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Calls for urgent civil-military balance in Balochistan

If not operations, opposition must offer alternative solution to counter terrorism: CM Balochistan

Mir Sarfraz Bugti says political point-scoring has become a particular pastime for some people

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has said that maintaining a civil-military balance in Balochistan is an urgent need of the hour. In the war against terrorism, security forces must be provided with a conducive environment to take effective action. The state cannot, under any circumstances, leave its citizens, security personnel and law-enforcement agencies at the mercy of terrorists.

He expressed these views on Saturday while speaking during the session of the Balochistan Assembly on an issue raised by Leader of the Opposition Mir Younis Aziz Zehri on a point of order.

The Chief Minister of Balochistan said that on this occasion he would first like to mention the recent terrorist incident referred to by Member of the Provincial Assembly Noor Muhammad Dummar. The way the terrorists attacked the security forces and brutally martyred our people, there are very few words to condemn it. The status of the martyrs is very high, and we believe that the martyrs will be under the intercession of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and are in a better place than this world.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that from the very first day, he had been trying to convey before a representative and respected House such as the Balochistan Assembly that, in order to understand terrorism, it must be understood that the security forces are currently operating in a "grey zone."

He said that his previous statement had been presented by the Leader of the Opposition out of context, and political point-scoring had become a particular pastime for some people. He said that some people describe him as a representative of the ISPR; however, the reality is that the state of Pakistan and this very respected House had entrusted him with the responsibility of presenting the state narrative, the government narrative, and the government's position on terrorism and development before the Assembly.

The Chief Minister said that Balochistan cannot, under any circumstances, afford an imbalance between the civil and military sides; rather, under the current circumstances.



QUETTA: Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir receives a briefing on the prevailing security situation, operational preparedness and measures to maintain peace and stability in Balochistan during his visit to Quetta Garrison



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti expresses his views during the assembly session.

Governor stresses joint efforts to tackle poverty in Balochistan

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Governor Balochistan Jafar Khan Mandokhail, on the occasion of World Charity Day, said that the efforts of all philanthropists, welfare organizations, volunteers and social workers devoted to the spirit of public service across the province are highly commendable. Their role is crucial in making life easier for orphaned children, the poor and widows. Although the welfare of the people and the protection of their dignity and honor is the foremost responsibility of the government, and the government is striving to strengthen the sectors of education, health, social welfare and public welfare while fulfilling its constitutional and moral responsibilities, collective efforts are also essential in view of Balochistan's vast and scattered population and the prevailing economic difficulties.

The Governor of Balochistan urged all affluent individuals, the business community and those associated with welfare organizations to work together with the government to support educational institutions, orphaned children, widowed women, patients in need of medical treatment and people requiring assistance in their daily lives. He said that while helping someone, it is essential to take special care of their self-respect.

He said that even a small effort and a good deed on your part can change the lives of people suffering from financial hardship. Our great national traditions and values teach us to support one another in difficult times and demonstrate solidarity in times of sorrow and hardship.

If we promote the spirit of public service and generosity, severe poverty can be reduced.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting on the Export Development Fund

Economic stability, empowerment destiny of Balochistan's talented women: Dr Rubaba

QUETTA, (VoM Report): The Government of Balochistan has taken another important step towards the economic empowerment of women and providing them with dignified employment opportunities. Under the Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme, 600 women across the province have completed their training, while 100 trained women have practically started their businesses.

Support cheques were also distributed among the women who launched business activities under the Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme, organized by the Balochistan Women Development Department. Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi, Adviser to the Chief Minister of Balochistan for Women Development, distributed cheques of Rs. 200,000 each to 100 women to start their businesses, providing a total of Rs. 20 million in financial assistance.

On the occasion, Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi said that the Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme marks the beginning of a new era of economic empowerment for women in Balochistan and is an important step towards implementing the vision of Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

She said that 600 women have benefited from the first comprehensive Women Entrepreneurship Programme in the history of Balochistan, while financial assistance has been provided to 100 women entering the practical business world so that they can start their own businesses and contribute to the economic stability of their families.

The Adviser for Women Development said that the Government of Balochistan is not limiting its efforts to merely making women skilled; it is also providing them with the necessary resources and opportunities to turn their skills into businesses.

The economic empowerment of women will not only strengthen households but will also promote the local economy of the province.

Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi said that the destiny of Balochistan's talented women is not poverty but economic stability, empowerment and development. Economically empowering women is, in fact, an investment in a better future for families and coming generations.

Peace, prosperity of Balochistan people remain state's top priority: Field Marshal

RAWALPINDI, (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, visited Quetta Garrison and interacted with commanders and commanding officers of the field formations. During the visit, the COAS was given a comprehensive briefing on prevailing security environment, operational preparedness and ongoing measures aimed at maintaining peace and stability across Balochistan, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). Matters related to institutional coordination and support to the socio-economic development of the province were also reviewed. The CDF appreciated the high standards of professionalism, operational readiness and selfless commitment displayed by troops.

He underscored importance of continued coordination among Law Enforcement Agencies and other state institutions to consolidate peace and maintain an environment conducive to sustained economic activity and development.

The Field Marshal reaffirmed that the peace, prosperity and well-being of the people of Balochistan remain central to the efforts of the state.

Pakistan's defence history filled with shining examples of sacrifices, courage: CM Bugti

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti, in his message on the occasion of Defence Day of Pakistan, said that September 6 is a day in our national history that reminds us of the unparalleled sacrifices of our armed forces and those great sons of the nation who sacrificed their lives for the defence of the motherland. The Chief Minister said that during the 1965 war, officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army demonstrated extraordinary bravery and determination and thwarted the enemy's designs. The nation continues to pay tribute to the martyrs and veterans who made history by protecting the security and sovereignty of the country.

New administrative units to be formed only with people's consent: Naqvi

LAHORE, (Monitoring Desk): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday said the creation of new administrative units should be based on the people's wishes, describing a system reset as the need of the hour.

"Reset does not mean breaking down the system. Reset means making wrongs right," he said, clarifying that his earlier remarks about the system's collapse were not directed at any particular party.

"If a company does not work, deliberations are held on how to make it work," he added.

The security czar said work on creating new administrative units would only proceed if backed by the people of Pakistan.

Naqvi's remarks come amid an ongoing debate over Pakistan's governance structure, with ruling allies the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) appearing divided over the creation of new administrative units or provinces.

