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## Field Marshal Asim Munir vows to defeat terrorism, ensure lasting peace in country

***COAS, French Defence Secretary General discuss bilateral security ties***

RAWALPINDI, (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ on Tuesday visited Corps Headquarters Peshawar.

He was briefed on the prevailing security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, ongoing counter-terrorism operations, border management measures and operational preparedness of formations deployed in the province, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). The COAS commended the high morale, readiness and professionalism of officers and troops, acknowledging their steadfast commitment to safeguarding the country and its people. He directed formations to remain vigilant and uphold the highest standards of operational preparedness.

He emphasised that the Armed Forces, with the unwavering support of the nation, remain resolute in their determination to defeat terrorism and ensure lasting peace and stability across the country. He also laid a floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada and offered Fateha, paying rich tribute to those who laid down their lives in defence of the motherland and in the fight against terrorism.

He reaffirmed that their supreme sacrifices would never be forgotten.

Upon arrival, the COAS was received by Commander Peshawar Corps.

Meanwhile, Secretary General for Defence and National Security (SGDSN) of France, Nicolas Roche accompanied by Ambassador of France to Pakistan Jean-Noël Poirier called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ here on Tuesday at General Headquarters (GHQ).

During the meeting matters of mutual interest, including regional security, bilateral cooperation in defence and security domains were discussed, said a press release issued by ISPR.

The COAS reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening of bilateral ties and further enhancing defence and security cooperation. Nicolas Roche acknowledged Pakistan's efforts to promote regional peace, stability and reciprocated France's interest in expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest.



**RAWALPINDI: Secretary General for Defence and National Security (SGDSN) of France, Nicolas Roche called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ at General Headquarters (GHQ).**



**NEW YORK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meets Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on sidelines of UN General Assembly session.**

## PM Shehbaz, Kuwaiti Crown Prince reaffirm commitment to regional peace, stability

NEW YORK, (Monitoring Desk): Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Tuesday discussed regional and international developments, reiterating their shared commitment to promoting peace, stability and prosperity.

The two leaders met on the sidelines of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly in New York, a statement from Sharif's office said.

They reviewed bilateral ties and discussed avenues for further strengthening cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

Sharif emphasized the importance his country attaches to its relations with Kuwait and highlighted the potential for enhanced cooperation in trade, investment, energy and human resource development.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's strong and brotherly relations with Kuwait.

## CM Sarfraz Bugti vows to eliminate terrorism; establish peace in Balochistan

***Expresses grief over martyrdom of policemen deployed for security of anti-polio teams in Nushki***

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, while praising the successful operation conducted by the security forces against terrorists in Saran Tangi, said that the security forces' operations would continue to eliminate terrorism and establish peace in the province.

The Balochistan Chief Minister said that under Operation Shaban 2, during an intelligence-based operation in Saran Tangi, six terrorists of Fitna al-Hindustan were killed while nine suspected individuals were arrested.

A large quantity of weapons and ammunition was also recovered from the possession of the terrorists during the operation. Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that the security forces had achieved a significant success against terrorist elements through timely and effective action.

The Chief Minister said that operations against terrorist elements and their facilitators would continue without interruption. No compromise would be made on maintaining law and order in Balochistan and protecting the lives and property of the people.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that the security forces' operations would continue until the complete elimination of terrorism, adding that the nation stands with its brave personnel. Meanwhile, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti also expressed deep grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of two police personnel who were deployed to provide security to an anti-polio team and were shot by unidentified armed men in Killi Jamalabad, Nushki. He has sought a report from the Balochistan Home Department.

## Germany's cooperation, educational experience vital for promotion of higher education in Balochistan: Governor

QUETTA, (VoM Report): German Ambassador to Pakistan Ina Lepel met with Governor Balochistan Jafar Khan Mandokhail at the Governor House in Quetta, where detailed discussions were held on bilateral relations between Pakistan and Germany, the political situation in the region, and matters of mutual interest.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Balochistan Jafar Khan Mandokhail said that there are bright prospects for further promoting mutual cooperation and relations between Pakistan and Germany in various modern fields. He said that Germany has gained significant experience and expertise in modern technology, renewable energy, technical and vocational education, and other sectors, from which Balochistan can also benefit.

Governor Mandokhail said that benefiting from Germany's cooperation and educational experience is extremely important for the promotion of higher education in Balochistan.

He said that keeping in view the requirements of the modern era, special attention is being paid in the province not only to quality education but also to the promotion of technical and vocational skills.

He said that further strengthening the private sector is an urgent need of the time in order to provide better employment opportunities for young people.

In this regard, modern skills, vocational training, and educational and training programmes aligned with market requirements can play an important role.



**QUETTA: German Ambassador to Pakistan Ina Lepel called on Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail**

## Country could not afford protests, long marches: Atta Tarar

PESHAWAR, (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) long march towards Islamabad had no justification, adding that protesters having a track record of disruption and vandalism would not be allowed to enter the federal capital.

"The nation is witness to the disruption and inconvenience caused to the general public by PTI workers during their previous rallies. On one occasion, a female media anchor even had to take refuge by climbing over a DSNG vehicle to escape from the protesters," he said.

Addressing a press conference at the Peshawar Press Club, the federal minister said the Islamabad High Court had issued directions that no compromise would be made over disruption to the movement of people in the federal capital.

Former Governor KP, Iqbal Zafar Jhagra, Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N) leaders including Ali Khadim Hussain, Ikhtiar Wali Khan and MPAs Tariq Awan and Jalal Khan, among others, were also present.

The Information Minister said country could not afford protests and long marches that disrupt routine traffic and economic activities, adding that such disruptions could cause losses of around Rs.120 billion to the national economy each day.

Referring to the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) protest, he said no major disruption or damage had been witnessed during its demonstration, whereas incidents of vandalism and damage to government property had been reported during PTI protests, he added.

## MoU inked to expand DHIS2, digital health innovations in Balochistan

***CM Bugti says process of modern reforms in Balochistan's health system would continue with the cooperation of international academic and technical institutions***

QUETTA, (VoM Report): A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Health Department, Government of Balochistan, and the HISP Centre of Norway's prestigious University of Oslo to further strengthen the digital health system in Balochistan, ensure effective implementation of DHIS2, and promote local innovation, research, and technical capacity building.

The MoU was signed by Provincial Coordinator Dr. Ababgar Baloch on behalf of the Balochistan Health Management Information System (BHMIS/DHIS2) and Professor Dr. Kirsten Braa on behalf of the HISP Centre of the University of Oslo. The MoU was finalized in the presence and under the supervision of Balochistan Health Secretary Syed Mujeeb-ur-Rehman. Dr. Aamir from UNICEF Balochistan, Chief Executive Officer of the Balochistan Health Card Programme Dr. Ahmed Wali, and Dr. Shahko Mengal of the Health Services Reforms Unit Balochistan were also present at the ceremony.

