his vote at his polling station, where he had a dispute with members of the Sadat family.



KARACHI: British Deputy High Commissioner Ms. Alison Blackburne in a group photo with Governor of Balochistan, Jaffar Khan Mandokhail

Bilawal laments election commission's inaction on PPP's rigging claims in AJK polls

ISLAMABAD, (INP): PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Sunday said that although the political party rigging the first phase of general elections held for the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly had confessed to its crime, still the election commission had failed to take any action on the complaints the PPP had lodged regarding rigging.
In a post on X, he said that had the election commission taken action then, the credibility of phase-II of the elections being held today could have been restored.
Bilawal made it clear that the PPP reserved the right to protest and demand reelection in all those constituencies where rigging took place and where the commission failed to act. He further said that the PPP had already sent multiple complaints to the commission in writing regarding stuffing of ballot boxes and eviction of its polling agents from polling stations today.
The PPP chairman expressed the hope that the commission would now act swiftly in order to maintain fairness in the second phase of polls.
Also on Sunday, urging the election commission to hold free and fair elections, PPP leader Nadeem Afzal Chan said that the party was being forced to boycott the third phase of polls.



RAWALPINDI: Voters are receiving their voting numbers from polling camps set up by different political parties at polling stations during the second phase of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly elections

Provision of equal opportunities to women essential for sustainable development: Kiran Baloch

QUETTA, (VoM Report): The Ministry of Human Rights, Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with the Provincial Department of Social Welfare and Human Rights, organized a provincial consultative session in Quetta on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The purpose of the meeting was to review the legal, administrative, and policy measures taken at the provincial level and collect information from relevant institutions for the preparation of Pakistan's Second Periodic National Report to be submitted before the relevant United Nations Committee. The session was attended by Chairperson of the Balochistan Commission on the Status of Women Kiran Baloch, Director International Cooperation at the Ministry of Human Rights Dr. Arif Laghari and representatives from the Home Department.
Addressing the session, Director International Cooperation Dr. Arif Laghari said Pakistan ratified the International Covenant in 2008, under which the country is obligated to periodically inform the relevant UN Committee about measures taken to implement the rights recognized under the Covenant.

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

Monday August 03, 2026

Every cry that is silenced will return in future at a much greater cost

Bodies fused to their bones by phosphorus bombs, children pulled from the rubble in pieces and their limbs stuffed into bags, babies left to die and whose bodies were not allowed to be touched until they were devoured by vultures, bodies buried in mass graves by bulldozers, thirst, hunger...

We have witnessed unimaginable cruelty due to the genocide that has been ongoing in Gaza for nearly two years. The leader of these barbarians can attempt to legitimize an attack on Iran by beginning his speech with an address to the civilized world. The leaders of the U.K., the U.S., France and the EU can also invoke "Israel's right to self-defense."

The most aggressive actor in the Middle East, without a doubt, has been Israel since its inception. With its unilateral nuclear power advantage, it has acted with impunity in this region, both politically and militarily. Behind every bomb it drops and every execution it carries out lies the same confidence: the silent West.

The destruction Israel initiated in Gaza was not a military operation but a systematic campaign of annihilation. Since October 2023, over 55,000 people have lost their lives. At least 26,000 of them were civilians, thousands of whom were children. The bombardment Israel launched under the pretext of "fighting terrorism" targeted schools, hospitals and refugee camps. Gaza's infrastructure, water, electricity, roads and livelihoods were deliberately destroyed. This was not a war, but an extermination operation. In the West Bank, people were taken from their homes in night raids. Those arrested either disappeared forever or were shot in the streets. Official figures are insufficient, but the crackdowns, which resulted in hundreds of deaths and thousands of arrests, created an illegal occupation regime.

Attacks launched in Lebanon under the pretext of targeting Hezbollah rained down on civilians. More than 4,200 people lost their lives. More than 2,800 of them were civilians. Villages were razed to the ground. Even U.N. observation points were hit. Israel directly targeted civilian areas as well as military targets. It disregarded international law. Silence was also complicit in this crime.

The air operations carried out in Syria not only target military facilities. In 2024, Iran's Consulate in Damascus was hit. Diplomatic immunity was shattered by an airstrike. Revolutionary Guard commanders lost their lives in this attack. That year, approximately 390 people were killed in Israeli attacks across Syria. Some of them were Iranian soldiers, but dozens of civilians also lost their lives under the bombs.

The operations carried out in Iran were more insidious. Nuclear scientists were killed one by one. In the last two weeks alone, 14 Iranian scientists were murdered. Some were assassinated in their cars, others in their homes. In 2024 and 2025, Iran's territory was targeted by direct airstrikes. On June 13, 2025, alone, 78 civilians lost their lives. More than 300 people were injured. These attacks carried out in Iran amounted to a clear declaration of war.

Yemen was also targeted. In attacks on ports controlled by the Houthis, 14 civilians were killed in July 2024. Over 90 people were injured. Every blow to food and medicine supplies was aimed at punishing civilians. Israel turned hunger into a weapon.

Israel's five-year record of aggression includes tens of thousands of deaths, hundreds of thousands of injuries and millions of displaced people. Behind these numbers are children buried under rubble, young people taken from their homes in the middle of the night, fathers, mothers and doctors who never returned. Each one is a life, each one a violation of the law.

All these attacks took place under the shadow of a nuclear power. As the only nuclear state in the Middle East, Israel is not subject to any oversight. Its nuclear arsenal is not officially recognized but exists in practice. This advantage fuels its aggression. Every bomb, every assassination, every act of sabotage is protected by this shield of impunity. If international law were a reality, it would protect the victim, not the aggressor. This distorted rhetoric both undermines the law and renders the suffering of hundreds of thousands of civilians invisible.

Israel may be protected today, but this state of immunity is dragging it into an increasingly deep isolation and a more fragile future. Every cry that is silenced will return in the future at a much greater cost.

Fire and air

BY F.S. AIJAZUDDIN

One has to be either a fool or in government not to fear a nuclear conflict. Fools need not worry; they live in their own paradise. Governments make provision for their safety in case sirens blow. It is we — the citizenry of nuclear states — who are unprotected, when the doomsday button is pushed.

Modern tactics have taught nations that conventional civil defence preparations such as drills, blackouts and mass evacuation would be ineffective in the event of a nuclear attack. Every nuclear state, therefore, has developed its own strategy. In essence, it mirrors the priorities defined by the USSR in the 1960s: "to protect the leadership first, the essential work force second and the remainder of the population third". Contaminated survivors would nevertheless need to be fed, housed and medicated.

