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Field Marshal Asim Munir meets Iran's Interior Minister as peace efforts continue

CDF arrives in Iran as Pakistan intensifies diplomatic efforts to promote regional peace, stability and a peaceful conflict resolution

TEHRAN, (Monitoring Desk): Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir has arrived in Tehran on an official visit to Iran, accompanied by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. According to Iranian media, Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni received Field Marshal Munir and Naqvi upon their arrival in the Iranian capital.

CDF Munir and Naqvi met Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni upon their arrival in the Iranian capital.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) had earlier confirmed that the two officials departed for Iran as part of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to promote peace and stability in the region.

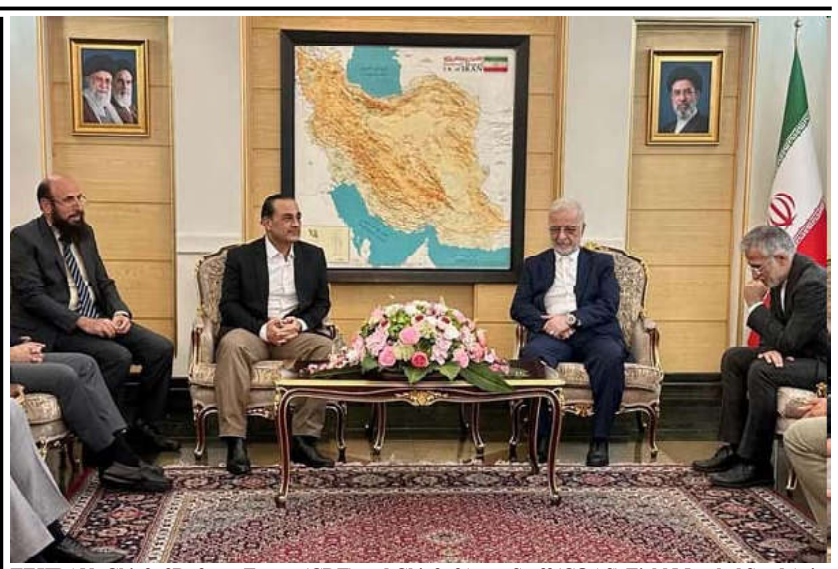
During the visit, Field Marshal Munir is expected to meet senior Iranian officials to discuss bilateral relations, regional security and diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions.

The Pakistani military chief will also focus on efforts for a peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict and ways to advance regional peace initiatives.

Pakistan has consistently advocated dialogue and diplomacy as the preferred means of resolving regional disputes. Islamabad has also expressed its desire for lasting peace and stability in the Middle East.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei had earlier said that Field Marshal Munir would lead an official delegation to Tehran. According to the Iranian Foreign Ministry, the visit is aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation between Iran and Pakistan and supporting efforts to promote peace and security in the region.

The visit comes amid Pakistan's continued diplomatic engagement with Iran and other regional and international stakeholders to support peace efforts. Islamabad has maintained that it is prepared to use its diplomatic channels to facilitate dialogue and help resolve outstanding issues. The visit also assumes significance amid stalled peace negotiations between the United States and Iran.



TEHRAN: Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir meets Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni



QUETTA: Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti chairing a high-level meeting of the Balochistan Safe City Authority.

Our issue is not about ego; we want to provide relief to people: Hafiz Naeem

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman on Monday said the government was giving oil companies undue margins on petrol prices as protests against the petroleum levy continued.

Addressing participants of the sit-in at Faisal Chowk on Lahore's Mall Road, Naeem said if the government wants to hold negotiations with his party, it should hold them over the abolition of the petroleum levy.

"The government is giving companies an undue margin on petrol prices," Naeem said, adding that people were already facing difficulties while bureaucrats' privileges were being increased.

The JI's sit-ins in Lahore, Peshawar, and Karachi have entered their ninth day, with Naeem saying participation in the party's protests was increasing, including among women.

"Our issue is not about ego; we want to provide relief to the people," he said.

Naeem announced that the party would call for a nationwide shutter-down strike on 13 Rabi-ul-Awwal and said a countrywide strike would be held in the first week of September.

He warned that the government would face nationwide protests if it attempted to remove or interfere with the sit-ins.

"Peaceful sit-ins and protests are our democratic right," Naeem said. "If the government tries to interfere, we will shut down the entire country."

He also criticised the government's spending, saying rulers should stop lavish expenditure and the use of large official vehicles. Naeem alleged that rulers were collecting the petroleum levy even from people who were not liable to pay taxes, describing the practice as unacceptable. He also said the government had allowed wheat exports, which he claimed had contributed to an increase in wheat prices.

The JI chief said the party would hold a rally in Faisalabad on August 28 and another in Rawalpindi on August 30.



ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan speaks to the media

Seven-Hour N-65 closure leaves passengers, patients in distress

BOLAN (ANN): Traffic remained suspended for seven hours last night on Balochistan's important national highway, N-65, due to torrential rain and landsliding in the Mehrgarh Chowki–Qalam Din Hotel area of Bolan. As a result, thousands of passengers, including women, children and elderly people, remained stranded on the roads in extremely hot and humid weather.

Following the heavy rains, severe landsliding from the mountainous areas caused large rocks to fall between Darbi and Sirajabad. As a result of the road blockage, long queues of freight vehicles and public transport formed, while patients and ordinary passengers faced severe difficulties. Transporters and affected passengers said that despite the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) issuing a high alert regarding the monsoon rains, the Kachhi district administration failed to take timely measures. Due to the absence of a control room at the district level, ordinary passengers, patients, transporters and owners of freight vehicles remained unaware of the road closure for hours. The passengers and transporters demanded that Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti and the Commissioner of Sibi Division immediately take notice of this serious negligence.



LAHORE: Senator Rubina Khalid, Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), talks to the media.

PM vows to make Pakistan strong, self-reliant, sustainable

ISLAMABAD, (Agencies): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has welcomed Moody's upgrade of Pakistan's sovereign credit rating, praising the government's economic team for its efforts to improve the country's economic outlook. In a statement, the premier commended the economic efforts of Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir. He said that the improvement in Pakistan's credit rating reflects global confidence in the government's economic policies and reforms. The PM welcomed the recognition by international financial institutions and rating agencies of the improvement in Pakistan's economic situation, saying the country's economy was moving towards stability. The premier said that the government had taken effective measures to stabilise the economy and improve the external sector.

Moody's improves Pakistan's sovereign credit rating to B3 from Caa1

NEW YORK, (Agencies): Moody's Ratings on Monday upgraded Pakistan's sovereign credit rating to B3 from Caa1, citing the country's stronger external position, better fiscal metrics and lower domestic financing costs. The global ratings agency maintained Pakistan's outlook at "stable", Bloomberg reported.

Pakistan's external vulnerabilities have eased as foreign-exchange reserves steadily increased, supported by sustained macroeconomic stabilisation, said Moody's. "Lower domestic financing costs amid monetary easing and an improved fiscal position" have driven a "material improvement" in Pakistan's debt affordability, Moody's said. The country's strengthening credit profile is also showing "greater resilience to external shocks than in previous cycles," including the ongoing Middle East conflict, it added.

The development comes as the country rebuilds its foreign-exchange reserves and pushes ahead with economic reforms after years of financial stress.

Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar says:

Pakistan's foreign policy should be guided by national interests

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Former caretaker prime minister and Senator Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has stressed the need for Pakistan to pursue strategic autonomy, independent decision-making and balanced regional ties as the country navigates an increasingly multipolar world.

Speaking at an Eminent Speaker Series hosted by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) in Islamabad, Senator Kakar discussed Pakistan's relations with Iran, Gulf states, China, Afghanistan and India, as well as the growing impact of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies on global power dynamics.

Senator Kakar further noted that Pakistan's foreign policy should be guided by national interests while maintaining constructive engagement with countries across the region. He highlighted Pakistan's evolving relations with Iran and the Gulf states, calling for stronger regional partnerships that could contribute to stability while protecting Pakistan's strategic and national interests.

Terrorism cannot halt Balochistan's development: Bakht Kakar

QUETTA (ANN): Provincial Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar said that the role played by the government for the stability of the country and the restoration of democracy is commendable. He said that, on the external front, the role played by Chief of Army Staff Asim Munir has raised Pakistan's prestige throughout the world, and the country has now embarked on the path of development. All political parties will have to play their role together for the development of the country.

He expressed these views while speaking to a delegation. He said that the Pakistan Peoples Party is a party of martyrs and veterans that has made sacrifices for the country in every era, and the martyrs are before us. He said that the Pakistan Peoples Party is the people's only source of support for the country, and that his party not only supported the national institutions but also stood shoulder to shoulder with them and played its role. This is why democracy is currently strong in the country and the institutions enjoy public acceptance.

He said that they want the country, particularly Balochistan, to move forward on the path of development. He said that the way Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has taken the province towards success has also worried the enemy.

CM Bugti vows to expand technology-based security measures in Balochistan

Says timely identification of crimes and suspicious activities could make police operations more effective and help ensure the protection of citizens' lives and property

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has said that the Balochistan Safe City Authority is playing an effective role in maintaining law and order, preventing crime, and protecting the lives and property of citizens. He said that the effective use of modern technology can enable the timely identification of crimes and suspicious activities and further improve the police response mechanism.

He expressed these views while chairing a high-level meeting of the Balochistan Safe City Authority. The meeting reviewed in detail the performance of the Balochistan Safe City Authority, its surveillance system, crime prevention measures, and matters related to enhancing the authority's capacity.

Inspector General of Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir Khan gave the meeting a detailed briefing on the performance of the Balochistan Safe City Authority and various initiatives. The briefing stated that, through the effective Safe City surveillance system, 138 stolen vehicles from across the country had been identified. It was further stated that the timely identification of nine suspicious activities helped prevent major acts of terrorism.

The meeting was informed that the Balochistan Safe City Authority had provided police with 631 important pieces of evidence related to various crime scenes. These helped make crime investigations and the process of tracing suspects more effective.

The briefing further stated that the 15 Madadgar Emergency Response Service had been placed under the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), which would help improve emergency response and coordination between the relevant institutions.



LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman addresses a press conference

CM Bugti vows decisive action against terrorists

Condemns terrorist attack on workers engaged in road construction in Saranan Bazaar

Shahid Rind says targeting innocent labourers is proof of the brutality and cowardice of the terrorists

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti strongly condemned the terrorist attack on workers engaged in road construction in Saranan Bazaar, Pishin district, saying that once again innocent Pakistanis had been targeted and martyred by terrorism, and that the terrorists had crossed all limits of humanity.

The Chief Minister said that the hardworking labourers were working to provide for their children and to play their role in the construction and development of the country and the province. Targeting them was clear evidence of the terrorists' brutal mindset. Those who shed the blood of innocent civilians and hardworking Pakistanis deserved no leniency.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that terrorists should understand that the martyrdom of innocent Pakistanis would not weaken but further strengthen our resolve. State institutions would continue operations against terrorist elements with full force to ensure peace, development, and the protection of the people in Balochistan.

He said that the war against terrorism had entered a decisive phase, and terrorists and their facilitators would be brought to justice at all costs.

There was no place in Balochistan for those who played with the blood of innocent citizens. The Chief Minister expressed heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the families of the martyred workers, saying that the government stood with the families of the martyrs in this hour of grief. He prayed for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs, patience for their bereaved families, and the speedy recovery of the injured worker.

Meanwhile, Adviser to the Chief Minister of Balochistan for Information and Political Affairs, Shahid Rind, strongly condemned the terrorist attack on workers engaged in road construction in Saranan Bazaar, Pishin district, and expressed deep sorrow and grief over the loss of precious human lives in the incident.



QUETTA: Provincial Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove chairs a meeting to review security arrangements for 12 Rabi ul Awwal.

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Tuesday August 25, 2026

Climate threat

Pakistan is confronting a growing climate threat at precisely the moment it has reduced spending on the institutions tasked with managing it. The decision to cut the climate ministry's PSDP allocation from Rs3.5bn to Rs2.48bn is difficult to justify given the challenges ahead. Climate risks are increasing and public investment should reflect that reality. Suparco has identified 130 potentially dangerous glacial lakes in Pakistan's northern regions, with downstream communities exposed to the risk of glacial lake outburst floods. While only 24 of these lakes are currently unfrozen and under observation, the findings show that our glaciers are under increasing stress. Rising temperatures are accelerating glacial melt in a country that contains one of the largest concentrations of ice outside the polar regions. The concern extends beyond the immediate flood danger. As glaciers retreat, the long-term reliability of river flows that sustain agriculture, hydropower generation and drinking water supplies comes into question. Then there is the climate outlook. Suparco has warned that El Niño conditions may bring weaker monsoon rainfall, more frequent heatwaves, drought conditions and warmer winters. Such shifts threaten crop yields, livestock production and water availability. Extreme heat already imposes economic costs through lost labour productivity, increased energy demand and mounting public health burdens. Droughts can damage food security and raise inflationary pressures, while erratic rainfall continues to expose vulnerable communities to both flooding and water shortages.

Climate change is increasingly a fiscal challenge. Governments are forced to divert scarce resources towards emergency relief, reconstruction and compensation instead of development priorities. Repeated climate shocks discourage investment, disrupt supply chains and place additional strain on an economy already grappling with tight public finances. Our experience in recent years demonstrates how quickly climate shocks can overwhelm public resources. The devastating floods of 2022 caused losses estimated at over $30bn and left a recovery bill that continues to burden public finances. The lesson is that preparedness costs less than reconstruction. Investments in climate monitoring, early warning systems, resilient infrastructure and disaster management are not discretionary expenditures. They are economic safeguards. The budget debate also raises questions about priorities. Senator Sherry Rehman was right to question why climate spending is being cut while hundreds of billions of rupees continue to flow towards loss-making SOEs. At a time when climate-related hazards are multiplying, reducing support for adaptation and resilience amounts to a costly policy error. Pakistan cannot control global emissions trends, but it can strengthen its capacity to cope with their consequences. That requires sustained funding, stronger institutions and long-term planning. The country's climate vulnerabilities are becoming more visible with each passing year. Ignoring them today will prove more expensive tomorrow.

Time to swap borrowing for equity

NADEEM UL HAQUE & SHAHID KARDAR

Every time interest rates rise in Pakistan, a familiar chorus emerges from industrial lobbies, chambers of commerce and TV experts: investm-e--nt will collapse, industry will die, and growth will disappear unless the State Bank immediately cuts rates 'in the national interest'. The argument is pre--sented as self-evident. Cheap loans equal growth.