All funds available with EDF utilised to facilitate business community: PM

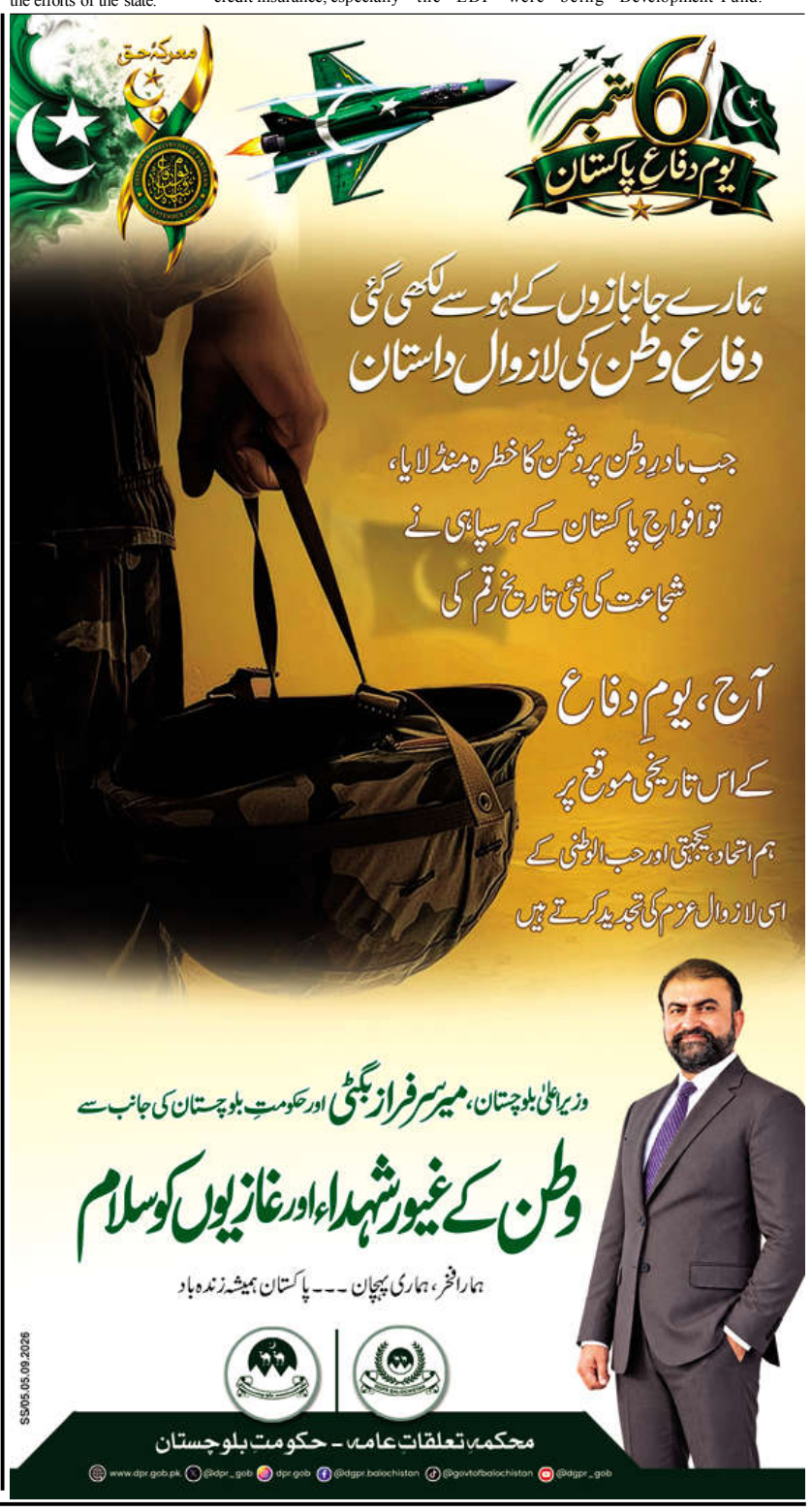
LAHORE, (APP):Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday welcomed the provision of export insurance coverage by the Export Development Fund (EDF) and the Export-Import Bank of Pakistan (EXIM Bank), particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), saying the initiative would help increase the country's exports.

Chairing a meeting on the Export Development Fund, he said the Rs3 billion Risk Pool would expand access to export credit insurance, especially for SMEs, and facilitate the business community in increasing the volume of exports.

He termed the initiative a highly welcome step for promotion of small and medium-sized businesses in the country and appreciated the EDF team for undertaking reforms aimed at strengthening the national economy. PM Shehbaz Sharif said that following restructuring and reforms, the leadership of the EDF had been entrusted to private-sector professionals. He added that all funds available with the EDF were being utilised to facilitate the business community.

"These measures reflect the Government of Pakistan's commitment to promoting the national economy and increasing exports," the PM said, adding that such initiatives would help Pakistan emerge as a global hub for investment. He said the government's measures were aimed at fulfilling its commitment to promoting an export-led economy.

During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed on the restructuring and reforms of the Export Development Fund.



THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

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Balochistan's vast mineral potential

The recent meeting of the Mineral Investment Facilitation Authority (MIFA), chaired by Provincial Finance and Minerals Minister Mir Shoaib Nosherwani, reflects a decisive and forward-looking approach by the Balochistan government to unlock the province's vast mineral potential while safeguarding the interests of its people. At a time when economic resilience and sustainable development are paramount, this initiative signals both clarity of vision and seriousness of purpose.

Balochistan's mineral wealth has long been recognized as one of its greatest assets, yet for years it remained underutilized due to outdated frameworks and inconsistent policy direction. The government's renewed focus on reforming the mining sector demonstrates a clear commitment to turning this potential into tangible prosperity. By prioritizing mining as a cornerstone of economic policy, the provincial leadership is not only acknowledging its importance but actively working to modernize and strengthen it.

A particularly noteworthy aspect of the meeting was the discussion on revising mineral royalty rates and associated fees, which have remained unchanged since 2017. Updating these rates is both timely and necessary. It reflects an understanding that economic conditions evolve, and policies must adapt accordingly to ensure fairness, competitiveness, and increased revenue generation. The unanimous recommendation by MIFA to move forward with these adjustments underscores a rare and commendable consensus among stakeholders.

Equally important is the government's balanced approach toward growth and responsibility. The emphasis on developing a comprehensive strategy to protect mine owners and workers highlights a progressive shift toward inclusive development. Economic expansion without worker safety and welfare is unsustainable, and the government's recognition of this reality strengthens confidence in its reform agenda. By integrating labor protection with economic planning, the authorities are laying the foundation for a more stable and equitable mining ecosystem.

The presence of key policymakers, technical experts, and industry representatives at the meeting further reinforces the credibility of this initiative. It reflects a collaborative governance model where decisions are informed by diverse perspectives, ensuring that reforms are both practical and impactful.

This session of MIFA marks more than just a routine policy discussion—it represents a meaningful step toward institutional reform and economic transformation. By modernizing regulatory frameworks, enhancing revenue streams, and prioritizing the well-being of workers, the government is positioning Balochistan as a more attractive and responsible destination for investment in the mining sector.

In a province where a significant portion of the population relies on mining for their livelihood, such reforms carry profound implications. They promise not only increased economic activity but also improved living standards and greater social stability. If implemented effectively, these measures could serve as a model for resource management across the country.

The government's proactive stance deserves recognition. By aligning economic ambition with social responsibility, it is charting a path that is both pragmatic and visionary—one that holds the promise of long-term prosperity for Balochistan and its people.

