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No govt job to be sold or traded in Balochistan, warns CM Bugti

Mir Sarfraz Bugti vows to protect the employment rights of Balochistan's youth

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has warned that no government job in the province will be allowed to be sold or traded, asserting that any minister, secretary or other official found involved in such malpractice would face legal action if credible evidence was established.

Chairing a meeting of the Secretaries Committee, the chief minister said the government would protect the employment rights of Balochistan's youth and would not yield to pressure intended to compromise merit and transparency in recruitment. The meeting reviewed the performance of provincial departments, progress on the Annual Development Programme (ADP), recruitment procedures and a range of administrative matters.

Provincial Planning and Development Minister Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Finance Minister Mir Shoaib Nosherwani, Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan and administrative secretaries of various departments attended.

Bugti took serious notice of complaints regarding alleged irregularities in recruitment to the Forest Department and ordered a high-level inquiry. He directed that the allegations be examined impartially and said disciplinary and legal action would follow if an investigation confirmed wrongdoing.

The chief minister reiterated that the provincial government had adopted a clear policy against the sale and purchase of jobs, saying the cabinet, chief secretary and administrative machinery were committed to safeguarding merit-based recruitment.

He directed departments to maintain transparency in routine administrative affairs and recruitment and ordered immediate implementation of the already approved policy for merit-based appointments to Grade-5 and above positions through Artificial Intelligence. He further instructed that the recruitment tests be conducted locally.

The Chief Minister's Secretariat, he said, would extend all necessary support if assistance was required for administering the AI-based examinations.

Bugti also dismissed the possibility of nepotism in appointments to Class-IV positions, making it clear that recruitment committees would neither have a share nor any quota in such appointments.

He stressed that there would be no leniency in matters involving the alleged sale or purchase of government employment.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti chairs the meeting of Secretaries Committee



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Gates Foundation calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Maintaining public safety fundamental responsibility of govt: Governor

Expresses concern over the reported increase in street crime in Quetta

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Governor Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has stressed the need to turn public complaints and official assurances into concrete solutions, urging elected representatives to remain engaged with relevant departments until citizens' problems are actually resolved. He emphasized stronger coordination among the government, administration, police and elected representatives to improve public safety and ensure better delivery of essential services in Quetta and its adjoining areas.

The governor expressed these views during meetings with several delegations at Governor House, led by Provincial Minister Mir Asim Kurd Gello and MPA Zarak Khan Mandokhail. The discussions focused on civic problems, growing street crime and shortcomings in basic services.

Mandokhail observed that Quetta's rapid population growth had placed additional pressure on the city's administrative and civic infrastructure, creating challenges in traffic management, sanitation, healthcare, education, water supply, drainage and law and order.

He said effective cooperation between the institutions concerned was necessary to respond to these challenges and ensure that public complaints were addressed efficiently.

According to the governor, the success of public service should ultimately be judged by the ease with which ordinary people can have their genuine problems resolved, without being subjected to unnecessary delays or repeated visits to government offices.



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with Peruvian President Keiko Fujimori in Lima, the capital of Peru.

Muslim countries confronting growing internal, external challenges: Haideri

QUETTA (ANN): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) Central Secretary General and Member of the National Assembly Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri has voiced concern over what he described as US aggression and policies, saying they pose a serious challenge to peace and stability in the Muslim world and the wider region.

In a statement, Haideri said Muslim countries were confronting growing internal and external challenges, including conflict, unrest and instability, which he attributed to US policies in the region.

He urged the international community, the United Nations and human rights organizations to move beyond what he termed silence and take practical measures to prevent further escalation and the spread of conflict.

The JUI-F leader alleged that instability was adversely affecting the economies, defence capabilities, peace and development of Muslim countries. He further claimed that the United States was seeking to strengthen its influence in the region by exploiting conditions of unrest and instability.

Haideri said continued violence and turmoil were contributing to greater insecurity and alleged that further attempts were being made to push the region towards renewed conflict. He maintained that similar policies pursued in the past had caused serious damage to regional peace and accused what he called "imperialist powers" of playing a role in destabilizing Muslim countries.

The JUI-F leader said prolonged military actions were deepening existing conflicts and increasing threats to regional peace and security.

Questioning the international response, he called upon the UN and human rights organizations to take a more active position, stressing that military conflict could not provide a lasting solution to political disputes.

Haideri said wars had historically resulted in widespread destruction, instability and human suffering and urged the international community to intensify diplomatic efforts to contain tensions. He called for coordinated global action to prevent the conflict from widening and to reduce regional tensions before further escalation, warning that continued aggressive measures could create greater risks for peace and security.

Legal education foundation of justice system: Law Minister

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday said the government would continue taking all necessary measures to improve legal education, describing it as the foundation of the justice system and stressing that its quality directly affected the Bar and the Bench.

Addressing the launching ceremony of the Annual Report of the Directorate of Legal Education of the Pakistan Bar Council, the minister said several reforms had already been introduced to address longstanding issues in legal education. He said evening law courses had been abolished to curb substandard and "ghost" admissions in law colleges, while the Law-GAT had been introduced to improve the standard of students entering the legal profession. Senator Tarar said that after his election as a member of the Pakistan Bar Council in 2010, he had been given the responsibility of Chairman of its Legal Education Committee, following which efforts were undertaken to introduce reforms in the sector.

He said numerous issues had emerged in law colleges over the past 15 years. While several private institutions had performed well after legal education shifted from the public to private sector, the weakening of regulatory oversight had also contributed to various problems.

Education must remain at centre of Balochistan's development strategy: Khair Jan Baloch

QUETTA, 9VoM Report): The Balochistan Assembly's Standing Committee on Education has examined the Tameer-e-Nau University Quetta Bill, 2026, which seeks to establish a new private-sector university aimed at expanding higher education opportunities and strengthening research and innovation in the province.

The committee meeting was held at the Balochistan Assembly Secretariat under the chairmanship of Khair Jan Baloch. Members Rehmat Saleh Baloch, Mir Jahanzeb Mengal and Mir Liaquat Ali Lehri attended the proceedings, along with Assembly Secretary Tahir Shah Kakar, Higher Education Secretary Hashim Ghilzai and other officials.

The committee reviewed key provisions of the proposed legislation and discussed various aspects concerning the establishment and functioning of the university. Officials briefed the members that the proposed institution would focus on quality higher education, research, innovation and human resource development. It would operate in accordance with applicable laws, government policies and academic and quality-assurance standards set by the Government of Balochistan and the Higher Education Commission.

Int'l partnerships vital to achieve vision of digitally empowered Pakistan: Shaza Fatima

ISLAMABAD, (APP): A high-level delegation of the Gates Foundation called on Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Thursday and agreed to deepen cooperation in key technology and development areas. The delegation was led by Dr Kalpana Kochhar, Interim President of the Global Policy and Advocacy Division, and Dr Anita Zaidi, President of the Gender Equality Division of the Gates Foundation.

During the meeting, Shaza Fatima highlighted the government's flagship Digital Nation Pakistan agenda.

She said the initiative would help promote inclusive digital growth, modernise public service delivery and build a strong digital economy.

The minister stressed that international partnerships, particularly with the Gates Foundation, were important for achieving the vision of a digitally empowered Pakistan.