Unlike Hiroshima and Nagasaki which were city-specific, any future nuclear attack would be target-specific. No one would have time to relocate, only retaliate. Today, single bombs have been replaced by tactical nuclear weapons. These are "short-range nuclear weapons designed for more contained strikes".

Ever since India and Pakistan joined the macabre nuclear club in the 1990s, their strategies have hung, like fluttering pennants, for all to see.

India's nuclear doctrine was developed in the 2000s by K. Subrahmanyam, a former civil servant, regarded as "the doyen of India's strategic affairs community". It balances on three principles. One, no first use (NFU): India will not be the first to launch a nuclear attack. It will only retaliate. It will, however, use chemical or biological weapons, if need be. Two, credible minimum deterrence: India's nuclear weapons are to discourage others from attacking India. Three, massive retaliation: India's retaliation to a first-strike will be to 'annihilate' its enemy's capabilities.

The decision to approve a nuclear attack (or not) can be taken only by PM Modi, as head of the political council of India's Nuc-lear Command Authority. It is not (regardless of what the Indian foreign secretary was told to say) at the discretion of its DGMO.

And Pakistan's strategy? Responsibility for "the command, control, and operational decisions regarding Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme and strategic assets" is vested in its National Command Authority, a civilian-cum-military body. Pakistan's equivalent of Subrahmanyam is retired Lt-Gen K.A. Kidwai, adviser to the NCA.

He has identified four 'red lines' that could trigger a deployment of Pakistan's nuclear armoury: spatial threshold (loss of territory); military threshold (destruction of its land, sea or air forces); Economic threshold (any action that might choke Pakistan's economy, such as water terror — for example, the Indus Waters Treaty's suspension); and the political threshold (internal political destabilisation or disharmony, such as India's covert terrorism in Balochistan). Deterrence remains their capstone.

According to the CSIS, "India is currently estimated to have more than 180 nuclear warheads."] Pakistan's arsenal is said to have over 170. These warheads have "explosive yields of up to 300 kilotons, or 20 times that of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima". India relies on Russian, Israeli and US technological support; Pakistan looks to China. India and Pakistan have enough missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads that would leave both countries devastated, turning their citizens (as the dying Cleopatra said) into "fire and air".

'Disarmament' and 'non-proliferation' are two words erased from the blackboard of nuclear states. Less is no longer more. While India hides behind the fig leaf of its NFU policy, Pakistan flaunts a 'No NFU' posture. No more Mister Nice Guy. For the moment, both are in a state of suspen-ded animation. Their DGMOs continue to implement a withdrawal of their forces to a pre-Pahalgam situation.

The misguided missiles of Indian MPs propelled abroad to advocate India's cause have been received with polite incredulity and unexpected responses. Dr Shashi Tharoor took umbrage when his Colombian hosts condoled the deaths of Pakistani casualties, rather than Indian victims. In the US, Tharoor riled President Trump by comparing him unfavourably with former presidents Bush senior and junior, Clinton and Obama. Tharoor, a Francophone, should have heeded the French philosopher J.J. Rousseau's advice: "Insults are the arguments employed by those who are in the wrong." On his return, a bruised Tharoor may find the Congress door closed to him, and the BJP one locked from the inside.

As mentioned, K. Subrahmanyam was the ideological father of India's nuclear doctrine. Few know that S. Jaishankar, India's militant minister for external affairs, is his son. The son seems determined to test his father's nuclear strategy — on Pakistani soil.

Pension for all

BY NAEEM SADIQ

While slavery was officially abolished across the US in 1865, it did not die out. Instead, it mutated, taking on subtler but still lethal forms. Pakistan, too, became one of the practitioners of what is referred to as 'modern-day slavery' by either not registering 95 per cent of its workers with the Employees' Old-age Benefit Institution (EOBI) or not depositing their regular monthly pension contribution. This is large-scale cruelty and incompetence.

Here are a few basic facts to grasp the magnitude of this self-created chaos. Pakistan has a workforce of approximately 75 million workers. Only 11m of them are registered with the EOBI. Of the 11m registered workers, the monthly EOBI contribution is deposited only for 3.28m or 4.4pc of the total workforce (confirmed by the EOBI through a Right to Information request). Thus, 71.7m Pakistani workers have been deprived of their rightful pension and pushed towards a dependent and demeaning future.

An in-depth study of the EOBI reveals earth-shattering insights into our collective callousness. We are guilty of mandating the task of managing the pensions of 75m precious workers to a legally, functionally and professionally inadequate organisation. The EOBI department could not even produce a notification of its existential task, ie, the value of the 6pc amount that must be deposited by the employers. The EOBI website still refers to a 10-year-old monthly contribution of Rs780, while the verbal response by the EOBI management suggested a contribution of Rs2,220. Fifty random samples of 'proclaimed' EOBI registered workers were chosen to verify the true status of payments made by their employers. There was not a single employee whose payments were completely or correctly reflected on the EOBI website. The department had no answer to explain how it will ever know the amount deposited against a specific employee. A study based on several retired workers revealed that it took many months, reams of photocopies, endless runaround and numerous three-way disputes to determine the true amount contributed against any employee.

Pakistan could learn from a developing country like Uzbekistan whose entire workforce of 19.76m workers is registered in the national pension scheme. There are no inspectors or institutions for collecting pension contributions. All employers electronically contribute 12pc of the employees' gross salary bill, as 'social tax' along with other taxes, directly to the tax department. The distribution of pensions is subsequently implemented by the finance ministry.

Why has Pakistan allowed a known dysfunctional system to deprive 96pc of its workers of their legal right to pension? We have made a titanic blunder, and we must be willing to make amends by undertaking immediate, radical and forward-looking pension reforms. Start by completely shutting down the existing EOBI and repealing the Employees' Old-Age Benefits Act, 1976. This would immediately save about Rs2.7 billion of management expenses, recover 96 government vehicles, get back billions invested in buildings and plazas and relieve 657 employees currently engaged in further organisational decay. Declare that the state shall honour and provide for universal pension and social security for all citizens including unorganised workers and self-employed individuals.

