Daily

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

ABC Certified

www.voiceofmillionsqta.com Chief Editor: Syed Abdul Wadood Shah Quetta

Rabi-ul-Sani 12, 1448 AH Vol: XX No. 43 Friday September 25, 2026 Pages 4, Price Rs. 5 Ph: 2823307

No insurgency in Balochistan;

Anti-Pakistan elements misleading young people through organized propaganda: CM Bugti

Says it would not be correct to identify uneven development and backwardness as the main causes of unrest in Balochistan

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has said that there is no insurgency in Balochistan; rather, certain elements are promoting the idea of separation on the basis of identity. Such elements want to divide Pakistan like a cake, but no conspiracy to break up Pakistan will succeed.

He expressed these views while addressing participants of the 21st National Workshop Balochistan in Quetta. Senator Dinesh Kumar, Adviser on Information and Political Affairs Shahid Rind, and Principal Secretary Imran Zarkoon were also present on the occasion. Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that Baloch youth are being pushed into a futile war, from which neither the youth of Balochistan nor the future of the province will gain anything. He said that it would not be correct to identify uneven development and backwardness as the main causes of unrest in Balochistan, because the issue of uneven development exists in most countries of the world, including Pakistan. However, he said, people do not take up arms anywhere for development, nor is innocent bloodshed carried out anywhere. He urged young people to understand the difference between facts and perceptions and to learn about the true history of their province. He said that anti-Pakistan elements based abroad are misleading young people through organized propaganda. Therefore, young people should focus on education, development and a bright future and should not become part of anti-state propaganda.

The Chief Minister said that young people are being heard at every level in order to reduce the gap between the state and the youth. He said that young people can be given their due rights only by promoting meritocracy. An artificial intelligence-based testing system has been introduced in Balochistan to ensure merit and transparency in the recruitment process.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti addressing participants of the 21st National Workshop Balochistan



RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff, shakes hands with Maldivian Speaker Abdul Raheem Abdullah during a meeting at General Headquarters

CDF Asim Munir highlights importance of 'brotherly relations' with Maldives

RAWALPINDI, (Agencies): Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening ties with the Maldives for the "mutual benefit of both countries" during a meeting with Speaker of the People's Majlis Abdul Raheem Abdullah in Rawalpindi, the military's media wing said on Thursday.

Raheem Abdullah was on a five-day visit to Pakistan at the invitation of National Assembly (NA) Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. His programme included meetings with political leaders, interactions with the Pakistan-Maldives Parliamentary Friendship Group and visits to historical and cultural landmarks in Islamabad.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the CDF Munir underscored the importance Pakistan attaches to its "brotherly relations" with the Maldives. The two sides discussed matters of mutual interest, including regional security and bilateral cooperation, during the meeting at General Headquarters (GHQ). Raheem Abdullah "appreciated Pakistan's constructive role in promoting regional peace and stability" and said he wanted to deepen bilateral engagement and expand cooperation in areas of mutual interest, according to the ISPR.

On September 17, Abdullah met Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, with the two sides agreeing to strengthen parliamentary cooperation and people-to-people contacts. Sadiq had stressed the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in promoting peace and development in the region, while saying sustainable peace could not be achieved without resolving the issues of Palestine and Kashmir.



QUETTA: A delegation of office-bearers of Pakistan Journalists Association in a group photo with Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

72 young women from Balochistan complete skills training at IRM

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Seventy-two young women from Balochistan's Kech, Gwadar and Panjgur districts on Thursday completed professional training in Beautician and Cosmetology under the Government of Balochistan-funded RISE Programme at the Institute of Rural Management (IRM), Islamabad.

Certificates were distributed among the graduates at a ceremony held at the IRM Complex, with Provincial Minister for Education, Government of Balochistan, Ms. Rahila Hameed Khan Durrani, as chief guest.

Dr. Roomi S. Hayat, CEO IRM, Dr. Tahir Rasheed, CEO Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP), and Ms. Shandana Humayun Khan, CEO Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), were also present on the occasion. Ms. Ambrina Bakhtiar, Chief of SDGs, Government of Pakistan, attended the ceremony as a distinguished guest.

Speaking at the ceremony, the chief guest commended the Chief Minister Balochistan for initiating the programme and appreciated the graduates for their determination to acquire professional skills, saying such initiatives would contribute to sustainable socio-economic development in the province.

Dr. Roomi S. Hayat, CEO IRM, called the occasion one of genuine significance. He noted that the graduates had come from districts where simply seeking a skill is an act of courage, and that their completion of a rigorous programme represented real transformation. Drawing on IRM's three-decade track record in underserved communities, he reaffirmed that investing in women yields returns for entire households and generations. He placed on record IRM's appreciation for the Government of Balochistan's commitment to the RISE Programme, and for BRSP's partnership, which he described as grounded in shared purpose and mutual respect.

CEO BRSP Dr. Tahir Rasheed expressed gratitude to the Government of Balochistan for envisioning and funding RISE, and appreciated IRM for providing quality training in a professional learning environment. He assured graduates that BRSP would continue supporting them through post-training linkages, mentoring, market connections and financial support where applicable.

AI should not become monopoly of few actors: DPM Dar

NEW YORK, (Monitoring Desk): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has called for international cooperation to ensure artificial intelligence (AI) does not become another facet of the ongoing arms race, stressing the need to retain human judgement and control over AI development and integration. Addressing a UN Security Council briefing on artificial intelligence and international security on Thursday, Dar said AI was increasingly transforming all areas of life, with deep impacts on societies, economies and security. The DPM said AI's impact was particularly evident in international and regional peace and stability, describing it as a force multiplier and cross-cutting dual-use technology that was defining a new chapter of modern warfare.

He said the foremost priority was to retain human judgement and control at all stages of AI design, development and integration. Humans, he stressed, must remain in control of defining the structures of AI systems and limiting the speed and nature of their future capabilities.

NJAC reviews e-filing, One Case, One Identity strategy

ISLAMABAD, (APP): National Judicial Automation Committee (NJAC) has reviewed a strategy for introducing e-filing of cases and developing a "One Case, One Identity" system aimed at assigning a unique identity to every case throughout its judicial lifecycle.

The meeting, chaired by Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi, considered proposed standard templates for a uniform digital filing process across the country's judicial system. The Chief Justice informed the committee that e-filing would initially be introduced on a pilot basis for family cases in selected courts across all provinces and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). He also briefed the meeting on the UCIN initiative, "One Case, One Identity", under which each case would be assigned a unique identity to facilitate its tracking throughout the judicial process. He said relevant stakeholders had been consulted and a preliminary draft shared with the NJAC for detailed review and refinement before its submission to the National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee (NJPMC) for final consideration.

Chairman NJAC Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar led deliberations on the proposed e-filing template and stressed the need for a single, comprehensive template without provincial variations. He said the template should be applicable across all provinces and ICT, conform to relevant provisions of the Code of Civil Procedure and be convenient for judges, court staff, advocates and litigants. Justice Mazhar asked members to examine the template from legal and operational perspectives.

Finance minister explores financing for PIA, refinery upgrades, Reko Diq

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Thursday explored US financing opportunities for PIA aircraft, refinery upgrades and the Reko Diq mining project during his engagements in New York.