The briefing stated that UNICEF Pakistan's support has been of fundamental importance in the implementation of DHIS2 in Balochistan, improving reporting compliance, and making the system functional and effective.



**NEW YORK: US President Donald Trump speaks during the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly at UN Headquarters**

## Pakistan 'great country'

## Trump threatens to 'annihilate' Iran if no deal reached after US midterms

NEW YORK, (Monitoring Desk): U.S. President Donald Trump warned Iran on Tuesday that it could face "annihilation" if it fails to reach an agreement to end the Middle East war, while predicting that Tehran would ultimately come to the negotiating table after November's U.S. midterm elections.

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, Trump framed Iran's future as a choice between reaching an agreement with Washington that would allow the country to rebuild or facing further military action.

"I have a big decision to make. Will a deal be made with Iran that lets them rebuild and create a far greater country than it ever was before, maybe one of the greatest in the Middle East or even the world?" Trump said.

"Or do I annihilate the Islamic Republic and do it quickly, never giving them a chance to kill and destroy people and countries again?"

Trump continued the warning by asking whether he should "drive them into hell with no chance of survival and no hope of future greatness or generations," before saying he remained confident that an agreement could be reached.

"But I believe we'll make a deal right after the election," he said.

Trump argued that Iranian officials were waiting to see the outcome of the Nov. 3 midterm elections, in which Republicans are fighting to retain control of Congress. "I believe we'll make a deal right after the election because it doesn't make sense for them not to," Trump said. "They're waiting to see how I do in the midterm election. What they don't realize is that I'm not running. I did that already, and won in a landslide."

The U.S. president also used his address to defend the U.S.-Israeli war against Iran, arguing that military action prevented Tehran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Iran has consistently denied seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

Trump has offered several justifications for the February U.S.-Israeli strikes, including concerns over Iran's nuclear program, Tehran's support for regional armed groups and the prospect of political change in the country.

## Ayesha urges parents to ensure polio vaccination

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication Ayesha Raza Farooq has urged parents to ensure that all children under five years of age receive polio drops during the ongoing Sub-National Polio Campaign.

The campaign, being conducted from September 21 to 27 in 115 selected districts, aims to vaccinate more than 31 million children across the country.

Ayesha Raza Farooq said the decline in positive environmental samples was encouraging, but the risk of poliovirus transmission had not been completely eliminated.

"As long as the poliovirus exists anywhere, we must ensure that every child has access to the polio vaccine," she said.

She appreciated the efforts of polio workers who, despite challenging circumstances, were going door-to-door to protect children from the crippling disease.

The focal person urged parents to cooperate with vaccination teams and ensure that children up to five years of age receive the prescribed polio drops.

## Creativity, innovation key currency of digital age: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday said creativity and innovation had become the key currency of the digital age, stressing the need to transform the education system to promote critical thinking, questioning, observation and problem-solving skills.

Addressing the opening ceremony of an international conference on Research & Practices in Education themed "Evolving Learning Ecosystem: Connect, Teach & Grow," he said the world had entered an era in which transformation was taking place at the "speed of an electron," while artificial intelligence had brought a major disruption to the existing models of education and work.

"In this era, the currency is creativity and innovation," the minister said



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# Alarming rise in HIV epidemic

Pakistan now holds the unenviable distinction of being home to one of the fastest-growing HIV epidemics in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, which covers 22 countries in West Asia, North Africa, the Horn of Africa and Central Asia. New infections have surged by an alarming 200 per cent over the last 15 years, rising from 16,000 in 2010 to 48,000 in 2024. But even worse is the fact that public awareness campaigns and harm reduction strategies have been almost completely ineffective. Just this week, the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Health was told that nearly 20,000 patients out of 84,000 registered have gone "missing" after initiating antiretroviral therapy. That means they are walking around with potentially contagious levels of the virus in their systems.

Meanwhile, even the 84,000 people registered are nothing compared to the estimated 369,000 people living with HIV nationwide. This large, mostly untreated population, makes it harder to even identify who should be included in 'high-risk' groups. While unsafe sexual practices and intravenous drug use with used needles are still the main transmission routes, other medical routes, such as unsafe injection practices, unsterile blood transfusions, weak infection control and unchecked quackery are driving transmission to children and spouses.

Children have been disproportionately affected, with new infections in the 0–14 age group climbing from 530 in 2010 to 1,800 in 2023. In several outbreak hotspots - including Larkana, Taunsa and Hyderabad - children comprised more than 80 per cent of new detected cases. And despite these outbreaks, banned reusable syringes are still available in the market, and blood bank regulation remains spotty.

Compounding the crisis are resource constraints forced by underfunding from rich countries, especially US President Donald Trump's decision to almost eliminate all American foreign aid.

The aid-dependent National AIDS Control Programme is now severely underfunded and understaffed, while corrupt local elements managed to steal $800,000 worth of donated supplies from the programme.

# Beyond safety net

JAHAN ARA MANZOOR WATTOO

In an era defined by global macroeconomic shifts, structural domestic adjustments, and the relentless march of climate change, the true measure of public governance is facing an unprecedented trial. For developing economies like Pakistan, the primary challenge of the state is no longer just managing growth; it is protecting the human dignity of our people. At the absolute centre of this mission lies a critical tool that we must fundamentally reframe: social protection.

For far too long, social safety nets have been viewed through a clinical, reductionist lens—dismissed by critics as mere fiscal overhead or passive charity. This is a profound policy error that detaches governance from human reality. In a modern economy, a scientifically designed, data-driven social safety matrix is not a drain on state resources; it is the ultimate economic anchor for our community and an engine for lifting the masses out of despair.

Pakistan's current economic journey requires a fundamental pivot from short-term relief to long-term institutional empathy. As the state navigates necessary fiscal consolidations and structural adjustments, the immediate, painful fallout is invariably borne by the most vulnerable people in our society—the daily wage earners, the smallholder farmers, and the mothers struggling to feed their children. It is here that data-driven, adaptive social protection acts as a vital bridge. By cushioning our lowest income quintiles against inflationary shocks, a robust social safety infrastructure prevents vulnerable people from falling into irreversible poverty traps, maintaining their dignity and preserving social cohesion—the absolute bedrock of national stability.

The true game-changer in this paradigm shift is the transition from speculative, analogue welfare distribution to high-precision, digital census structures. Historically, welfare distribution in Pakistan suffered from institutional fragmentation and incomplete datasets, which carried the tragic risk of excluding nearly 20% of vulnerable populations—the very people who need the state's support the most. Today, we are witnessing a structural revolution led by the development of the Punjab Socio-Economic Registry (PSER) under the Punjab Social Protection Authority (PSPA).