IMF mission due on Sept 23 for biannual review of Pakistan's economic performance

ISLAMABAD, (Monitoring Desk): An International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission is due to visit Pakistan on September 23 for a biannual review of the country's economic performance and implementation of the $7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and the $1.4bn Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) for the period ending June 30, 2026.

Pakistan is currently under a $7 billion, 37-month IMF programme, aimed at stabilising the economy through fiscal discipline, structural reforms, and measures to support long-term growth. Official sources said that during an almost two-week visit ending in the first week of October, the IMF staff mission, led by Iva Petrova, would conduct the fourth review of the EFF and the third review of the RSF.

Deserving women should receive financial assistance directly, securely with dignity: PM

PM Shehbaz says govt firmly committed to completely eradicate polio from Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said Pakistan was firmly committed to completely eradicating polio, as he met with a delegation from the Gates Foundation.

The delegation, which called on the prime minister, included Gates Foundation representatives Kalpana Kochhar and Anita Zaidi, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

The prime minister appreciated the Gates Foundation's continued support and partnership with Pakistan amid the country's developmental challenges. He said the National Polio Eradication Programme enjoyed patronage at the highest level, underscoring the government's resolve to eliminate the crippling disease. PM Shehbaz said the Gates Foundation had played a commendable role in the fields of polio eradication, health, nutrition, financial inclusion, and the welfare of vulnerable segments of society. He said key reform priorities including digital payments, food security, maternal and newborn health, poverty alleviation, and climate change were part of the government's governance reforms agenda.

The prime minister noted that a cashless economy was a fundamental part of the government's transformation agenda, aimed at making life easier for ordinary citizens, enhancing transparency in government systems.

He said digital payments were increasing as a result of the joint efforts of the government and the Gates Foundation, adding that deserving women should receive their financial assistance directly, securely, and with dignity.



QUETTA: Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, Provincial Minister Mir Asim kurd Gailu and MPA Zarak Khan Mandokhail talking to different delegations.

Expansion of Makkah pact not yet on cards: Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Pakistan on Thursday calling the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement a "defensive alliance" said that the expansion of the pact was not yet on the cards, as the member states have to first consolidate their own framework.

"This is a defensive alliance of the countries which feel that the security of the region has to be protected through deterrence basically… As of now, expansion of the Makkah Agreement is not on the cards because first they have to solidify their own organisation. And then, of course, it will be open for all countries who hold similar views and perceptions and requirements," Foreign Office spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan said at his maiden weekly press briefing after he assumed the office of the spokesperson, replacing Ambassador Tahir Andrabi.

He said the signatory countries of the Makkah pact, including Pakistan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, were holding frequent meetings and consulting at different levels and that any expansion would be decided by the three countries subsequently.

"So at this stage, it is not being discussed," he remarked, saying that the pact's primary objective was to strengthen regional peace and stability besides strengthening many aspects of existing long-term relationships and defence cooperation. To a question about the repatriation of Afghan students from Pakistan, he said that there was no blanket decision from the government to deport all students and that students enrolled in a valid degree program and holding a valid visa were permitted to stay and complete their education.

Regarding CASA-1000 and other major connectivity projects, spokeperson Khan said that the primary challenge remained that the current Afghan regime must address Pakistan's security sensitivities concerning cross-border terrorism. Once terrorist threats subside, normal bilateral and economic relations can flourish, enabling these major regional energy and transit projects to move forward.



A Russian jet-powered drone reportedly struck a gas station in the Holosiyiv district of Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine. The attack damaged the gas station and parked vehicles.

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No further sanctions

US President Donald Trump's meeting with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin delivered exactly what Moscow wanted — no deal and no further sanctions. Trump, who had threatened "serious consequences" if no immediate ceasefire was reached, instead retreated empty-handed. The result was a diplomatic win for Putin, with only the vague prospect of a peace process that leaves Russia free to seize more land at no cost. With Trump unwilling to take a harder line on Russia, Europe's only choice is to turn the tables on Washington, taking the initiative and intensifying the pressure on Moscow.

For Ukraine and Europe, the only relief was that Trump did not strike a territorial concession deal with Putin in pursuit of a short-term political victory. But the press conference made clear that such a deal in exchange for a ceasefire was never on Putin's agenda. The Kremlin leader emphasized the need to address what Moscow calls the "root causes" of the conflict — namely Ukraine's independent statehood and Euro-Atlantic future. Convinced that Russia is winning and that Kyiv will eventually crack, he showed no interest in compromise.

Faced with Putin's hardline position, Trump dropped the immediate ceasefire as his central objective — a move that directly contradicted the approach agreed with Ukraine and European leaders before the summit. Yet this reveals Europe's underlying weakness: a cycle in which Trump sets the strategic goals, while European governments limit themselves to providing the means to achieve those goals, from the Coalition of the Willing to the new scheme of financing US weapons through NATO.

Such a division of labor can work. It did during the Cold War, when US leadership steered the West to victory but it relies on a strong transatlantic bond and genuine trust, both of which now appear increasingly fragile. And if Trump unilaterally shifts the strategic objective in Ukraine from a ceasefire to an illusory full-scale peace deal, what purpose will these European-crafted mechanisms serve?

The lesson of the Alaska Summit is clear: Trump is unwilling to make Moscow pay for its aggression against Ukraine, no matter how many ultimatums he issues. The only viable path for Europe is to seize the initiative, demonstrate leadership to Washington and increase pressure on Moscow. In this context, it is encouraging that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was joined in Washington on Monday by several European leaders, including German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Finnish President Alexander Stubb, French President Emmanuel Macron, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Their presence sends a powerful message that Ukraine is not alone and that the EU regards Kyiv's fate as an integral part of its own security. However, it is not enough for the leaders merely to exchange views or receive Trump's account of the situation. They should also come prepared to put forward concrete solutions.

This is where symbolism must give way to substance. Europe must start acting with confidence, as it "has the cards" to play a more active role. Europe already provides more military aid to Ukraine than the US, whose latest package is nearly exhausted. Moreover, Washington is increasingly shifting the financial burden of US weapons onto European allies. The Coalition of the Willing led by France and the UK should not wait for a ceasefire but deploy in a non-combat role to boost Ukraine's defense away from the frontlines by providing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, boosting air defenses to protect Ukrainian critical infrastructure and civilian areas, as well as assisting with training of Ukrainian military and providing logistical support. Europe should also stop wrangling over frozen Russian assets, seize them outright and channel the funds directly into Ukraine's war effort.

At the same time, the EU must recognize that its foreign and security policy machinery is unfit for an era of great-power competition and urgently reform it, starting with the slow and ineffective unanimity rule on sanctions and other decisions. Without such change, Europe risks sliding into even greater irrelevance and resigning itself to the role of a secondary player, even on its own continent. The gravest danger for Europe is that Putin will read both Europe's perceived weakness and Trump's reluctance to confront Moscow as a green light for further aggression, eroding the NATO deterrence that has preserved peace on the continent for 76 years. Addressing these weaknesses is essential not only to save Ukraine but also to prevent a wider war.

A fee-paying postdoc at KU? Disturbing drift of our academia

DR MUHAMMAD IBTESAM MAZAHIR

There are moments when a single policy decision reveals deeper structural cracks in a system. The recent announcement by the University of Karachi (KU) concerning a postdoctoral fellowship programme is one such moment. Not because postdoctoral opportunities are unwelcome, but because the model on offer appears fundamentally misunderstood.

