Daily

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

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Quetta

Rabi-ul-Awwal 29, 1448 AH | Vol: XX No. 30 Saturday September 12, 2026 | Pages 4, Price Rs. 5 | Ph: 2823307

Political, social differences should not overshadow larger national interest: CM Bugti

Says Quaid-e-Azam's political vision, principled leadership and steadfast struggle ultimately led to creation of an independent homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has called for renewed commitment to the principles of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, saying Pakistan represents a trust handed down to present and future generations and that making the country stable, prosperous and strong is the most meaningful tribute to its founder.

In his message marking the death anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam, the Chief Minister said Jinnah's greatest legacy was Pakistan, where national interests remained above personal considerations. He said the founder's political vision, principled leadership and steadfast struggle ultimately led to the creation of an independent homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent.

Bugti said the strength of a state could not be secured through slogans alone, stressing that constitutional supremacy, the rule of law, effective institutions, responsible governance, justice and protection of citizens' fundamental rights were essential for national stability. He said the principles espoused by Quaid-e-Azam continued to provide relevant guidance for confronting Pakistan's contemporary challenges. Integrity, discipline and respect for law, he added, should be translated into practical governance and collective conduct to safeguard the country's future. The Chief Minister emphasized that every province and citizen should have equal dignity, rights and opportunities for advancement. He said lasting national cohesion could be achieved only when all regions received equitable opportunities for development and merit and justice remained fundamental to state affairs. He stressed that political and social differences should not overshadow the larger national interest, urging collective responsibility, unity and stronger institutions as the foundations of a stable and prosperous Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairing an important review meeting on power load management in the country.



QUETTA: Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail chairing the 9th Senate meeting of Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences (LUAWMS)

Growing pool of graduates can play vital role in development of Balochistan: Governor

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has lauded the marked improvement in the performance of Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences (LUAWMS), saying its score has climbed from 41 per cent to 85.32 per cent while the institution achieved savings of Rs86 million within a year.

He described the development as a reflection of merit-based management, financial prudence, institutional discipline and effective leadership, noting that substantial progress could be achieved despite resource constraints. The Governor expressed these views while chairing the 9th Senate meeting of LUAWMS, where participants examined the university's academic and administrative performance, financial position, research output and proposed development initiatives.

The meeting was attended by Balochistan High Court Justice Sardar Ahmed Halimi, Planning and Development Minister Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Abdul Malik Tareen, Higher Education Secretary Hashim Khan Ghilzai, Parliamentary Secretary Zareen Magsi, Principal Secretary to the Governor Abdul Nasir Dotani, Higher Education Commission representative Dr Zahoor Ahmed Bazai, Pro-Vice Chancellor Dr Elahi Bakhsh, Registrar Dr Balach Baloch and other members of the Senate.

Mandokhail observed that public-sector universities across Balochistan had demonstrated encouraging improvements during the past two years in institutional governance, transparency and overall performance. Such progress, he added, was helping dispel longstanding negative perceptions about public-sector higher education institutions. He particularly commended Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Abdul Malik Tareen and his team for their efforts in improving the university's overall performance.

NJPMC commends district judiciary for disposal of over 1.46m time-bound cases

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chief Justice of Pakistan on Friday chaired the 62nd meeting of the National Judicial Policy Making Committee (NJPMC), which highly appreciated the exceptional performance of the district judiciary in disposing of 1,467,675 time-bound cases between September 1, 2025 and July 31, 2026.

The meeting, held at the Supreme Court of Pakistan, was attended by the Chief Justices of the Lahore, Peshawar and Sindh High Courts and the Registrar of the Islamabad High Court. The Secretary Ministry of Law and Justice, Additional Secretary Ministry of IT and Telecom and Director General National Cyber Emergency Response Team also participated as special invitees.



The Committee reviewed progress on decisions taken at its 61st meeting and unanimously resolved to strengthen institutional capacity, accelerate access to justice and ensure efficient and effective justice delivery.

The NJPMC considered progress on establishing a redressal mechanism for cases of enforced disappearances and directed the Ministry of Law and Justice to expedite finalization of the matter and submit a comprehensive report at its next meeting.

It also considered the Draft National Judicial Reform Framework aligned with the World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index. The Secretariat was directed to circulate proposed indicators to all High Courts for their suggestions within 10 days.

The Committee decided that the finalized framework and indicators would be operationalized in phases, with the Rule of Law Tracker to become fully operational across all tiers by March 15, 2027.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan chairs high-level Provincial Anti Polio Task Force meeting

Leghari vows to alleviate unnecessary financial burdens on power consumers

ISLAMABAD, (APP): A delegation of the Pakistan Business Council (PBC), led by Chief Executive Officer Javed Kureishi, on Friday met with Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari. The meeting focused on exploring strategic avenues to stimulate electricity demand, optimize existing generation capacity, reduce power sector costs, and promote electricity consumption to drive national economic activities, said a press release. During the meeting, Dr. Naveed Arshad, on behalf of the Pakistan Business Council, delivered a presentation on a strategic framework. The presentation addressed the interconnected challenges of demand and cost within the power sector, highlighting potential growth areas and proposing actionable measures for the optimal utilization of existing generation capacity.

The framework also evaluated projections indicating a potential annual demand growth of approximately 44 to 45 Terawatt-hours (TWh) over the next five to seven years.

Iranian President says pressure on country at critical, dangerous stage

NEW DELHI, (Monitoring Desk): Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Friday that pressure on his country from the United States had reached a critical and dangerous stage. Speaking in India ahead of a BRICS summit, Pezeshkian suggested that "the world today is going through a period of unprecedented complexity," adding the use of economic levers of pressure only served to exacerbate that. "Iran has been subjected to heavy sanctions in recent years; this pressure has reached a critical and dangerous stage in recent months following the military aggression by the United States and Israel," he said. The US and Israel sparked the Middle East war in late February with strikes on Iran, whose economy had already been weakened by decades of international sanctions. The Islamic republic retaliated by choking off the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for energy transit, causing global energy prices to surge. "When a country is subjected to political and military pressure on its trade, energy, infrastructure and financial system, the repercussions extend beyond its borders," Pezeshkian said.

Balochistan plans overhaul of fisheries laws, coastal communities to be heard

QUETTA, (VoM Report): The Balochistan Assembly's Standing Committee on Fisheries has taken up a proposed comprehensive legal framework for fisheries and aquaculture, deciding to consult fishermen, fish farmers and other coastal stakeholders before advancing the Balochistan Fisheries and Aquaculture Bill, 2026. The decision was made during a meeting of the committee chaired by Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman Baloch at the Balochistan Assembly Secretariat. Members Abdul Majeed Badini, Zafar Ali Agha, Barkat Ali Rind, Mir Zahoor Buledi and Safia Fazal, besides relevant officials, participated in the proceedings.

The committee decided to convene its next meeting in Gwadar to obtain first-hand input from communities and people whose livelihoods are linked to fishing and aquaculture. Stakeholders from the coastal belt will be invited to present their concerns, suggestions and recommendations regarding the proposed legislation.

Balochistan Police detain hundreds in province-wide crackdown, rescue 16 abductees

QUETTA, (APP): In a major crackdown against criminal elements, Balochistan Police have arrested 44 proclaimed offenders, 249 absconders, and 492 suspects involved in various crimes across 33 districts in the province's nine ranges.