US-Iran stand-off: conflicting perspectives

INAM UL HAQUE

The impasse in the second round of peace talks stems from Iran exhibiting intransigence and the US considering these parleys as a waste of time, for Iran not conceding on the core demand of halting uranium enrichment. The US proposals envisage a concurrent two-stage process, including ending the war first, and simultaneously addressing more contentious issues, like Iran's nuclear programme.

The Iranian proposition spans a sequenced framework; ending hostilities first, followed by CBMs like removing the maritime blockade, and thereafter the broader negotiations. Tehran wants the removal of the blockade as a precondition for further talks. Its approach comprises immediate de-escalation, while preserving the leverage (SoH) for the longer-term settlement.

Contrarily, the US considers postponement of nuclear discussions a risk, which weakens its centrality. Washington also cites 'tremendous infighting and confusion' within Iranian leadership, where the IRGC/Pasdaran is considered to be calling the shots, and not the political leadership, after the killing of the country's civil and military leadership. In a nutshell, Tehran seeks phased relief and recognition of its position, whereas Washington requires comprehensive guarantees upfront. Pakistan is trying hard to 'narrow the differences' before a second formal meeting. However, there seems to be an agreement on keeping the ceasefire open-ended, allowing time for diplomats to address complex issues.

President Trump cancelled a planned Islamabad trip by envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, announcing that Iran could call, once ready. Iran has, for now, shunned a face-off with the US and instead prefers dealing through intermediaries, due to a trust deficit and President Trump's eroding credibility. Consequently, the SoH remains closed in double blockade by US CENTCOM and IRGC, choking most of the Gulf LNG supply and around 20% of the global oil shipments, destined mainly for Asia, comprising 85% of its energy needs.

In global markets, major US stock indices (S&P 500 and Nasdaq) have hit record highs, due to robust energy trading, whereas the broader global market is pressured because of supply inconsistency and risks. With global oil prices hovering over $100-$109 a barrel, companies like Exxon and Aramco have reaped hefty profits; however, gas station inflation has hit international and US consumers hard.

Defence stocks have surged, and companies like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and Boeing are primary beneficiaries of this conflict. Chip stocks have registered gains for AI firms like Intel. Likewise, yields on the 10-year US Treasury bonds have risen. Gold has edged higher, as investors are increasingly shifting towards safer stocks.

Against this backdrop and despite no immediate prospects of direct talks, backchannel diplomacy remains active. Iran's FM Abbas Araghchi returned to Islamabad on April 25 after visiting Oman, travelling on a Pakistani aircraft, and later meeting Gen Asim Munir. Araghchi carried written messages outlining Tehran's position on key issues, like its 'nuclear red lines and SoH'. He later travelled to St Petersburg, where he met President Putin, Iran's close ally. Several regional countries are also actively involved in de-escalation. Araghchi also made separate contacts with Qatari and Saudi counterparts. GCC and Saudi Arabia want their concerns to be 'reflected' in the peace process. Turkey is also engaging the US, Iran and Oman.

President Trump has desisted from incendiary posts on social media, and has not indicated resuming hostilities; and the fragile ceasefire is so far holding. It seems that, given the stakes, both sides do not want to return to a shooting war – the US for domestic political costs, due to depleting ammunition stocks, and given the world reaction; and Iran because of attrition it has suffered and the economic fallout from the maritime blockade.

Although Iran publicly sticks to defiance and declares not to enter 'imposed negotiations' under threats or blockade. As a side development, Hezbollah in Lebanon refuses to be part of the ceasefire with Israel, brokered last week in Washington. Hezbollah's five peace conditionalities include: a) halt to Israeli aggression; b) withdrawal from occupied lands; c) prisoner release; d) displaced Lebanese returning to their homes; and e) reconstruction.

This seemingly is an over-ask, given the military situation on the ground, and the crushing blows suffered by Hezbollah in this war. Hezbollah, as an indispensable powerbroker, is trying to raise the 'stakes for parties mediating the conflict' and is simply bypassing the Lebanese government, which is eager for a settlement with Israel. That conflict, hence, will likely complicate the US-Iran mediations.

On the Iranian side, the sentiment seems more confident, hawkish and understandably angry. After absorbing and retaliating to the US-Israeli onslaught for over a month, the IRGC, with residual military capability, could perhaps continue the combat for up to three more months. Besides, the IRGC and most of the world consider restoration of peace squarely a US responsibility which, along with its protégé Israel, started this unnecessary war of choice.

Internally, IRGC is in the driving seat; however, ironically, generals are not known as great peacemakers and compromisers, given their training and outlook. Their world is a binary of black and white, with little or no shades of grey, and that remains the hallmark of politicians. Aligning the IRGC's worldview and conflict outlook with political reality would be a tough ask and lengthy process, especially after the stalemate that the IRGC has imposed on the mighty US-Israel coalition.

Ayatullah Mojtaba Khamenei was severely wounded on the first day of the war, suffering injuries to one hand and one leg and burn wounds to the face and lips. He is now awaiting a prosthetic leg. He reportedly speaks with difficulty and will eventually need to undergo plastic surgery. His own ties to the IRGC, his appointment as an IRGC favourite, his health, his reclusiveness due to security concerns, and the imperatives of regime survival bring the IRGC to the forefront as a lead player in deciding strategy and resource allocation.

Attacks on Israel and US interests in the Arab world, besides the blockade of SoH, are the Guards' strategic interests. Additionally, the generals reckon that they have contained the threat, hence the continued defiance. It was they who agreed to the ceasefire and who prevailed upon the Iranian government not to send their delegation to the Islamabad Peace Talks 2.0. Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, too, has an IRGC background, and several Guard generals participated as delegates in Islamabad Talks 1.0. Some fringe firebrands, like the ultra-hardline Saeed Jalili, continue to influence the media.

So, fingers are still crossed!

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Skills, not slogans: rethinking Pakistan's education divide

MEHAK ANWAR

Pakistan's education crisis no longer hides behind dense policy documents or statistical abstractions; it is laid bare in a stark and persistent divide. While urban literacy rates have climbed past 70%, rural Pakistan continues to fall dangerously behind. This is more than a disparity; it is a structural failure that speaks of years of uneven governance, weak delivery mechanisms, and policy priorities that rarely translate beyond paper. Successive governments have pledged reform, backed by rising allocations and an expanding institutional footprint.

Yet in districts like Tharparkar, the ground reality remains stubbornly unchanged. Access to education particularly for girls is still uncertain, shaped by geography, poverty and systemic neglect. Schools may exist in official records, but meaningful opportunity remains out of reach for many.

The issue, therefore, is not a shortage of policy ambition. It is the chronic failure of implementation, the absence of sustained follow-through, and an inability to convert investment into measurable, lasting impact.

Pakistan produces thousands of graduates each year, yet far too many remain unemployed or underemployed.

According to recent labour force estimates, youth unemployment in Pakistan hovers around 8–10%, with the rate significantly higher among young women.

The problem is not simply job scarcity, but a system that continues to prioritise degrees over skills. Technical and vocational education has yet to receive the sustained attention it demands. And despite Pakistan requiring nearly two million skilled workers annually, formal training systems produce only a fraction of that, leaving a widening gap between education and employability.

