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PM vows continued efforts to defuse regional tensions; MBS appreciates Pakistan's steadfast support

ISLAMABAD, (Monitoring Desk): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have agreed to remain in close contact and meet soon as regional tensions continue to escalate.

The understanding came during a telephone conversation between the two leaders on Sunday, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office.

A day earlier, Saudi Arabia shut down its East-West pipeline, after the vital oil conduit came under aerial attack in the widening Middle East war. The world's largest crude oil exporter said it temporarily closed the pipeline as a precaution after a drone attack that both Baghdad and Riyadh said had originated in Iraq.

The 1,200-km (745-mile) pipeline running across the Arabian Peninsula has served as the main route out for global supplies of Middle East oil for the past six months while the Strait of Hormuz has been largely shut by war. It has been moving 4 million to 5 million barrels per day, amounting to 4% to 5% of global supply, sparing Saudi Arabia the brunt of the disruption that has crippled other Gulf oil and gas exporters. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the strikes. Satellite images showed black smoke rising from an area of the pipeline south of Medina. The attack resulted in some injuries and damage that was being assessed, the Saudi Foreign Ministry said without detailing the impact on exports. US President Donald Trump, visiting Ireland to attend a golf tournament at one of his resorts, said Iran was probably to blame. On Saturday, the Saudi Civil Defence said in a statement that a projectile fired by the Houthis had injured two people in Jazan region, along with damaging several buildings, including a mosque. Saudi Arabia has opted not to retaliate so far, following a request from the Iraqi prime minister, the Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement. During today's telephonic conversation, PM Shehbaz strongly condemned the recent Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia's civilian and economic infrastructure.

The prime minister expressed Pakistan's complete solidarity with the Saudi leadership and people, saying the Houthi actions threatened regional peace and security and could further disrupt the global economy and energy supplies. PM Shehbaz said he, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar would continue their efforts to defuse tensions and promote peace in the region.



PHNOM PENH: Chairman Senate of Pakistan and Founding Chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference (ISC), Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, speaks at the Royal Audience at the Throne Hall of the Royal Palace on the sidelines of the 2nd Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference



ISLAMABAD: Justice Muhammad Kamran Khan Malakhail, Chief Justice of the Balochistan High Court, addressing the audience at the National Conference on Judicial Wellbeing, "From Reform to Recognition: Building a Responsive District Judiciary," at the Supreme Court of Pakistan

Gilani's diplomatic engagement enhances Pakistan's voice, visibility in global parliamentary forums

ISLAMABAD, (APP):Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani's sustained efforts to advance parliamentary diplomacy and strengthen Pakistan's engagement with legislatures across the world have received appreciation from the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference (ISC) for his leadership and contribution to the Second Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference (ISC-2), held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from August 26 to 28, 2026.

In a letter addressed to Chairman Senate, ISC Secretary General Ek Nath Dhakal conveyed appreciation on behalf of the ISC and President of the Senate of Cambodia, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, for his esteemed presence and contribution to the Conference.

The letter also acknowledged Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani as the Founding Chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference.

Chairman Senate Gilani's engagement reflects his statesmanlike approach to parliamentary diplomacy, with a consistent emphasis on dialogue, mutual understanding, peaceful resolution of disputes and cooperation among nations. Through engagement with Speakers, Presiding Officers and parliamentary leaders, he has sought to build bridges and deepen institutional relationships beyond traditional diplomatic channels.

The Second Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference, convened under the theme "Solidarity for Peace and Shared Prosperity — Strengthening International Law and Resolving Conflicts Peacefully," brought together parliamentary leaders to deliberate on peace, international cooperation and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Gilani used the platform to reaffirm Pakistan's commitment to dialogue, multilateral cooperation and respect for international law.



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail presenting certificate to participant of the award distribution ceremony organized at SOS Children's Village.

Pakistani media, int'l stars highlight TIFF 2026 in Canada

TORONTO Canada, (APP): The Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) 2026 drew global attention this week as filmmakers, actors, and media delegates from around the world gathered for one of cinema's most prestigious events.

The festival, held in downtown Toronto, featured red carpet premieres, industry panels, and cultural exchanges under the "Visa Infinite Priority Line" banner that hosted numerous international celebrities and media personnel. Among the notable attendees was Academy Award-nominated actress and director Maggie Gyllenhaal, who was seen engaging with festival staff and media on the red carpet. Gyllenhaal's presence underscored TIFF's continued role as a key platform for launching award-season films and fostering cross-border media cooperation. APP's Diplomatic &



Global Affairs Section is closely monitoring the festival proceedings as part of ongoing efforts to expand media cooperation and content-sharing initiatives with international press agencies. The participation of global media at TIFF provides opportunities for Pakistani narratives to reach wider international audiences. "The Toronto International Film Festival remains a vital hub for cultural diplomacy and media exchange," an APP spokesperson said. "APP continues to facilitate coverage that highlights Pakistan's perspective at major global media events." TIFF 2026 runs through this week with screenings, premieres, and industry programs attracting thousands of film professionals and journalists from over 80 countries.

PM Shehbaz announces Rs100 per litre petrol relief for motorcycles, small vehicles

ISLAMABAD, (Monitoring Desk): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday launched a special relief scheme providing Rs100 per litre discount on petrol for motorcyclists, rickshaw and chingchi owners and drivers of vehicles up to 800cc, as the government moved to cushion the public from rising fuel prices driven by tensions in the Middle East.

Following the increase announced on Friday, petrol is now being sold at Rs375.82 per litre, while the price of high-speed diesel has risen to Rs403.32 per litre, following hikes of Rs5.02 and Rs5.28 per litre, respectively.

Announcing the scheme, the prime minister said the government was fully aware of the burden rising oil prices had placed on the public and that the people would not be left alone in these difficult times. "We are launching a special scheme to reduce the burden of rising fuel prices on those using motorcycles, rickshaws, Chingchis and small vehicles," he said.

Pak-China Strategic partnership vital for regional peace: DPM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, emphasized the importance of further deepening the All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership between Pakistan and China across a broad range of areas.

He highlighted bilateral partnership in trade and investment, connectivity, CPEC, agriculture, science & technology, education and people-to-people exchanges.

The DPM/FM expressed these views during a meeting with Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to China Ambassador Ali Asad Gilani, who called on him, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

The DPM/FM congratulated Ambassador-designate Gilani on his appointment and underscored the special importance Pakistan attaches to its time-tested relationship with China.

Appreciating Ambassador-designate Gilani's services as Additional Secretary (Asia Pacific), the DPM/ FM expressed confidence that his experience would contribute to further strengthening this enduring partnership and wished him a successful tenure.

Service Chiefs, Armed Forces commemorate 61st martyrdom anniversary of Major Aziz Bhatti

RAWALPINDI (APP): Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), Admiral Naveed Ashraf, NI, NI (M), T Bt, Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, NI (M), HJ, Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), General Syed Aamer Raza, NI (M), S Bt, Commander National Strategic Command (CNSC) on behalf of the Armed Forces of Pakistan, solemnly commemorate the 61st martyrdom anniversary of Major Raja Aziz Bhatti Shaheed, Nishan-e-Haider and pay rich tribute to his exceptional courage, leadership and supreme sacrifice.