In what should have been a step toward strengthening Pakistan's research ecosystem, the programme instead resembles an undergraduate admission notice. According to the university's own announcement, selected "fellows" are expected to pay an admission processing fee (Rs10,000), an admission fee (Rs30,000), tuition fees (Rs100,000-120,000), departmental charges (Rs50,000-80,000), and even a "mentor fee" of Rs80,000.

This raises a fundamental question: do we, as a country, truly understand what a postdoctoral fellowship is?

Globally, postdoctoral fellows are not students. They are highly trained researchers who have already completed their PhDs and are now contributing to knowledge production, innovation and academic mentorship. At leading institutions across the United States, Europe and East Asia, postdocs are hired as employees or funded fellows. They receive stipends or salaries, access to research grants, and institutional support. In return, they publish, supervise students, build labs and elevate the university's global standing.

In Pakistan, however, the model appears inverted.

When a university charges scholars under the guise of a "postdoctoral fellowship", it is not a mere bureaucratic anomaly, it is a conceptual failure. A fellowship, by definition, is funded. When candidates are asked to pay for the privilege of conducting research under an institution's name, the line between academic development and commercialisation becomes dangerously blurred.

The implications are serious. First, such practices risk excluding talented researchers who cannot afford these costs, thereby reinforcing inequity in academia. Second, they undermine the credibility of the postdoctoral title itself. If postdocs are treated as fee-paying participants rather than knowledge producers, the value of their work is diminished. Third, this approach discourages serious researchers from engaging with local institutions, accelerating the already troubling brain drain.

Ironically, this development comes at a time when Pakistan urgently needs to strengthen its research capacity. The global knowledge economy is driven by innovation, interdisciplinary research and high-impact publications - all areas where postdoctoral researchers play a pivotal role. Yet, Pakistan faces a critical brain drain, losing thousands of skilled professionals annually. A fee-based postdoc programme does nothing to address this crisis, it only deepens it.

The contrast becomes even sharper when viewed through lived academic experience. Those who have navigated international academic environments understand that postdoctoral positions are built on merit, funding and intellectual contribution, not on fee structures. Exposure to global systems reveals a simple truth: universities invest in postdocs because they expect returns in the form of research output, rankings and reputation.

Why, then, are we moving in the opposite direction? Part of the answer lies in systemic gaps. Many faculty members in major Pakistani universities, including the University of Karachi itself, have not had postdoctoral exposure. This is not a criticism of individuals but an institutional reality. Without firsthand experience of how postdoctoral systems function globally, it becomes easier to misinterpret them as extended academic programmes rather than professional research roles.

However, this is precisely where leadership must step in. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has long emphasised improving research quality, international collaboration and academic standards. But such goals cannot be achieved if foundational concepts like postdoctoral fellowships are redefined in ways that contradict global norms. Indeed, the HEC's own Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programme (Phase-III) offers selected scholars financial support of up to Rs2.9 million. Other Pakistani universities, such as LUMS and GCUF, offer postdoc stipends ranging from Rs130,000 to Rs150,000 per month. If Pakistan is serious about building a knowledge economy, it must start by respecting its researchers.

If we are to reverse this drift, I propose the following immediate steps:

For the University of Karachi: Immediately rescind the fee-based model and redesign the programme as a funded fellowship, in line with global norms and the HEC's own standards.

For the HEC: Issue clear, binding guidelines that define postdoctoral fellowships as funded, professional research positions, not fee-paying academic programmes.

For Pakistani academics and researchers: Speak out against this model. Do not apply for fee-charging postdocs. Refuse to mentor scholars who are being charged to work.

For the media: Continue to expose such policies and hold university administrations accountable.

Postdoctoral fellows should be funded, not charged; treated as professionals, not students; and integrated into research ecosystems, not administrative fee frameworks. Anything less risks turning academic aspiration into a transactional exercise.

The issue at hand is not just about one university or one programme. It is about the direction in which our academic culture is heading. Are we building institutions that invest in knowledge, or are we creating systems that extract value from those seeking to produce it?

The answer will determine whether Pakistan's educational vision thrives or withers under the weight of misplaced priorities.

Pakistan: The heart of Asia's destiny

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

In the divine act of creation, the Almighty fashioned the human form with organs so perfectly attuned to one another that health and vigour depend upon their unbroken harmony. No faculty may falter without imperilling the rest. Foremost among them is the heart, which tirelessly propels the life-blood from the seat of intellect in the brain to the remotest vein in the toes. Through carelessness or affliction, however, obstructions arise; vessels constrict, clots form, and the vital current slows. Medicine is first employed to restore flow; when remedies prove inadequate, a stent may reopen the passage; and in the gravest peril, the surgeon must perform a bypass to safeguard existence itself.

Such, in many respects, is the condition of Pakistan today. Like the heart within the body of nations, Pakistan occupies a position of singular importance—geographically, politically, commercially, and strategically. It stands at the crossroads of civilisations, bearing responsibilities far beyond its borders. Pakistan has consistently extended every form of cooperation and assistance to address regional challenges, yet it has been afflicted by a persistent malady; terrorism nurtured from Afghan soil and abetted by Indian design. This external interference has disrupted the nation's stability and hindered its natural rhythms.

With exemplary patience, Pakistan pursued negotiations to resolve these tensions. When dialogue bore no lasting fruit, military operations were undertaken, not out of choice but necessity, to protect the country's integrity and the welfare of its people. Even now, despite these efforts, acts of terrorism continue, guided from across the border. In these difficult times, brotherly nations have extended valuable support for mediation. Qatar and Türkiye, along with other friendly countries, have offered their good offices to facilitate dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan, demonstrating a shared commitment to regional peace and stability. Such mediations reflected the hope that wisdom and mutual understanding could prevail over hostility, but all efforts went in vain due to Afghanistan's obstinacy in stopping hostile activities from their side.

The deeper tragedy lies in opportunities forfeited by continued strife. Central Asia—encompassing Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan—holds some of the world's most abundant reserves of natural gas, oil, uranium, and rare earth minerals. These landlocked states remain largely cut off from global markets. To their south lie Pakistan and Afghanistan, positioned by geography as the most direct overland bridge connecting this resource wealth with the energy-hungry economies of South and East Asia, particularly China and India. China, the planet's largest energy consumer, and India, its fastest-growing major economy, both grapple with structural deficits that could be eased through reliable northern corridors.

Pipelines for gas and oil, efficient road freight networks, and modern rail links traversing Pakistan and Afghanistan could generate billions of dollars annually in transit revenues. Such corridors would ignite industrial activity, multiply employment, develop infrastructure, and enable both nations to evolve from aid-dependent economies into thriving hubs of regional commerce. Ports such as Gwadar and Karachi could serve as vital gateways, while existing roads and proposed railways would knit together markets stretching from the steppes of Central Asia to the bustling ports of the Arabian Sea and beyond. This vision, however, remains locked behind a single critical barrier; the absence of enduring stability and cooperative governance in Afghanistan.