De-link the existing 'impossible-to-manage' process of employers making payments against a small number (usually 10pc) of their workforce. Introduce mandatory 6pc social tax on the gross salary bill of every em--p-loyer — industrial, commercial or agricultural. Also introduce 1pc social tax on the taxable in--come of every tax-paying individual. The social tax for organisations as well as individuals should be collected by FBR as an element of the routine yearly income tax. Using CNIC, pensions could be linked to Nadra records and managed on similar lines as BISP for distribution to all workers of Pakistan. Also, pension is a form of income and like most other countries (including India), must be declared as 'taxable income' for those receiving a pension of more than Rs50,000 per month.

If a judge of the high court can be entitled to a pension that is 70pc of his last salary, why can the workers' pension not be pegged to 70pc of the latest notified minimum wage? Inability or inefficiency in collecting 6pc social tax from each employer ought to be the responsibility of the state for which workers cannot be penalised. Pakistan can become a reformed model state by simple acts of providing minimum legal wage and a decent pension to every citizen. Is that asking for too much?

Climate resilience facility

BY ALI TAUQEER SHEIKH

Pakistan's engagement with the IMF enco-m--passes two complementary facilities. The Exte-n--ded Fund Facility provides support for macroeconomic stabilisation, while the Resilience and Sus--tainability Facility (RSF) targets climate ad--aptation and mitigation for resilience building.

For the IMF, resilience is the capacity of countries to withstand, adapt to and recover from external shocks that threaten macroeconomic and financial stability. Within the RSF framework, this concept emphasises structural reforms that reduce vulnerability to climate-related shocks while enabling sustainable economic growth. How effectively can the RSF address our climate vulnerabilities and adaptation needs?

The RSF's following five reform areas define its approach: 1) climate-integrated public investment management to restructure project selection to prioritise climate-sensitive infrastructure development through enhanced screening and budget integration mechanisms; 2) water system resilience and disaster response coordination, to focus on irrigation modernisation and disaster preparedness through digital systems and financing frameworks; 3) climate information architecture and financial risk management to establish banking sector climate risk integration and corporate disclosure requirements; 4) transport decarbonisation and green mobility to implement carbon pricing and EV promotion schemes; 5) energy sector alignment with climate commitments to restructure subsidy systems and mandate efficiency standards for consumer appliances.

These reform areas encompass 13 specific measures expected to mainstream climate considerations across government planning and investment processes. While the RSF framework establishes important institutional foundations, there are several critical gaps.

Integrating local governance: The RSF's federal-centric approach does not adequately engage local government roles mandated by the 18th Amendment. Climate resilience depends on local institutional capacity for early warning systems, emergency response coordination, and locally led adaptation measures. However, the current framework lacks strengthening mechanisms for municipal-level implementation of LG institutions. For instance, the RSF has created provincial irrigation tariff mechanisms and digital collection systems. But it does not address municipal water management, drainage systems, or flood management that directly affect community resilience. It assumes provincial-level reforms will automatically translate into local level improvements, without creating institutional linkages that connect policy to implementation.

This gap is an opportunity for enhancement. Provincial set-ups could use RSF-supported imp-rovements to strengthen local climate capacity by enhancing LG Acts that clearly define climate duties for district and municipal authorities. Sub-provincial resource allocation mechanisms could create climate-weighted fiscal transfer systems that encourage LG climate investments while co--ordinating with provincial and federal priorities.

Urban development gaps: The RSF framework does not explicitly recognise urban planning, land-use regulation, or pollution control that have critical importance for climate resilience. Pakistan's cities are vulnerable to air pollution, plastic waste, inadequate drainage, heat-island effects, etc, yet none of the 13 reform measures directly target these challenges.

Without effective urban planning and zoning laws, cities experience haphazard expansion, inefficient land use, and inadequate infrastructure provision, leading to increased exposure to environmental hazards and higher disaster recovery costs, creating broader economic instability.

As already seen, the absence of green infrastructure and pollution controls leads to environmental degradation, poor air quality and increased disaster vulnerability, raising healthcare costs. The RSF's infrastructure screening requirements may indirectly influence urban development patterns but lack explicit frameworks for climate-sensitive urban planning. This represents a missed opportunity to leverage the facility's institutional reforms and support provincial development of model legislation for climate-sensitive urban planning.

Differential vulnerability considerations: The framework lacks requirements for gender-disaggregated data collection, gender-sensitive impact assessment, or inclusive participation mechanisms despite climate impacts disproportionately affecting women, children, the elderly and marginalised. The lack of gender-segregated data results in policies that overlook differentiated impacts on marginalised groups. The exclusion undermines resilience-building effectiveness by assuming uniform impact distribution rather than addressing differential vulnerabilities that determine actual community resilience capacity. Not invoking the IMF's Strategy Towards Main-stre-aming Gender inadvertently reinforces existing inequalities while failing to harness the full poten--tial of inclusive resilience strengthening approaches. Cross-sectoral integration: The RSF's sectoral approach reinforces institutional silos rather than promoting integrated strategies. The five reform areas operate through different agencies with separate timelines, lacking clear cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms. Climate resilience requires integrated approaches that address interconnections between water management, energy systems, transport infrastructure and urban planning. Yet, the RSF's monitoring mechanisms rely primarily on federal-level performance indicators that may not capture local-level implementation effectiveness. This creates accountability gaps where reform implementation may achieve procedural compliance without building substantive resilience capacity. Strategic opportunities: Effective climate resilience requires addressing these gaps through enhanced integration of local governance, urban planning and social inclusion within the RSF framework. Rather than fundamental restructuring, these enhancements could build upon the facility's strong institutional foundation to create more comprehensive approaches to climate adaptation. The framework could include LG capacity-building mechanisms and community-level resilience indicators, aligning international support with constitutional requirements. This would strengthen institutions most critical for augmenting subnational resilience.

The RSF's emphasis on coordination mechanisms could be expanded to include enhanced integration with existing sectoral policy frameworks.