"During the 1965 War, Major Aziz Bhatti Shaheed defended the Burki sector near Lahore with extraordinary valour, holding his ground against relentless enemy assaults for five days and nights.

All matters between PPP, PML-N to be resolved amicably: Rana

LAHORE (APP): Advisor to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah Khan has expressed confidence that all matters between the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) would be resolved amicably.

Addressing a press conference here, Rana Sanaullah said that, in his personal opinion, the debate on formation of new provinces should have been initiated in Parliament.

"The formation of new provinces is not an issue to be debated at economic forums or different seminars," he said, adding that the discussion would become result-oriented if held in Parliament.

He said the participation of the leadership of all provinces and political parties in such a debate would help resolve the matter in a better way.

Rana Sanaullah said the PML-N would participate in the debate and present its policy position whenever the matter was discussed at the appropriate forum, which, he said, was Parliament.

He said a referendum could be held only if approved by a joint session of Parliament, adding that the government alone could not decide to hold a referendum.

Commenting on Jamaat-e-Islami's long march, Rana Sanaullah said the party had always held rallies and staged sit-ins within the boundaries of the law and the Constitution.

CM Bugti backs new provinces on administrative grounds, rules out talks with militants

Denies knowledge of any "two-and-a-half-year" power-sharing agreement, says decisions on govt change rest with political leadership

QUETTA (APP): Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has declared that the fight against terrorism will persist until the last terrorist is eliminated, stressing that civil and military leadership are fully united and resolute with no ambiguity on the matter.

Addressing national media anchors, senior journalists, and representatives via video link at the Chief Minister Secretariat, he said that state institutions are working in complete harmony against terrorism and that dialogue with those who take arms against the state is not possible under any circumstances. He praised the role of security forces performing their duties under challenging conditions.

Earlier, departmental briefings were held at the Secretariat on socio-economic development, minerals and mining, and law and order. The Planning and Development Department outlined strategies for governance, service delivery, and effective use of development funds.

The Minerals Department highlighted ongoing projects to harness natural wealth for the economic benefit of the people, while the Home Department briefed on the Provincial Action Plan, police reforms, and the integration of Levies into police. Updates on the Safe City project and coordination among law enforcement agencies were also shared. In the session, CM Bugti clarified the government's stance on several issues. He said that if new provinces are created in Balochistan, they should be established on administrative grounds rather than linguistic divisions. He denied knowledge of any "two-and-a-half-year" power-sharing agreement, adding that decisions on government change rest with political leadership.



Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Balochistan for Information and Political Affairs Shahid Rind speaking to anchorpersons and senior journalists of national media.

4 miners die in coal mine gas explosion in Balochistan's Harnai

QUETTA, (News Desk): Four miners died while another five were injured after a gas explosion at a coal mine in Balochistan's Harnai district, state-run Radio Pakistan reported on Sunday.

The army completed a rescue operation at the incident site, where miners were trapped following a gas explosion, the report said.

"Five miners trapped inside the coal mine were rescued alive through a timely rescue operation by the Pakistan Army," it said."

"Four miners have so far lost their lives, while five others sustained injuries in the gas explosion," the outlet added.

According to the report, the injured miners were shifted to Quetta for further medical treatment.

Accidents are common in Pakistan's coal mines, mainly due to gas build-ups.

Mine workers have complained that a lack of safety gear and poor working conditions are the key causes of frequent accidents, according to labour union officials.

Last month, three workers were killed in a gas explosion at a coal mine in the Degari area of Balochistan's Mastung district.

In late July, at least 32 coal miners — most of whom were from Shangla — were killed in a powerful methane gas explosion at a coal mine in Quetta. The victims' heirs later refused to receive the compensation cheques worth Rs400,000.

Following that incident, the National Labour Federation (NLF) Balochistan demanded reforms in mine safety.

NLF Balochistan General Secretary Umar Hayat said the province had 196 mining companies operating nearly 3,000 coal mines, yet only 17 mine inspectors were responsible for monitoring safety standards, describing the number as "grossly inadequate".



DUBLIN, IRELAND: A woman wearing a traditional Palestinian keffiyeh headscarf flashes a peace sign while marching during a large-scale anti-war protest

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Lavish lifestyles

Pakistan's tax system suffers from a serious credibility crisis rooted both in the failure to tax all forms of income equitably and in persistent low compliance. With less than 2pc of the people paying income tax in a country where a considerable number enjoys lifestyles unimaginable even in far richer economies, it is not surprising that reliance on IMF programmes is a regular feature of fiscal management. It is against this backdrop that the widening gap between conspicuous displays of wealth — on the roads, at weddings, on polo grounds, etc — and declared income has become a challenge for tax authorities. This gap, compounded by the growing pressure on the FBR to meet revenue targets, has led to the creation of a Lifestyle Monitoring Cell to detect concealed wealth of individual taxpayers through open-source intelligence and social media. Even the initial findings are shocking. In three months, investigators 'uncovered' undeclared assets of Rs12.3bn in 38 cases of blatant displays of spending on luxury cars, lavish weddings, frequent foreign travel, imported horses, real estate, and other high-end lifestyles on social media. In most cases, the declared income is negligible relative to the assets on display.

The shift in the FBR's focus on lifestyle spending signifies an attempt to map people's consumption patterns and match them with their latest tax and wealth declaration to see if they have committed tax fraud. Such expenditures cannot be treated as taxable events in themselves but only as indicators of undeclared income. Even so, the underlying logic of targeting expenditure rather than income alone is a sound policy. International experience shows that expenditure-based income assessments, used in varying forms in different countries, can be effective in identifying the hidden assets of wealthy and self-employed people. When the tax authority shifts its focus from what a taxpayer claims to have earned in their tax and wealth returns to what and how they spend, chances of catching cheaters significantly improve. Therefore, the FBR's decision to use lifestyle indicators and spending patterns is a positive initiative for strengthening tax enforcement and deterring tax evas.

Deeper effort needed

Faisal Bari

Schooling has changed a lot over the last three decades. Teachers engage students more; the curriculum is constantly updated; books and teaching material are more interesting and even interactive; new ways of teaching and engaging students have been introduced; technology has made its way into education in a big way; corporal punishment is officially banned and frowned upon if still practised; it is widely accepted that children need to learn through doing and exploring rather than just listening to lectures; and last but not least, it is recognised that learning should not be a drudgery and should be enjoyable. There is no reason why learning cannot be enjoyable.