According to a press release issued by the finance ministry issued here on Thursday, the minister discussed the financing opportunities with US Export-Import Bank Chairman John Jovanovich, including a potential package for PIA's procurement of aircraft and engines, particularly Boeing 787 Dreamliners, as well as spare parts to bring grounded Boeing 777 aircraft back into service.

Both sides agreed that work on a broader cooperation framework should continue while they prioritize specific transactions, including possible financing for aircraft pre-delivery payments. Refinery upgrades were also identified as another potential area for US EXIM Bank support.

DC Quetta orders assessment of losses from recent explosions

QUETTA, (VoM Report): A significant meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehrullah Badini to conduct a comprehensive and detailed assessment of the loss of life and property resulting from the recent explosions in Quetta. Officers and representatives of the relevant departments attended the meeting, where detailed deliberations were held on compiling records concerning the people, buildings, vehicles and other property affected by various incidents, as well as on the preparation of a final report.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner General, along with officers from the Health Department, MMD, Social Welfare, Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), and other relevant departments.

PM Shehbaz, Iranian President discusses Pakistan-Iran ties, regional situation

NEW YORK, (Monitoring Desk): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Thursday on the sidelines of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York.

In a post on the social media platform X, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said the meeting had begun, adding that the two would discuss Pakistan-Iran relations and the situation in the region. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi are also present at the meeting, as well as Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, the PMO said.

The two leaders had previously held a meeting in Kyrgyzstan, on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of State meeting in August, during which they reaffirmed the close and longstanding ties between both countries.

At the same time, PM Shehbaz had also stressed the importance of restraint and sustained diplomatic engagement to achieve lasting peace and stability in the region amid the US-Iran conflict. Thursday's meeting with the Iranian president comes as Islamabad continues efforts to bring the United States and Iran back to the negotiating table regarding the war in the Middle East.

Pezeshkian on Wednesday struck a defiant tone speaking at the UN for the first time since Washington and Israel launched an all-out war on his country, vowing Tehran would never "bend at the knee". He made no reference to the talks to resolve the stalled war in his steely speech. However, the Iranian side earlier this week indicated its willingness to return to dialogue with the US to de-escalate tensions. The flexibility on the issue was indicated by the Iranian side in a meeting between Pezeshkian and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi during the latter's visit to Tehran.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meets with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in New York

Media very vital pillar of state: Governor

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has said that politics and journalism are complementary fields, while a strong and responsible media plays a key role in making citizens aware of their rights and responsibilities in society.

He said that they have always held media persons associated with print, electronic and social media in high regard and have maintained very cordial relations with the journalist community for several decades.

He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation comprising office-bearers of the Pakistan Journalists Association (Registered), Balochistan, led by its President Muhammad Hanif Jamali.

The delegation included Muhammad Shahid Magsi, Huma Baloch, Sameera Rajput, Mahwish, Firdous, Fariya Batool, Ms. Noreen, Ms. Dunya, Jahanzeb, Akram, Arun Kumar, Muhammad Shehzad and Feroz Jamali, Muhammad Zafar Jamali.

On the occasion, the Governor of Balochistan said that the media is a very important pillar of the state and professional journalists work hard and struggle to maintain their professional standards and dignity.

He said that responsible and independent journalism plays an important role in highlighting public issues, holding institutions accountable, and strengthening communication between the public and government institutions.

Governor Mandokhail said that from the very beginning, he has kept the doors of the Governor House open to everyone, including media persons.

He said that he has always given importance to the problems and professional needs of journalists and that all possible cooperation with them would continue.

At the end, Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail also cut a cake on the occasion of the 12th founding anniversary of the Pakistan Journalists Association.



ISLAMABAD: Provincial Minister for Education, Rahila Hameed Khan Durrani addressing the participants of a ceremony at Institute of Rural Management (IRM).

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

Friday September 25, 2026

Pashtun heritage and modern knowledge

Pashtun Culture Day is more than a celebration of traditional dress, language and customs. It is a reminder of the enduring identity of the Pashtun people and of the responsibility to preserve their rich heritage while preparing younger generations to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhel's message on Pashtun Culture Day appropriately places the Pashtun community, particularly its youth, at the center of this journey. His call to draw light from history, identity from culture, strength from knowledge and hope from the future offers a constructive vision: cultural pride and modern development should not be viewed as competing objectives, but as complementary forces.

Pashtun culture has developed over centuries and remains distinguished by values such as dignity, mutual respect, hospitality, generosity and collective responsibility. The Pashtun language, traditional attire, cuisine, dance and the institution of the jirga are important elements of this cultural inheritance. Preserving these traditions is therefore not simply about remembering the past; it is about ensuring that future generations understand where they come from and carry the constructive values of that heritage forward.

The Governor's emphasis on education, science, technology, research and modern knowledge is particularly significant. Cultural confidence becomes more meaningful when it is accompanied by educational advancement and opportunities for young people. A generation that knows its history and language while possessing the skills required by the modern economy can contribute not only to the progress of the Pashtun community but also to the development of Balochistan and Pakistan. The message also rightly highlights the importance of women and men moving forward together. A society cannot achieve its full potential if any part of its population is denied respect, opportunity or responsibility. The reference to Shimla and Shawal as complementary elements of Pashtun cultural identity conveys the broader principle that cultural traditions can coexist with a more inclusive vision of social progress.

This is where the government's role becomes important. Supporting cultural preservation, education, research and youth development can help transform cultural pride into constructive social and economic participation. Government institutions, educational organizations and civil society all have a role in ensuring that Pashtun language, literature, history and cultural heritage receive appropriate attention while young people gain access to contemporary knowledge and opportunities.

The Pashtun nation possesses a deep historical and cultural legacy. Its future, however, will depend not only on celebrating that legacy but also on investing in education, knowledge, technology and human development. The preservation of culture should therefore be understood as a foundation for progress rather than a barrier to it.

Pashtun Culture Day provides an opportunity to make precisely such a commitment. The objective should be a society that remains firmly connected to its cultural roots while confidently engaging with the modern world.

The Governor's message presents this balance as a shared responsibility. Protecting language and heritage, encouraging education and scientific learning, promoting respect between men and women, and equipping the younger generation with modern skills can together form a constructive path toward a stronger future.

For the Pashtun youth in particular, the message is clear: pride in one's identity and pursuit of modern knowledge are not contradictory. A young person can value Pashtun history, language, traditions and cultural dignity while simultaneously becoming a scientist, researcher, entrepreneur, technologist, teacher or public servant.

That combination of cultural confidence and intellectual progress can become one of the strongest foundations for the future of Balochistan. Pashtun Culture Day, therefore, should not merely commemorate what has been inherited from the past. It should inspire a renewed commitment to ensuring that this heritage continues to evolve, contribute and flourish in the generations ahead.

From trust to strategy

SEHAR KAMRAN

Pakistan has more than one reason to reflect on its journey. From a state struggling for survival, it has evolved into a nuclear-armed country with substantial conventional capabilities and a network of longstanding strategic partnerships.

The signing of the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (MJDA) between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye on 7 August 2026 adds a new and significant dimension to that journey. Signed in the Holy City of Makkah, the agreement represents not simply a military understanding between three capable states, but the institutionalisation of relationships and trust that have developed over generations. However, its long-term value will be measured by the stability it helps create and the economic opportunities that stability makes possible. Collective defence, properly managed, can generate collective dividends in both security and prosperity.