Pakistan and Afghanistan together constitute the natural link between supply and demand in this vast region. Transforming the corridor from a theatre of conflict into an artery of commerce is achievable, yet it requires genuine political will and responsible conduct from Kabul. A landlocked Afghanistan cannot forge a stable and self-reliant future without dependable transit partnerships with its neighbours. It faces a clear choice; become a corridor of commerce that benefits its people or remain trapped as a corridor of conflict that perpetuates isolation and dependence on international charity.

The potential rewards are substantial and mutual. Peaceful connectivity would bring transit fees, vibrant border trade, fresh investment, and thousands of jobs for Afghans and Pakistanis alike. Pakistan, in turn, would secure enhanced access to Central Asian resources and fuller utilisation of its strategic ports and highways. Ordinary citizens on both sides of the Durand Line stand to gain from shared prosperity. Yet no economic endeavour of this magnitude can succeed while terrorism, militant sanctuaries, and cross-border attacks persist. Afghan soil must no longer serve as a base for groups operating against Pakistan. The region's transit promise is therefore inseparable from a firm recalibration of policy in Kabul.

The current Afghan dispensation's tolerance—and in some instances apparent facilitation—of anti-Pakistan terrorist activity remains the foremost obstacle to integration. Kabul must review its posture, cease support for elements hostile to Pakistan, and take credible, verifiable action against networks destabilising Balochistan and the border regions. The Afghan people, who ultimately bear the heaviest cost of their leadership's decisions, would do well to ask themselves whether they desire a future marred by proxy conflict and seclusion, or one illuminated by connectivity, commerce, and collective advancement.

The strategic implications extend beyond immediate neighbours. Balochistan possesses considerable deposits of minerals and rare earth elements essential to modern technology. This wealth cannot be fully realised while terrorism, sustained through Afghan sanctuaries, continues to unsettle the province. Peace in Balochistan therefore serves not only Pakistani interests but aligns with the broader aims of the United States and other stakeholders who seek secure trade routes and diversified supply chains of critical materials. Washington and the international community have every reason to encourage Kabul to act responsibly, deny safe havens to terrorists, and support regional connectivity rather than permit instability to fester.

Central Asia offers the resources, South and East Asia the demand, and Pakistan and Afghanistan the vital corridor between them. Security and mutual trust remain the only missing elements—qualities that depend largely upon a change of approach in Kabul. The Almighty has endowed this region with extraordinary gifts of geography and potential. It falls to its leaders and peoples, guided by foresight and statesmanship, to remove obstructions so that these blessings may flow freely, nourishing prosperity and harmony much as a healthy heart sustains the entire body in balanced and enduring life.

A changed world

ARIFA NOOR

It's been a year since the May that Pakistan will celebrate. A few cycles ago, we had the unfortunate May 9, which too cannot be forgotten but for reasons best not to get into. But last year brought us a May as bright and celebratory as the May of English poetry. The month didn't necessarily begin this way — for the clouds of war darkened the horizon after the Pahalgam event, fighting was predicted and correctly so. The end, thankfully, came quickly as did the victory Pakistan could call its own thanks to the downing of multiple Indian aircraft. This is not to say Pakistan did not face an Indian assault or des-truction but the downing of aircraft in the plural does get more attention than other damage.

Overnight, the conversation about the mess in the country — from elections to economic fragility to the quality of democracy — gave way to debate about Pakistan's air force, its skilled pilots and the capacity of Chinese hardware to down the French Rafale. There was also some talk of Indian adventurism which also received its share of the limelight with the events in Canada. Then came the bromance with the latest inhabitant of the White House and the rest as they say is history.

The Iran war has simply added more feathers to Pakistan's cap, of being a peacemaker and mediator and a trusted ally of sworn enemies that collects accolades from around the world. As Pakistan basks in this international glory, it seems that New Delhi cannot understand the rapidly changing world around it. flummoxed by the noise and attention around Pakistan, it has reacted by passing petty comments at worst.

This has simply added to the celebrations at home — from the critical remarks to the debates about how this change of fortunes happened in India. But at the same time, despite the self-congratulations and praise for individuals who have been given all credit, Pakistan, too, has misread the situation at times. In other words, it may be missing the woods for the trees.

To understand what is happening vis-à-vis Pakistan and the world, it is important to take a view longer than the May conflict or change in the White House. Indeed, some of these events are taking place in a world that has moved on from 9/11; where terrorism is no longer the foremost priority in global politics.

After 9/11 and other high-profile attacks in Western cities such as London, and the spectre of terrorist organisations such as Al Qaeda and IS, Pakistan was viewed through the lens of militancy. Despite being a close ally of Washington, doubts remained. In fact, once George Bush, who shared a close relationship with Pervez Musharraf, left the White House, the Pakistan-US relationship became thornier and stormier, reflecting the questions that were being raised about Islamabad's intentions.

Over time, with incidents such as Mumbai, New Delhi learnt to take advantage of this world — internationally and domestically. From pushing for Islamabad to be placed on the FATF list to having Pakistan-based groups condemned internationally, New Delhi grew more assertive as its economic heft increased as did its relevance to the West. Domestically, the BJP painted Congress as a weak player, which was unable to punish Pakistan for 'attacks' such as Mumbai and promised to avenge each transgression. On both planks it succeeded.

But then, the world began to change. The US withdrew from Afghanistan and terrorism seemed less relevant in the face of economic stagnation; populist politics; and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Terrorism slid down the priority list for the world. Nothing made this more evident than recognition of the new government in Syria. This is also evident in the change of attitudes from Balakot in 2019 to Pahalgam. If Indian accusations were believed in the first incident, in the second they were met mostly with silence. Not just because of the lack of evidence but also the environment.

Oct 7 and the Israeli rampage since has added a second dimension to this world. Islamabad is now being seen and hailed as a peacemaker as well as a security provider in the Middle Eastern region. American President Donald Trump, can't stop praising Islamabad and if the State Department has a view closer to India's, at the moment it is too irrelevant and gutted to make a difference.

Finally, it seems New Delhi is also learning to recognise this new world. There is anecdotal evidence the country is considering showing some flexibility in its approach to Pakistan and the idea of engagement. However, whether or not this leads to some qualitative change and talks is not clear.

At the same time, it is worth remembering that this may not stop New Delhi from fomenting clandestine trouble within Pakistan's conflict zones.

Islamabad remains ready to engage. But it needs to also be aware that the celebrations and the accolades will not last forever. The instability in the Gulf can and will lead to pressures for Pakistan, economically and otherwise. The phrase 'security provider' sounds impressive but there is little clarity on what it means for the country; and there is an aversion at home to discussing it in detail and what its ramifications — good or bad — might be. This is not good; for only a transparent debate can throw light on unexpected and unwelcome outcomes.

There might be renewed pressure from the West (read: the US) with regard to the Pakistan-China relationship as time goes on; it is worth remembering that it was the first Trump administration which began raising questions about Chinese loans to Pakistan. Indeed, this is reminder enough that Islamabad should use this space it has internationally to focus on the multiple domestic challenges, especially the economy.

The good times will not last forever.

Colombia's new president orders extradition of 5 former peace negotiators to US

Monitoring Desk

BOGOTA, (Agencies): Colombia's new president on Thursday ordered the extradition to the US of five criminal figures who took part as representatives or negotiators in peace processes with armed groups during the administration of former President Gustavo Petro.