To appreciate the scale of this project, one must look at the sheer demographics: with a population of over 127 million, Punjab is structurally larger than the vast majority of sovereign countries on earth. Consequently, executing a census of this magnitude is not merely a regional task; it is one of the largest and most complex data-driven social protection operations in the world. Deploying a massive, dedicated workforce of 22,000 trained field enumerators who have knocked on doors across every corner of our province, the PSER has documented nearly 140,000 families every single day. Today, this historic initiative stands at a monumental 92 percent completion rate, having successfully logged and verified granular data for 9 million homes, 10 million families, and nearly 40 million citizens across Punjab, systematically scaling to capture a broader socio-economic database of over 110 million individuals to guarantee absolute targeting integrity. This registry is far more than a cold collection of numbers; it is a live, dynamic map of our community's heartbeat, detailing our citizens' income profiles, health vectors, educational statuses, and housing vulnerabilities so that no one is left invisible.

We have not achieved this monumental milestone in isolation. With the strategic and structural help of our global development partners—most notably the World Bank, the German Development Cooperation (GIZ), and specialised United Nations (UN) agencies—we have built a social protection infrastructure that meets the highest international standards of transparency and data safety while remaining deeply rooted in local empathy.

The practical necessity of this compassionate data architecture was vividly demonstrated during recent global shocks. When severe energy supply disruptions caused import costs to skyrocket, Pakistan absorbed the initial shock by rolling out a massive Rs 129 billion fuel subsidy funded through deep spending cuts and public sector rationalisation. However, blanket subsidies face strict fiscal limitations under global monetary commitments.

The future belongs to high-precision, targeted cushions that protect the masses without breaking the state. By utilising live, rigorous data infrastructure like the PSER, emergency interventions—such as our vital Ramzan relief packages and targeted fuel subsidies for smallholder farmers and motorcyclists—can be deployed instantly and transparently. Instead of inefficient, universal handouts, advanced algorithmic targeting ensures that subsidised diesel reaches the exact, verified farmer struggling with agricultural input costs, and essential food support drops directly into the hands of the most deserving families. Crucially, this data-driven foundation is the mandatory launchpad for true shock-responsive or adaptive social protection. Pakistan stands at the frontlines of global climate vulnerability. The catastrophic floods and rapid agricultural shifts of recent years have proven that an unexpected crisis can instantly wipe out decades of localised poverty reduction, destroying entire communities in a matter of hours.

During my tenure directing these frameworks, my core strategic focus has been to fundamentally invert the traditional, reactive model of crisis management, which often arrives too late for those who have lost everything. By pivoting our focus squarely toward predictive and adaptive social protection, we are building a state mechanism engineered to reach the masses before, and not after, the calamity hits them.

Advanced data analytics allows us to achieve this through proactive, anticipatory action that saves lives. By integrating a live, high-precision database like the PSER with meteorological early-warning frameworks, we transition from emergency relief to institutional foresight. In the crucial 72-hour window before a projected flood crest hits a vulnerable riverine district, our registry allows the state to see exactly who is in the path of the disaster.

We can map out exactly which households contain pregnant women, elderly citizens, or persons with disabilities, enabling rescue teams to execute highly targeted, proactive evacuations. Simultaneously, this database allows the state to pre-position mobile banking liquidity and transport logistics to help smallholder farmers relocate their livestock and primary economic assets to safe ground before the disaster hits, rather than trying to rebuild after everything is gone. Moving from post-disaster compensation to pre-disaster preservation saves both human lives and the state exchequer billions in rehabilitation costs.

Yet, structural reform at home is only half the battle; the challenges we face are regional and global, requiring Pakistan to command respected international soft power. Through platforms like the Inter-Provincial Social Protection Forum (ISPF) and broader collaborations across South Asia, we have a unique opportunity to export our data-driven governance successes while adopting global best practices. By aligning our provincial welfare metrics directly with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Pakistan can demonstrate to the World Bank, GIZ, and UN agencies that our state institutions possess the elite administrative capacity to execute complex, transparent, and high-impact human development programmes. Ultimately, this transformation cannot rest on executive initiatives alone; it requires a robust, forward-looking legislative foundation where our parliamentarians transition these proven data frameworks into permanent, institutionalised federal legislation. By codifying data transparency, predictive climate-shock responsiveness, and female economic empowerment into the statutory fabric of the state, we can ensure that Pakistan's social safety infrastructure remains completely insulated from political volatility. Social protection is not a secondary tier of public policy; it is the foundational architecture upon which a stable, equitable, and resilient Pakistan will be built, reflecting a final legislative priority to permanently put the human dignity of our people first.

The writer is the Vice Chairperson of the Punjab Social Protection Authority.

# Slashing the regulatory burden

F. FAREED MALIK

Economic development is rarely the sole product of capital accumulation or technological advancement, but is fundamentally driven by the quality of the institutions governing economic activity. As institutional economists such as Douglass North and Daron Acemoglu have articulated, these institutions, encompassing both formal laws and rules and informal norms, serve as the foundational "rules of the game". They dictate economic incentives, guide investment behaviour, and ultimately determine long-term prosperity. Institutions, however, are intrinsically tethered to the governing legal frameworks of a state. In Pakistan, a profound institutional paradox has emerged: despite the aggressive proliferation of a voluminous and frequently excessive legislative corpus, state institutions have devolved from engines of macroeconomic development into instruments of extraction. Consequently, this overgrown regulatory apparatus actively facilitates systemic rent-seeking, amplifies unchecked bureaucratic discretion, and effectively stifles productive economic enterprise.

One of the defining characteristics of Pakistan's administrative system is its reliance on legalism — the assumption that socioeconomic problems can be solved through the introduction of increasingly detailed laws, regulations, and administrative controls. While regulation is essential for protecting public welfare and ensuring market stability, excessive regulation without effective oversight often creates opportunities for abuse. Rather than facilitating entrepreneurship, many regulatory institutions inadvertently increase the transaction costs of doing business. According to an internal review, there are more than three hundred laws applicable to businesses in Punjab alone, coupled with hundreds of subsequent regulations. Every new scenario is met with the administratively naïve response of adding new regulations and specialised agencies to enforce them, without analysing their bearing on the economic condition of the country, as there is no system to analyse such impacts.