During the operations, police also successfully rescued 16 abductees, including an 11-year-old girl, ensuring their safe return to families. According to a press release issued by the police spokesperson, the campaign was launched under the directives of Inspector General Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir, with a zero-tolerance policy against criminals to safeguard law-abiding citizens. The operations led to the recovery of a significant cache of weapons, including 95 pistols and revolvers, 6 Kalashnikovs, 7 shotguns and rifles, 770 rounds of ammunition, and 48 magazines.

In addition, police intensified action against drug traffickers, arresting 62 suspects and seizing 81.468 kilograms of hashish, 10.67 kilograms of crystal meth (ice), 525 grams of opium, 200 packets of gutka, 45 grams of crystal, 49 bottles of liquor, six liters of homemade alcohol, and 1,279 illegal cigarette packs. The crackdown also resulted in the recovery of three stolen vehicles, 44 motorcycles, and 13 mobile phones.

PM Shehbaz orders effective use of resources to curb prolonged power outages

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday took notice of increasing electricity load-shedding in various cities across the country and expressed displeasure over the situation, directing that no area should face load-shedding for more than two hours.

The prime minister gave these directions while chairing an important review meeting on power load management in the country, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

The meeting was informed that due to the prevailing regional situation, tensions in the Strait of Hormuz and transportation difficulties affecting the supply of Regasified Liquefied Natural Gas (RLNG), electricity generation had been reduced, resulting in a decrease in power output. Consequently, load management had to be carried out to maintain balance between demand and supply.

The prime minister directed that keeping in view the regional situation and future requirements, immediate measures be taken to address the disruption in RLNG supply.

He directed that all available resources be utilized effectively so that no area faces load-shedding for more than two hours.

The prime minister also ordered the establishment of Consumer Grievance Redressal Committees at the level of power distribution companies (DISCOs) to address public complaints related to electricity supply and other issues across the country.

He directed that the redressal committees should also include public representation, and that the grievance committees be made functional within one week.

The meeting was informed that electricity consumers could lodge their complaints through helpline number 118, and that upon registering a complaint, the consumer is provided with a token number as well as the expected time for resolution of the complaint.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan (centre) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) leader Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri address a joint press conference

Steps up consultations

Joint opposition to convene APC on creation of new provinces: Gohar

Maulana Haideri says the political parties would have to play a collective role in resolving the country's problems

ISLAMABAD, (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Friday announced that the joint opposition would hold an All Parties Conference (APC) soon on the creation of new provinces in the country.

The PTI chairman made the remarks following a delegation-level meeting with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Fazalur Rehman at his residence.

Speaking to journalists outside Fazal's residence, Gohar said, "Today was the first meeting regarding the joint opposition," adding that they decided to take all political parties into confidence on national issues. The development came a day after Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry had announced that parliamentary debate on the creation of new provinces would be held in October.

The "joint opposition platform" would be used for consultation on assembly sessions and matters concerning prisoners, he added.

The PTI chairman said they had previously discussed formation of a joint opposition with the JUI-F chief, adding that they agreed on the issue in the Senate and National Assembly.

Gohar said the first meeting had been encouraging and that consultations would continue in the future too.

He added that the opposition had not yet been invited to join their proposed long march, while discussions were held on participation in the APC. For his part, JUI-F leader Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri said, "We welcome the arrival of the opposition," adding that the consultative meeting discussed the proposed APC, the establishment of provinces and other issues.

Haideri said that the political parties would have to play a collective role in resolving the country's problems, adding that other parties, including Jamaat-e-Islami, were protesting against inflation.

He said JUI-F had also held rallies across the country over inflation.

According to a declaration issued after the meeting, a PTI delegation led by Chairman Barrister Gohar visited the residence of the JUI-F chief.

The delegation also included Salman Akram Raja, Asad Qaiser, Firdous Shamim Naqvi and Hussain Ahmad Yousafzai. Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri and Maulana Asad Mahmood were also present during the meeting, read the statement.



The Israeli army reportedly carried out an airstrike on the city of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza Strip despite the ceasefire, resulting in deaths and injuries, including children.

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

Saturday September 12, 2026

Addressing out-of-school children

A highly ambitious plan to enrol half of the 25.1 million out-of-school children in Pakistan by 2030 has just been undertaken by the Sindh government in collaboration with UNICEF. The move aims to tackle larger issues such as poverty, child labour, gender discrimination and access to education over the next five years to improve the country's literacy. It goes without saying that 'addressing' issues like poverty, discrimination and the like is a highly simplified way to take charge of a deeply complex problem.

In a discussion featuring senior government officials, Sindh Education Minister Sardar Ali Shah pointed out that the reasons behind school dropouts must be understood for effective interventions. But what does 'understood' mean within this context? When the general public routinely decries inflation, exorbitant school fees and a substandard quality of education in public schools, are practical and comprehensive measures not warranted as an immediate next step?

Considering Pakistan's current state of education, there is a pressing need to move beyond buzzwords that merely identify the problem but offer no concrete steps as respite. Instead, there is a greater need to address core issues underlying problems such as poverty and child labour.

These issues include administrative corruption, misplaced funding, incompetent implementation of previous initiatives and a regressive culture that still wants girls to only aspire for marriage.

Only time will tell whether this plan comes to fruition or not. But a transparent plan of action will surely offer predictive clues about its success - and as of yet, the plan does not exist. Improving the country's literacy is a lengthy challenge.

But for now, it seems like the government is focused on asking questions that have been answered countless times before. For any meaningful progress, the government must introduce action, not just rhetoric.

AI on the battlefield

Usama Khilji

The prominent use of artificial intelligence in warfare lately will remind many of us in Pakistan that this is not new.

The 'signature strikes' via drones in Pakistan by the Obama-led US administration considered any 'military age males' as legitimate combatant targets, a practice that led to a very high civilian casualty rate unaccounted for by the US and criticised by rights groups.

The processing of footage captured by surveillance drones that constantly buzzed above Waziristan and adjoining areas and deducing targets as early as in 2008 was one of the earliest cases of the use of AI intelligence in warfare which made Pakistan a testing laboratory for the tech-enabled warfare that would follow.

As a technological tool that uses large swathes of data called large language models to process information and make deductions for varied purposes, AI has come to be used across sectors, including in the information ecosystem. The 'fog of war' created by the use of generative AI in information operations is another example of its deployment in warfare, but that deserves a dedicated discussion. The lesser known targeting of people through AI certainly merits attention.

AI has several functions in warfare today, such as finding and classifying targets; fusing data for command and control; helping plan operations with generative AI and simulation; enabling drones and other unmanned systems to operate; and in supporting cyberwarfare, maintenance and logistics.

Reports of AI company Anthropic refusing to accede to terms demanded by the Pentagon in a military contract highlighted the tensions as well as collaborations that exist between technology companies and governments. However, the Anthropic case was an outlier, as evident from the eager signing of a contract with Pentagon by OpenAI. It signified that in a competitive market, an ethical stand taken by a company can quickly be overrun by another company.