At first, this sounds reasonable. Businesses need money to build factories, buy machines, and expand. If borrowing money is cheap, companies can invest more easily. But such framing hides a much bigger issue ignored for years.

There are two main ways to raise money for investment. One is by borrowing from banks, ie debt financing. The other is by putting in their own money or widening ownership — selling shares to investors. Both methods help companies raise money yet they create very different kinds of businesses and economies, shaping not only investment but also control, governance and distribution of wealth.

In Pakistan, business owners seek cheap bank loans, but avoid selling shares to the public, raising uncomfortable questions: why is equity participation narrow and often speculative despite decades of the 'capital market development' rhetoric? Why are ordinary savers expected to accept low returns on their savings so companies can keep borrowing cheaply? A deep structural issue has silently shaped Pakistan's long-term productivity, corporate culture and growth path: the unshakable reliance of the private sector on borrowing to finance capital investment instead of injecting additional equity from its own resources or by raising equity from markets.

For decades, the playbook for corporate success in Pakistan hasn't changed; it has been passed down through generations of tightly controlled family conglomerates. The formula is simple: offer real estate or heavy machinery as collateral, secure low-cost bank loans and expand the domestic footprint without any significant dilution of family ownership or control. Raising money by selling shares introduces outsiders who then demand transparency, sharing of profits, etc. Hence, their preference for debt over equity.

This system has worked very well for them because Pakistan has historically had very low real interest rates. A real interest rate means the interest rate after subtracting inflation. In Pakistan, real interest rates have often stayed below two per cent for long periods. For tightly held family-controlled businesses, this environment has created a golden arbitrage opportunity. The logic is not irrational, with the State Bank's collateral-anchored prudential framework serving as a facilitator. Cheap bank credit (reinforced by the tax deductibility of interest payments) is far less expensive than the cost of raising equity from a broad-based ownership which would dem-and dividends, a role in decision-making and a seat at the board table. Sponsors of closely held companies have, therefore, done what any ratio-nal actor would do — maximise leverage, minimise equity dilution and protect their hold on ownership.

Add to it our experience of early efforts to develop industry through cheap credit followed by non-seizure of collateral. This was interpreted as credit being both cheap and not necessarily involving serious recovery attempts.

Banks have also found it safer and easier to lend money to large, asset-rich companies, which offer adequate collateral. They have no incentive to develop sophisticated credit-scoring mechanisms for SMEs or asset-light startups. Both sides of this arrangement are acting rationally. Since the cost of bank credit has historically been lower than the expected return demanded by equity investors, the capital market has remained weak and shallow, lacking depth and liquidity. Sponsors only list when absolutely necessary, keeping the free public float small and corporate governance highly centralised within family boards. Across the border, in India, more than 50pc of the shares of their large conglomerates are held by non-family members. The nation's top companies have no genuine desire to list; if they do, they offer the bare minimum public float required by regulations. When the cost of bank credit is lower than the cost of equity, listing on the stock exchange is not viewed as an opportunity, a tool for capital formation, but a burden. They dislike the extra rules, public scrutiny and transparency requirements that come with public ownership. Consequently, corporate governance remains a family affair, and market capitalisation as a percentage of GDP is abysmally low.

This is not to suggest that borrowing itself is bad. Debt is an important part of modern finance. Businesses everywhere use loans to grow. The problem comes when companies rely too heavily on debt. Highly indebted companies become vulnerable when interest rates rise, when the currency weakens, or when economic growth slows. Equity financing works differently. When a company raises money through shares, the risks are spread among shareholders instead of being concentrated in bank loans. Equity financing also changes how companies behave. Businesses become more transparent because shareholders want proper information and there is greater pressure to improve productivity and profitability. Critics may argue that higher equity requirements could discourage investment by raising financing costs. But our long history of cheap borrowing has not created globally competitive industries anyway; instead, it has often protected inefficient businesses, encouraged concentration of wealth within a small number of family groups and speculative asset accumulation.

Pakistan desperately needs to change. To foster a resilient corporate sector capable of global expansion, Pakistan must transition from a debt-driven corporate model to an equity-first model. The State Bank, the SECP and economic policymakers must jointly use their regulatory muscle to incentivise a shift towards a higher equity-to-debt ratio — one that requires a meaningful skin in the game from sponsors. If large corporations borrow less from banks and raise more money through the stock market, banks would have more funds available for smaller businesses and farmers, creating broader economic growth.

Pakistan's old model has reached its limits. Despite a population of 245 million, the domestic market alone lacks the effective aggregate purchasing power to help companies grow into global firms. Even firms with a dominant position will have to venture abroad to grow by acquiring established firms and securing global distribution networks in larger markets. It has become a structural necessity. For this, they will require international capital, which demands equity.

Nurpur nightmare

Danyal Adam Khan

The state is waging a one-sided war against the people of Islamabad. To be clear, only against those Islamabadis who have had the misfortune of being born too poor to ascend into the land-grabbing, rent-seeking elite. The Capital Development Authority, and its powerful backers eyeing prime potential real estate, have been on a roll. Nurpur Shahan. Saidpur. Muslim Colony. Allama Iqbal Colony. Rimsha Colony. Nowhere is off the table, and anywhere can become the next gilded nouveau riche dream. The only ones in the way are the wretched of the earth who happen to live there.

The city's administration and law-enforcement authorities have already reduced thousands of houses and entire markets to rubble — ensuring people lose not just homes, but livelihoods as well. Anyone who has resisted has been arrested; the perpetrators have been awarded state honours. It seems, finally, that the decision to rid Islamabad of its poorer citizens has been taken in earnest.

While mainstream coverage has been dismal, visuals of the carnage have flooded social media. And the jarring juxtaposition against the One Constitution building was not lost on anyone. After a botched attempt at getting those premises vacated, it took the prime minister of the country less than 24 hours to intervene and announce the formation of a committee to review the case. Meanwhile, in the shadows of the skyscraper, Nurpur was being erased from the face of the earth. Such incidents only reinforce the belief that legality and illegality are concepts entirely open to interpretation by the powerful. And there could be no clearer indication of whom the state serves.

The government claims it has already compensated the earlier generation of residents in Saidpur and Nurpur (with a pittance, as it were), and all others who have arrived since then are encroachers and squatters. This claim is disputed by many who live there today, who say they have not been compensated adequately or at all. This also does not change the fact that families who have lived in these villages since before there was Islamabad — or Pakistan, for that matter — are being vacated from ancestral lands overnight.

There are several other important questions left unanswered. Was it not the responsibility of the state to manage this over the several decades that have passed? Where was the city administration when these settlements were expanding and new 'encroachments' were taking place? What about similar 'encroachments' that are taking place in other parts of Islamabad right now? Will anti-encroachment drives take place across the board, including against private developers and state institutions? Are there any low-income alternatives provided to ensure people don't need to resort to squatter settlements in the first place? What about the widespread allegations of under-the-table rent-seeking from these very settlements by the city administration? And if they've been illegally squatting on government land all along, why did they build roads and schools there and provide utilities?

More fundamentally, what does the state need this land for anyway? There was a time when the CDA's official plan was to bring the formal to the informal in localities like Nurpur or Saidpur. Today, it has deemed it easier to demolish the informal entirely for a different vision of development — a new city with a skyline that's "a mix of Shanghai and Manhattan", where plots and profits are in the billions, where big cars drive along wide signal-free highways, and conspicuous consumption has eradicated any signs of poverty.