These governance failures are particularly damaging for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which constitute nearly 90 percent of Pakistan's businesses, employ approximately 80 percent of the non-agricultural labour force, and contribute roughly 40 percent to the country's gross domestic product. Despite their central role in employment generation and economic diversification, SMEs face disproportionately high compliance costs. Unlike large corporations, smaller firms lack dedicated legal departments or regulatory specialists capable of navigating Pakistan's complex administrative environment. Consequently, many entrepreneurs choose to remain in the informal economy to avoid burdensome regulations, hidden levies, and unpredictable enforcement. The informal sector is estimated to account for over one-third of Pakistan's GDP, significantly reducing the tax base while limiting firms' access to formal credit, export opportunities, government support programmes, and technological upgrading.

The consequences extend well beyond entrepreneurship. Pakistan consistently attracts lower levels of foreign direct investment compared to many regional competitors despite its strategic location and population exceeding 240 million. The architecture of rent-seeking becomes evident when regulatory power evolves into a mechanism of control instead of public service delivery. Administrative bottlenecks surrounding permits, approvals, registrations, customs clearances, and taxation create artificial scarcity that increases the bargaining power of public officials and adds to the fatigue and frustration of investors. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index has consistently ranked Pakistan among countries struggling with public-sector corruption, reflecting broader governance weaknesses that undermine investor confidence. According to research by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), the deadweight cost of excessive regulation and administrative friction amounts to an astonishing 45 percent of Pakistan's GDP. It is a widely held perception within the business community that, upon establishing a business, entrepreneurs are confronted by a multitude of regulatory authorities, each seeking to assert its jurisdiction and, in some instances, extract informal payments.

The pervasive phenomenon of over-regulation is typically the result of a systemic fault within the state apparatus: an entrenched appetite for consolidating power by state agencies, coupled with a lack of knowledge of the drivers of economic growth. As elucidated by public choice theory and William Niskanen's model of the budget-maximising bureaucracy, state institutions inherently prioritise their own expansion over administrative efficiency. Rather than anchoring success to tangible public outcomes, these organisations are structurally incentivised to inflate their budgets, personnel, and regulatory footprints, knowing that sprawling institutions command greater political leverage, prestige, and access to public resources. This self-serving trajectory manifests visibly in the rapid proliferation of enforcement agencies with ever-expanding mandates. While institutional specialisation may occasionally be warranted to address genuine governance deficits, this unchecked expansion of the state apparatus, having colonial DNA, ultimately breeds overlapping jurisdictions and an increasingly intrusive, regressive regulatory maze.

The erosion of institutional trust represents perhaps the most damaging consequence of such a governance mess. When citizens perceive regulations as arbitrary or enforcement as selective, compliance increasingly becomes a matter of personal relationships rather than legal obligation. Businesses invest more heavily in cultivating political connections than improving productivity, while citizens increasingly rely on informal networks instead of formal institutions.

This erosion of trust weakens the social contract, reduces tax compliance, discourages civic participation, and limits the state's capacity to implement meaningful reforms. Perhaps most concerning is the political economy underlying this process. Once established, bureaucratic organisations develop institutional interests in preserving and expanding their own existence. They often advocate for broader regulatory mandates, additional staffing, and increased appropriations, creating a self-reinforcing cycle in which organisational growth becomes an end in itself rather than a means of improving governance. This dynamic shifts the focus of the state from facilitating economic activity to managing an ever-growing regulatory apparatus.

Several countries offer useful lessons for Pakistan. Georgia's comprehensive regulatory reforms following the early 2000s dramatically reduced business licensing requirements, simplified taxation, digitised public services, and strengthened anti-corruption institutions. As a result, the country rose rapidly in international ease-of-doing-business rankings while attracting significantly higher levels of investment. Similarly, Estonia's extensive digital governance reforms transformed public administration by reducing bureaucratic discretion through online services, electronic identification systems, and transparent administrative procedures. The UAE has slashed hundreds of regulations and simplified and digitised the compliance regime to attract foreign investors. Singapore's long-standing emphasis on regulatory efficiency, meritocratic public administration, and institutional accountability has likewise demonstrated how capable governance can facilitate sustainable economic growth despite limited natural resources.

Pakistan has initiated several promising reforms, including the establishment of the Pakistan Single Window to simplify international trade documentation, digital company registration through the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, and increasing adoption of e-governance initiatives. Nevertheless, these efforts remain constrained by fragmented technological interventions that are aimed at automating existing processes without system re-engineering and user-friendly interfaces, along with resistance from vested interests that benefit from existing administrative complexity. Sustainable reform therefore requires not merely digitisation but fundamental changes in institutional incentives and bureaucratic reform. A meaningful reform agenda should focus on transforming the state's role from regulator of economic activity to facilitator of productive enterprise, with economic decisions no longer made through the administrative mindsets of bureaucrats. The country would also benefit from implementing a systematic regulatory guillotine that periodically reviews and eliminates outdated, redundant, or economically harmful regulations. Equally important is the decentralisation of fiscal autonomy and political accountability so that local governments possess both the authority and responsibility to respond effectively to local economic needs. Only by redefining the state as an enabler of opportunity rather than a gatekeeper of economic activity can Pakistan realise its considerable economic potential in an increasingly competitive global economy.

The writer is an economic development practitioner and a graduate of the London School of Economics.

# Iran threatens US with new weapons, new targets if attacks resume

TEHRAN, (Monitoring Desk): Iran's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) warned Tuesday they will strike new targets and deploy new weapons if the U.S. launches further attacks, the Fars news agency reported.

"If a new aggression occurs, we will certainly change the weaponry and the geography of the war," IRGC spokesperson Hossein Mohebbi said, that Tehran was for a prolongedconflict.

Almost seven months into their war, Tehran and Washington remain locked in a stalemate, though neither side appears willing to return to full-scale war.

In a statement, Mohebbi warned that "there will certainly be significant changes in our defense and our counteroffensive" in the event of a new U.S. attack.

"We will introduce new weapons with new capabilities into the battlefield and the world will be surprised," he said.

"Our targets will not necessarily be the same as before either. We have new targets that have not yet been attacked," he added.

The Guards also said they were prepared for a "prolonged war".

On Saturday, the central command of Iran's military said the U.S. was planning new action against Tehran, according to state television, but it did not elaborate.

Fighting between the U.S. and Iran has eased in recent days after a flare-up at the end of last month, though Tehran continues sporadic attacks on commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz. Meanwhile, Two crew were wounded when an "unknown projectile" hit a tanker Monday in the Strait of Hormuz, a maritime agency said.

"Military authorities have informed UKMTO that a tanker conducting an inbound transit was struck by an unknown projectile," said the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO).

"Two crew have sustained minor injuries and the vessel is reported to be continuing to its next port of call under its own power," it added.