US authorities are seeking the five over alleged involvement in drug trafficking, illegal weapons trafficking or possession, and narco-terrorism, according to Colombian media reports.

President Abelardo De la Espriella, who took office on Aug. 5, said the extraditions had already been authorized last year by the previous government but procedures had been suspended because the individuals were taking part in different dialogue processes under the Petro administration.

Among the figures slated for extradition are Geovany Andres Rojas, alias Arana, the alleged leader of the Comandos de Frontera criminal organization, who was arrested on Feb. 14, 2025 while participating in peace negotiations with the government, according to local media.

The extradition order also covers Willington Henao Gutierrez, alias Mocho Olmedo, described as a leader of FARC dissidents, and Carmen Evelio Castillo Carrillo, alias Muneca, a former leader of the Autodefensas Conquistadores de la Sierra Nevada, also known as Los Pachenca. Gabriel Yepes Mejia, alias HH, and Fredy Castillo Carrillo, alias Pinocho, are also slated for extradition but remain fugitives, local media reported.

Mocho Olmedo surrendered to authorities in February 2025 amid fighting between FARC dissidents and the National Liberation Army, or ELN, in the Catatumbo region, while Muneca was arrested in June 2024 during a police operation.

De la Espriella said his administration reviewed the cases and found no "verifiable contributions" or concrete results toward peace that would justify continuing suspending the extraditions.

"Peace negotiations cannot become shelters from justice," he said, adding that those seeking to move toward legality must demonstrate it through "concrete and verifiable facts."



Protesters try to remove a barricade as police hold it during clashes at an anti-government rally in Tirana, Albania.



France's President Emmanuel Macron welcomes Thailand's king and queen during their visit to Paris.

More than 400 dead in DR Congo's spreading Ebola outbreak

Monitoring Desk

CONGO: An Ebola outbreak in the DR Congo has killed more than 400 people and is still spreading, with a first case reported in the major city of Kisangani nearly 600 kilometres (370 miles) from its epicentre.

The highly infectious disease has claimed 438 lives among the 1,406 people confirmed infected—a fatality rate of just over 31 percent—since the outbreak was declared on May 15, the National Institute of Public Health (INSP) said in its latest report published on Thursday.

The centre of the outbreak—whose true scale remains difficult to assess—was in the northeastern Ituri province, where more than 83 percent of the deaths have occurred.

The province borders South Sudan and Uganda, which has reported 20 cases including two deaths.

The virus has also spread to the nearby provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu.

A case has also recently been reported in Kisangani, a northeastern city of 1.5 million residents and the capital of Tshopo province. A test on the body of a 24-year-old pregnant woman was positive for Ebola, the INSP said.

"The deceased's body was secretly transported by motorcycle to Kisangani" from the health zone of Nia Nia in Ituri, the health authorities said.

The body of a deceased Ebola victim remains highly infectious and in many cases the virus has been transmitted during burial rites. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and the head of the African Union's health agency, Africa CDC, Jean Kaseya, were visiting the capital, Kinshasa, on Thursday.

In Haut-Uele province, which is next door to Ituri, a death and a case of infection were also reported at the start of the week. Health authorities said the infected person was "on the run" from the Nia Nia health zone. Nevertheless, health authorities continue to say that only three provinces in total are affected by the virus, as they say that the cases in Tshopo and Haut-Uele were "imported" from Ituri.

Gaza war's 1,000 days:

90% of strip 'destroyed', 80% 'seized' by Israel

Monitoring Desk

GAZA: More than 90 percent of the Gaza Strip has been destroyed, and Israeli forces are in control of 80 percent of the besieged territory, authorities in the enclave say, as the world marks 1,000 days since Israel's genocidal war on Gaza began.

Tallying up the extent of the damage since Israel launched its war on October 7, 2023, Gaza's Government Media Office said in a statement on Thursday that at least 73,066 Palestinians have been killed in the enclave.

More than 21,500 of those killed in Gaza were children, including 1,022 babies, it added. A further 9,500 people are missing, many believed to be buried under rubble, while 173,514 have been wounded. It added that about 223,000 tonnes of explosives have been dropped by Israel on Gaza during the war – 16 times more than what the United States dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945 with the atomic bomb.

With most of Gaza in ruins, the "ceasefire" framework meant to end the conflict is also faltering six months after its centrepiece body was established. The US-created Board of Peace, established in January to oversee the "ceasefire" and steer reconstruction under a three-phase plan endorsed by the United Nations Security Council, has failed to secure Israeli compliance, analysts said. Instead of a gradual withdrawal that the plan envisions, Israel has expanded its control of Gaza, and only a third of the aid trucks it committed to allow into the enclave daily are entering. Israeli forces have also killed more than 1,000 Palestinians since the October.



The highly infectious disease has claimed 438 lives among the 1,406 people confirmed infected since May 15, the National Institute of Public Health said.

Beijing says

China-EU trade talks set in the fall, to be held regularly each year

Monitoring Desk

HONG KONG: China and the European Union will hold ministerial-level trade talks once or twice a year, China's Commerce Ministry said Thursday, as the two sides work to increase and rebalance trade. The EU faces growing pressure to reduce its trade deficit with China, which widened to about 360 billion euros ($410 billion) last year, nearly 1 billion euros a day. Chinese cars and batteries are among items increasingly exported to Europe.

Under the newly agreed upon China-EU trade and investment consultation mechanism, Beijing has also invited the EU's trade commissioner, Maroš Šefčovič, to visit China this autumn, ministry spokesperson He Yadong told reporters.

He said the two sides intend to boost their collaboration in areas like artificial intelligence and the transition to renewable energy.

Beijing's remarks followed a meeting between Šefčovič and Wang Wentao, China's commerce minister, on Monday in Brussels. Šefčovič said after the meeting he would be travelling to Beijing in the fall. As the trade gap between China and the EU widens, Europe needs to "defend our industrial base and keep pushing for a level playing field globally," Šefčovič said.

Thailand denies viral claim Macron knelt before king

Monitoring Desk

FRANCE: Thailand's foreign ministry denied Thursday that French President Emmanuel Macron knelt before the country's king during his state visit to Paris this week, after an AI-generated picture circulated online. King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Queen Suthida's trip was the first official visit by a Thai monarch to France since 1960, marking the 170th anniversary of formal diplomatic relations between the two nations.

During a state dinner at the presidential palace, Macron presented the 73-year-old king with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour—France's highest award—and Queen Suthida with the Grand Cross of the National Order of Merit.



A Palestinian child stands on the rubble of a destroyed building near the Shati refugee camp in western Gaza City.

'Most massive' Russian attack on Kyiv kills at least 20

Monitoring Desk

KYIV: Russian forces launched a major drone and missile attack on Kyiv overnight, killing 20 people, in what the city's mayor has described as the "most massive attack" on the Ukrainian capital.

Vitaly Klitschko said around 90 people were injured. He said an ambulance station was among the places hit in the strikes and declared Friday a day of mourning.

Although previous attacks have killed more people, this latest barrage deployed the largest number of weapons on the capital and hit locations over a very wide area of Kyiv. Several neighbourhoods were evacuated as strikes rocked buildings throughout the city, hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned Russia was preparing an attack.

Contains some scenes which some viewers may find upsetting. - Verified videos show large-scale Russian strikes on Kyiv

Moscow said its forces hit what it called military plants in retaliation against attacks on Russian civilian infrastructure.