Bigger changes from outside have also had impacts. Online content has made access to quality material easier for teachers, parents and students. Online teaching and learning is opening new doors to ways of how children can be educated. It also improves access to subjects and areas that might not be available locally. Students can now participate in international competitions and other interactions from their schools or homes. AI has only just begun to have an impact. It is hard to see where it will take us but it will have a significant impact in multiple educational domains. Social media has changed access issues, and is shaping the brains, minds and habits of children for good and for bad. The impact is already significant and will be more so over the next decade.

When I talk to children, teenagers and young adults, it is clear that most of them enjoy school or college more than how much my friends and I enjoyed school. These changes need to be built on. There is no reason why any child should not have an enjoyable and fruitful learning experience. Education and learning are part and parcel of human existence. How does it make sense to not work on making this important part of life enjoyable?

At the same time, I have observed certain things over my 30-year or so teaching career that too need to be given some thought. Social media has been shown to have negative impacts on child development. It is not just trolling and peer pressure that are of concern but also how social media and electronic gadgets tend to hardwire children's brains. A few countries have already started limiting access to social media and internet during school hours. Some have even put age limits on when children can access social media. We need to think this through. The technology is having an impact on student concentration, attention spans and even on how children learn.

Learning should be enjoyable but it is also the case that hard things require a lot of effort to learn. Memory usage and sharpness, concentration, grit and resilience need hard work to build. In a bid to make learning enjoyable, some schools end up making things too easy. Students are not able to stay with difficult problems for long. They get bored or frustrated far too easily. But there are definitely hard problems we need to tackle and students need to be able to build 'muscles' for the hard work needed.

Multiplication and division, introduced around Grade 3 and 4, are hard concepts to understand and work out. I have seen too many teachers only demonstrate the method for doing multiplication and/or long division and then just relying on examples and exercises to get students reasonably comfortable. There is little to no effort to engage with the concepts behind them. More importantly, there is little attempt to work on memory, grit, concentration, resilience and other desirable attributes when working on explaining the concepts.

Learning multiplication tables 'by heart' might not be needed anymore as students have access to calculators and computers all the time (though I do feel memorisation gets a bad rap when learning poetry, tables, etc, is excellent practice). But they do need to realise that understanding the basics of multiplication and division are strong ways to further this acquaintance.

I see too many children crying or giving up when they face questions they do not know how to attempt or whose answers they get wrong on the first try. Teachers are not imparting the lesson that failing, making mistakes and learning from them is part of the process and that it is essential to engage with difficult problems for longer periods.

I have seen similar struggles in the teaching and learning of languages. Urdu and English can be hard for children to learn, depending on their circumstances.

If a child is introduced to a language three to four times a week — for 40 minutes or so each time — it would be a miracle if he/she is able to learn that language well.

Learning is slow and deliberate; it requires significant repetition and a lot of attention. If the attempt to turn education into 'edutainment' takes away from these, it will be a loss.

Private schools, in my experience, face this pressure more. They need to show parents that their children are enjoying classes and work, are doing well and are (almost) always brilliant. I guess the fear of losing children drives part of the logic. But there is a fine balance between building the confidence of children and just appeasing them. This balance seems to be missing considerably in our K-12 education.

Though we know much more about how children learn effectively than we did 25-30 years ago, we still don't know enough. Education should be enjoyable and children happy when learning new things. So, the kind of draconian regimes previous generations were educated under are out.

And rightly so. But education is not only about content; it is also about shaping humans and developing qualities like effective memory usage, deep concentration and focus for long periods, grit, resilience, etc. We need children to be able to take on hard tasks and to persist with them. Hopefully, modern trends in education will be able to forge a happy balance.

A search in limbo

Ayesha Razzaque

In his 1983 travel book The Kingdom by the Sea: A Journey Around Great Britain, travel writer Paul Theroux observed that every country has a characteristic, pervasive smell that locals are olfactorily blind to, but which immediately and overwhelmingly hits visitors. He described America's smell as that of "brewed coffee and donuts" and in some places that of the "sweetness of laundry soap and the chemical scent of floor wax". It was a moment of instant recognition. He gave a name to a scent I had unknowingly carried in my memory for years. Similarly, he described the smell of England as that of wet wool, coal smoke and dampness.

Theroux's observation got me thinking: how would I describe the smell of Pakistan that hits visitors? For the summer, I would have to go with the scent of rain and the wet ground, and in the winter time I would go with the smell of spices and the smoke of burnt trash. It being winter time, the latter — a dumpster fire — also happens to be an apt description of the outcome of the six-month-long search process for the next chair of the Higher Education Commission (HEC).

Around 750 hopefuls threw their hats in the ring in response to an advertisement seeking applications from people with 10 years of work experience after earning a PhD, with a record of publishing research, and administrative experience in higher education, while being no older than 65 years. The requisite application package consisted of little more than a CV, a few references and a 1,000-word statement. The search committee sent a summary to the Prime Minister's Office with the names of the five applicants it rated the highest, but the PM was reportedly left unimpressed and displeased by the recommendations and rejected all of them while directing the search to be restarted. A waste of six months while the HEC remains in limbo with brakes slammed on major decision-making with no resolution in sight — a dumpster fire.

The appointment of university vice-chancellors in Pakistan is a game of musical chairs played by people on the VC circuit and some new entrants. Appointments are generally for around four years, during which many VCs at the smaller and underdeveloped universities situated in the remote parts of the country remain on the lookout for positions at more prestigious, better-located institutions with healthy balance sheets.

As a result, apart from a few exceptions, decision-making at most universities remains driven by short-term thinking, quick fixes, and the pursuit of headlines, rather than the desire to address systemic weaknesses. For the most part, applicants for the position of HEC chair are sourced from the same circuit.

Appointments to senior positions like the HEC chair are as high as one can go in government bureaucracy.

That is why the process invites the full application of influence in political lobbying efforts, be it in Islamabad, Rawalpindi or the provincial capitals. In recent years, some applicants have augmented these efforts with poorly designed, even comical, social media campaigns. Whether it was an effort to drum up last-minute inside support, a premature victory lap, or a case of fake-it-till-you-make-it, one of the final five candidates reportedly even showed up at the HEC to meet senior officials to 'introduce' himself and give the impression that his anointing was a fait accompli.

Based on information in the public domain, the search process for the leadership position of a regulatory agency of a sector in dire need of reform lacks seriousness and depth.

I have said it before; publication records and PhDs are irrelevant to the task of reform. What applicants ought to be evaluated on first and foremost is their track record of bringing about successful reform in an organisation or sectors and a (detailed) proposal that demonstrates an understanding of the challenges of the higher education sector and a clear plan to tackle them. If an applicant deems this too demanding, that is a clear sign that they have not given serious thought to the responsibilities of the role they seek. As a matter of fact, I have argued for some time that applicants for university VC positions should be evaluated by a similar process.

Some leadership appointments in government are viewed as strategic and too important to be doled out as favours to the best-connected applicant, and foreign agencies weigh in or even provide (suggest) people for them. Unfortunately, the chair of the HEC is not counted among those positions.