Pakistan arrives at this moment with a clearer sense of its own strategic standing. Its nuclear capability established an essential threshold of autonomy. What has mattered more recently is the demonstration that this capability is paired with professional judgment and national cohesion. The May 2025 India-Pakistan conflict, known as "Marka-e-Haq", tested that combination under pressure. Under the leadership of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, the armed forces conducted a precise and restrained multi-domain response. The outcome reinforced public confidence and signalled to partners that Pakistan could defend its interests without unnecessary escalation.

Marka-e-Haq was a turning point. For Pakistan, it was an important demonstration of how strategic maturity and operational competence can reinforce one another, potentially strengthening the confidence of partners. In this regard, the Makkah Agreement demonstrates how those relationships can move beyond sentiment and symbolism towards practical cooperation in defence, security, diplomacy and economic development. The agreement should not be interpreted as the emergence of an offensive military bloc, nor as a pact directed against any particular country. Its stated purpose is collective defence and deterrence, consistent with the right of individual and collective self-defence recognised under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. Its central principle is straightforward: an armed attack against one of the three countries will be regarded as an attack against all three.

That distinction matters. Deterrence is not about preparing for war; its ultimate purpose is to make war less likely. In a region that has endured repeated conflicts, geopolitical rivalries and external intervention, a credible framework for collective defence, if managed with restraint, transparency and responsibility, can contribute to stability rather than undermine it.

From Trust to Strategic Partnership: The deeper significance of the Makkah Agreement lies in what preceded it. Pakistan's relationship with Saudi Arabia has evolved over generations, encompassing political, economic, religious and defence ties. Pakistan and Türkiye likewise share a longstanding partnership marked by strategic cooperation and strong public goodwill.

Türkiye's diplomatic and political support for Pakistan during the May 2025 India-Pakistan crisis was a notable demonstration of strategic solidarity. The Makkah Agreement is therefore not the beginning of trust between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye. It is the institutional expression of trust built over decades. This development also reflects Pakistan's transformation into a trusted defence partner whose credibility now contributes to wider regional stability.

There is another historical connection, particularly significant for Pakistan and the Muslim world. In 1974, Pakistan hosted the Second Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore under Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, bringing together leaders from across the Muslim world. The summit was a powerful expression of political solidarity, but it also reflected a deeper recognition: shared interests require institutions and relationships through which states can act together.

The present defence agreement is not the direct institutional product of a decision taken more than five decades ago. Yet there is a meaningful continuity of thought. The 1974 Summit represented a powerful political expression of Muslim unity; the Makkah Agreement represents a contemporary effort to translate long-standing relationships into practical strategic cooperation.

This year's Independence Day therefore coincides with a new chapter in Pakistan's engagement with the Muslim world. Pakistan's strength has increasingly been demonstrated not only through the possession of military capability, but through its ability to build confidence with partners.

The purpose of strategy is to create the conditions in which peace can be preserved. The Makkah Agreement can be understood in precisely this context. It is not an instrument for confrontation, but a mechanism intended to strengthen deterrence and preserve peace.

Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan each occupy strategically important positions and possess capabilities that are complementary rather than identical. Saudi Arabia has enormous economic and diplomatic weight and sits at the heart of the Gulf. Türkiye connects Europe, the Middle East and Asia and has developed a significant indigenous defence industry. Pakistan occupies a pivotal geographic position between South Asia, the Arabian Sea, the Gulf and Central Asia and possesses extensive military experience.

The agreement's openness to other regional countries makes this possibility even more significant. The Makkah Agreement could become a building block for a broader framework of regional consultation, crisis management and collective deterrence, provided it remains inclusive, defensive and respectful of international law. The initial response from beyond the three signatories is therefore important. Kuwait has felicitated Pakistan on the agreement, while Bahrain has welcomed it as an addition to the region's broader defence architecture. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation has described it as an important strategic step with the potential to contribute to regional and wider Muslim-world stability. These reactions suggest that the agreement is already being viewed within a wider conversation about regional security. Security and Prosperity: That conversation should now move beyond defence.

The Gulf states, Türkiye, Pakistan and other regional countries face interconnected challenges: terrorism, maritime insecurity, energy security, missile and drone threats, cyber risks and the economic consequences of prolonged conflict. No single country can address all of these challenges in isolation. The answer does not necessarily require one grand alliance. The Muslim world is too diverse, and its states have distinct national interests. A more practical model may be a network of overlapping partnerships built around shared interests. Security is also an economic proposition. Trade requires safe routes. Investment requires predictability. Energy markets require stability. Infrastructure projects require confidence that they will not be disrupted by conflict.

The economic ambitions of Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan all depend, in different ways, on a stable regional environment. A more secure region can attract investment, facilitate connectivity and create the conditions for economic growth. The ultimate dividend of security is prosperity.

For this reason, the Makkah Agreement should not be judged solely by its military dimension. Its long-term value will depend on whether it contributes to a region in which countries are more willing to trade, investors are more willing to commit capital, and governments have greater confidence in managing crises without escalation. From Independence to Interdependence: Pakistan's Independence Day provides an appropriate moment to consider this broader evolution.

In 1947, Pakistan's overriding challenge was survival. In the decades that followed, it built the institutions, capabilities and partnerships necessary to secure its independence. The achievement of nuclear capability fundamentally altered its strategic position. The development of a sophisticated defence sector expanded its capacity for self-reliance. And its long-standing relationships with Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and other Muslim countries created a diplomatic network that remains one of Pakistan's important strategic assets.

The next stage is to convert these capabilities and relationships into greater economic and regional connectivity. The signing of the Makkah Agreement is therefore a beginning, not an endpoint. Its credibility will depend on implementation: regular strategic consultation, reliable crisis communication, intelligence cooperation, interoperability, joint training and clearly defined mechanisms for consultation during a crisis. Economic cooperation should develop alongside security cooperation, particularly in energy, infrastructure, technology, agriculture, education and defence industries.

For decades, the Muslim world has spoken of solidarity. Solidarity, however, must eventually be translated into practical cooperation. That does not mean creating a single political or military bloc. It means developing the capacity to cooperate where interests converge while respecting the sovereignty and individual priorities of participating states.

The Makkah Agreement demonstrates that long-standing political relationships can produce concrete strategic mechanisms. It also offers a model of regional responsibility: capable states working together to strengthen deterrence while preserving diplomacy and respecting international law. For Pakistan, this is an opportunity to use its relationships not to deepen divisions, but to build bridges between South Asia, the Gulf, the Middle East and Central Asia. There is something particularly powerful about the fact that this agreement was signed in Makkah. The city represents a spiritual centre for the Muslim world, while the agreement signed there addresses a practical question faced by states everywhere: how to preserve peace in an uncertain international environment. The answer cannot rest on military power alone. It must also rest on trust, diplomacy, economic interdependence and the willingness to stand together against aggression while leaving the door open to dialogue.

This Independence Day, Pakistan can therefore look back with confidence while looking ahead with responsibility. From a country born amid extraordinary uncertainty, it has emerged as a nuclear power, a capable military state and an increasingly trusted defence partner. The Makkah Agreement gives that evolution a new strategic expression. Whether it becomes simply another defence agreement or the beginning of a wider chapter in the security and prosperity of the region will ultimately depend not on the ceremony of its signing, but on the wisdom with which it is implemented.