South Africa and Ghana in diplomatic row over alleged killing of migrant

Monitoring Desk

GHANA: A diplomatic row has erupted between South Africa and Ghana, over claims that a Ghanaian man was killed during anti-migrant protests, which South African officials deny. Ghana's Foreign Affairs ministry said it had received with "profound shock" reports that Bashiru Isak, 40, had been shot dead on Tuesday in Cape Town's Khayelitsha's township. It said it had sent a formal protest note and filed a complaint with the police. South Africa's justice minister responded by expressing concern "that Ghanaian authorities continue to communicate false information about South Africa regarding developments on irregular migration". The police said they had "no record of the Khayelitsha murder".

They did say they were investigating the killing, a day earlier, of 35-year-old Ghanaian Kwabena Boagen allegedly in extortion-linked crime in a different Cape Town township, Nyanga.

South African police said Boagen lived in Khayelitsha area but worked in Nyanga, where the crime occurred. It said a post-mortem was being done in line with its protocols. The police had earlier told the BBC that suspects allegedly entered the barbershop where Boagen was working and demanded money from him before he was shot.

At least six killed in explosion inside central Damascus cafe

Monitoring Desk

DAMASCUS: An explosion at a cafe in central Damascus has killed at least six people and injured 22, according to Syria's Ministry of Health. The explosion was reported at around 3:24pm local time (12:24 GMT) inside a cafe on al-Nasser Street in the al-Marjah district, close to the Palace of Justice, according to Syrian state media.

Syrian state television said the blast was caused by an explosive device.

Footage from the site showed severe damage to the cafe with blood smeared on the floor.

An investigation into the cause of the explosion has been launched with a number of government and private surveillance cameras in the area., said Milad Fadl, Al Jazeera's Syria correspondent.

"Traces of blood are all over the ground; the Interior Ministry is trying to gather evidence to see who is responsible," Fadl said. "Residents in the area gave first aid to the injured until the ambulances arrived."

Canadian court publication ban in Quebec militia case raises press-freedom concerns

Monitoring Desk

OTTAWA: A Canadian court has banned publication of facts related to an alleged plot to seize land for an anti-government militia, drawing criticism from press-freedom advocates and legal experts concerned the move could compromise citizens' understanding of threats to public safety.

The Quebec Superior Court ordered the ban in February, according to a copy of the order seen by Reuters. It came days after a lower-level court released more than a thousand pages of documents related to a police investigation of four men, including two active-duty soldiers, who were arrested last summer. Three of them were accused of taking "concrete actions to facilitate terrorist activity" and a fourth with weapons charges.

One legal expert said such bans commonly seek to restrict access to sensitive details that could jeopardize ongoing investigations or identify vulnerable victims. But he called the broad ban on information in this case unusual.

"Rights, including freedom of the press, are not absolute. But restrictions need to be reasonable," said Wayne MacKay, emeritus professor of law at Dalhousie University. "The broader the ban and the more sweeping it is, the harder it is to justify."

The judge's order gave no rationale for the ban, and a spokeswoman for Quebec Superior Court said the institution and its judges are prohibited from on any decision.

Security guard rescued from rubble 8 days after Venezuela earthquakes

Monitoring Desk

CATIA LA MAR: Hundreds of rescuers in Venezuela cheered and embraced Thursday after pulling a man alive from the ruins of a collapsed building eight days after deadly twin earthquakes, AFP journalists witnessed.

With the official death toll nearing 2,300 and huge numbers of people still missing, the rescue of security guard Hernan Gil after so long under the rubble was greeted as a miracle.

Gil was brought out on a stretcher after a painstaking operation to extract him from the collapsed seven-story building where he worked in Catia La Mar, a coastal area almost entirely razed to the ground in the June 24 catastrophe.

"This is truly a miracle," Gil's wife Gusbimar Gonzalez told AFP before his rescue.

"I'm completely amazed because it's the first time I've seen so many countries come together like this to save a single person," she said.

Rescue teams from seven countries—Venezuela, Chile, the United States, Portugal, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Mexico—worked around the clock over the past three days to reach him.

Thousands of Indians face severe hardship due to consular services closure in UAE

ABU DHABI (INP): Indian nationals in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are facing difficulties in obtaining passports, visas, document attestation and other consular services, making it difficult for Indians living abroad to carry out basic travel and legal matters.

The system of providing Indian consular services in the UAE has been affected due to a legal dispute. As a result of the court order, the new company has yet to formally take over the services, which has led to the suspension of passport renewals, visas, document verification and other consular services.

According to reports, Indian consular services in the UAE were previously being provided by BLS International and SGIVS, but the contracts of these companies expired on June 30, 2026. Under the new tender, Al Hind Tours and Travel was selected as the new service provider for the Indian Consular Application Centres and was to take over the services from July 1, but the transfer was stopped due to legal proceedings.

Two companies have challenged the technical review and scoring procedure of the tender in India's Delhi High Court.

Europeans fill most gaps left by US in NATO defence plans, top commander says

Monitoring Desk

BERLIN: European NATO allies have largely filled the gaps left by the United States in the alliance's defence plans, NATO's top commander said on Thursday, adding the bloc was looking at workarounds to address the remaining shortfalls in a few areas.

"In a matter weeks, European allies have largely filled the gaps left by U.S. reductions to the NATO Force Model," NATO's top commander, U.S. Air Force General Alexus Grynkewich, said in information provided to Reuters when asked for comment on the topic.

"And in those few areas where they haven't, where they do not currently have a like capability to replace, we are looking at alternate capabilities with matching effect."

The U.S. told its allies in May that it had decided to shrink the pool of capabilities committed to the transatlantic alliance in a crisis, raising urgent questions as leaders prepare for a NATO summit in Ankara on July 7-8.

The move is meant to gradually end an "unhealthy co-dependence" on U.S. forces as Washington faces the potential of simultaneous conflicts in multiple theatres, according to Grynkewich.

In mid-June, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said other allies were increasing their contributions and would fill "a lot" of the gaps but did not give any details.

Citing a NATO source, Reuters reported on Wednesday that NATO would announce at next week's Ankara summit that its European members have filled almost all the gaps left by the United States in the alliance's defence plans.

The main gap NATO is still struggling to plug is in strategic bombers, where the U.S. has said it will make only one aircraft available instead of two, said the source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The U.S. did not publicly disclose details of its reductions, but they range from refuelling aircraft to fighter jets, drones and , according to figures provided to Reuters by a military source.

The number of U.S. F-15 and F-15E fighter jets available to NATO will fall by a third to 99 and the number of MQ-4 and MQ-9 Reaper drones by half to 12, according to source.

The number of KC-135 and KC-46 refuelling aircraft falls to 63 from 79.

Trump says Iran war could end before US midterms, revising forecast

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): US President Donald Trump suggested on Thursday that the war with Iran could end before the November 3 midterm elections, a day after predicting it would conclude immediately afterwards.

"I don't know that they're gonna be able to hold out. But it'll get settled after the elections. Or maybe sooner," Trump reportedly told broadcaster NewsNation over the phone, referring to mounting US economic pressure on Iran.

Trump also denied reports that Iran's latest retaliatory strikes on a US base in Jordan damaged US aircraft in the region. "Nope… None whatsoever. No damage. No nothing."