War, Iran's denuclearisation and the region

INAM UL HAQUE

The war in the Middle East is in its 7th day. Essential aspects were covered in my article titled, "Rising Lion, True Promise: the Israel-Iran shadow war goes hot" on 15 June. As discerned, from eliminating Iran's ability to acquire nuclear weapons; and to 'facilitate' regime change in Tehran, the US-Israel nexus now demands unconditional surrender of the Islamic Republic. Israel reckons nuclear weapons in the hand of clerics would continue to pose it an 'existential threat', therefore removal of both is an imperative. IDF's current targeting strategy of killing almost the entire Irani military, leadership and important political, religious leaders and scientists; its wide-ranging attacks on infrastructure; its operations against Irani military facilities, in addition to nuclear installations at Natanz, Fordow, Bushehr, IR-40 (Arak) and elsewhere are aimed at achieving these dual objectives. Tel Aviv reckons Irani regime stands on shaky grounds due to prolonged sanctions, poor economic performance, political unrest and degradation of its regional clout and proxy potential. Hence persistent operations 'would' lead to the regime change but before that nuclear potential has to be taken out. For this, Israel had been 'shaping the environment' for years through military and diplomatic coercion, assassinations, cyber-attacks and degradation of Iran's 3H (Hamas, Hezbollah and Houthi) proxies through relentless overt and covert military, cyber and sabotage operations. Mossad has deep ingress at sensitive levels of the Irani state and society as substantiated by the recent assassinations of Irani scientists and military, religo-political leaders, not deemed possible without 'Humint' or human intelligence. However, Israel cannot go it along without substantial support from its key allies, the US, UK and France. Militarily, to take on the deeply burrowed Fordow fuel enrichment plant for example, IDF lacks bunker-busting munitions like the GBU-43/B, GBU-57 and the transporting bombers. It is also dependent upon its limited number of KC-707 air-to-air refuelers, to enable IAF's F-15L, F-16 and F-35 fighter jets to target Iran, during some 3,000 km of roundtrip. The US may join the war to compensate for Israeli shortfalls and has been repositioning its military, air as well as naval assets in the theatre. From messaging to posturing to shooting war, parties have room for diplomacy under coercion. Netanyahu from Day One was desperate to suck the US into this war. That outcome might leave Iran badly bruised but determined and hostile; Tehran's nuclear programme retarded, not eliminated but capped; and power within Iran re-arranged. The US is letting Israel weaken Iran sufficiently so that it is ready to sign a nuclear deal on unfavorable terms, which could be capping and rolling back the nuclear programme, short of an attack by the US forces. Such a deal might irreparably weaken the clerics, laying grounds for a regime change. Israel's deal, imposed on Hezbollah after recent military degradation, forcing Hezbollah to stay neutral in this war, can be a US-Israeli blueprint. However, the US participation in a shooting war has implications. First, declaration of war by any US president without consulting the Congress is unconstitutional, but US presidents have been doing so after World War II. So, domestic legal challenges can be circumvented. Second, any further degradation of nuclear facilities after the US involvement may cause dangerous radiation leaks and set wrong precedence; as the US, a responsible power would be attacking nuclear installations, legally forbidden even in war. Third, the US involvement may expose around 50,000 US troops on 19 bases in the Middle East to Irani and proxy retaliatory attacks. Although Tehran has been careful in its targeting strategy so far, desperation leads to errors and blunders. Fourth, conflagration would upend regional stability as Iran borders some six countries including Pakistan and Iraq, and has some 14 maritime neighbours. Regime change, domestic instability would have religious and sectarian repercussions especially in Iraq, that still bases US troops on sprawling Victory (Al Asad), Habbaniyah and Marez camps, etc. Iraq is Iran's known ally. Although the Jewish influence on the American policy is no hidden secret, and although Netanyahu sees everything through a dangerous and hate-filled binary, the world Jewry should be more careful in reigning Netanyahu, rather than allowing the US to get involved in a deeply unpopular war. World Jewry needs to be sensitive to the damage Netanyahu has already caused to their cause, and sense the international rage directed at Zionism and Jews for their genocidal war under America's criminal complicity in Gaza. So, by rational standards, the US should, instead of getting involved, push seriously to halt hostilities and work for a deal. However, as Netanyahu is apparently under nobody's control; Trump is unpredictably mercurial; ceasefire is making no apparent headway; and Israel is sustaining damage, however limited, so the conflict might escalate in the short term with or without the direct US involvement. The recent US pronouncements of Iran's unconditional surrender and killing Khamenei etc are part of posturing strategy aimed at bringing Iran to the negotiating table without getting involved in a shooting war. Iran is likely to fight back using its missile arsenal, the largest in the region. Continued military degradation would, however, reduce its lethality and effectiveness. With the present rate of around 11% missiles, especially in the Hypersonic category (Khyber Shikan for example) getting through the four-tiered Israeli AD system, the much smaller Israeli population would be subjected to fear, psychological trauma, shelter psychosis and insecurity. Iran may also usher in crisis in the oil markets by shutting down the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway allowing 20% of global oil flows.

Trump announces agreement on disarmament of Hamas, Israeli withdrawal from Gaza

WASHINGTON, (Monitoring Desk): US President Donald Trump said that the Board of Peace reached an agreement for the "complete disarmament" of Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza, with Israeli forces set to withdraw as the process moves forward.

Trump said the deal, which he described as a "historic" step toward peace and security, would be carried out in phases.

"The agreement will be carried out in carefully structured phases. As disarmament is completed, Israeli forces will withdraw, and the International Stabilization Force will work with a new Palestinian police force to take responsibility for Gaza being safe for its residents and its neighbors," he wrote in a post on his social media platform Truth Social. He said the agreement represents a "major milestone" in implementing his 20-point plan for Gaza, adding the territory would eventually be governed by a "new Palestinian government that will work closely with the Board of Peace to help the Palestinian people."

Trump also thanked Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye for their mediation efforts, saying their work, along with his administration's team, helped make the "historic breakthrough" possible.

"One year ago there was a violent raging war, humanitarian crisis and hostages kept in brutal captivity. We have made historic progress and there is still much work to do," he said. Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, which started following an Oct. 7, 2023 cross-border attack by the Palestinian group Hamas, killed more than 73,000 Palestinians and injured over 174,000 others, most of them women and children, while destroying about 90% of the enclave's infrastructure.

The ceasefire was brokered under Trump's 20-point plan for Gaza that is being overseen by the Board of Peace, which is chaired by Trump. Despite the ceasefire, which took effect on Oct. 10, 2025, Israel has continued daily attacks across Gaza, killing 1,214 Palestinians and injuring 3,977 others, most of them women and children, while causing widespread destruction. In a post on the US social media platform X, the Board of Peace said Hamas has agreed to a "detailed Roadmap for implementing the next phases of the Gaza ceasefire." "Our focus now turns to implementation. The Board of Peace has worked closely with the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG)," it said.



In Bogor, West Java province, Indonesia, the bed of the Ciliwung River has been revealed due to the drop in water levels.