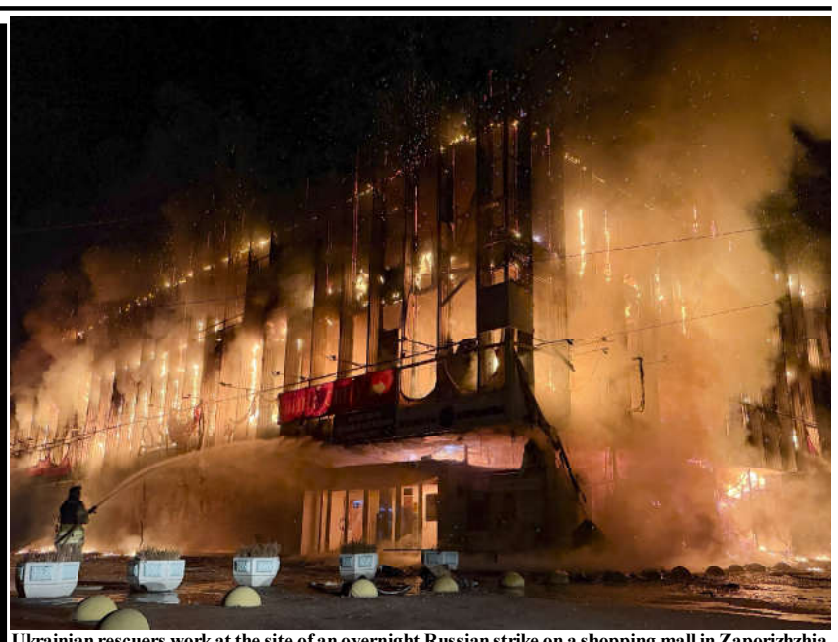
The UKMTO said the vessel is reportedly continuing to its next port of call under its own power. No reports indicated any environmental impact at this time.

British security firm Vanguard Tech said U.K.-flagged tanker La Stephanie was hit by a drone while sailing towards the Gulf, also reporting minor injuries to two crew members.

Tehran is seeking to maintain a stranglehold on the vital waterway in its war with the United States, while Washington has kept up a counterblockade of Iranian ports.

Tehran has asserted control over much of the Strait of Hormuz since the U.S. and Israel launched the war on Feb. 28 . In peacetime, about 20 million barrels – roughly a fifth of the world's oil supply – passed through Hormuz each day.

Some tankers are again traversing the strait, but traffic is well below what it once was, with both sides maintaining rival blockades in the waterway in an effort to exert pressure.



Ukrainian rescuers work at the site of an overnight Russian strike on a shopping mall in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine.



Britain's Prime Minister Andy Burnham gives a speech during a reception for first responders.

## Araghchi, Guterres discuss international peace

NEW YORK, (Agencies)Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held a phone call with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres following his arrival in New York for the 81st session of the UN General Assembly, the state news agency IRNA reported Tuesday. During the call, the two sides discussed issues on the agenda of the General Assembly and exchanged views on Guterres' efforts to promote international peace and security. Speaking to Iranian reporters at the start of his visit, Araghchi said Tehran's main objective is to use the UN as a major international platform to defend what he described as the rights, interests and legitimate claims of the Iranian people. He said the visit came after what he called a "cowardly war" launched against Iran by the US and Israel and subsequent developments.

Araghchi said the UN remains the world's largest international forum and provides countries with an important platform to present their positions and messages to the international community.

# Russia, Ukraine trade blows ahead of Zelenskyy meeting with Trump

KYIV, (Agencies): Russian missile and drone strikes across Ukraine killed at least four people overnight, officials said Tuesday, while a Ukrainian long-range strike damaged another Russian oil refinery.

The ongoing exchange of daily aerial attacks, while positions on the battlefield's front line barely change, provided a backdrop to the visit by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the United States.

Zelenskyy was due to meet other world leaders, including U.S. President Donald Trump, at the U.N. General Assembly in New York. The Ukrainian leader is hoping to recruit their help to end Russia's more than 41/2-year-old full-scale invasion of his country. Russian President Vladimir Putin isn't due to attend the annual event.

The war, which Western officials say has killed more than 500,000 Russian troops, has had global repercussions. The repeated attacks on Russian refineries, following Moscow's strikes on Ukraine's power grid, have caused international shortages of diesel and price spikes, according to Trump. However, the global crunch also came after the Iran war led to curtailed oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz.

Zelenskyy also wants help to ensure the flow of Ukrainian grain and other farm products to world markets through the Black Sea. Russian attacks on cargo vessels have severely disrupted Kyiv's exports, hurting its economy and threatening global supplies.



Israelis, who have usurped Palestinian lands, raided the Old City of Hebron in southern the West Bank under the protection of Israeli forces.

# Diana's brother reveals explosive claim about King Charles

LONDON, (Agencies): A new book published Tuesday by the brother of the late Princess Diana has made headlines around the world with its damning allegations about Diana's ex-husband, now King Charles III, and has reopened decades-old wounds within the U.K.'s royal family.

In "Swan Song: Diana, My Sister," Charles Spencer alleges that he argued with the then-Prince Charles over palace plans for Prince William and Prince Harry, then 15 and 12, to walk behind their mother's coffin during her 1997 funeral procession.

Spencer says he told Charles that Diana, who was killed in a car crash in Paris at the age of 36, would not have wanted her boys to undergo the ordeal.

He claims the prince "went ballistic" during the argument and told him: "Rest assured, we'll forget her soon enough." Spencer also accuses Charles of having "contempt" for his ex-wife and of sounding "elated" after her death.

After excerpts of the book were published last week, Buckingham Palace responded with a strongly worded statement that's rare by the measured standards of the royal household.

"His Majesty is mindful that the pain of fraternal grief can cloud reason, affect judgment and color memory in ways others do not recognize, even many years after such a loss," it said.

Spencer has stood by his claims, insisting to the BBC that he is telling the truth. On the royal rebuttal, he asked: "Is he furious? Is he furious or is he embarrassed?" Charles, then 32, married 20-year-old Lady Diana Spencer in a lavish ceremony at St. Paul's Cathedral in 1981. The couple divorced in 1996, and a decade later Charles married Camilla Parker Bowles, now Queen Camilla. Charles Spencer, the 9th Earl Spencer, has long clashed with the royals over their treatment of his older sister. Tensions between the palace and the Spencer family following her death were dramatized in the film "The Queen" and the Netflix series "The Crown." In a searing eulogy at his sister's funeral, Spencer vowed that her "blood family" would carry on her "imaginative and loving" legacy in raising her two sons. The speech was widely considered a swipe at the royal family.

At the time, many in the U.K. and beyond felt Queen Elizabeth II and the royals were too slow to acknowledge the global outpouring of grief over Diana's death and that the monarchy was deeply out of touch with the public mood. The royals have spent decades putting that period of crisis behind them. The warmer, more personable approach of William and Harry – and, in recent years, the king – is a legacy of that time.