Provincial bodies such as STEVTA and federal initiatives under PSDP continue to receive funding.

However, structural inefficiencies, weak oversight and a disconnect from market realities limit their effectiveness.

The result is a cycle where investment does not translate into employability, particularly in rural and underserved regions.

And yet, within this broader failure, there are signs of what works.

In Tharparkar, a targeted intervention funded by a private firm and implemented by Thar Education Alliance, is quietly challenging this status quo. The Girls Pathway to Skill Development programme focuses on something many public initiatives overlook: practical, market-relevant skills for young women who would otherwise remain excluded from economic participation.

By training girls in computer graphic design, sewing and embroidery, the programme goes beyond conventional literacy.

It equips participants with tools to earn, contribute to household income, and, crucially, shift longstanding social dynamics that have historically limited women's roles in such communities.

What sets this initiative apart is not just its intent, but its design. It is localised, outcome-driven and directly linked to economic opportunity.

Participants are not merely trained; they are prepared for independence, with tangible support such as equipment and continued mentorship.

This is where the contrast with public policy becomes stark.

While government programmes often struggle with scale and delivery, this collaboration demonstrates the effectiveness of focused, well-executed interventions. It shows that when funding is paired with accountability and on-ground understanding, results follow - even in the most challenging environments.

However, isolated success stories cannot carry the weight of a national crisis.

Pakistan's youth bulge often described as a demographic dividend will become a liability if the country fails to invest in skills at scale. Bridging the rural-urban divide requires more than budget increases; it demands systemic reform, stronger monitoring, and a shift in priorities from access alone to employability.

Public-private partnerships offer a practical way forward. Initiatives like this one provide a blueprint that the state can learn from and replicate.

For millions of young Pakistanis, the cost of inaction is measured in lost opportunities, constrained choices, and unrealised potential.

And unless that changes, Pakistan will not just fall short of its ambitions, it will actively hold back the very generation meant to achieve them.

The writer is a Mass Communication graduate and a human rights activist

Self-inflicted energy crisis

BENAZIR SAMAD

In the Karimabad valley of Chitral, Abdul Rahim's monthly electricity bill came to Rs1,500. The power comes from a community hydropower project run by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Pakistan's Hindu Kush mountains. Some 20 kilometers down the valley, families on the national grid pay between Rs6,000 and Rs7,000 for the same month. In that short stretch of road, Pakistan's energy crisis stops being a mystery.

The Economist recently ranked Pakistan among the world's biggest losers from the Gulf energy shock. Fossil fuels account for more than 30% of its total import bill, nearly 90% of that oil sourced from the Middle East, making energy shocks a direct trigger for current account crises. We saw this after the Ukraine war.

We're seeing it again after the Iran war. That chronic vulnerability points to a deeper question: how did a country with 60,000 MW of untapped hydropower potential, Chinese investment on its doorstep, and rivers, sun and wind in abundance, end up this exposed? The answer isn't resource scarcity. Political economy already determined the investment – and it chose wrong.

When China arrived with CPEC, a $60 billion infrastructure programme with energy at its centre, Pakistan had a once-in-a-generation opportunity. CPEC's first phase poured more than $33 billion into the energy sector. Nearly two-thirds of that generation capacity went to coal. Coal dominated CPEC not because it was the best energy solution or Pakistan lacked alternatives but because coal served a different purpose entirely.

Nawaz Sharif won the 2013 election on a promise to end load-shedding - coal could be built within an election cycle. Hydro couldn't. Punjab was the electoral base; hydro potential sat in smaller regions like Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. Sindh was no different. The PPP government, sitting on one of the world's great wind corridors in Jhimpir-Gharo, also prioritised coal. Both major parties, both major provinces, made the same calculation.

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan together hold over 45,000 MW of identified hydropower potential, which is 75% of Pakistan's total. Both received a fraction of CPEC's energy investment. In Gilgit-Baltistan, the shelving of a single $14 billion hydropower plant wiped out 98% of CPEC funds to the province – the same region that holds Pakistan's greatest hydropower potential.

Poor planning is another key factor. Even where the national grid did arrive, it arrived badly. Grid connectivity in topographies like Chitral, with its narrow valleys, is uniquely challenging. It needed to be done once, with proper planning. Chitral's Golan Gol project feeds 436 million units annually into the national grid, but captures only a fraction of the valley's actual estimated hydropower potential of 6,000 to 7,000 MW. To go back now means new transmission towers, new environmental disruption, new costs that careful planning could have avoided entirely.

The consequences are already being lived. Chitral residents took WAPDA to court over high-tension transmission lines running directly over their homes - a safety and health hazard that made the property beneath them worthless. They won. WAPDA was ordered to move the lines. It couldn't. The lines had been laid without accounting for what surrounded them, and there was no viable path to correct the mistake. A court order remains unimplementable. That is what short-term or bad planning looks like.

Meanwhile, the Sahiwal coal plant, CPEC's flagship energy project built in Punjab on imported coal, today operates at 41% utilisation while consumers pay for electricity it isn't producing. According to a CSIS analysis of CPEC's first five years, only 34% of energy projects were completed overall, and wind and solar received just 8% of generation capacity. Pakistan chose this.

The numbers make the case. Pakistan has a 10 to 12 GW surplus of generation capacity. Consumers pay Rs2.5 to 2.8 trillion every year for idle plants not producing a single unit of electricity. Yet millions of households remain without electricity, and millions more face 12 hours or more of daily load-shedding.

The rapid rise of solar in Pakistan is often celebrated as progress, but the boom is not a policy success story either. It is what happens when a state fails so completely that people opt out of it entirely. Electricity tariffs rose 155% in three years. People bought solar panels in desperation. Pakistan became the world's third-largest market for Chinese solar panels almost overnight, as solar became affordable for the middle class.

Now the government is cutting buyback rates and imposed an 18% import tax on panels, which was later reduced to 10% after public backlash, to protect the broken grid those same people abandoned. Also, there were reports of the government going further, requiring licences for solar users and introducing additional fees, even for smaller systems that were previously exempt. The Ministry of Power Division has, however, denied such reports. Anyway, as a matter of fact, the state built overcapacity with the wrong technology, priced people off the grid, watched them leave, and is now penalising them for leaving. That is not a solar success story. It is a governance failure in another form.

Pakistan's energy crisis is self-inflicted, a clear example of how short-sighted government policies play politics with essential human needs instead of solving them. The Pakistani government cynically used coal as a primary energy source despite the fact that it was polluting and required coal imports. The contracts that govern Pakistan's LNG terminals follow the same logic and so does every other energy decision Pakistan has made in the last two decades.

The government apparently felt that a longer-term strategy, properly communicated, which gives greater emphasis to renewables will not work politically because people want more power now regardless of the cost or inefficiencies. That is not mismanagement. That is a choice about who the system is designed to serve. It is time for the government to realise that decades of neglect cannot be addressed through short-sighted fixes that often create more problems than they solve. Pakistan cannot afford to abandon the pursuit of a sustainable energy future built on hydropower, solar and wind, even as it works to meet immediate demand. Pakistan will never get out of its "developing country" status unless it learns, as Americans say, to walk and chew gum at the same time.