If the PM Office wishes to see an effective chair installed at the HEC, it must clearly articulate its goals for the higher education sector, protect the search process from petty influence, own the mission and back its candidate when it is time for hard decisions.

Not doing so has kept the bench of talent shallow, not only for the HEC, but every public department. When governments sporadically turn their attention to one department or another, they struggle to find the right people because the crop that has been cultivated over decades of institutional neglect, favouritism and mismanagement has broken the talent pipeline and left a toxic environment that repels talent.

Speaking of petty influence, the search process has dragged on for so long, it has given some applicants time to organise their lobbying efforts. There is now a 'Karachi' group and a 'Lahore' group; they have thrown their support behind one candidate or another.

What is certain at this point is that the search committee approached its given task in a business-as-usual manner. The PM Office's rejection of the summary and the resetting of the search process gives me some hope that this appointment may yet still be made with some seriousness. Whether that happens or whether our nostrils are condemned to the smell of smoke year-round, time will tell.

The great mirage

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

Two years in, the regime's economic managers continue telling tales about streets flowing with milk and honey. Spin doctors live in an alternate reality by definition, but the extent of the spin is remarkable given that even procapital donors like the World Bank have acknowledged that poverty and inequality have increased markedly in recent years.

There is arguably no bigger example of the gap between how the ruling class projects its 'successes' and the actual conditions of working people than the inordinate focus on foreign remittances. By going on about the contributions of overseas Pakistanis being major contributors to the country's 'economic recovery', the regime implies that this is one of its great achievements.

The numbers are certainly eye-catching. According to the International Organisation for Migration, remittances reached a record high of $34 billion in 2024. This is equivalent to almost 10 per cent of GDP, making Pakistan's one of the highest remittances-to-GDP rates in the world. Most of this money goes into household consumption, with real estate and small/medium enterprises (SMEs) the other two major recipient sectors.

One only has to scratch slightly beneath the surface to reveal what the numbers really mean. The vast majority of Pakistanis abroad are engaged in low-skilled occupations, often informal and precarious, especially in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The Gulf migrations began in the 1970s and have produced social mobility for millions of largely rural households for decades. But that should not distract from the typically poor working conditions, racism and repression to which migrant workers are subjected in 'Muslim brethren' countries. It is also the case that the demand for labour in the Gulf kingdoms has decreased over time.

There are many Pakistanis abroad in the high-skilled labour bracket too, some of whom left decades ago, and some who continue to leave today. They are the ones who tend to invest in real estate, moving their money from one speculative investment to the next, one of the reasons why so many plots in gated housing schemes are actually unoccupied.

The number of migrants in both low- and high-skilled labour brackets has increased considerably in recent years. The Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment recently disclosed that 762,499 Pakistanis emigrated abroad in 2025. This is a considerable understatement; many who migrate abroad initially leave on student visas but have no intention of returning, becoming part of the precarious immigrant labour force mentioned above. Even more have no visa at all and leave via human smuggling rackets that promise a new home in European destinations like Greece and Italy. A significant number never make it, and disappear forever, or end up in limbo in countries like Iran and Afghanistan. Families who are lucky enough to track them down spend millions in bribes to get them back home. Many of these rackets, as we have seen recently, are run with the connivance of government departments like the FIA.

To harp on about the great contribution of remittances to Pakistan is to live in a make-believe world about the social and economic hardships and uncertainty about the future that are compelling more and more people to leave, including even those from relatively well-to-do backgrounds. Labour is now Pakistan's biggest export, above and beyond any single physical commodity. This is not about to change.

For all the talk about enhancing exports, the fact is that this regime is outdoing even those that preceded it in accumulating short-term debt, promoting conspicuous consumption, and engaging in resource grabs.

There are more and more high-profile SIFC-fronted conferences with fancy claims about 'mineral sector tra-nsformation' and ca--pital-intensive agriculture, but all of these revolve around the imperatives of capital, not labour.

It has been said before but it merits repeating that four million young people join the labour force every year. The opportunities for gainful employment are decreasing in parallel to the burgeoning supply of labour. This is why the number of people seeking to emigrate abroad is now touching one million a year.

None of the sectors where remittances are coming in are labour-absorbing. The real estate sector is amongst the biggest banes of our collective existence; not only does it create no jobs, it is sustained by land, water and forest grabs that are hastening environmental collapse. Then there is the SME sector, which may constitute a vital part of the informal economy, but cannot compensate for the absence of meaningful and broad-based industrialisation. The resort to more repression cannot hide the failure of this and previous regimes to provide for Pakistan's young working masses.

Plastic menace

Amin Valliani

Allah's presence encompasses the entire universe. There is no location where He is not present.

We live and thrive in the physical world where our physical senses observe many things but have no capacity to see Him physically. However, innumerable signs are there to witness His omnipresence. These signs encourage people to reflect, discover truth, show gratitude, care for creation (stewardship), and live morally. The Quran says: "…He is with you wherever you are… . (57:4); …And your Lord is not unaware of what you do" (27:93).

Allah's omnipresence can be witnessed in the natural environment. The environment enables us to 'feel' His presence. Here the environment refers to the conditions in which people, animals and plants live. Everything — living and non-living on earth — is surrounded by the all-embracing environment.

It is the environment that provides resources to sustain life, assimilate waste and enhance quality of life. It provides us with essential resources like oxygen to breathe, water to drink and grow food, shelter to live in, soil to walk, sunlight to have warmth and other nourishments necessary for survival. Similarly, on death, the environment helps decompose physical bodies. Thus, the earth is a receptacle of the living and the dead. The Quran reminds us "Have We not made the earth a container?" (77:25).

Today, the environment faces various challenges, including pollution, deforestation, habitat destruction, climate change, loss of biodiversity, fast-depleting glaciers and resource depletion. These challenges arise from human activities such as industrialisation, agriculture, urbanisation, and unsustainable consumption. They have significant implications for human well-being, the ecosystem, health and the future of the planet.

One of the major challenges to the environment worldwide is plastic pollution, which requires urgent action. Earlier, the use of plastic was hailed as one of the most transformative inventions of the modern era, having revolutionised industries, medicine and consumer lifestyles. Yet, the very material that promised convenience has now turned into an environmental and public health nightmare. The ubiquity of plastic has reached a tipping point; its invisible yet far-reaching impact threatens ecosystems, human health and the climate.

We see garbage piles in every city littered with used plastic bags; this has become part of the urban landscape, spreading disease and damaging the environment. The municipal authorities respond only after public outcry, yet the problem demands long-term solutions. Environmental awareness must begin in homes and schools, while local governments should establish proper segregation and recycling systems. We cannot fight climate change while our streets remain buried under polyethene bags.

Fortunately, some countries are trying to use plastic waste in construction of roads. They have found that plastic waste is durable, water-resistant and can be easily moulded into different shapes. Polythene can be used in different ways in the construction industry including as insulation, waterproofing and protection against corrosion.