In the Israeli genocide of Palestinians, the collusion of tech companies with the Israeli military has demonstrated the extent to which they are willing to go for profit, positioning them effectively as defence companies. The Israeli military has used AI for target generation and ranking, surveillance and signal analysis, translation/tra-n--scription of intercepted communications, and cloud infrastructure to store and process huge da--tasets for the genocide.

The best known AI-enab-led warfare systems used by Israel are Gospel and Lavender. Gospel suggests strike targets using technology by Palantir, whereas Lavender uses machine learning to create a list of potential hu--man targets, scoring people from zero to 100 bas--ed on data such as family ties and intercepted calls.

Microsoft, Google, OpenAI and Palantir, among others have been supplying advanced technology to enable Israel to carry out the Palestinian genocide. Microsoft provides the Israeli defence ministry with software, Azure cloud services to store data, and Azure AI services to process the data including language translation, apart from using OpenAI models. The news agency AP's investigations have found a direct link between AI-based targeting and "the wrongful killing of civilians, including a Lebanese family with children".

After having quietly removed the restriction on the use of its AI products for military purposes from its policy, Google along with Amazon has a $1.2 billion contract with Israel called Project Nimbus, for the provision of cloud computing and AI services to the Israeli military.

Just like everyday use of AI results in error and hallucinations, AI use in warfare comes with a critical risk of automation bias where military personnel start to rely on it without care for mistranslations, faulty pattern-making and other data problems. Further, there are few opportunities for companies to withdraw the provision of technology and services when humanitarian and human rights laws are violated, provided that is a priority for companies other than profits.

The mistreatment of whistle-blowers and workers protesting against the rights violations their labour was contributing to within these companies is indicative of their policies and priorities. After media reports that exposed Microsoft's dangerous partnership with the Israeli government, Microsoft only ended one of many contracts. This shows the lack of adequate and meaningful hu--man rights due diligence in the practices of these companies, and little oversight of the human rights risks and impact that the technology of these companies has on civilian populations.

It is not rare for companies to end their presence and work with governments due to their questionable human rights record. Google shelved its Dragonfly project in China after concerns were raised about the censorship it would build into its search engine. Tech companies also withdrew from Russia after its invasion of Ukraine, and banned Russian media pages. However, in the case of Israel, tech companies have raced to partner with the government despite credible determination of the genocide being carried out by them. This points to a clear inconsistency in the policies of US tech companies that have blatant double standards.

Like governments, companies cannot function with impunity. They are bound by international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights outline the responsibilities of companies, including human rights due diligence, as well as states' responsibility to ensure that companies functioning from their territories are not complicit in human rights violations.

The Global Network Initiative principles also bind companies to carry out human rights due diligence and protect freedom of expression and privacy rights in their business practices. But regulations like the EU AI Act make an exception for the military use of AI when it comes to AI regulation and oversight, and this is a problem.

AI enabled America's killing of 'military age men' in Pakistan in 2008, and more than 200 schoolgirls in Iran in 2026. Governments, regional and international bodies and companies must ensure that AI and associated technologies are not complicit in taking civilian lives.

Banning the dead

Muna Khan

FOR once, the headlines about us are not about instability, extremism or economic collapse. They are about a country that opened its doors to two adversaries and said: talk here, we will make it work. Pakistan, for a brief and genuinely remarkable moment, looked like a grown-up. And then Pemra, the electronic media regulator, issued a show-cause notice to Geo for airing content related to Asha Bhosle. Let that sit for a moment.

Asha Bhosle passed away last Sunday. When Geo reported her death and aired her songs, it was honouring her. It was giving audiences context, memory and meaning. It was journalism. Pemra looked at that and decided it was a regulatory violation worth pursuing.

This is not regulation. It is cultural vandalism.

Vandalism is not always loud. It does not always arrive with hammers and broken glass. Sometimes it arrives with paperwork. With a show-cause notice. With the quiet, bureaucratic erasure of something that connected people across lines that institutions have spent generations deepening. Art is often the last bridge left standing when everything else has collapsed. Pemra has chosen to burn it and call the act responsible governance. It is hiding behind the India content ban. That ban was not born out of cultural conviction but geopolitical anger. It was a reaction to whatever idiocy was coming out of India. Emotion dressed up as law.

There is an argument that gets deployed every time something like this happens. India bans Pakistani artists. India pulls our films, our music, our cultural presence from its platforms. Why should we be any different?

This is not an argument. It is a surrender.

If your benchmark for national policy is matching the worst behaviour of your rival, you have already conceded the moral ground. Tit for tat is not a strategy. It is a reflex. And reflexes require no thought. The moment you say, we will do what they do, you have handed them the power to define you. You become a mirror of your enemy's worst instincts rather than a country capable of charting its own course. Banning Asha Bhosle's songs does not make Pakistan stronger. It does not improve a single life, resolve a single dispute, or advance a single national interest. She was not an Indian artist — she called Noor Jahan her elder sister, sang with Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and gave voice to our poets, like Nasir Kazmi. She was subcontinental. What Pemra banned was part of our own soul.

Pemra's logic, if you can call it that, is that Indian content threatens our identity and values. That airing Indian songs during an obituary report is somehow cultural subversion. That Pakistanis must be protected from a woman who spent 70 years singing. This is the same Pemra that issued a show-cause notice recently to Channel 24 — not for anything dangerous, but because the morning show host's husband lifted her over his shoulder in what she described as a playful moment. Pemra called it a code of conduct violation, summoned the channel, and congratulated itself on protecting the nation from a married couple being affectionate on TV. If a couple's playful moment and a 92-year-old singer's voice are both national security concerns, we need to ask who is doing the threatening — the content or the regulator.

The subcontinent's musical heritage does not stop at Wagah. It never did. No notice from Pemra will change that. All it does is remind us how small the regulator's imagination is. Regulation exists to protect the public, not to manage the feelings.

Energy crisis unplugged

Atif Mehmood

If you were to ask people across the country what they are frustrated with most, the answer is quite easy and, most importantly, unanimous: electricity. Not only are they frustrated with the load-shedding they are going through these days, but they are also frustrated with the bills. It is a strange sort of unfairness, but one must understand that this is not how it is supposed to be.

There are a number of statistics that explain why people are frustrated with the situation. For instance, Pakistan has crossed 42,000 megawatts installed electric generation capacity; however, we are not able to meet even half of this due to fuel, circular debt and transmission losses. The circular debt has crossed 2.6 trillion rupees; it continues to increase every day.

And then, of course, there are the prices, which have risen many times over in recent months, and have led to an increase of over 30 per cent in the average cost of electricity being sent to people across the country in the last year or so. This, for a middle-income family, essentially translates into a choice between keeping their house cool during the scorching summer or not being able to buy food and other essentials.

Some of the government policies are also geared towards electricity conservation; while some of these policies make sense, others are simply a joke. For instance, the early closure of markets and office hours is geared towards electricity conservation; so is the electricity conservation drive we are witnessing these days. But when the temperature crosses 45 degrees or so in Sindh and south Punjab, it is simply a joke to ask people to conserve electricity to the extent they are already doing so.

Then there is the issue of the drive towards solar power, which is becoming impossible to ignore. For instance, if you walk through neighbourhoods in Islamabad or Faisalabad, you will see rooftops covered in solar panels. It is estimated that Pakistan imported over 10 gigawatts of solar panels in 2025 alone. The cost of a small installation for a household can be anywhere between 700,000 to 1.5 million rupees. That's clearly not something everyone can afford, yet people are opting for solar panels simply because they are tired of the uncertainty of the situation.