US-Iran agreement 'never been closer': FM Araghchi

TEHRAN, (Agencies): The United States and Iran have "never been closer" to a deal on ending the war in the Middle East, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Friday.

"The Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding has never been closer," Araghchi wrote on the social media platform X, referring to the Pakistani capital, which hosted previous U.S.-Iran talks.

The apparent breakthrough in negotiations comes after Iran exchanged fire with the U.S. and Israel over three days this week, threatening to return the Middle East to full-scale war.

"Pending its finalization, the media should refrain from entering speculation about its content," Araghchi added, after purported details of the accord were published by Iranian media.

"In line with our responsible and transparent approach, all details will be shared with the public in due course," Araghchi added.

U.S. President Donald Trump has said multiple times in recent weeks that the countries were on the cusp of a deal. The war launched by the U.S. and Israel on Feb. 28 has rattled the Middle East and virtually shut down oil and natural gas shipments from the Persian Gulf. A fragile cease-fire has been in place since April 7.

The regional officials said the emerging deal is expected to pave the way for reopening the Strait of Hormuz, the phased lifting of sanctions on Iran, and the release of frozen Iranian assets. These officials, who spoke to media on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the negotiations, declined to discuss further details.

A senior U.S. official said key terms in the emerging agreement include the removal and destruction of Iran's nuclear material and the dismantling of Tehran's nuclear program.

The U.S. official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to provide details about the sensitive talks. Underscoring the fragility of the talks, Trump on Friday lashed out at Iranian officials on social media and said: "They better get their act together, and FAST!"

Iran's nuclear program has been a key point of division. That's the main reason the U.S. and Israel cited for going to war. Tehran has insisted its nuclear efforts are for peaceful purposes.

Also critical is Iran's effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping lane for oil and natural gas. Disruption of transit through the strait has crimped global energy supplies, driven up fuel prices and made food and other basics more expensive well beyond the region. The U.S. has responded since mid-April with a naval blockade of Iranian ports to choke off Iran's own oil exports.



Israeli forces restrict Palestinians' movement in the area by blocking entrances and exits with metal barriers as they raid the Old City area under the protection of Israeli forces in Hebron, West Bank, Palestine



Smoke rises after an Air Force F-4 Phantom fighter jet crashed, during the Athens Flying Week air show at Tanagra Air Base in Athens, Greece

Epstein tried to amass money, power, women in Africa: Report

MIAMI, (News Desk): Before his 2019 death in a Manhattan jail cell, convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein built connections across Africa's elite. According to a report by Miami Herald on Wednesday, Epstein tried to amass money, power and women across the continent. When Senegal investigated former President Abdoulaye Wade's son for corruption, Epstein supported him with his Palm Beach mansion and extensive legal funding, even hiring a top firm to lobby US officials for his release, the report said.

"[V]ery glad to have you back," Epstein wrote to Karim Wade, son of Abdoulaye Wade, shortly after he was released from prison. "[W]e can skype when you like … we can share incarceration stories," the report said.

He also pursued ties with Libya's Muammar Gaddafi in 2010, then shifted to anti-regime figures as Gaddafi's power faded, the report said.

Bill Gates rejects wrongdoing amid scrutiny over Epstein ties

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates defended himself against questions from U.S. lawmakers regarding his past association with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, insisting he had "never victimized anyone" as scrutiny over the relationship resurfaced.

Gates, one of the world's richest men and a leading philanthropist, was appearing before the House Oversight Committee for a transcribed interview about the disgraced financier, who died in a New York jail cell in 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges involving underage girls.

"I never witnessed nor had any indication that Epstein was engaged in ongoing criminal conduct. I never went to his island, his ranch, or his Florida home. I have never victimized anyone," Gates said in prepared testimony to the closed-door hearing that was posted on his personal website. Gates described his meeting with Epstein as "a grave error in judgment" and added, "if the time I spent with Epstein lent him any credibility, I am deeply sorry." The panel asked Gates to appear after documents released by the Justice Department raised new questions about his contacts with Epstein.

Several other high-profile figures have also appeared before the committee, including Bill and Hillary Clinton, and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick.

Simply appearing in Epstein-related documents does not indicate evidence of a crime. The Epstein files include a 2013 draft email in which the financier appeared to suggest he had helped Gates manage the fallout from extramarital affairs, including by seeking antibiotics after a sexually transmitted infection.

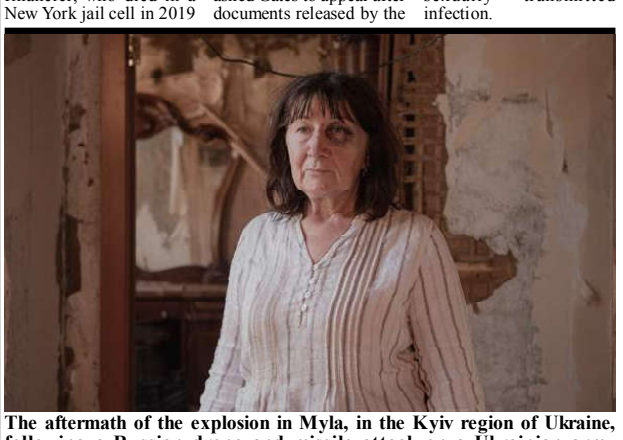
Iranians to safeguard nuclear, missile technologies as national assets: Mojtaba

TEHRAN (TASNIM) – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Mojtaba Khamenei emphasized the Iranian nation's determination to safeguard the country's achievements in the nuclear and missile fields as national assets.

"… Ninety million honorable Iranians, both inside and outside the country, … regard all identity-based, spiritual, human, scientific, industrial, and technological capacities—from nano and bio to nuclear and missile technologies—as national assets and will safeguard them just as they defend their land, sea, and air borders," the Leader said in a message issued on Thursday on the occasion of National Persian Gulf Day.

The Leader also said Iran will ensure the security of the Persian Gulf and eliminate the misuse of this waterway by hostile enemies. Ayatollah Khamenei's message is as follows: In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful One of the unparalleled blessings of Almighty God for the Muslim nations of our region, especially the noble people of Islamic Iran, is the gift of the "Persian Gulf." A blessing beyond a body of water, it has shaped part of our identity and civilization. In addition to connecting nations, it has created a vital and unique route for the global economy through the Strait of Hormuz and onward to the Sea of Oman. This strategic asset has, over past centuries, provoked the greed of many devils. The repeated invasions by European and American outsiders, along with insecurity, damages, and numerous threats imposed on regional countries, represent only a part of the malicious schemes of global arrogance against the inhabitants of the Persian Gulf—of which the latest example was the recent acts of aggression by the "Great Satan." The Iranian nation, possessing the largest share of the Persian Gulf's coastline, has made the greatest sacrifices for its independence and in confronting foreign aggressors—from expelling the Portuguese and liberating the Strait of Hormuz, which forms the basis for naming the 10th of Ordibehesht as National Persian Gulf Day, to resisting Dutch colonialism and the epics of resistance against British imperialism. The Islamic Revolution, however, marked a turning point in these struggles by cutting off the hands of arrogant powers from the Persian Gulf region. Today, after two months since the largest military aggression by global bullies in the region and the humiliating defeat of the United States in its plans, a new chapter for the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz is unfolding.