To save humans and other creatures on the planet, it is very important to pursue such research along with a drive to sensitise the general public over the use of plastic-made items such as polythene bags, bottles, 'shoppers', etc. Their use is detrimental to the environment because it harms wildlife, pollutes ecosystems, and contributes to climate change. Plastic waste can physically harm animals thro-u--gh entanglement or ingestion, and as it breaks down, it creates microplastics that contaminate soil, wat-er, and even the food chain. The production and disposal of plastic also release greenhouse gases and toxic chemicals, and due to its durability, it can take hundreds of years to decompose.

Keeping in view the seriousness of the problem, the government has taken some steps, such as banning plastic bags, but both the state's enforcement and the public's response to these initiatives is mostly lukewarm.

Moreover, plastic production continues relentlessly, driven by rising demand in packaging, textiles, consumer goods, and medical applications. If this trajectory remains unchecked, then the day may not be far when the entire country will be in the grip of plastic pollution.

The country's plastic industry is reportedly expanding. Some researchers have warned that greenhouse gas emissions from plastic production could triple by 2050.

Hence, activists and researchers want rigorous action at the grassroots level involving schoolchildren. The government should urge citizens to actively participate in such campaigns and adopt eco-friendly products instead of plastic-made items.

South Korea, Japan reaffirm denuclearisation goal, closer defence ties

SEOUL, (Agencies): South Korea and Japan on Friday reaffirmed their commitment to the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula and agreed to revive joint search-and-rescue drills in a step forward for security ties between the neighbouring countries.

Meeting in Seoul, South Korean Defence Minister Ahn Gyu-back and his Japanese counterpart Shinjiro Koizumi agreed to work on regional stability bilaterally, as well as through their partnerships with Washington, in the sixth round of talks between the two countries. "Both ministers shared the view to continue cooperation for maintaining regional peace and stability amid a grave security environment," South Korea's defence ministry said in a statement.

South Korea and Japan, with US encouragement, have been working to develop closer ties since 2022 and overcome sometimes bitter historical differences, a policy continued by President Lee Jae Myung and Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi.

In 2019, Seoul moved to end the GSOMIA intelligence-sharing pact with Japan after Tokyo restricted exports of semiconductor materials and removed South Korea from its preferential trade list, over lingering grievances rooted in Japan's past colonial rule of the Korean peninsula.

In 2025, Japan's then-Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and President Lee agreed to closer security and economic ties, and the defence ministers committed to working with Washington against North Korea's nuclear threat and Pyongyang's growing military ties with Russia, including cooperation on AI and unmanned systems and annual trilateral drills.

Takaichi and Lee agreed in January 2026 to deepen shuttle diplomacy and in May expanded cooperation on energy.

On Sunday, Ahn and Koizumi also agreed to continue fostering exchange between their air forces' respective aerobatic teams — South Korea's Black Eagles and Japan's Blue Impulse — to further advance search-and-rescue exercises designed for various maritime accident scenarios.

The two previously held talks in Japan in January and met again in May at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore where they discussed a possible military-logistics support agreement covering fuel, food and ammunition. The two sides also agreed to hold a joint humanitarian search-and-rescue exercise in June, the first in almost a decade.



Japanese Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi and South Korean Defence Minister Ahn Gyu-back salute to national flags during a welcoming ceremony before their meeting at the Defence Ministry in Seoul, South Korea.



As hot weather continues to affect Berlin, the capital of Germany, city residents spent time in public areas with puddles and fountains to cool off. Adults and children tried to cool down by playing in the water areas in squares and parks.

Qassem rejects Lebanon-Israel deal; demands Israeli withdrawal

TEL AVIV: Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem rejected the framework agreement signed between Lebanon and Israel under US sponsorship, and called for Israel's withdrawal from Lebanese territory in line with the Iranian-US memorandum of understanding. In a statement, Qassem made his first comments on the framework agreement signed in Washington at the conclusion of the fifth round of negotiations between Beirut and Tel Aviv on Friday.

"This agreement is null and void, and the provisions of the Iranian-American memorandum of understanding must be implemented," he said.

Qassem also warned against linking an Israeli withdrawal to the disarmament of the resistance across all of Lebanon, calling it "a very dangerous proposal that crosses all red lines".

He said such a move would turn Lebanon "into a plaything in the hands of the Israeli enemy".

Hospitals across Europe ring alarm as heat wave roasts continent

PARIS, (Agencies): A deadly heat wave sweeping across Europe prompted authorities to issue health warnings today; with France banning public alcohol consumption in Paris and warning that hospitals were nearing capacity as soaring temperatures strained public services across the continent. The heat wave affected at least 101 million Europeans with temperatures exceeding 35 degrees C (95 degrees F). Authorities across the continent linked more than 220 deaths to the extreme heat.

French and British health services reported a surge in emergency calls and visits as the extreme heat affected the elderly and ill. France and Spain reported deaths from the extreme temperatures, including a 3-year-old boy who was trapped in his family's car "We are reaching a saturation point in hospital facilities," Paris police Prefect Patrice Faure said. "The number of hospitalizations keeps increasing." In Paris, 25 cardiac arrests were recorded over 24 hours, compared with fewer than 10 typically, the office of Health Minister Stephanie Rist said. Nationally, she said emergency room visits for heat-related reasons increased fourfold.

London Ambulance Service said the extreme heat led to the highest number of life-threatening emergency calls in a day.

The European Joint Research Center, indicated more than 380 million people would face temperatures exceeding 30 C.

Peace deal in tatters after Iran hits Bahrain, Kuwait over US strikes

TEHRAN, (Agencies): Iran lashed out at recent U.S. airstrikes by launching drone and missile attacks on Bahrain and Kuwait Friday, while warning it would completely suspend negotiations to end the Middle East war if Washington carried out further attacks.

Efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz without Iran's direct oversight sparked the crossfire now gripping the region and have imperiled negotiations for a lasting cease-fire.

A multinational maritime body overseen by the U.S. Navy said Saturday that it would expand a route near Oman for both inbound and outbound traffic, setting up a new flashpoint with Tehran.

The global community has long considered the strait an international passageway, despite its being situated in Iran and Oman's territorial waters.

In recent days, Iran has twice attacked vessels going through a route on the Omani side of the strait backed by a United Nations agency.

Iran insists that it alone must govern the strait, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf that once carried a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reiterated the claim during a state visit to Iraq Sunday.

"Any interference in this matter, any attempt to establish new or separate arrangements from those currently being carried out by the Islamic Republic of Iran, will only lead to further complications, delay the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, and increase the level of tension, just as over the past two nights we witnessed incidents in the Strait of Hormuz that led to an increase in tension and confrontation," he said in Baghdad.

The United States and Iran are still debating the terms of an interim peace deal, including shipping arrangements through the strait, removing a U.S. blockade and sanctions and addressing the future of Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium. Under the memorandum of understanding signed earlier this month, the U.S. and Iran have 60 days to iron out the details.

The strikes threaten to torpedo the deal before it can be finalized. Continued fighting in Lebanon, where an Israeli soldier was killed by Hezbollah fire early Sunday, has also threatened the agreement.