The agreement will also face challenges. The three countries have different threat perceptions, geographic priorities and economic interests. A durable partnership will therefore require careful coordination rather than automatic alignment. Its success will depend on ensuring that collective defence strengthens deterrence without producing unnecessary escalation, and that strategic cooperation does not become a substitute for diplomacy. For Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, the opportunity is clear: turn trust into cooperation, cooperation into stability, and stability into prosperity. That would be a fitting next chapter for Pakistan as it celebrates another year of independence.

The writer is a Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan for the term 2024-2029, and a Patron in Chief of a non-partisan think tank; the Centre for Pakistan and Gulf Studies (CPGS). Twitter @SeharKamran

The Simmering Strategic Quagmire

IMRAN MALIK

The US-Israel Combine's rather misfiring war on Iran continues to trudge along pedantically and aimlessly. Its vaunted military has failed to achieve any of its objectives at the geopolitical and geostrategic levels. A destabilising, disruptive stalemate confounds the region and the world, with no viable exit strategies evident for either belligerent. The US' increasingly "start-stop" war on Iran indicates that it is not maintaining momentum in its offensive operations, an inviolable principle of war. A lack of strategic clarity and ample and timely replenishments of costly, hi-tech weapon systems, munitions, missiles, etc., has left it wallowing in abject strategic vacuity. A tenacious Iran has the US fixed in the Middle East (ME), disallowing it any egress, honourable or otherwise. President Trump has now been reduced to merely reinforcing failure. Period. It is a prime example of how a war must never be blundered into or fought. PM Netanyahu manipulated the US into this strategic quagmire, then smartly manoeuvred Israel out of direct combat with Iran and left it, along with the Gulf Arab states, to face Iran's ferocious, unrelenting retaliation!

The geopolitical and geostrategic environments in the ME are undergoing rapid paradigm shifts. Currently, the Gulf Arab states are facing a treble jeopardy. The US bases on their territories are attracting relentless Iranian missile and drone attacks, while the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) and trade routes through the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea-Gulf of Aden-Bab el-Mandab complex are becoming increasingly hazardous for all shipping. These choke points are seriously undermining international trade in oil, gas, fertilisers, petrochemicals, food grains, etc. However, the Gulf Arab states face yet another gargantuan geopolitical dilemma with critical geostrategic implications. Portentously, the US, their supposed ally and avowed net stabiliser and security provider in the region, is itself guilty not only of subjecting them to rampant political, diplomatic and economic coercion, but also of orchestrating (un)controlled chaos and/or attacks on most of them. The US has applied a variety of operational methodologies to that end: one, attacking them directly without allies (currently Iran); two, facilitating, arming and supporting Israel to carry out aggression against them (Palestine, Gaza and the West Bank—genocide, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq and Qatar); three, acting in connivance with Israel (Iran, June 2025 and February 2026); four, outsourcing aggression to its allies ("leading from behind", while NATO, France and the UK attacked Libya in 2011); five, instigating, fuelling and sustaining bilateral wars between them (the Iran-Iraq War, 1980–88); and six, acting with the help of allies and Coalitions of the Willing (Iraq in 1991 and 2003, and Afghanistan in 2001). The US-led West's support for Israel's wanton, merciless genocide of the Gazans-Palestinians has further marred its relationships with the Arabs, the region and the world at large. All this is to satiate Israel's perpetual, ersatz insecurities! The Gulf Arab states now interpret these as unacceptable, unjust and untenable existential threats. They now feel compelled to re-evaluate their respective foreign policy imperatives, engage in serious self-analysis, critical thinking, decision-making and policy (re)formulations to (re)chart their respective strategic directions. They are very likely to (re)ascertain their vital national interests unambiguously and pursue them single-mindedly. They might seek alternatives to the US' overwhelming presence in the ME.

Crucially, the US' bias in defending Israel rather than the Gulf Arab states, its ostensible allies, has had critical ramifications. It has apparently lost a great deal of stature, credibility, trust and confidence with the latter. They might not be able to practically ditch it straight away, but are now more inclined to hedge their bets elsewhere as well. "Die Sekunde der Wahrheit ist da"—the moment of truth and reckoning has arrived for them and for the US, too. Therefore, without prejudice to their alliance with and dependence upon the US, they are now looking for other, more trustworthy strategic partners at the regional and global levels. Ominously, this trust deficit is bound to resonate adversely with the US' strategic allies in the ME-Greater Middle East Region (ME-GMER) complex, Indo-Pacific Region (IPR), Europe/NATO and elsewhere as well. This will grossly impair the attainment of the US' geopolitical and geostrategic objectives in the future!

Ignoring the potentially volatile, critical and fast-evolving strategic environment of the ME is not an option for either China or Russia. The Gulf Arab states will expect them to exploit the emerging strategic spaces and project the requisite power and influence to rectify the acute strategic imbalance in the region. Israel will remain the overwhelming military-nuclear-missile-drone power and hegemon in the ME for the foreseeable future. Its rank monopoly on nuclear weapons will instigate a race among regional states to seek nuclear programmes, nuclear umbrellas, nuclear stationing and/or sharing. (The Nuclear Factor, by this scribe, The Nation, 16 and 17 May 2026). The already hair-trigger strategic environment will thus become increasingly vitiated and fragile. The Gulf Arab states will seek strong deterrents to forestall all forms of aggression and coercion by regional and external hegemons. China and Russia could pursue any of the following three options: one, enter into defence and security agreements with individual countries and enhance their military, technological and deterrence capabilities and capacities; two, adopt a regional approach and facilitate regional powers such as Pakistan, KSA, Egypt and Türkiye to incorporate most regional states into well-knit regional defence and security alliances and support them comprehensively; or three, seek a combination of both! Pakistan is faced with a trilateral dilemma, too. It needs to come to KSA's defence under the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA). This means deploying land and air forces on mainland KSA and naval and air forces in the Red Sea-Gulf of Aden-Bab el-Mandab complex, while tackling the scourge of terrorism at home, too. To that end, a critical strategic balance, sublime diplomacy and a stable internal environment will be inevitable for Pakistan! Pakistan has a unique, multidimensional presence in the ME. It is a member of the Board of Peace in Gaza, is mediating between the US and Iran in the Gulf war, is assisting Iran wherever it can, and is simultaneously defending KSA from hostile attacks from the Red Sea–Gulf of Aden–Bab el Mandab complex, Yemen, and from across the Persian Gulf. It is also being viewed as a potential net stabiliser and net security provider in the region as more Gulf Arab states approach it for defence relationships. If manifested, it is bound to have very serious strategic ramifications. It will seriously test Pakistan's diplomatic dexterity, resolve, resources, and perseverance in pursuit of its multifarious commitments. Pakistan therefore must strike a critical balance in its approach to the divergent, often conflicting imperatives of the ME's erratic, unpredictable, unforgiving geopolitics!