On Wednesday, Trump had said the war would "end immediately" after the midterms.

"I think the war will end immediately after the election because they can't hold out any longer," he told reporters ahead of a trip to Dallas, Texas.

His comments contrast with a Wall Street Journal report hours later that senior White House advisers had privately warned the conflict could continue through the remainder of his term.

Iran claims it struck US unmanned surveillance vessel in the Strait of Hormuz

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy claimed on Thursday that it had struck a US unmanned surveillance vessel in the Strait of Hormuz.

In a statement, the IRGC Navy identified the vessel as an unmanned US surveillance vessel named "Sildrone," with hull number 5838.

The Iranian force did not provide details on the weapon used, the extent of damage to the vessel or when the incident occurred.

Firefighters battle blazes in southern France after European heatwave

Monitoring Desk

LANCON: Firefighters were battling several wildfires fanned by strong winds in southern France on Thursday, as the country grappled with parched conditions Europe's recent heatwave.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said three blazes, two of which broke on the western edge of the Mediterranean port city of Marseille, had scorched a combined area of 1,210 hectares (2,990 acres).

As Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu arrived on Thursday afternoon in Marseille to hold a new crisis meeting on the heatwave and the wildfires, a new blaze had just started near the city of Roquemaure in the Gard area, firefighters told Lecornu.

Lecornu, whose minority government faces a no-confidence vote in parliament on Monday that was put forward by Green Party lawmakers over its handling of the heatwave crisis, said on Thursday that 8,700 hectares had burned in France so far this season, including 1,200 on Wednesday alone, and that 2,000 firefighters had been mobilised. The World Meteorological Organization last week warned that the record temperatures that baked Western Europe for over a week in late June.

Pakistan's religious leadership genuinely represents peaceful message of Islam

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator for the National Paigham-e-Aman Committee, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, has highlighted the committee's achievements during its first year, describing its work as a significant step towards strengthening interfaith harmony, national unity and Pakistan's collective response to extremism and terrorism.

Addressing a media briefing on the completion of one year of the National Paigham-e-Aman Committee, Ashrafi said the committee was established on the directions of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, reflecting a broader vision of using Pakistan's religious leadership as a force for peace, tolerance, national cohesion and stability.

He said the formation of the committee represented an important development in Pakistan's history because, for the first time in such a national-level initiative, leaders of different Muslim schools of thought were brought together alongside representatives of non-Muslim faith communities.

According to Ashrafi, the committee was established with the objective of giving practical expression to the principles of Paigham-e-Pakistan and creating a unified national response to extremism, terrorism, sectarian violence, hate speech and religious intolerance.

Ashrafi said one of the most visible achievements of the committee during its first year had been the creation of greater unity among religious scholars and leaders representing different schools of thought.

He recalled that critics had often argued that religious scholars belonging to different schools of thought could not even offer prayers together. The National Paigham-e-Aman Committee, he said, had helped disprove that perception through repeated joint appearances and collective prayers.

Religious leaders from different schools of thought have participated together in gatherings at major religious institutions, including Jamia-tul-Rasheed, Jamia Ashrafia, Minhaj-ul-Quran and other leading seminaries, demonstrating publicly that religious differences need not become a source of social division.

A recent multi-faith and multi-sect delegation comprising Christian, Hindu, Shia and Sunni representatives also jointly visited Jamia Ashrafia, where participants reaffirmed their commitment to tolerance, mutual respect and social cohesion.

Ashrafi said these initiatives had sent a powerful message that Pakistan's religious leadership could stand together on matters of national interest while respecting legitimate differences of faith and jurisprudence.

A major feature of the committee's first year, he said, had been the active participation of Christian, Hindu, Sikh and other non-Muslim representatives in national peace and harmony initiatives.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding the Trade Facilitation Board.



QUETTA: First PhD Nurse Dr Aneela Samreen called on Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

Welfare of people of AJK key priority of govt; DPM Dar

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister (DPM/ FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday stressed the need for early implementation of the development interventions so that the impact of these efforts is translated into tangible improvements in the lives of the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The deputy prime minister expressed these views amid chairing a meeting to review and fast-track development priorities in AJK and to take appropriate measures for their implementation, a DPM's Office news release said.

The DPM/FM emphasized that the development and welfare of the people of AJK remained a key priority for Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the Government of Pakistan and the Government of AJK.

The meeting was attended by Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) Tariq Bajwa, Secretary Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Young population source of hope for Pakistan's future: Syedaal

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Acting Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan Nasar has said Pakistan is fortunate to have a young population, with nearly 60 per cent of its people being youth.

He described young people as the country's greatest asset and a source of hope for its future.

Speaking as chief guest at the launch of a Transnational Education Partnership between the University of Lahore and the University of Plymouth, UK, at a local hotel on Thursday evening, he said investing in youth could lead Pakistan towards greater development and prosperity. He said providing young people with quality education, modern skills and access to global opportunities could promote development, prosperity and stability in Pakistan and the region.

He congratulated both universities on the partnership, saying it would further strengthen academic and educational ties between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. He said such partnerships would enable Pakistani students to access world-class education, gain international exposure and acquire modern skills.

"Investing in the youth of today is, in fact, an investment in Pakistan's future," he remarked. The Acting chairman said modern education and technology-oriented skills would strengthen the national economy and create new opportunities for development. He welcomed the launch of academic programmes in computing, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, business, law and health sciences.

Record attacks leave 93 mln children out of school worldwide, UN Fund warns

UNITED NATIONS, (APP): While September traditionally marks the start of the school year across the northern hemisphere, a staggering 93 million children are not in class at all amid an unprecedented number of attacks on learning, education experts warned Wednesday.

According to 'Education Cannot Wait', the global fund, insecurity and other factors mean that a total of 258 million children across 87 countries face severe learning disruption.

Marking the International Day to Protect Education from Attack, the fund cited a backdrop of "increasing conflict, decreasing restraint and eroding global norms" in several regions.

"When a child is denied schooling for years, the consequences are immediate and profound: it means forgotten literacy, lost routines and a future dictated by recruiters or traffickers, rather than teachers," said Maysa Jalbout, Director of Education Cannot Wait, the global fund for education in crises.

According to a report partnered by the fund, attacks on education and the use of schools for armed conflict reached a record high in 2024 and 2025. The number of students and staff killed, injured, abducted, or otherwise harmed has never been higher, either.

In the 28 countries profiled, education was targeted in attacks, or schools and universities were used for military purposes. In all, there were at least 9,259 attacks on education (including more than 3,600 on schools), representing a more than 50 per cent increase compared to 2022-2023.

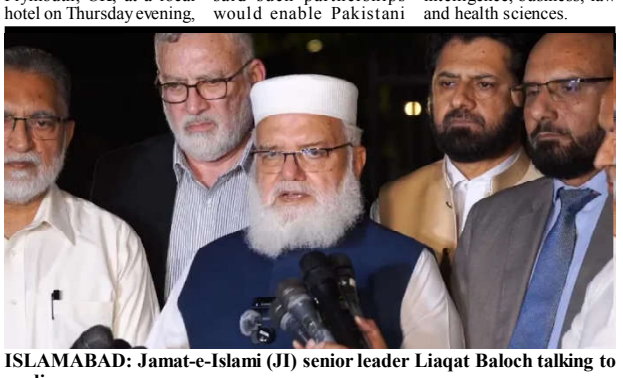
In addition, more than 10,600 students and educators were killed, injured or abducted, while the military use of schools nearly doubled. "Education in emergencies is about more than keeping children in school. It is about protecting them at their most vulnerable: offering safety, stability, a sense of normalcy, and a path toward a future beyond crisis," said Education Cannot Wait chief Ms. Jalbout. UNESCO, the UN education and cultural agency, stressed the obligation for all parties to conflict to respect international law and spare education from attack.