City in a pickle

Muna Khan

Being back in Karachi full time means, among other things, a backlog. Of errands, of repairs, of things you tell yourself you'll get to. Saturday was the day we got to them. First stop: a watchmaker.

His is not a shop in the modern sense; more of a man and his instruments and a particular kind of knowledge that doesn't transfer easily. I had an old clock. He seemed to be among the last of a generation who still knows what to do with one. Everything has gone digital, and with it, the people who understood the analogue. I didn't linger on that thought then. I do now. The second stop was Botal Gali, in the heart of Saddar. My friend OH needed jars — the right kind, in larger numbers — for a pickle he is working on. We could have ordered online. We didn't, and I'm glad. Minus the heat, minus the litter and filth we navigated like an obstacle course, being there was worth it. The gali is more perfume than bottles now, or at least that's how I remember it. My memory isn't reliable on the timeline, only on the feeling: I came here with my mother. She had opinions about glass over plastic so our fridge was a skyline of repurposed bottles I will not name, but you can probably guess. You'd think we were aficionados of banned substances from around the world. We were not. We were just people who knew a good bottle when we saw one.

It's no surprise that I walked away with three glass bottles I didn't strictly need along with a plan to return.

What made the stop especially worthwhile was the man we met inside the shop — the founder's son was there that day even though his own son now runs it. He guided us a little, with the ease of someone who has nothing to prove. It felt good to talk to an elder. To receive advice, even about jars. There's a texture to that kind of exchange that no website offers.

After that, we drove to a mechanic, a far less poetic errand. OH was trying to orient us on MA Jinnah Road, placing it in relation to a workshop I'm hosting at a restored library. And somewhere in the particular stillness that traffic jams impose, I stopped scrolling and started looking at the buildings.

The old ones. The ones that are still there, barely. Karachi must have been something to look at once. I have only ever known it as a concrete accumulation: eyesore stacked upon eyesore, with no apparent thought given to parking or pedestrians. I understand that cities expand. Populations grow, space is finite, and trade-offs are inevitable. But there is a difference between expansion and erasure, and we seem to have chosen the latter as policy, or perhaps as default. The urban equivalent of throwing dice and seeing where they land.

What lands, always, is at the cost of heritage. Of what the city was before it became what it is. Of what we might have kept if keeping had felt like an option.

I turned to OH, who has an economist's way of thinking I find useful because I don't. Wouldn't restoring these buildings make business sense, I asked. Wouldn't a city that is beautiful, not curated, not sanitised, but actually cared for, bring people in? Wouldn't that be worth something? If a jam jar can bring us to Saddar, imagine what a restored city could do. I want to be careful here. I don't mean restoration in the way we attempted it at Empress Market — that particular exercise in aesthetics destroyed the livelihoods of the people who inhabited it. That is not restoration. That is re---placement with better lighting. There is surely a just version of this. There must be a way to care for what we have without making the people with-in it pay the pri-ce of someone else's vision of what the city.

Five million SMEs; 2pc banked

Zafar Masud

Ask any banker in the country to name the single largest untapped commercial opportunity on their balance sheet, and the honest answer will not include corporates, nor consumers, not even mortgages. It is the roughly five million small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that are ostensibly bankable but sit almost entirely outside the formal credit system today.

Ask the same banker why these have not been pursued, and the answer becomes more revealing: a mixture of risk language, regulatory caveats and a quiet acknowledgement that the sector is, in some fundamental way, simply too hard to read.

That difficulty lies at the heart of the matter, and it deserves to be stated plainly rather than being dressed up in the vocabulary of risk.

SMEs generate close to 40 per cent of GDP, 25pc of exports and around 80pc of non-agricultural em--ployment. Yet by December 2025, only 302,922 of them were formally banked. The South Asian average for firms reporting access to a bank loan sits above 31pc; Pakistan's figure is a dismal 2.1pc.

The cost of exclusion is concrete. An SME that is locked out of formal credit borrows, if at all, from informal sources at 30pc to 60pc per annum. At those rates, no enterprise modernises machinery, builds working capital cushions, or invests in compliance. The very conditions that would make an SME bankable are those that it cannot afford to meet — precisely because it is not bankable.

It is tempting to attribute this to risk aversion in the banking system. But this would be wrong. Pakistani banks are not unusually conservative by global standards — they are unusually starved of information. The median SME operates on cash, holds no audited statements, files no returns, and records sales in ledgers that no credible auditor will certify. A bank cannot underwrite what it cannot see. The problem is not that SME risk is high; it is that SME risk is invisible, making risk-pricing prohibitive, much as is the case with agriculture.

This framing matters because it points to the actual solution. The question is not how to make banks braver. It is how to make the borrowers visible. That work has begun, and the early numbers are genuinely encouraging. Outstanding SME financing grew from Rs457 billion at the FY23 trough to Rs882bn by December 2025 — nearly doubling in slightly over two years — with the State Bank targeting Rs1.5 trillion by 2028. The proof of concept sits closer to home than most realise. Punjab's Asaan Karobar Scheme, launched in January 2025 on a hybrid risk-absorption formula — a first-loss guarantee from the federal government and an interest-rate subsidy from the Punjab government — with digital architecture stitching together CNIC, FBR, credit bureau and bank data, has already disbursed funds to over 110,000 SMEs, half of them from low-income groups, and more than a third of the total industry borrowers. The opportunity is being widened further by the industry's Islamic conversion. For SMEs, where religious considerations weigh heavily, Sharia-compliant products are not a parallel track; they are a primary channel. But progress must be honest about its constraints. As of 2025, only 38pc of banking assets are deployed in private sector lending, while banks bear an effective tax rate of 54.1pc — the highest in the region, against 30pc or less in India, Malaysia and Vietnam. Until that incentive structure shifts, no amount of regulatory exhortation will redirect capital at scale. Yet the macro tailwinds are real. The policy rate has been cut by more than 1,000 bps from its 22pc peak. Fiscal consolidation has produced a primary surplus of 3pc of GDP. Moody's, Fitch and S&P have all upgraded Pakistan. This is the most favourable backdrop for priority sector credit in over a decade — and converting it rests on five policy actions. First, formalisation must be reframed not as exposure to punitive taxation but as access to affordable capital. The federal government should announce a time-bound SME documentation roadmap linked to incentives for first-time borrowers. Incremental lending to priority sectors should receive targeted tax incentives: a reduced tax rate on income generated from first-time SME borrowers would materially improve risk-adjusted returns for banks. Second, risk-sharing mechanisms must expand rapidly. Sustained fiscal allocation for first-loss guarantees can crowd in priority sector lending at multiples of public investment. Third, the Financial Data Exchange must be ope--rationalised. Integrating Nadra, tax, banking and payment system data would fundamentally imp-rove credit scoring and underwriting capability.

Fourth, the upcoming budget should make adequate provisioning for venture capital and private equity funding through front-loaded government contributions that absorb early losses, and rationalise tax structures on investment vehicles — at a fiscal cost smaller than a single year of circular debt accumulation. Fifth, the Alternative Dispute Resolution me--chanism must be made effective by ensuring that no stay orders are granted without the full deposit of the disputed amount, so that prolonged litigation cannot be used to delay the matter's resolution.