Of course, solar power is not the complete solution to the situation. For instance, the national grid is still unstable and net-metering policies are starting to change, yet this is not giving people pause for thought before opting for solar power. Those who cannot afford solar power are then forced to bear the burden of increasing tariffs; and the divide between the rich and the poor is visible for all to see.

However, there are solutions to the situation, and none of them is easy or quick fixes. This can start from reduction of transmission and distribution losses, which still remain at 17 to 18 per cent, and would go a long way in solving the situation without the need to build new power plants.

Second, ensuring that the policies regarding solar power remain stable. People would invest if they knew the rules of the game are not likely to change overnight. Then there is the solution of targeted subsidies rather than across-the-board subsidies to ensure the poor get the subsidies they need.

And perhaps just as importantly, there needs to be a more honest conversation. People know the system is strained. People want reassurance that the plan is solid and progress is evident. The main challenge, however, is unpredictability: lights may be on one day and off the next, with no discernible rhythm or reason.

The burden of taxes

Sakib Sherani

THE unwarranted and illegal war imposed on Iran represents an extraordinary exogenous shock for developing countries. Pakistan is particularly vulnerable on this front. It has an outsized import dependency on a wide range of products, from energy to food, and from industrial raw materials to finished goods. Remittances from non-resident Pakistanis keep not just the external account afloat, but also provide a vital lifeline to 30 to 40 million family members at home. Amplifying Pakistan's exposure to the conflict in the neighbourhood is the fact that the central node for both trade flows and capital flows that the country so heavily depends on is the Gulf region. Compounding our vulnerability even further is the fact that we have virtually no, or limited, buffers in all critical areas of economic security — energy, foreign exchange reserves, food or fiscal space.

The absence of fiscal buffers is illustrated not just by the high levels of public debt and the large share of interest payments in the budget, on the one hand, but also by the still-narrow and weak tax revenue base. Despite the extraordinary increase in tax collection by FBR over the past four years, most of it has come from the same base — corporate taxpayers, imports, salaried individuals and ordinary Pakistanis paying via regressive indirect taxation.

The recent resort by the government to increasing petroleum levies yet again to plug a gaping shortfall in FBR's tax collection target aptly demonstrates the unresolved taxation dilemma. Due to its failure to broaden the tax base, the government saw it appropriate instead to nearly double the petroleum levy on petrol from Rs84 per litre before the start of the Iran war to Rs161 per litre as of April 3. As a result, the 54 per cent increase in the reference price of crude oil imported by Pakistan ballooned overnight to a 72pc increase paid by Pakistanis at the petrol pump. It is worth noting that the petroleum levy, along with the newly imposed carbon levy, is the visible part of the taxation structure on this essential commodity. The ex-refinery price incorporates the customs duty and general sales tax (GST) levied by the government at the import stage. Combined, at its April 3 peak, the incidence of tax on a litre of petrol had shot up to 41pc.

While this decision was reversed quickly after the massive uproar across the country, bringing the tax incidence down to 28pc currently, petroleum taxation still remains excessive by virtue of the fact that it is an important input in virtually all economic activity, and the fact that it is inherently extremely regressive in nature once its indirect effects are accounted for.

While petrol and diesel constitute a lower proportion of direct expenditure for poorer households, the cascading effect of price increases on transportation, food and electricity bills means that they end up with a higher net burden relative to income and expenditure.

To put the burden in perspective, an interesting comparison of the international retail price of petrol in various countries versus their per capita income was done recently. It showed that Pakistan had the highest retail price of petrol relative to per capita income in the world after Ethiopia.

Increasing reliance on taxation of petroleum products is demonstrated by the fact that the tax incidence on a litre of petrol was as low as under 10pc in 2022. With projected collection at around Rs1.5 trillion in FY26, this revenue source is now the second-largest base of indirect taxation for the government, providing the equivalent of 16pc of total tax collected by FBR.

In conjunction with the increase in GST coverage and the recent introduction of fixed charges in electricity bills for even lifeline consumers, the heavy reliance on petroleum taxation marks increased regressivity in the tax structure over the past few years.

The inequity of the country's tax regime, in vertical as well as horizontal terms (i.e., between different income groups as well as across the same income group, or among similar businesses), is mirrored across the tax spectrum. According to FBR, only around 5,000 companies out of approximately 125,000 registered firms are tax compliant, accounting for 90pc of corporate income tax paid. Out of these tax-compliant firms, a narrow base of approximately 300 companies in the five main taxpaying sectors accounts for the bulk of tax paid. The situation with regard to sales tax is even more skewed towards a small base of compliant corporates.

US says it destroyed IRGC surveillance tower at Chabahar port

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on X that US forces destroyed a surveillance tower at Iran's Shahid Kalantari Port in Chabahar on July 16, describing it as part of a maritime surveillance network used by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) along Iran's Gulf of Oman coastline.

According to CENTCOM, the surveillance network had been used for decades by the IRGC to monitor commercial vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz. The US military claimed the strike would degrade the IRGC's ability to coordinate attacks on civilian merchant ships.

CENTCOM further said the operation was intended to protect freedom of navigation in regional waters, while maintaining what it described as the ongoing US naval blockade against Iran. Separately, the US military has denied Iran's claims of killing US soldiers in Syria, according to a CENTCOM post on X.

Iran said it had killed US troops stationed at a base in al-Tanf on the Syria-Jordan border. Syria said there's been no Iranian attacks on the US base which US forces left in February.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force Commander Seyed Majid Mousavi said on Friday that the Iranian attacks will continue "until calm returns to the southern coastline and the Strait of Hormuz", Al Jazeera reported.

"In the system of calculations, the entire territory of Iran — from Tehran to the south — is one and the same. Effective and targeted strikes from across Iran against the enemy will continue until calm returns to the southern coastline and the Strait of Hormuz," he said in a statement carried by Iranian state TV.

Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organisation said all major roads across the country remain open and traffic has resumed on sections damaged in overnight US strikes, according to Press TV. In a statement on X, the organisation said road maintenance teams restored traffic on affected routes, including several bridges in southern Iran, within 12 hours of the attacks.

It added that temporary bypasses had been constructed around damaged sections.



Boris Nadezhdin, an anti-war Russian politician, appears in court in Dolgoprudny, Moscow region, Russia.



Rescue workers search for survivors at the site of a landslide along Wujiang river in Pengshui Miao and Tujia Autonomous County, Chongqing, China.

Uganda school bus crash kills 20 children, 1 adult

Monitoring Desk

UGANDA: schoolchildren have been killed after the bus carrying them crashed on the way back from an educational field trip in eastern Uganda, authorities said.

Uganda suspended school outings on Friday after the crash, which also killed one adult on Thursday night.

Three other adults and more than a dozen children were also injured, officials said.

The bus belonging to the King David Junior School was returning to the capital, Kampala, after a trip to Sipi Falls when the accident occurred, the Uganda Police Force said on X. The crash took place near Chekwatit village in Kapchorwa district, police added.