Volunteers spray water on visitors to help them cool down as temperatures exceed 47 degrees Celsius in Najaf, Iraq

Putin under pressure as Ukraine war finally comes to Moscow and St Petersburg

Monitoring Desk

MOSCOW: The war in Ukraine may have slipped down the news agenda in recent months, but recent large-scale attacks deep inside Russia – including around St Petersburg – are a reminder that the conflict is entering a new and potentially decisive phase. Ukraine is demonstrating an increasing ability to strike targets once considered beyond its reach, suggesting that the initiative is shifting.

At the same time, Russia continues its campaign of missile strikes against Ukrainian cities and civilian infrastructure. Much has been made of Moscow's hypersonic missile capability, yet many of these weapons have proved far less decisive than advertised.

Modern Western air defence systems such as the US Patriot have shown a remarkable ability to counter threats billed as unstoppable, like the vaunted Russian Kinzhal and Zircon hypersonics. As with much of Russia's military capability, the reality on the battlefield has often failed to match the rhetoric emerging from the Kremlin. Ukrainian drone and missile technology is now bringing Moscow and St Petersburg within striking distance. For many wealthy Russians living in these cities, the war is no longer a distant conflict fought on the steppes of eastern Ukraine. It is beginning to touch their daily lives.

It may also now be touching their sons of military age. Until now, the burden of the war has fallen disproportionately on poorer regions, ethnic minorities and those recruited from prisons. However, after enormous losses over more than four years of conflict, concerns are growing among families in Russia's major cities that their young men may be rounded up and sent to the meat grinder too.

No disarmament before Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, says Hamas

DOHA, (Monitoring Desk): A senior Hamas official said that the Palestinian group will not take any steps toward disarmament before Israeli forces withdraw from the Gaza Strip. Ghazi Hamad, a member of Hamas' negotiating delegation, said the issue of disarmament is linked to Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and the territory's reconstruction.

In remarks to the Qatar-based media, Hamad said Israel would have no role in the disarmament process, which would instead be carried out by a Palestinian national committee. He stressed that Hamas would not implement any disarmament measures unless Israel first fulfills its obligations under the agreement. Hamad described the negotiations as "difficult and tough," saying Hamas sought to secure the best possible outcome while remaining committed to safeguarding the rights of the Palestinian people. He also thanked Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye for their mediation efforts in helping reach the agreement. Hamad's remarks came after US President Donald Trump announced that an agreement had been reached for the complete disarmament of Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza, with Israeli forces set to withdraw in phases as the process moves forward.

Trump also credited Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye for helping broker what he described as a "historic breakthrough," saying the agreement would be implemented gradually, with an International Stabilization Force working alongside a new Palestinian police force to assume responsibility for security in Gaza.

Israel's genocidal war on Gaza has killed more than 73,000 Palestinians and injured over 174,000 others, most of them women and children, while destroying about 90% of the enclave's infrastructure. The ceasefire was brokered under Trump's 20-point plan for Gaza, which is being overseen by the Board of Peace, which he chairs. Despite the ceasefire which took effect on Oct. 10, 2025, Israel has continued daily attacks across Gaza.



A woman uses her hands to have a drink of water as people queue to fill up their containers from a cistern at the Maghazi camp for Palestinian refugees in the central Gaza Strip.

N. Korea announces opening of new nuclear facility

Monitoring Desk

NORTH KOREA: North Korea on Thursday unveiled a new facility to produce nuclear bomb fuels, with leader Kim Jong Un announcing plans to bolster the country's nuclear forces "at an exponential rate."

The official Korean Central News Agency said the facility used "more sophisticated technology" but didn't provide further details, such as where it is located and when it began its operation. State media photos showed what appeared to be a large centrifuge hall, indicating the plant is likely used to enrich weapons-grade uranium.

The disclosure of the new factory is in line with Kim's repeated vows to expand its nuclear weapons program to cope with what he called escalating U.S.-led military threats.

KCNA said Kim visited the nuclear facility on Wednesday to learn about its operation indices and its long-term production plan.

KCNA quoted Kim as saying the urgency for bolstering up the country's nuclear war deterrent, both in quality and quantity, has grown because of confrontations with "the most ferocious enemies," an apparent reference to the United States and South Korea. Kim cited other unspecified threats and crises as a need to boost North Korea's nuclear capability, it said.

Kim claimed that North Korea's weapons-grade nuclear materials production capacity has more than doubled compared with five years ago, according to KCNA. There are virtually no ways to independently verify his claim.

IIT graduate Mishra posed as 'Sadhu' to exploit, blackmail women in UP

MATHURA (INP): Police have arrested Abhishek Mishra, an IIT Roorkee mechanical engineering graduate who posed as sadhu 'Adhikarta Narayan Das', for alleged sexual exploitation and blackmail of women in Govardhan area.

The case came to light after a B.Sc Nursing student's family complained that Mishra allegedly drugged the woman with "prasad" on May 15, sexually assaulted her while unconscious, then threatened to leak her photos and demanded Rs 5 lakh via video call.

The family filed the case on May 25 due to fear of social stigma. During the probe, police said Mishra lured educated women and students through online discourses and kirtans, secretly recorded objectionable videos, and used them to extort money.

Iran targets US vessel carrying a command center in Gulf waters

TEHRAN (INP): Iran has claimed that its naval forces targeted an American military vessel in the Sea of Oman, while the United States has strongly denied the allegation.

In a statement, the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy said it had targeted a US military ship carrying a command-and-control centre.

Iranian officials alleged that the vessel was moving towards Iranian territorial waters and had violated regulations governing navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

According to the Iranian Navy statement, Iranian naval forces took action after identifying what they described as a breach of maritime rules by the American vessel.

However, the Iranian claim was swiftly rejected by United States Central Command, which described the Iranian account as false. In a statement posted on X, Centcom said Iran's allegations were untrue and insisted that US military aircraft and naval vessels were continuing their operations without interference.

The US military command maintained that its forces remained fully operational and dismissed Tehran's assertions regarding the reported incident. The conflicting claims could not be independently verified, and neither side provided immediate evidence to support its version of events.

Brazil may purchase 20 more fighter jets from Sweden

Monitoring Desk

SWEDEN: Brazil wants to acquire 20 additional Gripen fighter jets, made by Swedish defence company Saab, on top of the 36 it already has, Sweden's defence minister said Thursday.