The nations of the Persian Gulf region, long accustomed to the silence and submissiveness of rulers before aggressors, have in the past sixty days witnessed remarkable displays of strength, vigilance, and bravery by the naval forces of the army and the IRGC, alongside the honor and courage of the people and youth of southern Iran in rejecting foreign domination.



The aftermath of the explosion in Myla, in the Kyiv region of Ukraine, following a Russian drone and missile attack on a Ukrainian army ammunition depot, continues. Mines, shells, and rocket fragments were scattered over an area of several kilometers, damaging numerous civilian homes across several hectares.



Young Iranian rollerbladers perform freestyle inline skating tricks and maneuvers on curved ramps at Navid Park in Tehran, Iran. Amid ongoing political tensions between Iran and the United States

Israel arrests 175 Gaza flotilla activists in int'l waters off Greece

ATHENS, (Monitoring Desk): The Israeli military arrested some 175 activists from a Gaza-bound aid flotilla after intercepting it in international waters off Greece, the country's Foreign Ministry and the flotilla's organizers said Thursday.

"Approximately 175 activists from more than 20 boats ... are now making their way peacefully to Israel," the ministry said in a statement.

The statement included a video of the activists aboard an Israeli navy ship.

The organizers of the latest flotilla of pro-Palestinian activists seeking to break Israel's blockade on Gaza had announced shortly beforehand that their boats were surrounded by Israeli military ships while off the coast of the Greek island of Crete.

"At the time of publishing this statement (06:30 Paris time, 04:30 GMT), at least 22 of the flotilla's 58 boats have been stormed by Israeli forces in complete violation of international law," the Global Sumud Flotilla said in a statement.

The flotilla set sail in recent weeks from Marseille in France, Barcelona in Spain and Syracuse in Italy.

Overnight from Wednesday to Thursday, the flotilla said its boats had been "illegally surrounded" by Israeli vessels.

The remaining boats in the flotilla are currently near Crete, according to the organization's live tracking on its website.

'Lasers, assault weapons'

"Our boats were approached by military speedboats, self-identified as 'Israel,' pointing lasers and semi-automatic assault weapons, ordering participants to the front of the boats and to get on their hands and knees," the organization had said.

Trump's rating tanks further as Iran war drives up domestic prices

WASHINGTON, (Monitoring Desk): President Donald Trump's approval rating has fallen to its lowest point of his current term as Americans grow more dissatisfied with his handling of the cost of living and the unpopular war with Iran, a new Reuters/Ipsos poll found.

The four-day poll completed Monday showed 34% of Americans approve of Trump's performance in the White House, down from 36% in a prior Reuters/Ipsos survey.

The majority of responses were gathered prior to the Saturday night shooting at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner, where Trump was due to speak. Federal prosecutors have charged the accused shooter with attempting to assassinate the president.

Trump's standing with the U.S. public has trended lower since taking office in January 2025, when 47% of Americans gave him a thumbs-up.

His popularity has taken a beating since the U.S. and Israel launched a war against Iran on Feb. 28 which has led to a surge in gasoline prices.

Only 22% of poll respondents approved of 's on the cost of living, down from 25% in the prior Reuters/Ipsos poll.

The survey, which was conducted nationwide and online, gathered responses from 1,014 U.S. adults and had a margin of error of 3 percentage points.

Pentagon official says Iran war costs US military $25B

WASHINGTON, (Monitoring Desk): U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth sharply criticized congressional Democrats as "the biggest adversary we face" during a heated hearing today, as the Pentagon disclosed the war with Iran has already cost an estimated $25 billion.

Hegseth told the House Armed Services Committee that boosting next year's Pentagon budget to an unprecedented $1.5 trillion will "maintain the world's most powerful and capable military."

Trump renews pressure on Israel's Herzog to pardon Netanyahu

WASHINGTON, (Monitoring Desk): US President Donald Trump has renewed his "pressure campaign" on Israeli President Isaac Herzog to pardon Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Trump told Axios on Wednesday that Netanyahu had raised his corruption trial when they spoke Tuesday night and told him he'd be back in court on Wednesday, instead of focusing on Iran.

"In the middle of a war? Give me a break," Trump said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cut short a court session in his corruption trial on Wednesday to hold security consultations related to an aid flotilla heading to the Gaza Strip.

Before the trial session began in Tel Aviv, Netanyahu asked to shorten Wednesday's hearing to three hours, but judges rejected the request.

He then asked to leave the courtroom for one hour to hold security consultations at the Defense Ministry and then return later, which the judges approved.

Gwyneth Paltrow under fire for complicity in Israeli occupation

NEW YORK, (Agencies): Hollywood actress Gwyneth Paltrow has come under fire after appearing in a promotional campaign for a high-end residential development in Israel, drawing criticism from activists and social media users amid heightened scrutiny of public figures' ties to the country.

Paltrow, 53, is the face of the "51 PARK" project, a high-end residential development in the coastal city of Herzliya, developed by Israeli real estate company Aviv Melisron.

UN warns Iran war could plunge 30 million people into poverty

PARIS, (Monitoring Desk): The U.S.-Israeli war on Iran has caused a surge in energy and fertilizer prices and could push more than 30 million people into poverty, the head of the U.N. Development Program said Thursday.



"It's development in reverse," Alexander De Croo told media on the sidelines of a G7 development meeting in Paris. "It took decades to build stable societies, to develop local economies, and it took only several weeks of war to destroy that," he added. "We did a study after six weeks of war and estimated that even if the conflict ended at that point, 32 million people would be pushed into precarity in 160 countries," said De Croo. The war has led to closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas flows in peacetime. Gulf nations are also important for many oil products and feedstocks to make fertilizer. A shortage of supplies and high prices has led to countries in Africa and Asia imposing a range of measures that include fuel rationing and shortening the work week to reduce consumption.



Thousands of Orthodox Christians gathered in Jerusalem to participate in the Procession of the Virgin Mary. Beginning at Gethsemane, the procession, accompanied by prayers and hymns, proceeded along the Via Dolorosa, the route believed to have been taken by Jesus on his crucifixion, to the Christian Quarter.

Women must 'fearlessly' report all gender-based discrimination at workplace: Fauzia

ISLAMABAD, (Agencies): Federal Ombudswoman for Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Fauzia Waqar said that women must report all kinds of gender-based discrimination at the workplace, including physical misconduct, denial of equal opportunities, disregard for merit, and ban on senior roles.