The Kuwaiti military said air defenses intercepted incoming Iranian drones and missiles Sunday morning, just after the U.S. strikes.

Kuwait, which hosts a major U.S. Army base, said it had detected and intercepted two ballistic missiles and there were no reports of injuries or damage.

Bahrain's Interior Ministry said the Iranian strikes damaged a residential building near the international airport and no one was killed. The ministry released photos of an 8-story building, with the top floor destroyed, filled with rubble and its windows blown out.

Bahrain is home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, whose base there came under repeated attack during the war. The damaged building on Sunday was not near the fleet's headquarters, in downtown Manama.

Bahrain's Foreign Ministry denounced what it called "a dangerous escalation that reveals that what Tehran is doing is not a passing act, nor an isolated incident, but rather a deliberate approach and a systematic pattern of repeated aggression." Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard claimed responsibility for both attacks.

The latest U.S. strikes came after the U.S. and Iran traded attacks earlier in the weekend.

The U.S. military's Central Command said it struck Iranian military "surveillance infrastructure, communication systems, air defense sites, drone storage facilities and minelayer capabilities" Sunday, following an attack on a ship at sea early Saturday morning. That ship, the Panamanian-flagged tanker Kiku, carried crude oil for the state-run energy company of Qatar, a key mediator between Iran and the U.S.

In a social media post, Trump said the U.S. had "struck Iranian missile and drone storage locations, and coastal radar sites, for violating the Cease Fire Agreement, AGAIN!" He warned of a point where the U.S. may no longer be able to be reasonable, "and will be forced to militarily complete the job."

"If that happens, the Islamic Republic of Iran will no longer exist!" Trump wrote on Truth Social. The incident follows a similar back-and-forth that occurred just days prior, when an Iranian drone struck a merchant vessel off the coast of Oman Thursday, and the U.S. military retaliated with strikes

Iran has consistently said the cease-fire must include a halt to fighting in Lebanon, where Israel has launched an invasion and airstrikes in the name of fighting the Iran-backed armed group, Hezbollah. Days after the U.S. and Israel launched the war against Iran, Hezbollah joined the war in solidarity with its Iranian allies. Israel responded with an invasion that has occupied large swaths of southern Lebanon and displaced hundreds of thousands of people. Israel has said it will not withdraw its troops until Hezbollah is disarmed.

Last week, Israel and the Lebanese government signed a framework agreement to end the conflict. But their deal did not include Hezbollah or Iran. Hezbollah has criticized the deal and rejected calls to disarm. On Sunday, Araghchi again said during a visit to Iraq that the U.S. must force Israel to halt attacks and withdraw.



An anti-corruption protest was held in Metro Manila ahead of the Senate impeachment trial of Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte.

Death toll from Venezuela earthquakes rises to 920 with thousands missing

CARACAS, (Agencies): The official death toll from twin earthquakes in Venezuela rose to 920, National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez said, as rescuers raced to find survivors beneath collapsed buildings.

The South American country is reeling from the magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 quakes that hit the country's north within less than a minute of each other on Wednesday.

In a televised address, Rodriguez updated the death toll that had previously been at 589.

He also announced a military deployment to one of the worst-hit regions, the state of La Guaira.

More than 50,000 people were missing following the disaster, United Nations aid chief Tom Fletcher told AFP.

"We've got over 50,000 people missing, over 500 people dead, so a massive job to go through the rubble," he said, while the US Geological Survey predicted more than 10,000 deaths.

Families searched desperately for loved ones trapped under debris, with some of them using their hands to claw at the rubble of buildings. At one flattened building in La Guaira, AFP saw workers using sledgehammers to break debris and calling for "absolute silence" to detect cries from trapped survivors. Countries around the world have pledged humanitarian aid and rescue support to Venezuela.

Trump unveils new US passport, with picture of himself

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump unveiled a rendering of a new limited-edition United States passport to mark the country's 250th anniversary of independence — featuring his stern-faced likeness. "The USA's new passport, which says, 'Welcome, but be good!'" Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform featuring the passport mock-up. The image features a glowering Trump leaning on his desk and his signature, with the text of the Declaration of Independence in the background. It appears to be based on a portrait taken by White House photographer Daniel Torok. The opposite page shows a painting depicting the declaration's signing in 1776, with the words "United States of America 250."



People went to the polls to vote in the local government elections. In Bangkok, the capital of Thailand



A woman reacts as she mourns over the body of a victim killed in a reported Israeli airstrike on a police station in the Al-Mawasi district, during a funeral at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, Palestine.

CJP becomes new political challenge for Modi govt

NEW DELHI: India's newly formed political outfit, the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP), has emerged as a challenger to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government while highlighting concerns over repeated examination paper leaks and the country's education system.

The report also cited CNN as saying that government examination paper leaks have become a persistent issue in India, fueling protests among students demanding greater transparency and accountability.

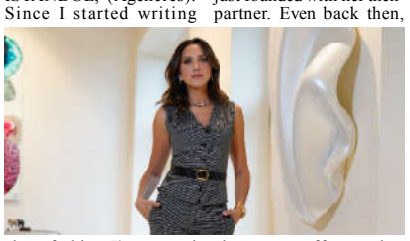
According to Abhijeet Deepke, founder of the CJP, diapers are the last solution left to prevent paper leaks in government exams. Indian students are heading towards suicide due to Modi's wrong policies.

Congress leader Abhishek Dutt says that the Modi government has ruined the lives of 65 million students by leaking 90 exam papers in 10 years. The incompetence of Indian Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has brought India's education system to the brink of collapse.

According to CNN, Modi's incompetent minister is hiding his failure by calling the protesting youth as terrorists.

How Turkish brand redefines everyday elegance globally

ISTANBUL, (Agencies): Since I started writing about fashion, I've crossed paths with many designers, brands and brand stories. I first met Yasemin Öğün years ago, around 2011 or 2012, when we sat down at Zorlu Center to talk about the brand she had just founded with her then-partner. Even back then, she gave off a calm, observant energy – someone who analyses her surroundings carefully, manages crises well and carries confidence without needing to be in the spotlight.



Over the years, we have met many times, and that impression never changed. Yasemin always felt composed, self-assured and quietly intelligent in the way she ran things. Most recently, we met at her Muse For All pop-up store in IstinyePark. Standing there, I saw a woman I had known for nearly 15 years – someone who had gradually built her own path, step by step.

She had left her first partnership behind, founded a new brand that expressed her vision more clearly, and continued to evolve.



Mexicans delivered humanitarian aid supplies they collected for those affected by the earthquakes in Venezuela to the Venezuelan Embassy in Mexico City

At least 14 killed in Saudi Aramco chopper crash near Ras Tanura

RIYADH, (Agencies): At least 14 people were killed when a helicopter operated by state oil giant Aramco crashed in Saudi Arabia, the kingdom's official press agency reported.