Pakistan needs deep analytical thinking, incisive policy formulation, critical decision-making, and well-crafted diplomacy to cross such a Rubicon, if at all. Primarily, it must determine and secure its vital national interests in this volatile geopolitical-geostrategic imbroglio. It must therefore articulate an unambiguous strategic direction, a compatible, well-defined, achievable policy end state, and practical ways to attain its strategic objectives/end state. One, in pursuance of the SMDA, it could deploy a well-equipped, balanced force in the ME to create a centre of power that eventually expands and transforms into a veritable centre of gravity of the region. Two, it could also act as a stabiliser and a deterrent against internal uprisings, turmoil, unrest, as well as against existential threats from hostile neighbours with expansionist designs and/or their distant allies. Three, it could help deter air and maritime threats from across the Persian Gulf, Yemen, and the Red Sea–Gulf of Aden–Bab el Mandab complex. Four, it could restrict itself to enhancing the Gulf Arab states' military capacities and capabilities through military training, technological and technical support, joint exercises, etc. only. Five, the SMDA could be given a regional dimension by including all the GCC countries and Iran, Türkiye, Egypt, Jordan, etc. Six, it could implement all the foregoing options, albeit sequentially in time and space. Seven, Pakistan must have a viable exit strategy at all times; one which allows it to extricate itself honourably, regardless of the attainment of its policy end state or otherwise. Furthermore, the most direct means to achieving its desired policy end state could see Pakistan actually opting and moving to become the veritable net stabiliser and net security provider of the region, individually or through an enlarged SMDA, which, of necessity, must be supported by China and Russia. However, this will raise very serious implications at the geopolitical and geostrategic levels. Crucially, Pakistan needs to be extremely wary of the critical strategic triangle formed by the divergent national interests of KSA, Iran, and Pakistan.

Iran says Hormuz shipping route deal with Oman is close

Monitoring Desk

TEHRAN: Iran and Oman are close to agreeing on a new shipping route through the blocked Strait of Hormuz, according to officials in Tehran.

The two Gulf states have agreed on the geographical coordinates of a navigation route through the strait, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA on Wednesday evening.

A joint statement was in the final stages of review and drafting, he said, provided that no external party interfered in the process.

Oman has not publicly commented on the reported agreement, which Iran says was negotiated without US involvement.

Ships were able to pass freely through the strait, which lies between Iran and Oman, before the war began in late February. Any arrangement giving Tehran extensive control over shipping through the strategically important waterway would represent a strategic gain for Iran.

Baghaei cautioned that an agreement with Oman alone would not guarantee safe passage. Security in the strait remained linked to what he described as the continuing US blockade and other "aggressive and threatening" actions against Iran, he said.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi also said an agreement on new shipping arrangements was nearing completion, according to IRNA.

However, he stressed that the proposed arrangement would not amount to a full reopening of the strait, but would instead establish a new model for maritime traffic.

US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday evening that the strait could open on Wednesday or Thursday as part of a possible agreement with Iran.

The Strait of Hormuz is a crucial route for global shipments of oil, gas and fertilizer.

The dispute over the waterway and the terms under which ships would be allowed to pass has been a major factor in the renewed escalation of the war between the US and Iran.



BRUSSELS, BELGIUM: Hundreds of people gather at Schuman Square in front of European Union institutions during a protest organized by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and various Belgian trade unions against the proposed "EU Inc." framework, which aims to simplify company formation across the EU



NEW YORK: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, while in New York for the 81st United Nations (UN) General Assembly, attended a meeting with representatives of US think tanks organized in coordination with the Presidential Communications Directorate and SETA at the Turkish House.

New Zealand PM Luxon open to referendum on electoral system

Monitoring Desk

WELLINGTON: New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said on Thursday he was open to a referendum on whether to change the country's electoral system, opening another split in his centre-right coalition months ahead of a general election.

New Zealand adopted the German-style Member Proportional (MMP) system in 1996 after an inquiry found smaller parties were being shut out of parliament under the previous first-past-the-post system.

Luxon said in an interview with radio station Newstalk ZB that a referendum is "something we should consider", and could be held as early as 2027 if he returns to power following a general election scheduled for November 7.

"I think I would because I actually think that it is quite right to check in constitutionally and say, is this the system, New , you still want?" he said.

He did ' not say whether any referendum would be binding.

Luxon's remarks led to criticism from his coalition partners, who are already split on economic and minority issues.

Winston Peters, the leader of ' New Zealand First, a minor party in Luxon's National-led coalition, called the idea "inexplicable".

"Shutting down and taking away true democratic representation from the people of New Zealand should be seen for what it is – a power grab and an ignorance for what it means to be a democracy," he said in a post on X.

Luxon's other coalition partner, the ACT Party led David Seymour, and the main opposition Labour Party, also said they opposed a referendum.

North Korea fires ballistic missile: South Korea military

Monitoring Desk

SEOUL: North Korea fired a short-range ballistic missile over the Sea of Japan on Thursday, Seoul's military said, with the launch coming after Pyongyang lambasted Japan's military build-up in the Pacific.

North Korea, which since 2019 has repeatedly declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear state, featured among growing regional threats in a recent Japanese government assessment.

Tokyo's Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said this week that Japan's military needs to be boosted with a "sense of urgency and crisis".

In a statement carried by North Korean state media on Wednesday, Kim Yo Jong—the powerful sister of leader Kim Jong Un—said Pyongyang's "leadership will set up additional military options which are obviously due to Japan's transformation".

On Thursday, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said that "our military detected one short-range ballistic missile launched from the Wonsan area of North Korea at around 5:00 pm (0800 GMT)".

Authorities in Seoul and Washington were analysing the missile's exact specifications, it added in a message to news organisations.

The JCS said earlier the missile was launched towards the East Sea, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan. Tokyo's defence ministry posted on X that "something that may be a ballistic missile has been launched from North Korea", later saying there was no impact "on the areas around Japan".



MOSCOW, RUSSIA: Russian Minister of Agriculture Oksana Lut delivers a speech during the plenary session of the 2nd International Forum on Veterinary Safety

Myanmar ex-junta chief on first Thailand trip as civilian leader

Monitoring Desk

BANGKOK: Myanmar's ex-junta chief Min Aung Hlaing met with Thailand's prime minister in Bangkok on Thursday, his first visit to the neighbouring nation as civilian leader, as he seeks a return to the diplomatic fold for his pariah state.

As a general, Min Aung Hlaing led a 2021 military coup that ousted democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi, triggering a civil war estimated to have killed more than 100,000 people on all sides.

He was installed as Myanmar's president in April following stage-managed elections that democracy watchdogs and Western nations called a sham intended to launder the junta's image.

Thailand has since been leading an effort to normalise relations with Myanmar, both bilaterally and through the 11-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said his discussion with Min Aung Hlaing at Bangkok's Government House on Thursday was an opportunity to "push cooperation".

"Both Thailand and Myanmar are members of the ASEAN family, and Thailand fully supports Myanmar's participation in ASEAN," Anutin said, sitting with Thai officials at a long table across from Min Aung Hlaing and his delegation.

3 killed after car crashes onto railway line in Germany

Monitoring Desk

GERMANY: Three people were killed on Thursday after their car veered off a motorway in southern Germany and came to a stop on a railway line, disrupting both road and rail traffic, police said.

The car left the A3 motorway near Nittendorf, west of Regensburg, at around 7 am (0500 GMT) for reasons that remain unclear. No other vehicle was involved.