Repeated US sanctions against Tehran will yield no results: Baqaei

'Washington's persistence in failed methods has no result other than proving America's hatred for the Iranian people,' says Foreign Ministry spokesman

TEHRAN, (Monitoring Desk): Repeated US sanctions against Iran will yield no results, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said Monday, arguing that such measures have "failed" to achieve their objectives.

"Washington's persistence in failed methods has no result other than proving America's hatred for the Iranian people, because they know very well that the direct consequences of these sanctions are on ordinary citizens," Baqaei told reporters at a weekly news conference, according to Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency. He said sanctions and "intimidation" of other countries aimed at limiting trade ties violate the principles of free trade and respect for national sovereignty.

"This illegal practice is a wake-up call for the international community, as America's excesses and violations of the law in international relations have even provoked protests from its close allies."

Regarding reports that Tehran had been invited to join the Mecca pact, Baqaei said Iran had not been asked to join but that "proposals have been made for talks with these countries on regional security."

The Mecca agreement was signed in early August by Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to strengthen collective security and defense cooperation and promote regional stability.

Tensions in the Middle East have escalated since the US and Israel began joint strikes on Iran in late February, triggering retaliatory attacks by Tehran on regional countries hosting US assets.

The US and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding on June 17 and launched negotiations toward a final agreement. However, the talks later stalled over disagreements on security guarantees and freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategic routes for global energy supplies and trade.

Between July 8-24, the US and Iran exchanged military strikes, with Washington attacking targets inside Iran and Tehran responding by striking US military facilities and equipment in several Arab countries, including Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait.



A ceremony was held at Lychakiv Cemetery in Lviv, Ukraine, to commemorate Ukrainian heroes who lost their lives in the Russo-Ukrainian War. The ceremony, held as part of Ukraine's Independence Day celebrations, was attended by civilians, soldiers, and relatives of the fallen soldiers.

UN rapporteur calls for int'l protection force in Gaza, West Bank

Francesca Albanese says deployment is 'absolutely urgent' and calls on states to act on International Court of Justice ruling

UNITED NATIONS, (Monitoring Desk): UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese called Sunday for an "international protection presence" in the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, saying such a deployment was "absolutely urgent."

"Third states have an obligation, per the ICJ, to act to end Israel's unlawful occupation," Albanese wrote on the US social media platform X, referring to a July 2024 advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice that deemed Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory unlawful and said states must not assist in maintaining it. Albanese also questioned whether UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' diplomatic efforts and the General Assembly's "Uniting for Peace" mechanism could overcome the Security Council's deadlock on the conflict.

The mechanism allows the General Assembly to consider international peace and security issues when the Security Council cannot act because of a lack of unanimity among its permanent members. The council has repeatedly been unable to take action on Gaza and the West Bank amid vetoes by the US.

Japan reiterates support for US-sanctioned ICC president after backlash over 'weak' response

TOKYO, (Monitoring Desk): Japan on Monday reiterated its support for International Criminal Court (ICC) President Tomoko Akane after rights groups criticized Tokyo for what they described as a weak response to US sanctions against the Japanese judge, Kyodo News reported.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said Tokyo had maintained close communication with Akane and was prepared to provide any necessary support. "If there is any necessary support we can provide, we intend to make sure that we do so," Kihara said, according to Kyodo.

The remarks followed criticism from international rights groups after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and the Foreign Ministry last week described Washington's sanctions as "very unfortunate," but stopped short of condemning the move. Amnesty International Secretary General Agnes Callamard criticized Tokyo's response on US social media company X.

"This is a rather weak reaction from Japan to the sanctioning of their national and President of the ICC. They 'note' the sanction and reaffirm their commitment to the ICC," she said.

Human Rights Watch Japan Director Kanae Doi also said the government should build on its longstanding support for the ICC by "strongly condemning" the Trump administration's actions against the court.

Kihara acknowledged that "various viewpoints" had been raised but declined to address them individually, reiterating Japan's longstanding support for the ICC and the international rule of law.

Washington sanctioned Akane and ICC prosecutor Abdoulaye Seye last week. Seye was involved in seeking an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over alleged war crimes in Gaza.



Overwhelmed by the hot weather in Istanbul, some local and foreign tourists tried to protect themselves from the sun by walking around Sultanahmet with umbrellas.



Relatives of 14-year-old Palestinian Islam al-Ajuri mourn during a funeral ceremony as he is killed by Israeli troops during a raid on Nablus in West Bank, Palestine

Israeli fire kills six in Gaza despite new effort to salvage truce

Monitoring Desk

CAIRO: Israeli strikes and gunfire killed at least six Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, health officials said, amid efforts to salvage the US-brokered ceasefire.

Medics said an Israeli airstrike killed least four people near Al-Yeman Al-Saeed Hospital in the Jabalia refugee camp, north of the enclave, while two others were killed in separate shooting incidents in Khan Younis, in the south, and Gaza City.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the incidents.

The violence came as mediators, Egypt, Qatar and Turkey, wrapped up week-long talks with Hamas and other Palestinian factions on implementing the second phase of US President Donald Trump's Gaza plan, which would involve Hamas disarming and Israel withdrawing its forces.

An October 2025 truce brokered by Trump has failed to halt Israeli attacks in Gaza or to secure the disarmament of Hamas fighters.

Israeli strikes in Gaza have killed more than 950 people since the truce, health officials say, while Israel says four soldiers have been killed by fighters in that period.

Hamas ' the absence of a full agreement to end the Gaza conflict on Israel's refusal to fulfill first-phase obligations agreed in October.

Britain announces sweeping social media ban for under-16s

Monitoring Desk

LONDON: British Prime Minister said on Monday he would ban social media sites for under-16s and impose restrictions on gaming and live-streaming platforms, in a fightback against big tech that goes further than any other country.

The sweeping changes will "give kids their childhood back", Starmer told reporters, outlining measures against Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram and other platforms, as well as gaming sites that allow strangers to contact children.

"It is clear to me a full ban is the right choice," he said. "It will make a huge difference, it will make our children safer, it will make our children happier, it will give them more time, more security, more freedom to grow up, more opportunity".

U.K.'s ban on Palestine action under terror legislation was lawful, court of appeal rules

Monitoring Desk

LONDON: The high court was wrong to rule that the ban on Palestine Action under terrorism legislation was unlawful, the court of appeal ruled Monday morning. Palestine Action was proscribed under terrorism laws last year, but after a legal challenge by the group's co-founder, London's high court in February deemed the government's designation unlawful. It remained proscribed, pending the government's appeal.

Lady Chief Justice Baroness Carr, the most senior judge in England and Wales, said the five-person strong panel had "concluded that the proscription decision struck a fair balance." She described the group as "a covert organization operating with secret cells to avoid the detection and prosecution of those using violence to destroy the property of third parties" and said "at no stage has Palestine Action suggested that its terrorist activities were either a mistake or an aberration."

Due to the proscription remaining in place, it is still an offense to support, fund, or belong to Palestine Action.

Huda Ammori, who co-founded Palestine Action in 2020 and brought the appeal over the designation to the high court earlier this year.

Teen on trial in Germany over Islamist school knife attack

Monitoring Desk

GERMANY: An 18-year-old college student accused of carrying out a string of Islamist knife attacks went on trial in Germany on Monday. Prosecutors have charged the Kosovar teenager with three counts of attempted murder over the incidents in the western city of Essen last year. The suspect, who was 17 years old at the time, is accused of having stabbed his 45-year-old teacher at a vocational college.