The Saudi Press Agency, citing an official at the energy ministry, reported the helicopter crashed in Ras Tanura in the country's east.

"The accident claimed the lives of all 14 passengers, all Saudi citizens," the agency said, adding that an investigation was underway to determine the cause of the crash.

Aramco says it operates more than 60 aircraft, including helicopters, serving more than 300 heliports in Saudi Arabia, making it one of the largest corporate fleets in the region.

The deadly accident comes as oil-rich Gulf nations seek to ramp up their output following Iranian attacks and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for the export of oil and gas.

The Gulf monarchy did not indicate the incident was in any way connected to a hostile attack.

During the Middle East war, Iranian attacks had targeted energy facilities in the Gulf.

Ras Tanura is home to one of the largest refineries in the Middle East, with a capacity of 550,000 barrels per day (bpd), and is critical to Saudi Arabia's energy sector.

The refinery has been targeted several times, notably during an Iranian drone attack at the beginning of the conflict, which caused a fire and forced a partial shutdown.

Riyadh said in April that the weeks-long attacks had disrupted several production operations at key facilities, with refineries in Ras Tanura as well as Jubail, Yanbu and Riyadh targeted.

Saudi Arabia, the world's leading crude exporter, produces a little over 10 million bpd.

Muslims witnessing painful developments in different parts of world: Ahsan Iqbal

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal has stressed the need for collective self-accountability, a stronger sense of Muslim identity and adherence to the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to overcome challenges confronting the Muslim world and regain its lost strength.

He was addressing the National Women Seerah Conference 2026, organised under the theme "Contribution of Muslim Women in the Islamic Renaissance in the Perspective of Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)" at the Nisar Fatima Institute for Seerah and Women Studies (NFISWS), here.

Expressing gratitude to Allah Almighty for enabling the participants to gather and reflect upon the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Ahsan Iqbal said the Seerat of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was the best source of guidance and a beacon of light for the Muslim Ummah. He urged the participants to draw inspiration from the life and character of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and translate its teachings into their individual and collective lives.

The planning minister said the Muslim world was passing through a deeply distressing period, with Muslims witnessing painful developments in different parts of the world. He expressed concern over the helplessness of the Muslim Ummah in the face of prevailing challenges, particularly the continuing suffering of Palestinians.

Referring to Israel, he said it was a matter of serious concern that a country with a population of around 10 million had been able to keep nearly two billion Muslims on the defensive, while attacking Muslims and shedding their blood with impunity.

Ahsan Iqbal said the prevailing situation demanded more than expressions of concern and required the Muslim Ummah to critically examine its own weaknesses. He stressed the importance of collective self-accountability to determine how Muslims could move from decline towards progress and from weakness towards strength. He said Muslims could not regain their lost strength until they developed a strong and conscious understanding of their identity, values and collective responsibilities.

A firm sense of identity, he added, was essential for rebuilding confidence, unity and strength in the Muslim world.

The minister said the Holy Prophet (PBUH) had provided humanity with a comprehensive model of individual and collective life.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar presents certificates to participants of RJ and broadcasting internship training program 2026 at Radio Pakistan



ISLAMABAD: Justice Aalia Neelum, the Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court, addressing the audience at the National Conference on Judicial Wellbeing, "From Reform to Recognition: Building a Responsive District Judiciary," at the Supreme Court of Pakistan

Jam Kamal highlights increasing role of digitalization in economic development

Hong Kong (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a series of bilateral meetings with regional counterparts on the sidelines of the Belt and Road Summit (BRI), focusing on trade, connectivity, food security and emerging technologies.

The Commerce Minister separately met his counterparts from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Qatar, while also holding discussions with the Secretary General of the International Organization for Mediation (IoMed), said a release issued here.

The engagements focused on expanding bilateral trade, strengthening regional connectivity and developing greater cooperation in emerging economic and technological areas. During his meeting with Sri Lanka's Minister for Trade, Commerce, Food Security and Development, Mr. Wasantha Samarasinghe, both sides discussed ways to strengthen bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

Health sector directly linked to people's lives: Bakht Kakar

QUETTA (ANN): Balochistan Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar has said continuous monitoring is being carried out to ensure the attendance of doctors and medical staff, quality of patient care and effective administrative management at government hospitals, warning that those found responsible for negligence or dereliction of duty would face action.

Talking to various delegations, the provincial minister said providing timely and quality healthcare to the people was among the government's foremost priorities, with measures underway to improve treatment facilities across public hospitals.

He emphasized that the health sector was directly linked to people's lives and therefore negligence in the delivery of medical services could not be tolerated.

Kakar said particular attention was being given to strengthening basic healthcare facilities at government hospitals in remote districts and rural areas so that residents would not have to travel to major cities for treatment of routine or more complicated illnesses.

He said efforts were also being made to ensure the presence of doctors and other medical personnel, maintain adequate stocks of essential medicines and provide hospitals with modern medical equipment. Diagnostic services were likewise being upgraded to improve the timely detection and treatment of diseases. The provincial minister acknowledged that people in Balochistan had faced longstanding challenges in accessing adequate healthcare and said the incumbent government was taking practical measures to address these shortcomings.

Hormuz strike, Houthi advance further escalate Mideast war

TEHRAN, (Monitoring Desk): Tensions in the Strait of Hormuz climbed further Sunday when an Iranian cargo vessel was struck off Qeshm Island, killing one person and wounding four others, Iranian state media reported. The attack comes a day before Tehran was due to brief regional countries on its efforts to manage shipping traffic in the contested waterway. The events were a deadly reminder of the underlying challenge to global shipping even as attention turns to a new threat, with Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen now perched on the Bab el-Mandeb Strait in the Red Sea.

State-run IRNA news agency quoted the Qeshm governor as blaming a "terrorist enemy." There was no immediate comment by the U.S. military, which has struck Iranian-flagged vessels during its blockade of Iranian ports – while facing a new threat from Iranian ballistic missiles launched at its warships.

Separately, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations monitor said a vessel was hit by a projectile while transiting the strait, later adding that a fire had broken out and local authorities were evacuating those on board. Qeshm Island, about 14 miles (22 kilometers) from the port city of Bandar Abbas , is key to Iran asserting control over the Strait of Hormuz.

Hours before the attack, Iran's government remained defiant. "Our people can't be bullied into submission. Iran won't surrender," President Masoud Pezeshkian said in a U.S.-aimed social media post.

Monday's meeting returns regional attention to the Strait of Hormuz days after the Houthis swept down Yemen's Red Sea coast to apply new pressure to a growing alternative for global shipping. While the Houthis say they are targeting only neighboring Saudi Arabia, which backs Yemen's internationally recognized government fighting the rebels, markets are wary.

Global prices of oil, natural gas and related products have been sent even higher. Commercial ship traffic remains low in the Strait of Hormuz as attacks continue on what was seen as an international waterway before the U.S. and Israel launched the war on Feb. 28.