Defence Minister Pal Jonson said that the countries had signed a declaration of intent.

"In the statement of intent, there is an interest also on the Brazilian side to go beyond the 36 that's been delivered and possibly also procuring another 20 Gripen," Jonson told a Stockholm press conference alongside his Brazilian counterpart Jose Mucio.Jonson added that the additional planes would be manufactured in Brazil.

Lebanon's PM stands by Israel talks despite Hezbollah rejection

Monitoring Desk

LEBANON: Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam on Thursday defended his government's negotiations with Israel as the "fastest and least costly path" for Lebanon, after the talks produced a new ceasefire initiative that was swiftly rejected by Hezbollah.

The Lebanese-Israeli negotiations led overnight to a US-backed agreement aimed at ending hostilities between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group and paving the way for Hezbollah's disarmament.

In a statement released by his office, Salam said the negotiations represented the best option available for the people of Lebanon.

"We could have stood by in the face of a reality and a war that we did not choose, but that was never an option for a single moment," he said, describing the talks as difficult and the Israeli position as "tough."

Under the agreement announced in Washington on Wednesday, Hezbollah militants would be disarmed.

Salam said the principle of a state monopoly on arms had already been established after the country's civil war ended in the early 1990s and that Lebanon should not miss another opportunity to enforce it.

As a next step, he announced the gradual deployment of the Lebanese Army in southern Lebanon, warning that any delay would come at the expense of the region and its residents.

However, Hezbollah rejected the agreement.

Secretary General Naim Qassem described the direct negotiations as a "farce" and a "humiliation." He said the group would not accept any arrangement centred on its disarmament.

Hezbollah insists that any agreement must focus on a comprehensive ceasefire and a full Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory.



More than 800 irregular migrants, who set off from the shores of Castillejos town in Morocco, swam to Ceuta, a Spanish territory in North Africa.

Hungary drops charges against organisers of banned Pride marches

Monitoring Desk

BUDAPEST: Hungarian prosecutors said Thursday they had dropped charges against organisers of last year's Pride marches, citing a landmark ruling from the EU's top court.

Budapest's progressive mayor, Gergely Karacsony, was charged in January for organising the city's 30th Pride parade despite an official ban ordered under the former prime minister, nationalist Viktor Orban.

But in April, the European Court of Justice found that Hungary's 2021 anti-LGBTQ legislation—which served as the basis for the ban—was in breach of EU rules.

Since the ban was based on "a provision that was later found to violate EU law, the facts described in the prosecutor's indictment no longer constitute a criminal offence," prosecutors said in a statement.

Mexican authorities arrest suspected gang leader accused of ordering mayor's assassination

MEXICO CITY, (Agencies): Mexico's Security Minister Omar Garcia announced that the alleged leader of a criminal cell linked to the country's powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) has been arrested for ordering the assassination of a mayor in Michoacan state.

Garcia said in a post on the US social media platform X that a joint operation between police, special forces and the military resulted in the apprehension of Ramon Angel, also known as "El R1." "Ramon Angel, alias 'El R1,' identified as the mastermind behind the cowardly murder of Uruapan Mayor Carlos Manzo, was arrested after months of intelligence and investigative work," Garcia said on social media. The killing of Manzo on Nov. 1, 2025 during Day of the Dead festivities outraged the entire country and an investigation was launched that resulted in 31 arrests, including of cartel members and the late mayor's own security detail. Angel is considered a high-ranking enforcer within the CJNG's criminal structure and the leader of a specialized armed cell. "'El R1' is identified as the main leader of 'Los Rs,' one of the most violent criminal cells linked to the CJNG, operating in Apatzingan, Uruapan and Morelia, Michoacan, as well as in Jalisco," said Garcia.

FBI warns of cyberattacks targeting US water systems after incidents in Minnesota

WASHINGTON DC, (Agencies): The FBI and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) warned that "malicious cyber actors" are targeting internet-facing operational technology used by US water and wastewater utilities after a series of cyberattacks disrupted facilities in at least seven states.

In a joint public service announcement, the agencies said attackers have targeted Rockwell Automation/Allen-Bradley programmable logic controllers (PLCs), remotely changing IP addresses and passwords, resulting in the loss of monitoring and control functions.

The reported operational effects include pressure loss and flooding, according to the statement.

The FBI and EPA urged operators to disconnect PLCs from direct internet exposure, strengthen authentication measures, "strictly control" network access and maintain the ability to operate systems manually in the event of cyber incidents.

The warning follows a coordinated cyberattack earlier this week that affected more than 30 community water systems in the midwestern US state of Minnesota.

According to media reports, US officials believe the campaign was likely carried out by Iranian hackers, though investigators have not reached a definitive conclusion and are also examining whether the attackers could have sought to disguise their identity.

Ex-national security adviser John Bolton will plead guilty in classified information case

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: Former Trump administration national security adviser John Bolton has agreed to plead guilty to a single count of retaining classified information under a deal with the Justice Department that could allow him to avoid prison time, a person familiar with the matter said Thursday.

The deal would resolve a criminal case filed in October that charged Bolton with 18 counts of either retaining or disseminating classified information, including diary-like notes from his time in government that officials say he shared with his family members as he was preparing a memoir about his time in office.

Under the agreement, Bolton would also face a $2.25 million fine, said the person, who insisted on anonymity to discuss a deal that had not been made public. Any prison sentence would be capped at five years, but the agreement allows for him to avoid time behind bars, though the punishment will ultimately be up to a judge.

Bolton is one of multiple adversaries of President Donald Trump who have been prosecuted over the past year by the Republican administration. An FBI investigation into Bolton burst into public view int August when FBI agents served warrants at his Maryland home and office.

He is a a longtime fixture in Republican foreign policy circles who became known for his hawkish views on American power. Bolton served for more than a year in Trump's first administration before being fired in 2019 and publishing a critical book about the president.

The administration fought unsuccessfully to block the publication of "The Room Where it Happened" on the grounds that the book risked disclosing classified information.

Heavy gunfire in Somali capital as row over election delay escalates

Monitoring Desk

MOGADISHU: Government forces and opposition fighters have exchanged heavy gunfire in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, as a row over delays to elections has escalated. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's term in office ended on 15 May but was extended by a year. The opposition said this was unconstitutional and called for protests on Thursday. Gunfire was reported in several neighbourhoods of the capital and persisted throughout the night, according to accounts by residents. Police said they were conducting a "large-scale security operation" against "heavily armed militias who launched mortar attacks" in some areas. Somalia last held a one-person, one-vote election in 1969 and has been ravaged by civil war for more than 30 years. Former Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire said he had been attacked by government forces.