Although the car did not collide with a train, the occupants suffered fatal injuries and died at the scene. The busy Regensburg-Nuremberg railway line was closed while the vehicle was recovered, while the A3 motorway towards Nuremberg was also shut, causing major traffic delays during the morning rush hour.

Nigerian security forces rescue more than 300 abductees

Monitoring Desk

KWARA: More than 300 people abducted in separate attacks in Nigeria have been rescued, the country's presidency says, in what it describes as the largest single-day operation by joint security forces.

The victims were rescued from the Kainji Lake National Park in Niger State in an operation involving the military, police, intelligence unit and the National Counter-Terrorism Centre.

Those freed include 163 people abducted during a February attack on the Woro community in Kwara state, where scores were killed. At least 145 others had been taken in Niger state.

It is not clear whether any suspects were detained in the operation.

The victims were receiving medical care at a military site before being reunited with their families. "President Bola Ahmed Tinubu warmly welcomes the successful rescue of 308 Nigerian citizens who were abducted in different attacks in Niger and Kwara states," presidential spokesman Bayo Onanuga said.

It was "the largest rescue operation ever carried out" in a single day, Onanuga added.

Tinubu described the operation as a sign of improved co-ordination among Nigeria's security agencies.

The armed jihadists wanted residents of the village of Woro in Kwara State to renounce the Nigerian government and its constitution and instead follow their teachings, effectively attempting to impose a parallel system of rule and government in the area.

Amnesty International said many of the dead had been found with their hands and feet tied - some had had their throats slit.

Man charged with killing Scottish aid worker

Monitoring Desk

GREECE: An Afghan boxer has been charged with killing Scottish aid worker Elisabeth Ross in Greece.

Sharif Ahmadzai, 26, has been charged with homicide with intent, alongside robbery and weapons offences.

The body of Ross, who was 38, was discovered in a suitcase by a homeless man in a derelict building in the Kypseli area of the Greek capital on 18 July.

Ahmadzai was remanded in custody until his trial, which could take up to 18 months. During the hearing he asked for an English translator but did not respond to the charges.

Ahmadzai arrived in court in Athens on Thursday morning in an unmarked Grey car. He was escorted out with masked officers holding his head down.

Two Israeli soldiers killed in south Lebanon explosion

Monitoring Desk

BEIRUT: The Israeli military said on Thursday that two soldiers were killed and four others seriously wounded during an explosion in southern Lebanon.

The Israel Defense Forces said the injured were evacuated and taken to hospital after Wednesday's incident.

Israeli media reported that an explosive device detonated inside a building the soldiers were preparing to search in the southern Lebanese village of Majdal Zoun.

On Wednesday, the Israeli military said Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah militia had committed a "blatant violation" of the ceasefire agreed in June. Israel responded with strikes in southern Lebanon.

Lebanon's Health Ministry said one person was killed and 12 others wounded in the Israeli strikes.

Israel and Hezbollah have repeatedly accused each other of violating the ceasefire.Israeli forces remain deployed in parts of southern Lebanon and continue to carry out military operations there. Under the latest ceasefire framework, Israeli troops are to withdraw from southern Lebanon.

Germany raises heat-related death estimate to nearly 12,000

Monitoring Desk

BERLIN: Nearly 12,000 people in Germany are estimated to have died from heat-related causes so far this year, with the vast majority of deaths linked to an extreme heatwave in late June, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) said on Thursday. The German public health agency now estimates that about 9,600 heat-related deaths occurred during the week of June 22-28 alone, when temperatures reached around 40 degrees Celsius in many parts of the country. The revised estimate is sharply higher than an earlier figure of just over 5,000 deaths for the week.



The Malaysian International Halal Fair (MIHAS 2026), which brings together companies, buyers, and industry representatives operating in various fields of the global halal economy, continues on its second day in Kuala Lumpur

Congo Ebola health workers protest unpaid wages, disrupting response as deaths top 1,800

Monitoring Desk

BUNIA: Dozens of Congolese health workers at the epicenter of the fastest-growing Ebola outbreak on record staged protests Thursday to demand payment for their wages, abandoning several health facilities even as aid workers warn that the disease is still spreading at an alarming rate.

Confirmed cases in the outbreak, meanwhile, reached 3,973, including 1,801 deaths, according to the government data as of Tuesday published on Thursday. It is the second-largest Ebola outbreak on record, behind the 2014-2016 West Africa outbreak that recorded more than 28,000 cases, including over 11,000 deaths.

The health workers are protesting at the governor's office in Bunia, the capital of Ituri province, which accounts for nearly 90% of the Ebola cases in the country. They are the latest group to walk off their jobs since protests over pay issues began weeks ago.

The health workers, including nurses providing critical care to Ebola patients, said they haven't received wages and bonuses for their work fighting Ebola since the outbreak was declared in mid-May in one of Congo's most remote and vulnerable areas ravaged by rebel conflict.

"With this way of managing things, Ebola will not end in this province. We ask the authorities to get involved at all levels so that a solution is found quickly," said Edouige Makosi, one of the protesters.

Officials have in the past blamed logistical issues for the payment delays. Congolese authorities did not immediately respond to an inquiry for comments on Thursday. Poor welfare for frontline workers has been a key source of concern in the outbreak. Apart from the payment issues, many health workers and facilities have been attacked by rebels and angry mobs.

During his visit to Congo on Wednesday, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged authorities to prioritize care and support for the responders.

The medical charity Doctors Without Borders said this week that the outbreak is still "spreading at an alarming and unprecedented rate.

Russia strikes Ukrainian railway station

Monitoring Desk

KHARKIV: Russia has struck a Ukrainian railway station, killing two people, as it intensifies its attacks on civilian infrastructure.

Eight people were injured in the attack on Lozova railway station, in the north-eastern Kharkiv region.

Video footage showed a train carriage in flames as plumes of smoke rose from the station building.

In a post on Telegram, Oleh Syniehubov, the Kharkiv regional governor, said some of the injured were in a serious condition.

On Wednesday, an attack on a railway station in Brovary, east of Kyiv, killed eight people who were waiting for a train.

Meanwhile, Ukraine struck two Russian oil refineries hundreds of miles from the border.

Volodymyr Zelensky said Ukraine's defence force hit the Slavneft-Yanos refinery in Yaroslavl and the Bashneft-Novoil refinery in Bashkortostan, about 1,300km and 700km from the front.

The Ukrainian president said the attacks were "strengthening the prospects for diplomacy".

"Russia must choose peace," he said, posting a video from Russian social media that showed plumes of black smoke rising above an oil facility.

Ukraine strikes Russian oil refineries; 6 killed, dozens hurt in Ukraine

Monitoring Desk

RUSSIA: Ukraine said Thursday that it hit two oil refineries deep inside Russian territory in strikes overnight as well as tankers in Russia's so-called shadow fleet and Russian naval vessels in the Black Sea. Six people were killed and 28 injured in Russian attacks on Ukraine's Kharkiv, Sumy and Odessa regions.

Posting on X, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Ukraine Defense Forces carried out long-range drone attacks on the Bashneft-Novoil refinery 950 miles away in the Russian republic of Bashkortostan and the Slavneft-YANOS refinery, one of Russia's largest, in Yaroslavl 270 miles northeast of Moscow.