In his book, Spencer also criticized the royals for what he described as a "lack of obvious care" for the then 12-year-old Harry.

He recounted how "tiny, and slight, and bereft" his nephew looked after the funeral. "He needed Diana's hugs, of course, and they would forever be denied him," he wrote. "But instead of calm and nurture, he was allowed to spin out of control." Some critics have questioned why Spencer felt the need to revisit the pain and trauma 30 years on.



Palestinian Ismat Subh continues to struggle to survive in her tent in Gaza City under harsh weather conditions, unable to return home even a year after the ceasefire in Gaza.

## Lithuanian parliament backs move to remove ban on weapons of mass destruction

VILNIUS, (Agencies): Lithuania's parliament on Tuesday backed a proposal to remove from the Constitution a ban on weapons of mass destruction and foreign military bases on the country's territory, advancing the measure to the next stage of the approval process, according to public broadcaster LRT.

The amendment would repeal Article 137 of the Constitution, which currently states that weapons of mass destruction and military bases belonging to foreign states cannot be located on Lithuanian territory.

The Seimas, Lithuania's parliament, voted 99-13, with five abstentions, in favor of the proposal.

The proposal must receive two more parliamentary approvals, with at least three months between the votes.

It will require the support of at least 94 of the 141 members of the Seimas.

The first vote on final adoption is scheduled for Oct. 6, while the final vote is planned for Jan. 12, according to Seimas Speaker Juozas Olekas.

# Houthis eye highlands amid report Trump halted strikes last minute

SANAA, (Agencies): Yemen's Houthi rebels pushed to seize strategic heights Tuesday to sever the Red Sea coast from Saudi-backed forces, following reports that President Donald Trump aborted U.S. strikes against the group at the last minute. A lightning advance by the Iran-backed group this month has extended the wider Middle East conflict to a new theater and further threatened global energy supplies. Washington has so far rebuffed repeated pleas from Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to join the fight in Yemen. The Houthis said Saturday they had fired on Riyadh, where ' loud booms were followed by columns of smoke visible near the airport.

Saudi Arabia has not commented on the first apparent strikes on the capital since the escalation began. The New York Times reported that the Trump administration had prepared on Sunday to launch airstrikes against the Houthis after fresh calls from the Saudi crown prince. But the newspaper said Trump called off the airstrikes at the last minute, even as troops were loading bombs onto aircraft.

Reuters could not immediately verify the report. The U.S. military's Central Command referred questions to the White House. The White House did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment. Trump spoke Sunday to Rashid al-Alimi, president of Yemen's Saudi-backed, internationally recognized government, who asked him for U.S. military help, four sources told media.

# Typhoon Dujuan lashes Tokyo, over 1M urged to evacuate

TOKYO, (Agencies): Typhoon Dujuan battered the Tokyo region with torrential rain early Tuesday, prompting evacuation advisories for more than 1 million people and hundreds of flight cancellations as flooding and landslides threatened parts of Japan.

Two people have been confirmed dead as heavy rainfall triggered landslides in Chiba and Kanagawa prefectures near Tokyo, local governments reported according to Japanese media including the Kyodo news agency.

Japan often sees strong typhoons in the late summer and early autumn, and other storms have already disrupted some events at the Asian Games being hosted in the country.

Dujuan was bringing winds of some 144 kilometres (89 miles) per hour Monday as it moved to around 130 kilometres south of Katsuura City near Tokyo.

By early Tuesday the storm had shifted away from the coast and was heading northeast out to sea, with slightly diminished winds, the Japanese Meteorological Agency (JMA) said.

Japan Airlines cancelled 135 flights and All Nippon Airways scrapped 140, while more than 9,000 households near Tokyo were without power.

More than 1.6 million residents in and around the capital were urged to evacuate Monday, according to the Fire and Disaster Management Agency. The evacuations are not mandatory.

Landslide warnings were issued for Tokyo as well as for Chiba, Kanagawa and Shizuoka prefectures.

Railway operators in Tokyo and neighbouring regions suspended services on some lines.

In areas where warnings have been issued, "there's a risk the rain will continue as the typhoon moves north", the JMA's Takuya Hosomi told reporters.

The JMA warned on Sunday that rain and winds were expected to intensify even before the typhoon's arrival.

"The total rainfall through Tuesday could exceed the average monthly rainfall for September.

## Spain's public broadcaster plans to continue Eurovision boycott over Israel's participation

GENEVA, (Agencies): Spain's public broadcaster RTVE is planning to continue its boycott of the Eurovision Song Contest in 2027 over Israel's continued participation.

RTVE President Jose Pablo Lopez said Tuesday he would propose that the country remain out of the contest.

He made the remarks at the broadcaster's parliamentary oversight committee.

Lopez said RTVE had spent the past year pushing, alongside other major European public broadcasters, for changes within the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), including tougher governance rules, penalties for political instrumentalization and stricter rules on neutrality in sponsorship and the contest itself.

While acknowledging progress, he said RTVE had not achieved all of its objectives and that it was "deeply painful" that Israel's public broadcaster would continue participating.



SAN SEBASTIAN, SPAIN: Oyku Karayel (L), Metin Akdulger (C) and Yesim Ustaoglu (R) attend the 74th San Sebastian International Film Festival

## UK to support Saudi refueling amid Houthi tensions

LONDON, (Agencies): The U.K. has agreed to a request from Saudi Arabia to extend defensive air-to-air refueling for a limited time period amid ongoing tensions with Iran-backed Houthis, British Prime Minister Andy Burnham said a move he described as helping to stabilize the wider region.

Riyadh requested support after the Houthis, who control the most populous parts of Yemen, intensified their attacks on Saudi Arabia.

"We have received a request from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for military support, and on the advice of the defense secretary and the foreign secretary, last night I agreed to that request for defensive air-to-air refueling," Burnham told reporters as he travelled to New York

## G7 foreign ministers urge Iran to end alleged military support for Houthis

NEW YORK, (Agencies): G7 foreign ministers on Tuesday called on Iran to stop what they described as military support for Houthi forces in Yemen, warning that continued assistance could fuel further tensions in the region and put international shipping and global stability at risk.

In a statement released after a meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, foreign ministers from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States also condemned ongoing Houthi attacks in Yemen and against Saudi Arabia.

The ministers urged all sides to avoid actions that could further destabilize the region or interfere with maritime trade, which is vital to the global economy.

The G7 also called for an immediate halt to attacks by Iran and stressed the importance of protecting maritime routes and freedom of navigation, including through the Strait of Hormuz and other critical waterways.

"We call for the immediate and unconditional cessation of all attacks by the Iranian regime," the ministers said in the statement.