British media highlights growing curbs on women and girls in Taliban's Afghanistan

LONDON (INP): A report published by the British newspaper The Guardian has renewed international attention on the situation facing women and girls in Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban.

According to the report, girls in Afghanistan have remained largely excluded from education beyond the sixth grade, with restrictions on secondary schooling continuing several years after the Taliban returned to power.

The newspaper noted that access to education for adolescent girls remains one of the most significant human rights concerns in the country.

The report also highlighted concerns about legal changes affecting marriage laws, stating that critics believe the measures could increase the risk of child marriage and further restrict the rights of young women. The Guardian wrote that despite international conventions and widespread global criticism regarding the treatment of women, the Taliban authorities have continued to enforce policies that rights groups say limit women's freedoms and participation in public life.

Attention was also drawn to Afghanistan's judicial system, with analysts arguing that recent legal and institutional changes have further reduced protections and opportunities for women. The report referred to remarks made by Afghanistan's education minister in 2024, who reportedly told journalists that the reopening of schools for older girls was not currently possible and that discussion of the issue remained restricted.

International experts cited in the report said Afghanistan has become increasingly challenging for women and girls, particularly because of limitations on education, employment opportunities, and public participation.

Rights advocates continue to argue that meaningful progress on women's rights will remain a key factor in determining the international community's engagement with and recognition of the Taliban administration.

Society needs to treat trafficking victims with compassion rather than stigma: President

Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to combat human trafficking

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President, Asif Ali Zardari has called for a united, relentless and global response to human trafficking, describing it as one of the gravest violations of human rights in the modern era, in a message issued on the occasion of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, observed annually on July 30.

In his message on the occasion, the president said human trafficking is not merely a statutory offence but a transnational crime that respects no borders, nationalities or socio-economic status. He noted that criminal syndicates ruthlessly target people desperate for a better future, whether they are seeking economic opportunities or fleeing conflict, often resulting in the loss of precious lives, particularly during unauthorised sea travel.

The president identified poverty, local and regional conflicts, lack of economic opportunities, inadequate education and limited awareness of immigration processes as the root causes fuelling trafficking networks. He stressed that these underlying factors must be understood and addressed if the challenge is to be tackled effectively.

Highlighting the growing threat of cybercrime gangs using online scams to lure young people, the president called for a multi-layered strategy combining law enforcement action, digital literacy and alternative economic opportunities, alongside an extensive public awareness campaign targeted particularly at vulnerable and poverty-stricken communities. President Zardari said Pakistan has fundamentally reshaped its strategy by strengthening collaboration between local law enforcement agencies and international partners to ensure there are no safe havens for traffickers, whether within or outside the country's borders. He credited the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) with standing at the front line of this fight, noting its deep commitment to combating the menace on multiple fronts.

According to the president, the country has significantly enhanced its intelligence capabilities, shifting from reactive policing to a proactive approach. He said intensified efforts to dismantle trafficking networks have led to the arrest of major operatives and the rescue of vulnerable victims, while border controls and immigration processes are being tightened to detect fraudulent documents and suspicious travel patterns before victims can be moved out of the country.

The president urged every citizen to act as "the eyes and ears of our nation."



Voters exercising their right of casting vote at a polling station during Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Refugee Seats elections



QUETTA: Folk artist Gul Mir Jamali called on Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

PM vows to completely uproot terrorism from country

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the terrorist attack carried out by Fitna al-Khawarij terrorists on a police check post in Hangu district.

The prime minister expressed deep sorrow over the martyrdom of nine police personnel, including Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Diyar Khan, in the attack.

He prayed for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs in Jannah and extended his heartfelt condolences to their bereaved families, praying that they be granted courage to bear the loss with patience.

The prime minister also prayed for the early recovery of those injured in the attack.

He commended the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police for their swift response, which resulted in the killing of 15 Fitna al-Khawarij terrorists.

"The police have always served as the frontline force in the fight against terrorism," the prime minister said.

Gilani highlights Pakistan's growing research, innovation ecosystem

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chairman of the Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Thursday said Pakistan is keen to expand cooperation with South Korea in biotechnology, artificial intelligence (AI), healthcare, pharmaceuticals, advanced manufacturing and information technology.

He expressed these views during a meeting with a high-level South Korean delegation led by KOA-Bio Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Cho, accompanied by representatives of KOA Corporation, Scale Sniper and other leading South Korean companies.

Gilani said Pakistan highly values its longstanding friendship with South Korea and highlighted the country's growing research and innovation ecosystem.

He invited South Korean companies to explore joint ventures, technology transfer, research partnerships, medical device manufacturing and AI-powered healthcare solutions in Pakistan.

He also highlighted the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in attracting strategic investment through its single-window mechanism.

The Senate chairman said stronger parliamentary engagement, along with closer collaboration between academia, researchers and the private sector, would further strengthen bilateral ties.

The South Korean delegation thanked Gilani for the warm welcome, appreciated Pakistan's investment potential and scientific capabilities, and expressed interest in expanding cooperation in biotechnology, healthcare innovation, artificial intelligence and research.

National unity, collective action essential to secure Pakistan's future: Naqvi

Interior Minister says Pakistan's longstanding governance challenges could not be resolved without structural reforms, administrative decentralization and cooperation among all political stakeholders

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Interior Minister, Mohsin Naqvi called for sweeping institutional reforms and greater political consensus, urging Pakistan's business community to move beyond financing election campaigns and play a leading role in shaping the country's governance and economic future. Addressing the Pakistan Economic Summit in the federal capital, the interior minister said Pakistan's longstanding governance challenges could not be resolved without structural reforms, administrative decentralization and cooperation among all political stakeholders.

Reflecting on discussions held during various sessions of the summit, Naqvi said representatives from across the country had highlighted similar concerns about governance, public service delivery and economic development. While acknowledging Pakistan's growing international standing and economic opportunities, he maintained that recurring governance failures had prevented the country from fully realizing its potential. The minister said Pakistan's governance framework had reached a point where fundamental reforms had become unavoidable. Stressing that he remained a strong supporter of democracy, he argued that democracy must function through an efficient and responsive administrative structure rather than an outdated system that no longer met the needs of citizens. Temporary measures, he said, would continue to amount to little more than "firefighting" unless the country's institutional foundations were strengthened.