The amendment to the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010 passed by the senate on January 4, 2022 expanded the scope of the legislation by defining harassment as (i) any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours, stalking or cyber stalking or other verbal, visual or written communication or physical conduct of a sexual nature or sexually demeaning attitudes, including any gestures or expression conveying derogatory connotation causing interference with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, or the attempt to punish the complainant for refusal to comply to such a request or is made a condition for employment; or (ii) discrimination on basis of gender, which may or may not be sexual in nature, but which may embody a discriminatory and prejudicial mind-set or notion, resulting in discriminatory behavior on basis of gender against the complainant

Inculcating awareness regarding the law, Fauzia urged the women to report all incidents of workplace harassment sans fear.

Discussion on administrative structure in country should be above political interests: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Saturday clarified his remarks regarding new provinces, saying most of Pakistan's social and human resource indicators had continuously declined during the last fifteen years that needed significant improvement for achieving the national development goals.

He said the main reason for the country's poor performance in the social sector was the lack of transfer of powers and resources to the grassroots level after the 18th Amendment and the centralization of powers at the provincial level.

Ahsan Iqbal said that in order to accelerate the process of national development, Pakistan needed to overcome its weaknesses in human resources and the social sectors at a very fast pace. In this regard, he said, the country had two options.

The first option was to establish empowered local governments in 160 districts, which would be directly provided resources from the Provincial Finance Commission, or to establish 12 or 15 new provinces through consensus, as the current administrative structure had become overloaded with a population of 260 million.

He further said that the formation of 160 district governments was need of the hour so that powers could be transferred to the lowest level and development could be made possible in backward areas.

He said that results in any sector depended on effective implementation of projects and their local monitoring.

All over the world, the minister said, powers were being transferred to the doorstep of the people so that service delivery could be brought closer to them, while in Pakistan, no effective action had been taken in this direction.

Ahsan Iqbal clarified that unless powers were transferred to the grassroots level, sustainable solutions to public problems were not possible.

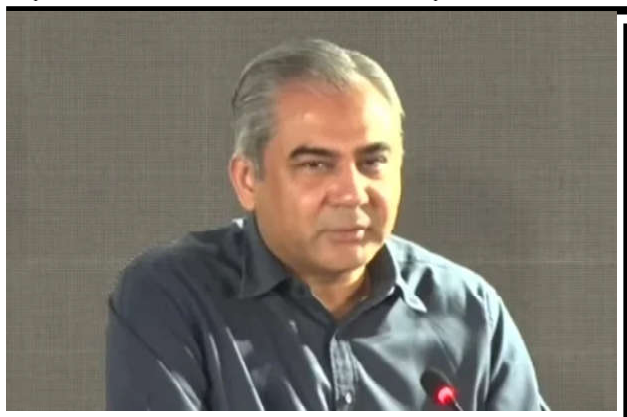
He said the success of any administrative structure depended on its ability to change and reform itself according to changing circumstances. "A system that remains static falls apart," he remarked.

He said the discussion on the administrative structure in the country should be above political interests and held in the light of the requirements of the country's development.

He added that politicians themselves should take the matter forward.



QUETTA: Provincial Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove presenting Balochistan Citizen Facilitation and Good Governance resolution during the assembly session.



LAHORE: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi speaks during an event

Christian community ready to make every sacrifice for sovereignty of country: Archbishop Arshad

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Archbishop of Rawalpindi-Islamabad Dr Joseph Arshad has reaffirmed that the Christian community stands with the Pakistan Armed Forces and is ready to make every sacrifice for the defence, security and sovereignty of the country.

In his message on Defence Day, he said September 6 was a historic day in Pakistan's history when the armed forces bravely faced a much larger enemy and foiled its designs through courage and sacrifice.

He said Defence Day reminded the nation of the sacrifices of martyrs and ghazis who laid down their lives to protect the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

"The nation will always remember and honour the sacrifices of its martyrs with the greatest respect," he said.

Martyrs true heroes of nation: NA Speaker

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has paid rich tribute to the martyrs and ghazis of the 1965 war, saying that the brave soldiers of the Pakistan armed forces rendered matchless sacrifices for the defence of the motherland and demonstrated exceptional courage, bravery and professionalism.

NA Speaker said that during the 1965 war, the Pakistan forces confronted a much larger enemy force with courage and determination, defeated it on every front and foiled its nefarious designs against Pakistan.

Ayaz Sadiq said that the unity and solidarity demonstrated by the Pakistani nation during the 1965 war, when the people stood firmly alongside their armed forces, represented a glorious chapter in the country's history.

He expressed these views in his message on Defence Day, observed every year with national spirit to pay tribute to the martyrs and ghazis of the 1965 war.

Ayaz Sadiq said that the Pakistan armed forces demonstrated extraordinary courage, bravery, professional competence and patriotism during the 1965 war and shattered the arrogance of the enemy.

NA Speaker said that the martyrs are the true heroes of the nation who sacrifice their today for the bright and safe future of the country. The nation, he added, would always remember their great sacrifices with the utmost respect and reverence.

Balochistan's development journey must continue despite challenges: Zahoor Buledi

Says successful and timely actions in Kalat and Bhag Kachhi demonstrates state's determination to counter terrorist elements

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Provincial Minister Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi has emphasized that the fight against terrorism requires a united national response, saying no single institution or segment of society can confront the threat alone.

In a statement, Buledi praised the security forces for their operation in Kalat and commended the Balochistan Police and Anti-Terrorist Force (ATF) for their action in Bhag Kachhi. He also paid tribute to the officers and personnel who took part in the operations.

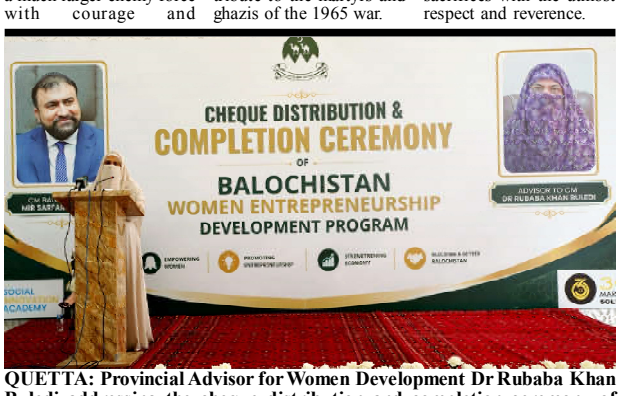
The minister said the successful and timely actions in Kalat and Bhag Kachhi demonstrated the state's determination to counter terrorist elements and protect peace and stability. He appreciated the courage, professionalism and resolve displayed by security and law enforcement personnel while responding to security threats.

Buledi said the sacrifices made by the security forces, police and other law enforcement agencies in protecting citizens and their property deserved the highest recognition. He described those who had lost their lives while performing their duties as national heroes.

He said the operation conducted by the Balochistan Police and ATF in Bhag Kachhi reflected the professional preparedness of law enforcement agencies and their ability to respond effectively to emerging security challenges. Such actions, he added, would also help reinforce public trust in security institutions.

The minister maintained that terrorist elements would not be permitted to obstruct Balochistan's progress toward peace, development and prosperity.