The agency noted that nearly eight in 10 of all out-of-school and crisis-affected children – some 74 million – live in just 20 countries. Within these settings, the barriers to learning are steepest for the most vulnerable: 74 per cent of refugee children, 52 per cent of internally displaced children, and 45 per cent of children with disabilities are out of school.

Latest UN data on children caught up in conflict indicate that 24,174 children were impacted in 2025, out of 38,558 verified violations.

Killing and maiming were among the most widespread violations, affecting 14,224 children. Youngsters were also recruited and used in conflict, abducted and denied humanitarian assistance, according to the UN Secretary General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict.

The report highlights how fighting increasingly took place in densely populated areas, exposing children to airstrikes, artillery and explosive drones. Homes, schools, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure were damaged or destroyed, while children faced danger fleeing violence or seeking food, water and medical care.



ISLAMABAD: Jamat-e-Islami (JI) senior leader Liaqat Baloch talking to media persons

Tackling unemployment major priority of Balochistan govt: Sadiq Umrani

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Senior Minister and Irrigation Minister Mir Muhammad Sadiq Umrani has described the provision of rightful employment and promotions to deserving employees as a matter of honour, saying hundreds of Irrigation Department personnel have received their long-awaited promotion orders.

Addressing a ceremony at Sikandar Jamali Auditorium in the Civil Secretariat, the minister said the provincial government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, was pursuing measures aimed at reducing unemployment and advancing development and public welfare.

The ceremony was attended by Irrigation Department officials and employees, representatives of the clerks' union and other participants, where promotion orders were formally distributed among the employees.

Umrani said resolving long-pending cases had been among his priorities since taking charge of the Irrigation Department. He noted that particular attention had been given to cases under the deceased employees' quota that had remained unresolved for an extended period.

He said the process had also resulted in the issuance of appointment orders to 117 widows and orphaned dependents of deceased employees at an earlier ceremony held at the same venue.

The senior minister said tackling unemployment remained a major priority of the provincial government.



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Industries & Production (Federal Minister) Haroon Akhtar Khan and Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashood Khan witnessed the signing ceremony of the MoU between SMEDA and the Prime Minister's Youth Programme.

CM Bugti orders treatment of Mastung acid attack victim

Balochistan govt strongly condemns violence against women: Shahid Rind

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Chief Minister's Adviser on Information and Political Affairs Shahid Rind has said the provincial government will bear the cost of specialized medical treatment for a woman injured in an alleged acid attack in Mastung.

He said Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti had directed the authorities to arrange the survivor's treatment at Aga Khan Hospital Karachi and ensure that she received the best possible medical care. The government will also extend legal assistance in the case.

Rind identified the survivor as Bibi Laiba, wife of Kaleemullah, and said immediate measures had been initiated following the chief minister's instructions.

A formal letter has been issued to facilitate her treatment at Aga Khan Hospital Karachi, where she will receive specialized medical care at the government's expense.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, meeting with a high-level Gates Foundation delegation led by Dr. Anita Zaidi, President, Gender Equality Division, along with Ms. Kalpana Kochhar, Interim President, Global Policy and Advocacy Division, at the Finance Division today to discuss economic reforms, human capital and development priorities.

Public funds must be subjected to transparent, effective scrutiny: PAC Chairman

QUETTA, (VoM Report): The Balochistan Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has expressed serious reservations over the implementation of the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme after examining Rs6.35 billion in expenditure, warning that failure to comply with its directives could lead to referral of the matter to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

The committee, chaired by Asghar Ali Tareen, reviewed several observations from the 2022-23 special audit report relating to the Forestry and Wildlife components of the programme for the period 2019-22.

During the proceedings, the PAC noted that the project had achieved only 12.43 percent physical and 10 percent financial progress during its first three years.

The audit attributed the sluggish pace partly to frequent transfers of officers serving in Project Implementation Units and delays in appointing key personnel to the Project Management Unit.

The committee also expressed concern that the special audit report had not yet been presented before it. The department was directed to facilitate physical verification and address the audit authorities' concerns within 20 days.

An audit observation involving an alleged loss of Rs55.420 million due to incomplete nursery infrastructure was also taken up. According to the audit findings, 70 nursery sites were scheduled for establishment, development or upgradation, but the required infrastructure remained incomplete at several Project Implementation Units.

The PAC sought a comprehensive account of the nurseries, including the total number established, those completed and those formally handed over to the departments concerned.

Skilled youth can contribute to inclusive; sustainable national development: Mashhood

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) have agreed to devise a collaborative framework for advancing youth empowerment, climate resilience and green economy initiatives across Pakistan. In this regard, the two sides signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) here on Thursday. SDPI Executive Director Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, and PMYP Joint Secretary Dr Muhammad Ali Malik signed the document on behalf of their respective organizations.

PMYP Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan was also present on the occasion.

PMYP Chairman, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan pledged that now the two sides will jointly work to enhance skills development among the youth, foster sustainability leadership, and create pathways for meaningful youth engagement in climate resilience and the evolving green economy, contributing to inclusive and sustainable national development.

Commissioner expresses concern over drug addiction among women in Hub

UTHAL, (VoM Report): Lasbela Division Commissioner Saira Atta has encouraged female students to pursue their education and professional ambitions with confidence, assuring them that harassment in educational institutions would not be tolerated and warning that a government official could be dismissed from service if found guilty of such misconduct. She made the remarks while addressing a career counselling seminar at Lasbela University. Atta said the administration would provide assistance in technical and educational guidance and extend cooperation to university faculty to help students make informed decisions about their academic and professional futures.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan chairs a meeting regarding QDA and Quetta Master Plan.

Red Crescent train journalists for stronger climate reporting

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), in collaboration with the German Red Cross (GRC), has equipped more than 30 journalists and field reporters from Pakistan's climate vulnerable regions with advanced skills in climate science, data driven reporting, mobile journalism and human centred storytelling



through a two day national training workshop in Islamabad, aimed at strengthening the quality, credibility and impact of climate journalism in the country.

Organised by the PRCS Climate Change Adaptation and Media & Communication departments in collaboration with the GRC, the workshop brought together journalists from Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regions which are increasingly exposed to floods, extreme weather, environmental degradation and other manifestations of a rapidly changing climate.

The initiative sought to bridge the gap between complex climate realities and public understanding by enabling journalists to transform scientific evidence, climate data and community experiences into compelling, accessible and consequential stories.

The training commenced with an overview of its objectives by Sajjad Ali Kandhir and Ghulam Murtaza of the PRCS Climate Change Adaptation Programme.

German Red Cross Transition Delegate in Pakistan Asif Aman and Programme Coordinator Ghulam Rasool Farooqui welcomed the participants.

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