India's GenZ leader slapped at protest

Monitoring Desk

MUMBAI: The founder and leader of India's Cockroach Janta Party was slapped repeatedly by unknown men during a protest in the northern city of Jaipur on Monday, which he said was an attempt to scare him and his group.

Abhijeet Dipke, 30, who has lived in the United States for the past two years, was being carried along on the shoulders of supporters when he was suddenly slapped repeatedly on the shoulders and face by two men, television social media footage showed. The men were not identified.

"These are all tactics to scare us, threaten us and distract us from the main issue at hand. But we will continue to speak out," Dipke said in a video posted on the group's social media accounts.

Dipke was slapped by at least two men several times before he was carried away.

rapid rise of Dipke and his Cockroach Janta Party, which says it represents "the lazy, the unemployed, and the chronically correct", is driven by the concerns of the young in a country where those below the age of 30 are estimated to number more than half of population of 1.42 billion.

The group, which has amassed more than 22.5 million followers on Instagram since launching in mid-May, has been demanding the resignation of Education Dharmendra Pradhan over recurring leaks of examination papers and errors in marking that have threatened to derail the careers of millions of students.

Modi's government has blocked the movement's X account.

Macron plans rapid launch of mine-clearing mission in Strait of Hormuz

Monitoring Desk

FRANCE: French President Emmanuel Macron is pushing for a rapid launch of an international military mission in the Strait of Hormuz after Washington and Tehran reached an agreement to end the war in Iran.

During an interview with French broadcaster TF1 on Monday, Macron said: "We will first do everything to ensure that this agreement enters into force and that the Strait of Hormuz is peacefully reopened and shipping can resume."

"We are on the ground," he said. "We are ready to act very quickly."

France could deploy its aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, frigates, minesweepers and aircraft in the region "within the next two to three days after confirmation," Macron said. "So together with the Americans and in parallel with the Iranians, we will ensure that this deployment takes place so that the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz is peaceful and lasting."

A naval mission led by France and the UK has long been planned and prepared and is due to begin once the fighting officially ends. The aim is to clear mines in the strait and escort merchant ships to ensure safe passage.

UK, France, Germany and Italy ready to lift Iran sanctions

Monitoring Desk

EUROPEAN: E4 nations including the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy said on Sunday the countries were prepared to lift sanctions on Iran in response to steps on its nuclear programme after the US and Iran reached a deal to end their war. "Iran must never acquire a nuclear weapon. We stand ready to work with the US, Iran and the IAEA to this end," the leaders of the countries said in a joint statement.

In Tokyo, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on Monday said Japan's welcomes the deal toward ending hostilities and hopes for steady implementation of the agreement, including the actual reopening of the Strait of Hormuz for international vessels. Posting on X, Takaichi said Japan "strongly hopes" that "free and safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

Zelensky calls for G7 response to Russian attacks on UNESCO monastery

Monitoring Desk

KIEV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday called on the Group of Seven (G7) leading industrial democracies to respond decisively to Russian attacks in Kiev and other cities.

A wave of Russian airstrikes on Ukraine caused a fire at the main church of the historic Kyiv Pechersk Lavra monastery complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Ukrainian officials reported significant damage across the capital and rising civilian casualties nationwide.

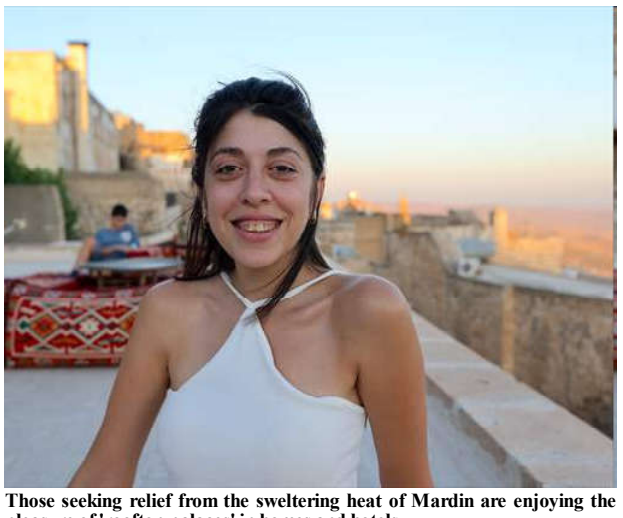
According to Ukrainian authorities, there were at least 11 deaths and dozens of injuries nationwide. In Kiev alone, authorities reported five deaths and 35 injuries.

More pressure was needed on the aggressor and more support for Ukraine's air defence, especially to protect against attacks with ballistic missiles, Zelensky wrote on Telegram. He is expected in the evening at the G7 summit in the French town of Évian.

On Monday, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in a post on X that the summit would focus on increasing pressure on Russia and pushing for negotiations to end the war and to "bring Putin to the negotiating table."

"Russia, on the other hand, showed again its sole interest in violence and destruction," she wrote.

Russia attacked the capital Kiev with more than 60 missiles and cruise missiles overnight, Zelensky said. Overall, 611 drones and 70 missiles and cruise missiles were deployed overnight.



Those seeking relief from the sweltering heat of Mardin are enjoying the pleasure of 'rooftop palaces' in homes and hotels.



CHORZOW, POLAND: Pia Skrzyszowska of Poland poses for a selfie with fans after competing in the Women's 100m Hurdles Final at the Silesia Diamond League meeting of the 2026 Wanda Diamond League circuit at Silesian Stadium

بعدالت اسپیشل جج انسداد دہشتگردی کچھی بمقام ڈھاڈر

اشتہار زیر دفعہ 87 ضابطہ فوجداری پاکستان ہمراہ دفعہ (10) 19 انسداد دہشتگردی ایکٹ

ATC نمبر 31/2026 FIR نمبر 53/25 سرکار بنام: دوتین خان وغیرہ

جرم زیر دفعہ 3-4 Exp ,11-N , 7 ATA 427,P.P.C پولیس تھانہ CTD سبی

ہرگاہ ہمارے روبرو پیش ہوئی ہے کہ مسمیان (1) دوتین خان ولد کمال خان (2) جمیل (3) منگل خان پسران جمل خان (4) راتا ولد منگی اقوام تالانی ساکنان لنڈی واہلیڑی ضلع سبی جرم بالا کے جس کی سزا مذکورہ بالا دفعات میں مقرر ہے مرتکب ہوئے ہیں (یا ان کے ارتکاب پر شبہ ہے) اور ازروئے رپورٹ یعنی کیفیت تعمیل وارنٹ گرفتاری کے جو بہ طبق اس ناٹس کے جاری ہوا تھا معلوم ہوا ہے کہ مسمیان مذکوران بالا دستیاب نہیں ہو سکتے اور ہرگاہ حسب اطمینان ہمارے ثابت ہوا ہے کہ مذکوران بالا فرار ہو گئے ہیں یا انہوں نے وارنٹ کی تعمیل سے گریز کرنے کیلئے اپنے تئیں روپوش کیا ہے لہذا اس اشتہاری رو سے حکم دیا جاتا ہے کہ مسمیان مذکوران کو لازم ہے کہ وہ بتاریخ 21-09-2026 عدالت ہذا بمقام ڈھاڈر ناٹس مذکور کی تعمیل کیلئے حاضر ہوں مفرور ملزمان کی جانب سے مسٹر ثیر محمد مری ایڈووکیٹ کو کونسل مقرر کیا جاتا ہے۔