Sharing footage of columns of black smoke rising into the sky amid the sound of explosions that the BBC said it had verified was of Yaroslavl, Zelensky said the actions were part of Ukraine's strategy of targeting Russia's ability to generate revenue from hydrocarbons, which in turn were used to fund the war.

"Today, our long-range sanctions once again worked to limit Russia's oil revenues, which it uses to finance the war and the killing of Ukrainians. Our responses to Russian aggression in the Black Sea were also successful. In particular, two military patrol boats and shadow fleet vessels were struck," wrote Zelensky.

In all, the latest attacks involved more than 600 drones.

Israeli prosecutors charge a settler in West Bank killing of Palestinian leader Awdah Hathaleen

Monitoring Desk

JERUSALEM: Israeli prosecutors Thursday charged a settler for the killing of a Palestinian community leader last year in the occupied West Bank, according to an indictment filed in district court.

In the document, prosecutors accuse Yinon Levi, who lives in the south of the West Bank, of reckless manslaughter in the death of prominent Palestinian activist Awdah Hathaleen in July 2025. The charge holds a lesser punishment than murder under Israeli law. The indictment also charges Levi with armed trespassing and malicious property damage.

It is extremely rare for Israel to charge settlers with violence against Palestinians. Israeli rights group B'Tselem said that the charges against Levi mark the first time since Oct. 7, 2023, that an Israeli has been indicted for the death of a Palestinian in the West Bank. In that time, the group said, Israeli settlers and soldiers have killed at least 1,100 Palestinians in the territory. A lawyer for Levi, Avichay Hajbi, did not confirm whether an indictment was handed down, but told The Associated Press that the prosecution had made a "mistaken decision."

Indian journalist Tarun Tejpal sentenced to 10 years in jail for rape

Monitoring Desk

BOMBAY: An Indian court has sentenced former Tehelka magazine editor Tarun Tejpal to 10 years in prison for raping a former colleague, overturning his 2021 acquittal in a decade-old case.

The Goa bench of the Bombay High Court convicted Tejpal under sections of Indian law pertaining to rape and sexual harassment.

Along with jail terms which run concurrently, the court has also ordered him to pay fines adding up to more than 1mn rupees ($10,500; £7,800).

Tejpal, who has denied the accusations, said before the sentencing that he would file an appeal in the Supreme Court.

The allegations against Tejpal, one of India's best-known editors, had made national



Displaced children, who fled southern Lebanon with their families following Israeli strikes, receive backpacks, textbooks, and stationery supplies provided by the Ahla Fawda non-governmental organization in the Hamra neighborhood of Beirut, Lebanon



American actor and producer Brad Pitt posed for photos with fans who greeted him on the red carpet at the premiere of his film 'Heart of the Beast'.

Pak-Belarus friendship to be further consolidated through economic, parliamentary ties: Gilani

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani held a high-level meeting with President of the Republic of Belarus Aleksandr Grigorievich Lukashenko in Minsk and conveyed warm greetings and best wishes from the people and Parliament of Pakistan to the people of Belarus.

Chairman Senate expressed appreciation to President Lukashenko for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to the Pakistani parliamentary delegation said a news release received here on Thursday.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's high regard for its longstanding and friendly relations with Belarus, describing the relationship as one based on mutual respect, cooperation and solidarity.

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani underscored Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening bilateral relations and expanding cooperation with Belarus in political, parliamentary, economic, educational, technological, cultural and people-to-people sectors.

The Chairman Senate highlighted the importance of the Islamabad Declaration of May 2015 and the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation signed in August 2015 as important instruments providing an expanded framework for bilateral cooperation.

He also recalled the official visit of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to Minsk in April 2025 and welcomed President Lukashenko's official visit to Pakistan in November 2025 as important milestones in high-level engagement between the two countries.

Discussing the economic dimension of bilateral relations, Chairman Senate emphasized the need to translate existing understandings into tangible outcomes and greater economic benefits for the peoples of Pakistan and Belarus. Mr. Gilani called for greater engagement between the business communities of the two countries through investment forums and the Belarus-Pakistan Business Council.

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani underscored Pakistan's strategic geographical position as a gateway to South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East and encouraged greater exploration of Pakistan's connectivity and logistics potential for access to regional markets.

He also highlighted opportunities for industrial cooperation, joint ventures, technology transfer, research and development and manufacturing partnerships.

The Chairman Senate emphasized greater cooperation in agriculture and food security, including opportunities for greater exports of Pakistani rice, fruits and vegetables to Belarus, as well as collaboration in seed production, livestock, fisheries and agricultural technology.

He welcomed Belarus's positive consideration of Pakistan's proposal for establishing a joint agricultural machinery testing facility.



MINSK: Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani holds a high-level meeting with President of the Republic of Belarus Aleksandr Grigorievich Lukashenko.



NEW YORK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar meets Foreign Minister of Maldives Iruthisham Adam, on sidelines of 81st Session of UNGA.

Pakistan advancing modernisation of maritime infrastructure: President

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari reaffirmed that Pakistan remained committed to strengthening maritime safety, security and regulatory oversight in line with its international obligations. In a message on the occasion of World Maritime Day, being observed on September 24, while extending his greetings to Pakistan's seafarers, maritime professionals, port authorities, ship operators, regulators, training institutions and all others associated with the maritime sector, he said their professionalism and dedication are vital to the safety and efficiency of maritime transport. The president said this year's theme, "From Policy to Practice: Powering Maritime Excellence", highlighted the importance of translating international maritime standards into effective national laws, regulations and day-to-day practice. The president said their seafarers and maritime professionals are at the heart of this effort.

Pakistan stands with people of Nepal in this difficult time

DPM Dar, Nepali FM review bilateral relations, mull over ways to boost cooperation

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister (DPM/ FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday met with Foreign Minister of Nepal, Shisir Khanal on the sidelines of the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, where the two leaders reviewed bilateral relations and discussed ways to further strengthen cooperation, including through the Political Consultations and Economic Consultations mechanisms.

The DPM/FM conveyed condolences over the loss and devastation caused by the recent flash floods in Nepal, assuring that Pakistan stands shoulder to shoulder with the people of Nepal in this difficult time. Foreign Minister Khanal expressed gratitude for Pakistan's support and briefed the DPM/FM on the extent of the calamity and its impact on people and infrastructure, a DPM's Office news release said.

They also exchanged views on regional and global developments of mutual interest and underscored the importance of continued coordination at multilateral fora, particularly the UN and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Both sides agreed to maintain contact to further expand bilateral cooperation.

Pakistan will not be coerced by Taliban regime's provocations, warns Solangi

Kabul must face consequences of its own policies

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Spokesperson of the President of Pakistan Murtaza Solangi on Thursday warned the Taliban regime in Kabul against reckless provocations against Pakistan, saying such actions would neither coerce nor deter the country.

In a post on X, the spokesperson said if the illegitimate Taliban regime in Kabul believed that a handful of flying toys sent across the international border could intimidate Pakistan, it was gravely mistaken. "Pakistan will not be coerced, distracted or deterred, and Kabul should have no illusion that reckless provocations will pass without consequences," he said.

Murtaza Solangi said no manufactured confrontation would divert Pakistan from its diplomatic efforts for regional and global peace.

"Nor will external adventurism conceal the Taliban regime's record of broken commitments, domestic repression and failure to govern responsibly," he added.