They also reaffirmed "the importance of safeguarding maritime routes, and safety of navigation, including in the Strait of Hormuz and all associated critical waterways," as well as the security of global supply chains and the stability of energy markets.

The ministers expressed support for countries facing attacks by Iran or Iranian-backed groups, saying they have the right to defend their territories and protect their citizens.

"We support the right of the countries unjustifiably attacked by Iran or by Iranian proxies to defend their territories and protect their citizens," the statement said, while reaffirming support for their security, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The G7 further said Iran must not obtain a nuclear weapon and called on Tehran to halt its ballistic missile program and what it described as destabilizing activities in the region and around the world. The group also condemned attacks in Iraq by Iran and Iranian militias against diplomatic facilities, energy infrastructure and US and anti-ISIS (Daesh) coalition forces, particularly in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.



RABAT, MOROCCO: Supporters of the National Rally of Independents (RNI) Party take part in an election campaign march ahead of the parliamentary elections scheduled for September 23

# Saudi king Salman denounces Houthis as 'terrorist militia' after Makkah attack

RIYADH, (Agencies): Saudi King Salman has denounced Yemen's Houthi rebels as a "terrorist militia" following an attack that authorities said targeted the holy city of Makkah last week.

The 90-year-old monarch praised the armed forces and security services for defending the kingdom and condemned the Houthi attempt "to target Makkah", describing it as "a provocation to Muslims around the world", according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

Earlier, Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by phone with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Tuesday, with the two leaders discussing security in the Gulf and the importance of keeping vital waterways open, the Kremlin said.

The Kremlin said Putin and MBS held a detailed exchange of views on the situation in the Middle East and stressed that a political and diplomatic settlement remained the only viable way forward.

They also "underscored the need for a swift cessation of hostilities" in Yemen amid a worsening military and political situation there.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Tuesday the US is open to speaking with Iranians at the UN General Assembly, but no meeting is currently scheduled.

"We're open to that. I don't think anything is scheduled at this point, but we're certainly open to something like that, especially if it has the prospects of leading to something positive and ultimately achieving the goal of what this is all about," Rubio said in an interview with NBC's "Today" show.

"And that is the fact that Iran can never have a nuclear weapon. They just simply can't."

Earlier, the Iranian Director General of Public Relations for the President's Office issued a statement saying that the US' denial of visas to Iran's media team was "a blatant violation of media protection and an open admission of fear from the truth," according to ISNA. "If you claim to uphold freedom, where does this terror come from—of cameras and documents that have recorded the oppression of our nation and the bombing of schools", they added. An unnamed Iranian official on Tuesday told Japan's Kyodo News that Tehran has offered to "reopen the Strait of Hormuz within seven days if the United States takes initial steps toward easing military pressure." Anadolu could not independently confirm the veracity of the statement.

The proposal has "already been conveyed to Washington through mediators," the report said. It "calls for renewed talks aimed at reaching a permanent end to hostilities between the two countries," the Iranian official said.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani addresses as chief guest at the convocation of Beaconhouse International College.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal addresses the inaugural session of an international conference on "Education, Research and Action" at Allama Iqbal Open University.

## President Zardari lauds security forces for successful Balochistan operation

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari, Tuesday, commended the security forces for eliminating six terrorists affiliated with Fitna al-Hindustan during an operation in Saran Tangi, Balochistan.

The president praised the bravery and professional expertise of the security forces for foiling the terrorists' plans, President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release.

President Zardari said the fight against externally perpetrated terrorism in the country would continue.

Fitna al-Hindustan and its facilitators would not succeed in undermining peace and stability in Pakistan, he further reiterated.

## Naqvi meets President Pezeshkian, vows to expand Pak-Iran ties

***President Pezeshkian highlights the wide-ranging potential of Iran and Pakistan and stresses the need to increase cooperation in trade, energy, tourism and joint investment***

TEHRAN, (APP): Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and said Pakistan is committed to further developing relations between Islamabad and Tehran. During the meeting, both sides discussed expanding cooperation in trade, tourism, science, energy and investment, while highlighting the potential of stronger bilateral engagement.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening relations with Iran during a meeting with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

During the meeting, Naqvi emphasized the importance of expanding cooperation between Pakistan and Iran in multiple sectors, including trade, tourism, culture and science. Naqvi described the current relationship between the two neighboring countries as being at a high level and said Pakistan remains committed to enhancing cooperation across different fields.

President Pezeshkian highlighted the wide-ranging potential of Iran and Pakistan and stressed the need to increase cooperation in trade, energy, tourism and joint investment.

## Pak-China ties to expand through modernization, economic development, says Jiang Zaidong

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Ambassador of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong on Tuesday said that Pakistan and China are committed to strengthening their all-weather friendship by expanding cooperation in modernization, economic development and strategic ties.

"We will continue to share the fruits of Chinese modernization with the world, deliver greater benefits to Pakistan, our iron-clad all-weather friend, and work together to build an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era", he stated while addressing a reception here for overseas Chinese communities celebrating National Day and Mid-Autumn Festival.

Addressing the gathering, he hoped that overseas Chinese communities will present a credible, lovable and respectable image of China, and consolidate the social foundation of the iron-clad China-Pakistan friendship. "We are deeply moved and proud that overseas Chinese compatriots have long served as invaluable people-to-people envoys for China-Pakistan friendship. You have strived diligently in Pakistan, lived in harmony with local communities, devoted yourselves to public welfare, supported the development of the motherland, and actively facilitated bilateral economic, trade and cultural exchanges, he maintained.

The ambassador said that employees of Chinese-funded enterprises, the backbone of China-Pakistan practical cooperation, have stayed committed to front-line work far from home and advanced the high-quality development of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects. He said that it has boosted local economic growth and livelihood improvement and consolidated the foundation of our all-weather friendship with tangible outcomes.

He stated that China and Pakistan will further tap cooperation potential, deliver more win-win outcomes benefiting both peoples, strictly uphold safety discipline and exercise rigorous self-discipline in words and deeds. Mr. Jiang Zaidong stressed to uphold the fine image of overseas Chinese nationals, make new contributions to national rejuvenation and national development, and write a new chapter for deepening all-weather China-Pakistan strategic cooperation. In his address, the Ambassador further said that we gathered joyfully today to celebrate the 77th anniversary of the founding of our great motherland and embrace the reunion spirit of the Mid-Autumn Festival. He extended his best festive wishes to all overseas Chinese, employees of Chinese-funded enterprises, media representatives and international students in Pakistan. Over the past 77 years, under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China, he said the Chinese people have strived unremittingly and achieved the historic leap from standing up, growing prosperous to growing strong. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in particular, under the leadership of General Secretary Xi Jinping and the scientific guidance of Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar chairs a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases.