اسپیشل جج انسداد دہشتگردی کورٹ کچھی بمقام ڈھاڈر

PRQ No 1009/24-08-2026

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CORRIGENDUM IN DATE

It is in reference to the tender advertisement issued by the Deputy Director, Agriculture On Farm Water Management, District Pishin, published in daily newspapers on 12th August 2026 vide PRQ No. 762/11-08-2026. The time of the following PSDP will be read as;

S#	TSE Number	Name of Work/s	Total Estimated Cost	Last Date and Time of Bid Submission	Tender Opening Time
1	TSE-2627081161603	WSS ALONG WITH SOLAR SYSTEM & 3 INCH DYA PVC PIPE AT ASIF MUHALA AT TEHSIL PISHIN PSDP 2026-27 S.NO. 95[Z2026.3983]	14,850,866	31 August 2026 till 09:15 AM	31 August 2026 till 10:15 AM
2	TSE-2627081161913	ENHANCEMENT OF AGRICULTURE PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH OFWM AT KILLI RIZWANULLAH NEW REGI DISTRICT PISHIN PSDP 2026-27 S.NO 51 [Z2026.2937]	19,801,820	31 August 2026 till 09:30 AM	31 August 2026 till 10:30 AM
3	TSE-2627081161963	ENHANCEMENT OF AGRICULTURE PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH OFWM AT KILLI NAIMAT JALAL ABAD BATTEZAI PISHIN PSDP 2026-27 S.NO. 69[Z2026.3789]	19,802,434	31 August 2026 till 09:45 AM	31 August 2026 till 10:45 AM

The remaining terms & conditions will remain unchanged.

Deputy Director Agriculture On Farm Water Management District Pishin

PRQ No.995/24-08-2026

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President appreciates China's continued interest in supporting Pakistan's infrastructure, maritime development

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday called for an integrated approach to the proposed development of Keti Bunder Port, stressing that the project should be supported by reliable road connectivity, power and water supply, industrial infrastructure and other essential facilities.

The president was speaking during a presentation on the proposed development of Keti Bunder Port by China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC). Welcoming the Chinese delegation, he appreciated China's continued interest in supporting Pakistan's infrastructure and maritime development.

He said Keti Bunder had significant potential as an additional maritime gateway that could strengthen Pakistan's port and logistics network and support greater connectivity and trade.

He emphasised the need for close technical coordination between the Chinese side and relevant Pakistani authorities.

He also stressed that environmental sustainability should remain a key consideration, particularly the protection of the fragile ecosystem of the Indus Delta and the interests and livelihoods of local fishing communities. He encouraged continued technical engagement to further refine the master plan and identify an appropriate implementation and financing framework.

The Chinese delegation presented the Conceptual Master Plan for Keti Bunder Port, envisaging a new deep-water maritime gateway with multiple terminals, logistics and supporting infrastructure.

The proposed Phase-I development includes a multi-purpose terminal with a 500-metre quay, with a preliminary engineering cost estimate of approximately US$522.34 million.

The Chinese delegation comprised Wu Ping, Chief Representative of CHEC in Pakistan, Wang Zongde, Head of Marketing Department and Mr Xu Tielin, Engineer, along with Ali Raza, GM of Strategy and Marketing.

Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, Senators Saleem Mandviwala and Sherry Rehman, Sindh Minister for Energy, P&D Mr Nasir Hussain Shah, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Investment & Public Private Partnership Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar and Chief Secretary Sindh Syed Asif Hyder Shah also attended the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari speaking during a presentation on the proposed development of Keti Bunder Port by China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC).



ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

India's normalcy mantra in IIOJK belies ground realities

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has said that India's claims of normalcy and peace in occupied Jammu and Kashmir are far removed from the ground realities, where Kashmiris continue to face military repression, raids, cordon-and-search operations and arrests. According to Kashmir Media Service, the APHC spokesman, Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas, in a statement in Srinagar said the Modi regime was deliberately projecting a false image of normalcy in IIOJK to mislead the international community and conceal the grim situation prevailing in the occupied territory.

The Hurriyat said daily raids, CASOs, arrests, questioning and surveillance by Indian forces and investigative agencies had exposed New Delhi's hollow normalcy narrative. It said the massive deployment of Indian troops had transformed the occupied territory into a highly militarized zone, where the Kashmiri people continue to live under constant fear and pressure.

Pakistan can't afford another constitutional or political crisis: Nawaz

LAHORE, (Monitoring Desk): PML-N President Nawaz Sharif has reportedly warned that the country cannot afford to become embroiled in another constitutional or political crisis, as he discussed the prevailing political situation with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at Jati Umrah.

The reported remarks came during the Sharif family's weekly meeting, which assumed added significance amid political turbulence, contempt of court proceedings against the prime minister, and the growing controversy over the government's handling of former PM Imran Khan's medical treatment.

According to media reports, Nawaz Sharif inquired from Shehbaz Sharif why Imran, who is incarcerated, was taken to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) instead of Shifa International Hospital, as directed by the Supreme Court in its August 18 order.

The prime minister reportedly briefed his elder brother on the circumstances surrounding the decision.

The two brothers also discussed the government's possible response to the contempt proceedings moved by the PTI before the Supreme Court over alleged non-compliance with the apex court's order. Nawaz, who has served as the country's prime minister thrice, was quoted as stressing that Pakistan could not afford another constitutional or political crisis. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz also attended the weekly meeting.

Balochistan strengthening basic health units to stop rural maternity wards from becoming death traps

QUETTA, (APP): Jamal Uddin Malikyar still remembers the day his family rushed a pregnant woman to a health facility, hoping that medical care would save her life. Instead, the journey ended in tragedy. His 34-year-old cousin's brother Aminullah's wife had already delivered three children through normal deliveries. But during her fourth pregnancy in 2022, the family faced a problem that remains common for women in rural Baluchistan: the nearest basic health facility was there, but the medical staff needed to handle childbirth were not.

The family first took her to the Basic Health Unit Malikyar just three kilometers away from their home.

But there was no doctor available. With no option left, they began traveling to the BHU Dub Khanzai around 14 kilometers away. Before they could reach the BHU, Aminullah' s wife died on the way. For Jamal Uddin, the tragedy was not simply the loss of a loved one; it was a painful reminder that having a health center in a village does not necessarily mean that healthcare is accessible.

Jamal Uddin says the BHU in Malikyar was also badly affected by the floods of August 26, 2022. Roads were washed away, making travel even more difficult for residents, particularly when they needed medical treatment outside the area.

Although the BHU is now functional, he says key positions, including those of a female doctor and Lady Health Visitor (LHV), remain vacant. As a result, women requiring maternity care often have to travel to Dub Khanzai. Jamal Uddin is now hopeful that the recent announcement of new posts will finally bring an LHV to the Malikyar BHU. He believes that if the facility is properly staffed, other families may not have to experience the loss his family suffered. According to Jamal Uddin, families have to take maternity cases either to District Headquarters Hospital, around 12 kilometers away, or to the BHU Dub Khanzai, which is 14 kilometers away from Malikyar. Private doctors charge between Rs 8,000 and Rs 10,000 for each case, Jamal Uddin says. For poor families, this is not affordable. His cousin's brother's wife had already successfully delivered three children. There was no reason for the family to expect that the fourth delivery would end differently

Baluchistan carries Pakistan's highest maternal mortality burden. According to the Pakistan Maternal Mortality Survey 2019, Baluchistan has the highest maternal mortality ratio in Pakistan, with 298 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births. Bearing the province's staggering maternal mortality burden, the provincial health department has set its sights on a critical uphill battle: driving down the maternal mortality ratio from 298 to 200 deaths per 100,000 live births while aggressively tackling preventable fatalities during pregnancy and childbirth. A shortage of female healthcare workers data available on the website of the People's Primary Healthcare Initiative (PPHI) shows that its 903 functional BHUs have 396 Lady Health Visitors, 351 midwives or traditional birth attendants and only 63 female medical officers.