Preliminary investigations suggested the driver lost control, and the bus veered off the road and turned after hitting a large stone, police said.

Ugandan Minister of Local Government Balaam Barugahara Ateenyi said on X that more than 28 children were being treated in hospitals, nine of them in critical condition.

Officials have not yet released the names or ages of the children killed. The adult who died is believed to be the school's founder and head.

Residents arrived before official rescue teams and began carrying victims away from the wreckage, according to footage released by the Uganda Red Cross Society. Some survivors were brought to hospitals in pick-up trucks. The village where police said the crash occurred is near the Uganda-Kenya border, some 300km (186 miles) from Kampala.

The government announced a suspension of "all school trips and excursions, effective immediately and until further notice".

Uganda experiences frequent deadly crashes. Its roads are among the most dangerous in a region with the world's worst safety record. Crashes are often linked to speeding, poorly maintained vehicles and bad road conditions.

Earlier this month alone, 14 people were killed when a bus and truck collided in a remote area of northern Uganda.

In October, 46 people were killed when several vehicles, including two buses, collided on the Kapala-Gulu highway.

Trump accuses China of 2020 election interference, contradicting US intel

Monitoring Desk

NEW YORK: US President Donald Trump declassified documents on Thursday that he asserted showed Chinese interference in US elections, reviving his long-running attacks on election security despite a US intelligence assessment that found no evidence Beijing affected the 2020 vote that he lost.

The 25-minute prime-time address underscored Trump's effort to make election security a central political issue ahead of November's midterm elections, when his fellow Republicans will be defending their slender congressional majorities.

Trump his remarks to again press Republicans in Congress to pass legislation imposing new voter identification and citizenship requirements, despite longstanding findings that voter fraud in US elections is rare. The bill has stalled in the Senate amid fierce Democratic opposition.

Trump said the declassified material would reveal "shocking vulnerabilities in our election infrastructure". But many appeared to show the opposite, or were not related to the US election infrastructure at all.

The speech came at a challenging political moment for Trump and Republicans, with his approval rating weighed down by the unpopular Iran war and high energy prices. Trump briefly mentioned the war at the outset, saying the US was "winning big," while listing a series of domestic accomplishments, including tax cuts and his immigration crackdown, before turning to election security.

The president said he was declassifying sensitive information that showed China had illicitly acquired 220 million US voter files, including names, addresses, and other data.



Ugandan Red Cross shows injured children being brought in a pick-up truck to hospital after a school bus crashed in the Kapchorwa District in eastern Uganda.

Iranians suffer new uncertainty and anxiety as US steps up attacks

Monitoring Desk

A new wave of US attacks on Iran has plunged Iranians back into deep uncertainty and anxiety after a period of relative calm while a shaky ceasefire held.

Iranians contacted by Reuters via an encrypted messaging app said economic problems were mounting and they were consumed by worries over what will happen next.

Sharing a photograph of her weekly grocery shopping, Somayeh, 40, a photographer in , said the pre-war prices had almost doubled. "The most important thing overall in the middle of the war is the economy. Every day our situation is worse and more difficult," she said.

"The thing that's the most stressful is the back and forth: one day it's war, the next it's peace. We don't know what's actually going to happen. We can't even make plans for two days in the future."

Like everyone else interviewed by Reuters, she spoke on condition of partial anonymity, declining to let her full name be used and citing fears of government reprisals.

Amir, a 30-year-old software engineer in Sanandaj in the western Kurdistan province, said he had married shortly before the war began with US-Israeli attacks on February 28.

He had been worrying about how to provide for his family and struggling to find work since Iran's leaders cut internet connectivity during protests against the authorities in January.

"Within a month or so when the internet was reconnected, the war began. The internet was cut off again, businesses were again severely impacted, there was a lot of trouble in my industry," said Amir.

Russia fines anti war politician as he suffers medical episode

Monitoring Desk

MOSCOW: A Russian court fined anti-war politician Boris Nadezhdin $13 on Friday for displaying "extremist symbols", delivering the verdict moments after paramedics performed a cardiogram on him in court for extreme high blood pressure.

Nadezhdin—one of the few politicians in Russia openly criticising President Vladimir Putin and Moscow's Ukraine offensive—had tried to sign up for running in tightly controlled parliamentary elections in September.

The 63-year-old faced the charges over a 2023 post he made linking to a video featuring the late opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who is designated an "extremist" in Russia.

Navalny died in prison in 2024 but any mention of him in Russia is still deemed dangerous.

Iran says it hit U.S. command center in Syria as Hormuz fight escalates

Monitoring Desk

TEHRAN: Iran early Friday said it struck a U.S. special operations command center in southeastern Syria, escalating the war over the Strait of Hormuz, as the United States attacked bridges and other urban infrastructure in Iran.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps described the strike in a statement as a "surprise attack" conducted in retaliation for the seven soldiers killed early Wednesday in a U.S. attack on Bampur, near Iranshahr in southeastern Iran. The elite military unit claimed to have destroyed a U.S. radar system and several special-operations helicopters. It claimed to have killed "a large number" of Americans.

State-run media reported Iran also attacked U.S. bases and assets in Kuwait and Bahrain in retaliation for the U.S. attacks hours earlier. Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting claimed the United States destroyed five bridges around Bandar Abbas near the Strait of Hormuz.

U.S. Central Command said it had completed a "major wave" of attacks on Iran at 9:40 p.m. EDT Thursday. It said it hit dozens of Iranian military targets, including coastal surveillance and air defense sites, military logistics infrastructure and maritime capabilities.

Though CENTCOM made no mention of civilian infrastructure, President Donald Trump on Tuesday warned that the U.S. military would be ramping up its attacks through the week and would include civilian targets, but explicitly stating.

Indian regulator warns of 'boss scam', a cyber fraud targeting top executives

Monitoring Desk

MUMBAI: Indian markets regulator on Friday issued a warning against a fraud involving impersonation of CEOs and senior executives of companies to trick employees into transferring funds.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), while referring to this as 'boss scam', said the warning was being issued after it received information Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre of rising instances. The regulator said fraudsters are targeting finance executives and other employees through email, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams and social media platforms while posing as CEOs or other senior executives. The scammers then instruct victims transfer funds to accounts.

Landslide kills eight in Chongqing, 34 still missing

Monitoring Desk

BEIJING: Eight people were killed and 34 others are still missing after a landslide in a county in southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing on Friday, local government officials told a press conference.

In a late Friday directive, President Xi Jinping ordered search and rescue operations to be carried out for the missing and called for an investigation into the cause of the landslide.

Preliminary verification indicated that a Pengshui county community worker spotted scattered falling rocks around 8 a.m. local time (0000 GMT) issued an emergency warning.

Authorities ordered an evacuation of more than 60 residents, but the landslide occurred during the evacuation at 9:08 a.m.

The landslide has caused multiple residential buildings downhill to collapse, prompting the evacuation of more than 1,000 residents from nearby areas. As of Friday afternoon, 10 people had been injured, including two who were seriously injured and two in condition, local government told the press briefing.

Aerial footage from CCTV showed rock and debris falling on a cluster of riverside residential buildings, while people could be seen fleeing with a thick plume of dust billowing behind them.