He said the government, security institutions and the people remained united in confronting forces seeking to undermine stability. Buledi called for further strengthening national efforts under Azm-e-Istehkam to eliminate terrorism and establish durable peace, stressing that the province's development journey must continue despite the challenges. He made it clear that those attempting to challenge the writ of the state should not expect leniency. Buledi once again acknowledged the services and sacrifices of personnel of the security forces, Balochistan Police and ATF involved in the Kalat and Bhag Kachhi operations.



QUETTA: Provincial Advisor for Women Development Dr Rubaba Khan Buledi addressing the cheque distribution and completion ceremony of Balochistan Women Entrepreneurship Development Program.

New provinces should be created on basis of administrative needs: Aleem

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President of the Istehkam Pakistan Party (IPP) Abdul Aleem Khan on Saturday welcomed Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal's views on the creation of new provinces, terming the growing political debate on the issue a positive development.

In a message posted on X, he said new provinces should be created on the basis of administrative needs and public convenience rather than linguistic or cultural considerations.

Abdul Aleem Khan said the issue was not the concern of any single political party but a matter linked to the future of the country and its people.

He urged all political parties to engage in serious and meaningful dialogue on the issue instead of using it for political point-scoring.

He said the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies had already passed resolutions supporting the creation of new provinces, while a rural-urban quota system had been in place in Sindh since 1972. The IPP president said new administrative units could help address public problems more effectively and improve governance.

He added that Pakistan needed to reorganize its administrative structure according to present and future requirements.

He said the IPP had already supported the creation of Hazara province in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and was ready to engage with all political parties and stakeholders on the matter.

Abdul Aleem Khan said differences of opinion were part of democracy.



QUETTA: MPA Farah Azeem Shah exchanging views with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti during the assembly session.

DPM Dar reviews report on recruitment policy of govt

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar Saturday chaired a meeting of the Committee constituted by the Prime Minister to review the report on Recruitment Rules/ Recruitment Policy of the federal government.

The committee reviewed measures to modernize and digitalize recruitment across the Federal Government, with a focus on greater transparency, improved efficiency, faster processing of vacancies, and reducing reliance on manual processes and interventions.

The DPM/FM stressed the need for a transparent, streamlined and technology-driven recruitment framework, aligned with the Prime Minister's vision of digital governance, merit-based recruitment and institutional reform.

The meeting was attended by SAPM Tariq Bajwa, Secretary Cabinet, and senior representatives of the Establishment Division, Cabinet Division & Law & Justice Division.

Govt to reduce tax burden through structural reforms: Kiyani

LAHORE, (APP): Minister of State for Finance & Revenue and Railways Bilal Azhar Kiyani said on Saturday that the government has introduced major tax relief and structural reforms to reduce burden on businesses, exporters, salaried persons and small traders, while efforts are being made to transform the FBR (Federal Board of Revenue) into a more transparent, facilitation-oriented and technology-driven institution.

He mentioned, super tax had been completely abolished for exporters and businesses with annual income between Rs 150 million and Rs 500 million, while the rate for companies earning more than Rs 500 million had been reduced from 10 to 08 per cent. For exporters, the tax deduction on export proceeds had also been reduced from 02 percent to 1.25 percent. He added, the government was also introducing a new tax operating model featuring centralized and faceless audit and assessment mechanisms to reduce individual discretion, harassment and possibilities of collusion.

He was addressing the business community here at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), where he was received by LCCI President Faheem Ur Rehman Saigol. Senior Vice President Tanveer Ahmad Sheikh, former FPCCI President Mian Anjum Nisar, former LCCI President Malik Tahir Javed, FBR Commissioners Amna Kamal and Shabana Aziz, and LCCI Executive Committee members were also present.

In his welcoming address, LCCI President Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigol said that Lahore Chamber, with around 48,000 member businesses comprising traders, industries and SMEs, represented one of Pakistan's most important business communities. He said the Chamber's membership had grown from around 32,000 to 48,000 during 2024-26.

Appreciating Bilal Azhar Kiyani's role and his previous engagement with the business community, particularly during discussions on SIFC-related matters.



SIALKOT: Minister for Defence Khwaja Muhammad Asif and Punjab Minister for Labour and Human Resources Muhammad Manshaullah Butt inaugurate the project for the revamping and upgradation of the Social Security Hospital, Daska Road

Pakistan's defence, security, stability depend upon national unity: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council and Coordinator of the National Paigham-e-Aman Committee, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Saturday called upon leaders of all schools of thought and faiths to renew their pledge to the security, stability, sovereignty and defence of Pakistan on the occasion of Defence Day on September 6. In a national appeal, Ashrafi urged religious and community leaders to announce their complete solidarity and cooperation with the Pakistan Armed Forces and national security institutions in confronting the Fitna al Khawarij, Fitna al Hindustan, terrorism and every conspiracy for destabilising Pakistan. He called for the sacrifices of the country's martyrs and the services of its war veterans to be honoured across the country, with tributes organised in mosques, seminaries, churches and other places of worship. Ashrafi also appealed to religious leaders and communities to offer special prayers for the security, stability, progress and prosperity of Pakistan. He emphasised that Pakistan's defence, security and stability depend upon national unity and solidarity between the people and the Pakistan Armed Forces.

Concluding his message, Ashrafi reaffirmed the nation's resolve to stand united for Pakistan's security and sovereignty.

From independence to shared prosperity:

Vietnam looks to stronger bonds with Pakistan: Ambassador Tuan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Ambassador of Viet Nam to Pakistan Pham Anh Tuan has said that Viet Nam's journey from independence to economic dynamism reflects the resilience, determination and sacrifices of generations of Vietnamese people, while expressing confidence in further strengthening friendship and cooperation with Pakistan.

Addressing a reception marking the 81st Anniversary of the National Day of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, the Ambassador said President Ho Chi Minh's proclamation of the Declaration of Independence in 1945 opened a new era of independence and self-determination for the Vietnamese nation.

"Over the past 81 years, generations of Vietnamese have devoted their efforts and sacrifices to defending our independence, building our country, and pursuing a better and happier life for our people," he said.



The Ambassador highlighted the transformative impact of Renovation Policy launched in 1986, saying Viet Nam had evolved from a lower middle income country into a dynamic and deeply integrated economy.

He said Viet Nam currently maintained diplomatic relations with 194 countries and was an active member of more than 70 international and regional organizations, reaffirming the country's commitment to being a friend, a reliable partner and a responsible member of the international community.

The envoy said foreign direct investment reached nearly US$40 billion, while the country's total import-export turnover crossed US$900 billion for the first time.

"Viet Nam is also becoming an increasingly attractive destination for high technology, digital industries and global supply chains," he added.

Referring to the successful 14th National Congress of the Communist Party of Viet Nam, the Ambassador said the country had set strategic directions for a new stage of development, with particular emphasis on innovation, digital transformation and sustainable growth. He said Viet Nam was determined to achieve its two centenary goals — becoming a developing country with modern industry and upper-middle income by 2030, and a developed, high-income country by 2045.

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