PPHI reported 24,589 normal deliveries at its BHUs during 2025.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Ms. Wajiha Qamar talking to media persons during her visits to the National Book Foundation.

Pakistan seeks IMO's urgent intervention to secure release of held seafarers

ISLAMABAD, (News Desk): Pakistan has sought urgent intervention from the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to secure the release and safe return of 10 Pakistani seafarers being held aboard MT Honour 25.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar made the request during a meeting with IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez in London, according to a statement from the Foreign Office on X. The MT Honour 25, a Palau-flagged product tanker, was seized on April 21, approximately 30 nautical miles off Somalia's Puntland region, with 17 crew members aboard, 10 of them Pakistani.

Family members of the Pakistani crew have expressed growing concern over the fate of their loved ones and appealed to the government to intensify efforts to bring them home safely.

Dar thanked Dominguez for his support for ongoing efforts to secure the safe release of the 10 Pakistani seafarers and called for "urgent and effective institutional intervention" to ensure their early return.

The foreign minister reaffirmed Pakistan's longstanding commitment to the IMO and appreciated its role as the principal international regulatory body for safe, secure and efficient international shipping.

During the meeting, Dar also highlighted Pakistan's efforts to strengthen maritime governance.



An illuminated view of Memon Masjid beautifully decorated with colorful lights in connection with Eid Milad-un-Nabi (SAWW) celebrations at Memon Society.

Dar arrives in London on his official visit to UK

LONDON, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday arrived in London ahead of his official visit to the United Kingdom from 24 to 28 August 2026.

High Commissioner of Pakistan to the United Kingdom, Tipu Usman received the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister at London Heathrow Airport.

During the visit, the deputy prime minister will hold meetings with UK Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband and FCDO Minister of State for Pakistan Stephen Doughty, as well as with other senior members of the UK Government.

He will also meet with Arsenio Dominguez, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), to discuss regional maritime security. The deputy prime minister will also meet with Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.

PM Shehbaz, Sindh CM agree to maintain political harmony

ISLAMABAD, (Monitoring Desk): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Monday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, during which they agreed to maintain political harmony and consultation on matters of national importance.

In the meeting, they also discussed affairs related to politics, Sindh province, ongoing development projects, and matters of mutual interest, according to a statement issued by the PM Office.

The meeting was attended by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah, Information Technology Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, Economic Affairs Minister Ahad Khan Cheema and Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik.

The meeting comes amid growing tensions between the PPP and PML-N, with the PPP raising concerns over the recent Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections. The PML-N emerged as the winner of the polls, which the PPP has alleged were marred by rigging and irregularities.

Last week, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said the party would withhold its support for the PML-N-led government until its concerns, including over the AJK elections, were addressed.

'Imran would not have spent 3 years in jail if he wanted to make a deal': Gohar

ISLAMABAD, (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Monday rejected speculation about any deal involving incarcerated party founder Imran Khan, saying he would not have spent years locked up had he wanted to make an agreement.

"Imran does not make deals," Gohar said while speaking to reporters outside the Supreme Court, adding: "If he wanted to make a deal, he would not have spent three years in prison." Gohar also said Imran did not want to stay in hospital even for a minute and only wanted to undergo the required medical tests. The remarks come amid the PTI's legal challenge over the alleged violation of the Supreme Court's order concerning Imran's hospital transfer.

The PTI chairman said he had visited the top court to meet Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi, but the meeting could not take place as the top jurist was busy. He said he and senior lawyer Latif Khosa met the Supreme Court's registrar, who assured them that a bench could be constituted to hear the petition. Gohar said the bench could also be constituted through an online process, adding that he hoped the Supreme Court would schedule the petition for hearing soon.

The PTI filed a contempt petition in the apex court on Saturday, alleging that the authorities violated the court's directions regarding the former premier's transfer specifically to Shifa International Hospital. Imran was taken to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) during the intervening night of August 20 and 21 for a medical examination and was later taken back to Adiala jail after the examination was completed.



A Palestinian woman injured following an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City

MNA Farah underscores importance of skilled women

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) Managing Director Senator Capt. Shaheen Khalid Butt inaugurated a two-day exhibition at Aiwan-e-Quaid, F-9 Park, showcasing products made by women trainees from PBM's Women Empowerment Centres across Pakistan, in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Youth Programme and An-Nisa Dastkari School, as part of efforts to connect vocational skills with entrepreneurship, digital markets and sustainable livelihoods.

The exhibition being held on August 23 and 24, brought together women trainees, government representatives, diplomats, NGOs and other stakeholders to showcase a wide range of products prepared by women trained at PBM centres across the country.



Ukraine Defense Minister Denys Shmyhal, Britain's Prime Minister Andy Burnham, Finland's President Alexander Stubb, Lithuania's President Gitanas Nauseda, and Estonia's President Alar Karis attend a commemorative ceremony on Ukraine's 35th Independence Day outside St. Sofia cathedral in Kyiv, Ukraine.

India police used excessive force during protests: Amnesty

NEW DELHI, (Agencies): Indian police used excessive force, including electric shock devices and pellet guns, against youth-led protests that forced the education minister to resign last month, Amnesty International said on Monday.

A report from the rights group clashes with the police account that force was used only after protesters turned violent, and comes after India's Supreme Court set up a panel on Thursday to investigate violence by both police and demonstrators.

Demonstrations in the capital, New Delhi, triggered by the leak of the national medical entrance test, turned violent on July 20 when thousands of protesters attempted to march towards parliament.

Amnesty said witness testimony and visual evidence it had verified confirmed the use of "pellet-firing shotguns, tear gas launchers, grenades, batons and electric shock devices against protesters" in Delhi and the eastern state of Bihar.

Amnesty said it had also verified two instances of a police officer "unlawfully using lethal force against a crowd" in Bihar's Siwan district. No one was killed.

"The weapons were deployed in a manner that breached international law and standards and domestic policing guidelines," it added. Amnesty said that there were "isolated incidents of protesters throwing stones", but that the "heavy-handed response was state-sanctioned violence masked as crowd control." Delhi Police said in a Supreme Court hearing last week they had used force only after protesters "resorted to violence".

They said anti-social elements "masquerading as aggrieved students" caused "grievous injuries" to security forces.

On Friday, opposition leader Rahul Gandhi staged a sit-in outside a Delhi police station with a 19-year-old protester who said he was injured by pellets during the July 20 demonstration.

Gandhi demanded a police investigation into the shooting, and officers later registered a case over the complaint. Led by the online Cockroach Janta Party, the protests broadened from anger over exam irregularities into a wider movement over unemployment, opportunities for young people and what critics describe as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's increasingly authoritarian rule.

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