Zelensky reports deaths and injuries in Russian drone, missile strikes

Monitoring Desk

KYIV: Several people have been killed and injured in Russian drone and missile strikes across Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Friday.

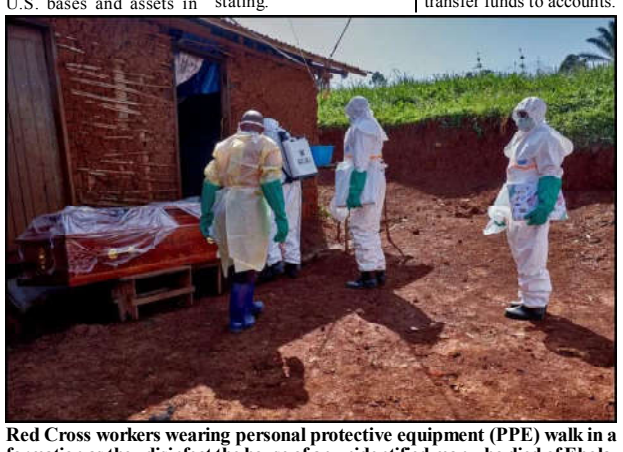
"In Odesa, two people were killed as a result of Russia's overnight missile strike on a residential building," Zelensky posted on the social media platform X. Five others were injured. Two people were also killed and five more injured in an airstrike on the Zaporizhzhya region in the south, he said.

Danish police officer and 2 others shot

Monitoring Desk

COPENHAGEN: A Danish police officer and two other people were shot Friday, including the suspected perpetrator, authorities said.

The shooting occurred in Nørresundby, in the North Jutland region in northern Denmark.



Red Cross workers wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) walk in a formation as they disinfect the house of an unidentified man who died of Ebola.

China says US will restore Hong Kong's special trade status

Monitoring Desk

BEIJING: The United States is set to restore Hong Kong's special trading status, revoked in a 2020 order by U.S. President Donald Trump in response to 's imposition of a national security law in the financial hub, China said on .

The year-long executive order, implemented on July 14, 2020 during Trump's first term, has been extended each year. China's commerce ministry said Washington had confirmed it would not extend it after the renewal date passed this week. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Hong Kong had benefited from a special economic and trade status with the United States that was separate from U.S. dealings with China. This status was based on the principle that Hong Kong remained a separate customs territory and maintained a high degree of autonomy after its 1997 handover from Britain to China.

The reported decision to let the order lapse would mark a significant reversal and comes after recent trade talks between Washington and Beijing that also produced tariff reductions. It could restore Hong Kong's preferential treatment on export controls and other trade measures that have been aligned with those applied to mainland China since 2020.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The EXECUTIVE ENGINEER DRAINAGE IRRIGATION DIVISION DERA ALLAH YAR invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution following works for the Year 2026

Tender Fee 2000 PKR and Bid Security 2% for each work

S. No	Name of Work/s	TSE No.	Estimated Cost
1	CONSTRUCTION OF (KACHA) NALA (DRAIN) USTA MUHAMMAD CITY TO RBOD-III DRAIN DISTRICT USTA MUHAMMAD (BSDI PHASE -III)	2627091190993	50,000,000
2	CONSTRUCTION OF R.C.C DRAIN KHANPUR DISTRY CITY AREA LEFT SIDE DISTRICT USTA MUHAMMAD (UNDER BSDI PHASE-III)	2627091191743	50,000,000
3	CONSTRUCTION OF R.C.C DRAIN KHANPUR DISTRY CITY AREA RIGHT SIDE DISTRICT USTA MUHAMMAD (UNDER BSDI PHASE-III)	2627091191813	50,000,000

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules – 2014. **Eligibility of Bidders:** Presence in Active Tax Payer List The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required The bidder must have completed 3 Assignment of similar nature of work Turn over of at least 35,000,000 PKR Amount in3 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm Registration with Pakistan Engineering council (PEC) C-5 and above (Upto 65 million)In Relevant Category And Specialized Code is CE04(ii) (Irrigation & Flood Control Systems). Tender fee Affidavit of non Litigation on 100 Rs Stamp paper, duly attested by 1st Class Magistrate 2% of estimated amount in the form of CDR or Bank Guarantee **Procedure Of Procurement:** Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure **Bid Security:** The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of **Bank Gurantee, Deposit at Call** of 2 % specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. **Tender Documents:** The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gob.pk **Issuance of tender Documents:** Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gob.pk **Last Date of bid submission:** Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by **01 October, 2026** till **12:00 PM** through supplier dashboard. **Tender opening:** All tenders will be opened on same day at **01:00 PM on EPPS System Address:** EXECUTIVE ENGINEER DRAINAGE IRRIGATION DIVISION AT IRRIGATION COLONY DERA ALLAH YAR

Phone no: 0838510281 Email: mudassarzaffar@gmail.com

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER DRAINAGE IRRIGATION DIVISION DERA ALLAH YAR

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As life expectancy rises, talks start on a UN treaty to protect older persons

Monitoring Desk

GENEVA: A United Nations meeting this week heard calls for an end to ageism and better protection against what campaigners say are hidden abuses as negotiations began on a treaty to strengthen the rights of older persons.

The week of talks in Geneva which ended on Friday were initiated and by Argentina in efforts to combat exclusion, discrimination and neglect as life expectancy rises. The U.N. projects that the number of people over 65 will double in the next 50 years to become a fifth of the world's population.

"Our objective is not just to address the needs of the present, but also to prepare a system that can meet the needs of the future," said Carlos Mario Foradori, Argentina's ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva. "This goal is to build an instrument that strengthens the dignity, protection, and the rights of millions of persons globally."

Brazil, Slovenia, the Philippines and Gambia are the proposed treaty's other main backers, and Chile and South Africa were among countries that voiced support in the week-long talks.

Negotiators are set to meet again in Geneva in October and it is not clear how long negotiations might last. It can take years for such treaties to be agreed on.

Although there are already human rights treaties that have non-discrimination clauses based on race and gender, none exist for age.

UN sanctions armed groups' leaders in eastern Congo

Monitoring Desk

KINSHASA: The United Nations Security Council has imposed sanctions on leaders of groups operating in eastern Congo including Rwandan-backed AFC/M23 rebels and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), which fights alongside the Congolese army.

The conflict in eastern Congo is rooted in the fallout from neighbouring Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

Fighting in eastern Congo last year when the AFC/M23 rebel group, which the United Nations and Western governments say is backed by Rwanda, seized large swathes of eastern Congo.

Rwanda denies backing the rebels.

The U.N. Security Council said on Thursday.

Transport of dead bodies within Congo risks further Ebola spread, UN agency warns

Monitoring Desk

GENEVA: The transport of Ebola victims' bodies between different areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo, often for funerals in their home communities, risks further spreading the virus, the U.N. migration agency said on Friday.

More than 2,000 Ebola cases and 700 have been recorded in Congo and neighbouring Uganda as of July 14, and around two-thirds of the deaths occurred outside clinics or hospitals, the International Organization for Migration said, making it harder to control burials.

The often fatal viral disease spreads through direct contact with bodily fluids from infected people or animals, and causes symptoms that can include high fever, vomiting and internal and external bleeding. This particular epidemic is caused by the Bundibugyo strain of the virus.