## Gilani approves comprehensive austerity measures for Senate Secretariat

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Tuesday approved a comprehensive package of fuel conservation and austerity measures for the Senate Secretariat aimed at reducing expenditure and promoting the efficient use of public resources.

Under the measures, Monday to Thursday will be observed as physical working days, while Friday will be observed as a work-from-home day during non-session days.

Employees will remain available through telephone, email, WhatsApp and other means of communication and will be required to report to the office within one hour if directed by the competent authority.

Official office timings will be from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on non-session days.

During Senate sessions, offices will remain open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. or until the conclusion of the session. As part of the transport-related austerity measures, fuel provision for official vehicles has been reduced by 50 percent for three months, while the purchase of vehicles of all types has been completely banned. A five percent reduction in the Non-ERE Budget for the financial year 2026-27 will also be implemented monthly. The Senate Secretariat will also give preference to teleconferencing for meetings, except intra-city meetings, while the number of meetings will be kept to the bare minimum. Foreign visits and travel have been banned for three months, subject to specified exceptions, while official dinners will only be hosted for visiting foreign delegations.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Musadik Malik addresses a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination.

## Pakistan, Maldives vow to strengthen parliamentary ties

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Speaker of People's Majlis of the Maldives, Abdul Raheem Abdulla, leading a parliamentary delegation, arrived at the Parliament House on Tuesday on an official visit to Pakistan.

Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq warmly received the Maldivian Speaker upon his arrival at the Parliament House. The visiting delegation held discussions on bilateral relations between Pakistan and the Maldives, with particular emphasis on further promoting parliamentary linkages and cooperation between the two countries. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening parliamentary contacts and institutional cooperation between the two legislatures. Ayaz Sadiq said that the visit of the Maldivian parliamentary delegation would prove to be an important step towards strengthening institutional linkages between the legislatures of Pakistan and the Maldives. He noted that Pakistan attaches great importance to its longstanding and friendly relations with the Maldives and expressed the desire to further expand parliamentary cooperation between the two countries.



ISLAMABAD: Acting Managing Director, Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) Sabeen Usman Khattak, in a group photograph with a delegation of probationary civil service officers of the 53rd Common Training Programme and 43rd Specialized Training Programme for the Information Group during their visit to Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) headquarters.

## Arab, Islamic countries' FMs expresses deep concern over humanitarian crisis in Gaza

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Foreign Ministers of Arab and Islamic countries have expressed deep concern over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, urging Israel to fulfill its 'Phase One' commitments by ensuring unhindered aid delivery, supporting early recovery, and rehabilitating critical infrastructure. In a joint statement, the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and the United Arab Emirates, who met in New York on September 21, on the margins of the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly, stressed the imperative of preserving the ceasefire and ending all violations.

"The Ministers stress that the Road Map constitutes an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan and provides the implementation framework for advancing its Second Phase, including decommissioning alongside full Israeli withdrawal, the deployment of the International Stabilization Force (ISF), the assumption by the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG) of its responsibilities throughout the Gaza Strip, and the launch of Early Recovery and Reconstruction across Gaza. They call on all parties to fulfill their respective commitments in good faith and without delay," the joint statement, shared by the Foreign Office Spokesperson, said.

The ministers reiterated their categorical rejection of any measures aimed at the expulsion or the forced displacement of the Palestinian people from their homeland or attempts to alter the territorial or demographic character of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

They deplored in this context the illegal measures aimed at consolidating Israeli control and annexation, including the accelerating settlement expansion, land confiscation, demolition of Palestinian homes, settler violence and terrorism, and forced displacement, and called for their immediate reversal.

## USF launches 15 projects to extend 4G to 3.66m people in 21 districts

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Universal Service Fund (USF) is implementing 15 projects to extend 4G connectivity to 3.66 million people across 1,893 mauzas in 21 districts, with a combined contracted subsidy of Rs14.008 billion, aiming to improve digital access in underserved areas.

According to official project data available with Wealth Pakistan, the 15 projects have a combined target population of 3,656,923 people and are at different stages of implementation.

The Kurram project has reached 75 per cent completion, the highest among the projects, covering 40 mauzas and targeting 251,980 people with a contracted subsidy of Rs92.25 million

Five projects have reached 50 per cent completion, including Pishin, Chiniot, Abbottabad and Badin.

The Pishin project has the largest geographical coverage, spanning Pishin, Killa Abdullah and Quetta and covering 306 mauzas. It targets 574,545 people with a contracted subsidy of Rs1.32 billion.



LARKANA: Women and girls participate in the Lahooti Melo organized by the Sindh Government to mark World Peace Day at the Police Training School Ground.

## Uzbek delegation explores Pakistan's military heritage at Army Museum

LAHORE, (APP): A nine-member Uzbek media delegation visited the Army Museum Lahore and Lahore Garrison Shooting Gallery, exploring Pakistan's rich military heritage, historical legacy and modern shooting facilities. The delegation was received by Brig Umer Khalid (retd), Director Army Museum Lahore, who welcomed the delegation and briefed them about the museum's historical significance and various sections. During a guided tour, the delegation was briefed about the museum's rich collection representing different periods of the region's history and cultural heritage. The visitors took keen interest in displays related to different historical eras, particularly military equipment, weapons and other war memorabilia associated with the 1965 and 1971 wars.

## Dams can help control floods; glaciers cannot be stopped: Musadik Malik

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr Musadik Malik on Tuesday called for integration of national institutions dealing with climate, glacier monitoring, early warning systems, satellite data and disaster management to ensure timely availability and effective use of climate-related information. The climate change minister told the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, chaired by Senator Sherry Rehman, that Pakistan needed a coordinated mechanism under which relevant departments could automatically share data instead of waiting for formal requests from one another. He said Prime Minister had constituted a committee under the Ministry of Defence to bring relevant departments and institutions onto a common platform.

Dr Malik said a virtual platform had already been developed as part of efforts to integrate available information.

He said glacier and water systems were dealt with by the Ministry of Water Resources, while the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) was responsible for devices monitoring snowfall and glacier melt.

Early warning systems, he said, fell under the Ministry of Defence, satellite data was handled by the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco), while disaster-related matters were dealt with by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). "Whether civilian or defence-related, satellite data is with Suparco, while disaster management is the responsibility of NDMA. We need to bring these systems together so that the country can receive integrated and timely data," the minister said.

Dr Malik said the government was also working towards establishing a new authority to deal with civilian weather-related matters. The proposed authority, he said, would also serve as the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination's think tank. He added that proposals in this regard would be finalised and presented before the federal cabinet shortly. Discussing glacier-related risks, Dr Malik said glacier melt and flooding were two different phenomena and required different responses.

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