The U.S. has asserted that plenty of oil is getting out as its military helps to guide ships along Oman's coast, at the risk of attack. Iran has said foreign ministers from regional countries will meet Monday to discuss efforts by Iran and Oman, located on the other side of the Strait of Hormuz, to manage shipping on it. However, Bahrain has already said it will not attend, citing a lack of diplomatic relations with Tehran.

It was not clear what other nations would be there and there was no new statement from Iran Sunday.

Since early in the war, Iran has expressed interest in having ships pay fees for transit. It has said traffic into the Persian Gulf would pass through Iranian waters, while the outbound route would pass partly through Iranian waters and partly through Oman's.



HONG KONG: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan in a group photograph with prominent members of the Pakistani diaspora and business community at the Pakistan Club in Hong Kong

Fuel price hike placing additional burden on ordinary citizens: Opposition leaders

QUETTA (ANN): Leaders and lawmakers from various opposition parties in Balochistan have strongly opposed the latest increase in petroleum prices, calling for its immediate withdrawal and warning that the decision would further strain households already struggling with inflation and economic hardships.

National Party Balochistan President Rahmat Saleh Baloch, Awami National Party leader Zmarak Khan Achakzai, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam lawmaker Mir Zabad Ali Reki and Maulana Noorullah expressed their strong reservations over the increase in separate statements. The opposition leaders said higher fuel prices would have a direct impact on transportation costs and prices of essential goods and services, placing an additional burden on ordinary citizens. They urged the government to reconsider the decision in view of the prevailing economic difficulties.

They alleged that repeated increases in petroleum prices, including the latest adjustment announced at night, were adding to the financial pressure on the public. Some of the leaders further claimed that the Pakistani people were being made to bear the cost of Pakistan's role in mediation between Iran and the United States.



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar offering prayers for the safety and prosperity of the country during his visit to Data Darbar.

Welfare, wishes of children must be considered in custody matters: LHC

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) has set aside an order handing over three children to their father and directed that their custody be restored to their mother, observing that the welfare and wishes of the children must be considered in custody matters.

Justice Ghulam Sarwar Nihung issued the written verdict on a petition filed by Naseem Bibi, who had challenged the decision to hand over her three children to their father.

According to the verdict, the Additional Sessions Judge, Sheikhupura, had earlier ordered that 16-year-old Amna Bibi, 11-year-old Iman Fatima and nine-year-old Ali Hussain be handed over to their father, holding that they were not of tender age.

The mother had contended that the children were forcibly taken from her custody on July 20, following which she approached the court under Section 491 of the Code of Criminal Procedure seeking their recovery.

Quetta struggling with persistent water crisis for many years: MPA Zarak

QUETTA (ANN): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) central leader and Balochistan Assembly member Sheikh Zarak Khan Mandokhail has said he is working on a major water development project comprising several small dams to help address the worsening water shortage in Quetta and improve groundwater availability.

Talking to the media after offering Fateha at Quetta Press Club over the death of Abdullah Khan, brother of senior journalist Zahir Khan Nasir, he said water scarcity had become one of the most pressing challenges facing his constituency as well as Quetta city as a whole.

Mandokhail said his constituency covered a vast area where residents faced several basic problems, with inadequate water supply emerging as a particularly serious concern. He noted that Quetta had also been struggling with a persistent water crisis for many years. He alleged that the tanker mafia was exploiting the shortage to its advantage, further increasing difficulties for citizens who depend on privately supplied water.

The lawmaker said work was progressing on a comprehensive initiative in his constituency to improve the water situation. The proposed project would include a number of small dams, which he hoped would help improve groundwater levels and contribute to resolving the long-standing water shortage. Responding to a question about provincial affairs, Sheikh Zarak Mandokhail said Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti was fully empowered to make decisions and independently dealt with matters relating to development projects and other provincial issues.



SOHBATPUR: Deputy Commissioner Fareeda Tareen visits Govt Girls College, Sohbatpur.

PPP criticizes PML-N over people's problems

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan People's Party expressed its lack of trust over the performance of PML-N in a joint session of Punjab Coordination Committee of the two allied parties while exchanging views over local government elections, price hike and problems faced by farmers.

PPP's Hassan Murtaza strongly criticized to the PML-N over people's problems, while Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Hassan Murtaza exchanged harsh words in meeting, sources said.

He also vehemently criticized failure in holding local government elections in Punjab and unceasing hikes in petroleum prices.

PPP representatives also protested with Ishaq Dar over power loadshedding, and the problems faced by the farmers, sources said.

Sources said that the record of the PPP's nominations and schemes, given in the previous session of the committee was also not available with the ruling party.

The PPP recommendations were not implemented, sources said. "Hassan Murtaza said that the Punjab's government has failed to fulfill its promises".

According to sources, PML-N representatives complained of scathing criticism from Qamar Zaman Kaira and Hassan Murtaza.

Balochistan Police's Complaint Cell resolves 562 complaints in 6 months

QUETTA (APP): The Accountability Bureau and Complaint Cell at the Central Police Office Quetta has resolved 562 cases, registered during the last six months.

The complaint cell has reported significant progress in addressing public grievances against police officials. Over the past six months, 615 complaints were registered, of which 562 cases have been resolved, while 26 cases were deferred at the request of complainants.

Investigations confirmed allegations against six personnel as three were compulsorily retired and three dismissed from service. Additionally, disciplinary actions included service forfeiture for six officials and punishments in four separate cases. Meanwhile, 112 complaints were found baseless after thorough scrutiny.

PMYP, UN Women ink MoU to advance women's empowerment

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) and UN Women Pakistan on Sunday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) at the Prime Minister's Office to advance the empowerment, leadership and meaningful participation of young women in Pakistan, with the partnership focusing on gender-responsive youth development, employability, entrepreneurship, civic participation and safe digital engagement.

The MoU was signed during a meeting chaired by PMYP Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan and attended by Joint Secretary PMYP Dr Muhammad Ali Malik, UN Women Pakistan Country Representative Jamshed Kazi, Deputy Country Representative Fahmida Iqbal Khan and senior officials and representatives from both organisations.

Under the agreement, PMYP and UN Women will strengthen cooperation through technical collaboration, knowledge exchange, joint initiatives and the sharing of expertise and good practices in women's leadership, youth empowerment and gender equality.



The partnership will promote gender responsive approaches to youth development and encourage the integration of gender perspectives into relevant youth-focused programmes, policies and initiatives, particularly in leadership, employability, entrepreneurship and civic participation.

The two organisations will also work to create greater opportunities for young women through mentorship, networking, leadership development and professional exposure, contributing to Pakistan's broader youth development and gender equality priorities.

Recognising the growing importance of digital spaces, the partnership will support safe, inclusive and responsible digital participation among young people, particularly young women and girls, through initiatives focused on digital literacy, responsible online engagement and digital citizenship.

The collaboration reflects a shared commitment to creating an enabling environment in which young women can develop their potential, assume leadership roles and participate meaningfully in Pakistan's economic, social, civic and public life.

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