Ebola remains highly infectious death, making funeral practices a critical component of outbreak control. "If we don't really manage the dead bodies well, if we don't engage the community … then it means there will be more spread within the community," said Andrew Mbala from IOM.

Pakistan strongly condemns Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia, backs Riyadh's right to self-defense

UNITED NATIONS, (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's United Nations (UN) envoy Asim Iftikhar Ahmad has strongly criticized the Iran-backed Houthi rebels' attacks against Saudi Arabia this week, reiterating its support for the Kingdom's territorial sovereignty and backing its right to self-defense.

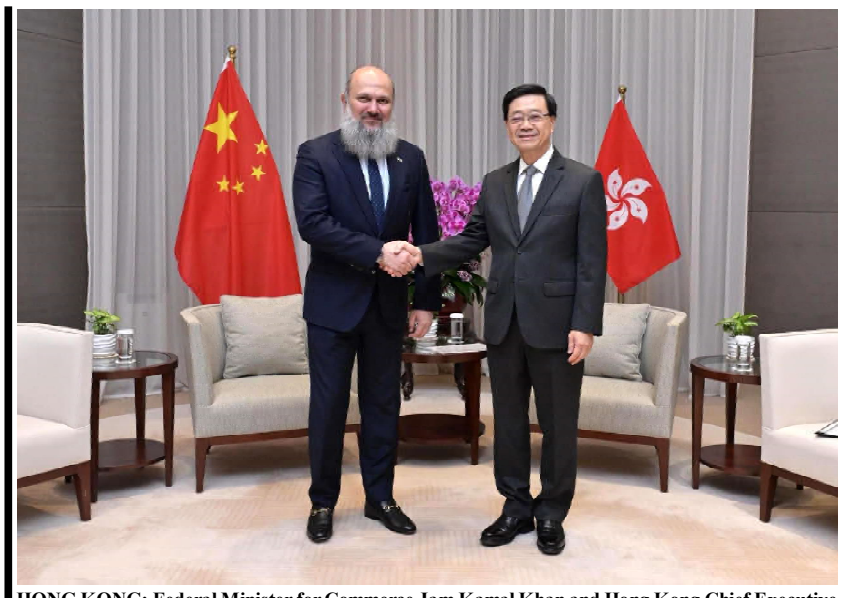
Saudi authorities said 73 civilians, including women and children, were injured in attacks this week by Houthi rebels on the southern cities of Abha, Khamis Mushait, Jazan and Najran. Operations at some energy facilities were temporarily halted as a result of the strikes.

Pakistan, which signed a bilateral defense pact with Saudi Arabia in September 2025 and a trilateral defense pact with the Kingdom in August this year that also involves Türkiye, has warned that the agreement could become operational in the event of aggression against Riyadh.

"Pakistan condemns, in the strongest terms, the reprehensible attacks carried out by the Houthis against civilian and economic targets in Abha, Khamis Mushait, Jazan and Najran in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," Ahmad said during a UN Security Council emergency meeting on Yemen on Thursday.

"These attacks constitute a flagrant violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Kingdom and undermine efforts for a peaceful and durable resolution of the conflict in Yemen. As the Prime Minister of Pakistan has underscored, 'such dastardly attacks threaten innocent lives as well as regional peace and security.'" Pakistan reiterated its support for the Kingdom's territorial sovereignty and said it "fully supports" Saudi Arabia's right to take necessary measures to defend its territory and protect its citizens against any threat. The Pakistani envoy warned that the situation in Yemen has entered a "deeply alarming and dangerous phase," noting the escalation in hostilities across multiple fronts, Houthi attacks against commercial shipping in the Red Sea and attacks against civilian and economic targets in Saudi Arabia.

He warned that these developments, with potentially far-reaching consequences for Yemen and the wider region, underscore the need to prevent further escalation and preserve the space for diplomacy. "Pakistan, therefore, supports an inclusive, Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political process under United Nations auspices," Ahmad said. He condemned the arbitrary detention of over 70 UN personnel and other diplomatic staff in Yemen by the Houthi rebels, calling for their immediate and unconditional release.



HONG KONG: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu shake hands following their high-profile meeting in Hong Kong, reaffirming their commitment to stronger trade, economic cooperation and closer Pakistan-Hong Kong ties.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar chairs a meeting of the Cabinet Committee for Disposal of Legislative Matters at the Ministry of Law and Justice.

Struggle of Quaid-e-Azam for freedom vital chapter in Pakistan's history: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday paid tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah for his role in leading the Muslims of the subcontinent towards an independent homeland. In his message, Naqvi said that Quaid-e-Azam gave a nation a vision, awareness, and a sovereign state. He stated that the struggle of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah for freedom remains an important chapter in the national history of Pakistan. He said that Jinnah led the Muslims of the subcontinent from a state of subjugation towards the goal of an independent homeland. Naqvi said Pakistan emerged on the world map as a free state as a result of the leadership provided by the Quaid. The interior minister said that the personality of Quaid-e-Azam reflected a combination of strong character, truthfulness in speech, and consistency in action.

Differences must be resolved through democratic processes, dialogue, rule of law: President Zardari

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari has paid rich tribute to Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on his 78th death anniversary, saying the great leader had devoted his life to the constitutional, legal, religious, cultural and, above all, human rights of the Muslims of the subcontinent, eventually leading them towards the creation of Pakistan.

In his message on the occasion, the president said Pakistan was envisioned as a country where the Muslims of the Muslim-majority areas could live their lives without the spectre of a Hindu majoritarian state, in harmony and peacefully with non-Muslim minorities, so that people of all faiths could live according to their beliefs.

President Zardari said the Quaid's life offered an enduring lesson in perseverance, discipline and confidence in one's purpose, adding that these qualities provided a great vision to handle all challenges, crises and opportunities. He said that from security, political, social, cultural and economic challenges to climate emergencies, the life of the Quaid stood as a radiant lighthouse and compass to meet all challenges. He said the nation must not forget that the Quaid had taught that durable strength came from institutions enjoying public confidence, constitutional continuity and equality before the law, adding that differences and polarisation must be resolved through constitutional institutions, democratic processes, dialogue and the rule of law. The president said the challenges before the nation required seriousness, hard work and responsible governance.

Protecting childhood not act of charity; matter of rights, justice: First Lady

ISLAMABAD, (APP): First Lady Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari on Friday said every child had an absolute right to grow up safe at home, school, in the community and increasingly, in the digital world.

In a statement on child protection, she said violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect of a child could never be dismissed as a private matter, social custom or an unfortunate circumstance.

"When a child is harmed, society has failed in its most basic duty of care," she said.

Asifa said children across the world continued to face physical and sexual violence, trafficking, forced labour, child marriage, exploitation and abuse online.

She said the United Nations had repeatedly warned that violence against children remained widespread yet preventable, adding that protecting children required political will, strong institutions and sustained action.