Naqvi urged political parties, the business community and civil society to work together to establish additional administrative units or provinces so that justice, government services and decision-making could be brought closer to the people. He said citizens should not have to travel for hours to access courts or other essential public services, adding that effective local governance was critical for sustainable economic growth.

Highlighting the role of entrepreneurs, the minister said business leaders possessed the management skills needed to solve complex national challenges and should actively participate in the political process rather than limiting their involvement to funding election campaigns. He argued that meaningful reforms would only become possible when the business community collectively demanded institutional change.

Focusing on Pakistan's youth, Naqvi said young people were seeking merit-based employment, equal opportunities and transparent governance rather than temporary financial assistance. He warned that ignoring the aspirations of the younger generation could create serious social pressures.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives addresses the launching ceremony of the Monthly Development Report (MDU).



SANGHAR: PPP's MNA Shazia Marri condoles with family of slain Bahirav Kohli at Daulatabad

National Workshop Balochistan delegation visits NSTP at NUST

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) hosted a delegation from the National Workshop Balochistan (NWB) at the National Science and Technology Park (NSTP) here to showcase Pakistan's rapidly growing innovation and entrepreneurship landscape.

The delegation comprised a diverse group of media professionals, social media activists, youth representatives, students, and faculty members primarily from Balochistan and other provinces across the country.

During the visit, Director NSTP Mr. Amer Sheikh briefed the delegates on the pivotal role NUST and NSTP play in fostering research, technological innovation, and industry collaboration.

He highlighted how the NSTP functions as a premier hub where academia, industry, government, and entrepreneurs work together to transform creative concepts into market-ready solutions that drive national socio-economic development.

The delegates toured several high-growth tech enterprises based at NSTP.

Unnecessary adjournments, dilatory tactics must be discouraged to preserve public confidence in justice system: SC

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Supreme Court has held that a party guilty of unnecessary delay, negligence and abuse of the judicial process is not entitled to equitable relief, observing that the law of limitation is not a mere technicality but a substantive legal framework designed to ensure timely and final resolution of disputes.

A three-member bench comprising Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali issued the unanimous judgment, authored by Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan, dismissing Civil Appeal No. 2555 of 2016 while upholding the concurrent judgments of the Lahore High Court and the subordinate courts.

The court held that the appellants had failed to file their appeal within the prescribed limitation period and were unable to provide any satisfactory explanation for the delay. It observed that an applicant seeking condonation of delay must furnish a reasonable, convincing and bona fide explanation for each day of delay; otherwise, the court cannot interfere with rights that have accrued upon the expiry of the statutory limitation period. The judgment noted that the record showed the appellants had been granted several opportunities but failed to pursue the case diligently and, through their own negligence, lost the opportunity to seek legal redress.

Pakistan setting regional benchmark for gender-responsive AI governance: Shaza

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT), together with UN Women Pakistan and with support from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), have launched the UN Women Gender-Responsive AI School Pakistan, marking a major step towards advancing inclusive, ethical, and gender-responsive artificial intelligence (AI) in Pakistan. Gender-Responsive AI School aimed to strengthen national capacity by equipping policymakers, government institutions, parliamentarians, the United Nations system, academia, civil society, the private sector, and community leaders with the knowledge and practical skills to harness AI responsibly and ensure women and girls are equal participants in Pakistan's digital transformation.

Welcoming participants, Jamshed M. Kazi, Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan, said, " Pakistan is setting a new benchmark for the Asia-Pacific region through the UN Women Gender-Responsive AI School; the first initiative in the region to deliver a national Training of Trainers programme with tailored learning pathways for the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, as well as civil society and the private sector. What begins here today is not following a precedent; it is setting one. Together with the Government of Pakistan, the Ministry of IT & Telecom and KOICA, we are investing in the leadership, institutions, and skills needed to build an inclusive, ethical, and gender-responsive AI future. The curriculum combines conceptual learning with practical application through tailored learning pathways covering AI foundations, gender-responsive and ethical AI, AI governance, prompt engineering, AI agents, and AI applications for public administration and inclusive development. Ahead of its launch, the initiative delivered specialized training programmes for parliamentarians, government officials, UN personnel, academia, and civil society, creating a growing national network of AI champions.

Targeting BISP through false allegations or political motives unacceptable

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) strongly condemned attempts by certain elements to undermine its reputation for narrow personal or political interests, warning that legal action under the (PECA) could be initiated against those making baseless allegations or using the programme for political point scoring. A BISP spokesperson said the programme is Pakistan's largest national social protection initiative and is widely recognised at both national and international levels as a successful model of transparency, efficient service delivery and timely financial assistance to deserving households. The spokesperson said delegations and development partners from around the world regularly visit Pakistan to study BISP's operational model. Expressing concern over recent attempts to damage the institution's reputation, the spokesperson said millions of deserving women and families benefit from BISP and that targeting the programme through false allegations or political motives is unacceptable.



RAWALPINDI: Police arresting the protesters at Murree road.



HYDERABAD: A young man carries an elderly woman on his back as he crosses a waterlogged street after heavy rainfall.

Aleem Khan orders zero-tolerance policy against overloaded vehicles

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan directed authorities to adopt a zero-tolerance policy against vehicle overloading, ordering strict enforcement of axle load regulations across the country to protect road infrastructure and improve highway safety.

Chairing a high-level meeting here at the Ministry of Communications, the minister reviewed progress on the implementation of axle load management and received a detailed briefing on enforcement measures, said a press release.

Inspector General National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP), Sultan Ahmad Chaudhry briefed the minister that axle load management on motorways was comparatively satisfactory but required further reinforcement across national highways.

Ahsan Iqbal directs to accelerate relief, rehabilitation work in flood affected areas

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Emergency Response Committee (ERC) held its seventh session at the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) headquarters to review the flood situation, rescue operations, relief efforts and preparedness measures across Pakistan, with federal and provincial authorities pledging stronger coordination to deal with emerging challenges. The meeting, held on the directions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, was chaired via video link by Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof Ahsan Iqbal. Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari attended the session at the National Emergencies Operations Centre (NEOC), while Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for Water Resources Mian Muhammad Mueen Wattoo, Punjab Health and Emergency Services Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique, chief secretaries of provinces and regions, Chairman NDMA and senior officials joined physically and virtually.

According to officials, the committee reviewed the overall monsoon situation, including recent incidents.

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