"In Pakistan, this responsibility is especially urgent," she said, adding that recent evidence concerning online exploitation of children reminded that threats to childhood were evolving rapidly. She said technology must expand children's opportunities, education and knowledge and must never become a doorway through which predators entered their lives. The first lady said child protection could not begin only after a tragedy had occurred and must begin with prevention, including informed parents, safe schools, trained teachers, responsive police and social services, stronger protection mechanisms, responsible digital platforms and communities willing to speak when they saw a child at risk. She said where a crime against a child had occurred, there must be no silence, stigma or protection for the perpetrator. "A frightened child must be heard. A harmed child must be protected. A survivor must be treated with dignity. And an offender must face the law," she said. Asifa said children should never have to prove that they deserved protection, as their age and vulnerability imposed that responsibility upon all.

She said Pakistan must continue strengthening a child-protection system in which prevention, reporting, investigation, rehabilitation and justice worked together, where children and families knew where to seek help and where institutions responded swiftly, sensitively and without subjecting survivors to further trauma. She also stressed the need to listen to children themselves, saying their fears, experiences and voices must inform the policies that affected their lives. "Protecting childhood is not an act of charity. It is a matter of rights, justice and the kind of nation we choose to become," she said.

The first lady called upon government institutions, provincial authorities, law-enforcement agencies, schools, civil society, religious and community leaders, the media, technology companies and families to make the protection of children a shared national responsibility.



Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council and Coordinator of the National Paigham-e-Aman Committee, Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, receives Hubert Walter Award for Reconciliation and Interfaith Cooperation at a prestigious ceremony held in the Great Hall of the historic Lambeth Palace in London.

Ashrafi receives Hubert Walter Award for Reconciliation and Interfaith Cooperation 2026

LONDON, (Monitoring Desk): Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council and Coordinator of the National Paigham-e-Aman Committee, Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, on Friday received the Hubert Walter Award for Reconciliation and Interfaith Cooperation at a prestigious ceremony held in the Great Hall of the historic Lambeth Palace in London. The award was presented by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally, in recognition of Ashrafi's decades-long contribution to peace, reconciliation, moderation, interfaith and intra-faith harmony, minority rights, peaceful coexistence, and his consistent stand against extremism, terrorism and sectarian violence.

The Hubert Walter Award is one of the Lambeth Awards presented by the Archbishop of Canterbury to recognise distinguished contributions to reconciliation and interfaith cooperation. According to details released by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Ashrafi is among the leading figures honoured across five categories of the Lambeth Awards this year and received the Hubert Walter Award for Reconciliation and Interfaith Cooperation.



ISLAMABAD,: The Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad celebrates Enkutatash, the Ethiopian New Year, and Hibir Ken (Unity in Diversity Day) with the national zeal and fervor."

DPM Dar directs to ensure preparations for successful COM meeting in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday chaired a meeting to review preparations for the ECO Council of Ministers (COM), to be hosted by Pakistan on 15–16 November 2026. He reviewed the preparations in detail and provided guidance on key aspects of the upcoming COM meeting. The DPM/FM underscored the importance Pakistan attached to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and its role in advancing regional trade, connectivity and economic cooperation.

He directed all concerned to ensure comprehensive preparations for a productive and successful COM meeting in Pakistan.

Ethiopia-Pakistan ties highlighted at Ethiopian New Year celebration

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad has celebrated Enkutatash, the Ethiopian New Year, and Hibir Ken (Unity in Diversity Day) with the national zeal and fervor under the theme "Diversity: Ethiopia's Adornment."

The event was attended by members of the diplomatic corps, parliamentarians, government officials, business community, media, civil society and members of the Ethiopian community in Pakistan, said a press release issued on Friday.

Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Malik was the chief guest, while Prime Minister's Advisor and National Coordinator on Tourism, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan and Additional Secretary (Africa), Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan attended the event as guests of honour. Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba welcomed the guests and extended Ethiopian New Year greetings to all present.

In his remarks, the ambassador highlighted the significance of Enkutatash, which is marked by the blooming of the Adey Abeba flower. He said Ethiopia was the only African nation never colonised and had its own Ge'ez calendar and alphabet. He said the New Year's message of hope, resilience and a bright future reflected the growing relations between Ethiopia and Pakistan, which had been strengthened through Pakistan's Look Africa and Engage Africa policies and joint economic and environmental initiatives.

He thanked Dr. Musadik for his unwavering support and then formally invited Pakistan to support Ethiopia's hosting of COP32 in Addis Ababa in 2027.

Begum Kulsoom Nawaz demonstrated courage during dark period of dictatorship: Dr. Tariq

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Friday paid tribute to Begum Kulsoom Nawaz, praising her courage and steadfastness during a difficult period in the country's political history.

In a message marking her death anniversary, he said Begum Kulsoom Nawaz demonstrated courage during the dark period of dictatorship and made significant efforts for the restoration of democracy and supremacy of the Constitution.

Dr Tariq said her democratic struggle remained an unforgettable chapter in the country's political history. He said she did not compromise on her principles even in the most difficult circumstances and continued her democratic struggle despite numerous challenges.

The minister said Begum Kulsoom Nawaz's sacrifices for democracy would always be remembered. He described her struggle for democracy and constitutional supremacy as highly commendable.



LASBELA: DC Humaira Baloch giving briefing to Commissioner Lasbela Division Saira Atta about development projects.



KHAN YUNIS, GAZA, PALESTINE: Palestinians mourn the loss of their relatives at the hospital as the bodies of Palestinians killed in an Israeli army airstrike on Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip are brought to Nasser Hospital

Rs 26 mln dacoity from foreigner:

Two suspects behind bars within 36 hours

ISLAMABAD, (APP): ICT Police have arrested two suspects in less than 36 hours for allegedly robbing a foreign national at gunpoint and recovered the entire Rs26 million snatched amount from their possession. An official told APP that Industrial Area Police registered a case immediately after receiving information about the incident and launched an investigation and operation to trace the suspects. He said special police teams were constituted under the supervision of SP Industrial Area Zone Dr Ayaz Hussain to track down those involved in the armed robbery. Using modern technical resources, the police teams traced and arrested the two suspects, identified as Aqib and Talat, in less than 36 hours.

Syedaal for collective efforts to promote Pakistan's development, prosperity

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate, Syedal Khan held separate meetings at Parliament House with parliamentarians, civil society and business representative.

The deputy chairman met with Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance, Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat, Senator Rana Mahmood-ul-Hassan, Senator Nadeem Bhutto, former provincial minister Sardar Asad Nasir, Member Balochistan Assembly and former Provincial Minister, Ameer Ghulam Dastgir Badini, as well as various delegations from the four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, representatives of civil society, and business and trade communities.

The meetings covered a wide range of issues, including the country's overall political and economic situation, challenges faced by the people, legislation, public relief, federal and provincial matters, regional issues, and other matters of mutual interest, said a news release issued here on Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Chairman Senate, Syedal Khan said that the Senate was a symbol of the federation and a constitutional forum representing all federating units on an equal basis.

He said the Upper House effectively represented the voices of all regions of the country, including the four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. He said the fundamental objective of legislation in the Senate was to address public issues, safeguard the national interest and provide maximum relief to the people.

Parliament was playing its constitutional and democratic role in addressing public concerns, while the Senate continues to raise issues affecting the people and different regions of the country in an effective manner. Talking to the various delegations, the Deputy Chairman said that the proposals and concerns presented by representatives and delegations from the four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan were accorded special importance. He said the Senate served as an important constitutional platform for promoting coordination, harmony and cooperation among all federating units, where issues concerning the people and different regions were highlighted

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