The spokesperson said the Taliban regime had confined half of Afghanistan's population to their homes, denying women and girls education, employment and fundamental freedoms.

He said the regime continued to repress religious and ethnic minorities while attempting to manufacture pseudo-religious and pseudo-nationalist hysteria against Pakistan.

"This is a transparent attempt to divert attention from its failures at home and from the commitments it undertook in the Doha Agreement," he said.

Murtaza Solangi said the Taliban regime should understand clearly that confrontation with Pakistan would not rescue it from its failures but would compound them.

"Every reckless misadventure further isolates the regime, exposes its irresponsibility and accelerates the consequences of its own policies," he said.

The spokesperson said "Taliban 2.0" was increasingly demonstrating that it was not merely a danger to the Afghan people but also a growing source of instability for its neighbours and for international peace and security.

He recalled that the first Taliban regime had collapsed under the weight of its own extremism and isolation.

"If the present regime persists on the same path—while adding cross-border adventurism to its record—it risks an even more disastrous political fate," he concluded.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti giving laptop to a student during 21st National Workshop Balochistan.

PTI seeking greater political control over institutions in KP: Talal

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhary accused the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of seeking greater political control over institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through proposed changes to the provincial police law.

Speaking to a private television channel, Chaudhary alleged that the proposed legislation would give the provincial government greater influence over the police, including political appointments at the behest of the chief minister.

Reports on the proposed KP Police Act 2026 say it would give the chief minister a larger role in police policy and the appointment, transfer and removal of senior police officers. Chaudhary said such changes could affect the structure and functioning of the police, which he described as one of the country's key public institutions.

Responding to a question about political dialogue, the minister said the federal government had consistently prioritised negotiations but alleged that the PTI had repeatedly avoided engaging in talks.

He also criticised the PTI's planned protest, saying the party should pursue legal and political issues through the relevant constitutional and legal forums rather than through street demonstrations.

The PTI, meanwhile, has said its planned September 27 long march is intended to pursue what it describes as its constitutional and legal rights. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi said that peaceful protest was a constitutional and legal right



FAISALABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal addresses a ceremony at the old campus of Government College Women University Faisalabad (GCWUF).

Naqvi directs institutions to work in coordination

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry chaired an important meeting to review progress on the Islamabad Model Jail project, which has remained pending for the last 15 years.

During the meeting, Mohsin Naqvi directed officials to complete all remaining work without delay and decided that the facility would be inaugurated next month.

The meeting reviewed in detail the ongoing work on the Islamabad Model Jail project, including construction, administrative arrangements and preparations for the inauguration. Officials briefed the participants on the status of the remaining tasks and measures being taken to complete the project.

Mohsin Naqvi instructed the relevant authorities to ensure the early completion of all outstanding work. He directed that every necessary step required for the completion of the project should be taken on time so that the inauguration can take place as scheduled next month.



QUETTA: CEO QESCO Balochistan Engineer Mirza Aizaz Baig called on Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

Pakistan, Maldives call for joint efforts to address climate change

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Acting Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan Nasar and Speaker of the People's Majlis of Maldives Abdul Raheem Abdullah on Thursday discussed Pakistan-Maldives bilateral relations, parliamentary diplomacy, trade and investment, education, defence, tourism, climate change, people-to-people contacts and other matters of mutual interest.

During a meeting with the Maldivian parliamentary delegation, Syedaal Khan Nasar said Pakistan-Maldives relations were rooted in mutual respect, trust, shared interests, Islamic brotherhood and longstanding friendly ties. He said Pakistan attached great importance to its relations with Maldives, both bilaterally and within the frameworks of SAARC, the OIC and the United Nations.

The Acting Chairman emphasized the role of parliamentary diplomacy in promoting mutual understanding, institutional cooperation and people-to-people contacts. He called for expanding parliamentary exchanges, sharing experiences and strengthening institutional linkages between the two legislatures. He said Pakistan and Maldives had significant potential to expand trade and economic cooperation, stressing the need for enhanced direct air and maritime connectivity, improved market access and greater private-sector participation. He added that Pakistan had considerable export potential in textiles, rice, cement, meat, vegetables, fruits, pharmaceuticals and other sectors. Syedaal Khan Nasar also emphasized creating greater educational opportunities for Maldivian students in Pakistani universities, particularly in medicine, engineering, pharmacy, dentistry and other professional disciplines.

Discussing climate change, he said both Pakistan and Maldives were significantly affected by its adverse impacts. He called for greater cooperation in climate-related research, exchange of experiences, capacity building and joint initiatives.

Erdogan fearless advocate of Kashmir cause: Wani

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prominent Hurriyat leader and Vice Chairman Jammu and Kashmir National Front Altaf Hussain Wani has hailed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for his fearless advocacy of the Kashmiris' just cause.

In a statement issued here today, the National Front leader said that President Erdogan has always raised his voice against the persecution of Muslims everywhere in the world and sought resolution of world disputes through dialogue and diplomacy as enshrined in the UN Charter.

Referring to Turkey's consistent support to Kashmiris' ongoing struggle for the right to self-determination, Wani said that Turkey is one of the leading countries that has maintained a clear and categorical stance on the key issues facing the Muslim world. "Be it Kashmir or Palestine, Turkey has never shied away from calling a spade a spade and, without any ifs and buts, condemned foreign occupation," Wani said.



TIRANA, ALBANIA: The Albanian Parliament approved the deployment of Albanian Armed Forces personnel to Gaza as part of the planned 'International Stabilization Force'.

PNRA, Poland's National Atomic Energy Agency sign MoU to strengthen cooperation in Nuclear Safety

ISLAMABAD, (APP):The Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA) and Poland's National Atomic Energy Agency (NAEA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen bilateral cooperation in nuclear safety and radiation protection, enhancing regulatory cooperation between Pakistan and Poland. According to the PNRA, the MoU was signed at the Headquarters of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna by Shahid Rashid, Member (Executive), PNRA, and Andrzej Glowacki, President, PAA. The signing ceremony was attended by officials from NAEA's Policy and International Cooperation Bureau and representatives of the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the IAEA in Vienna.

Establishment of hardware repair facility represents vital development for country's telecom sector: Shaza

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Thursday welcomed the establishment of Huawei Pakistan's Repair Centre GSC in Islamabad, saying the facility would create high-skilled employment, reduce foreign exchange outflows and help Pakistan move from being a consumer to a builder of technology.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the Huawei Pakistan Repair Centre GSC, she thanked Huawei's leadership and team for establishing the facility in Pakistan.

She said the government's policy certainty, along with the support and attention of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the federal cabinet towards the IT and telecom sectors, had helped create an environment encouraging international companies to expand their footprint in Pakistan. The minister said the newly inaugurated repair centre was the first of its kind in Pakistan, particularly for telecom hardware equipment.

She said Pakistan had made significant progress in software and IT-enabled services, but the establishment of a hardware repair facility represented an important development for the country's telecom sector.

"Today, the equipment, whether it's wireless or any other telecom-related equipment, if it's being repaired here today, and it's being repaired to international standards, then tomorrow, for the whole world, our children can make this facility available," she said.

Shaza Fatima said telecom equipment was not merely important for social media or communications but had become a lifeline, particularly during disasters and periods of network downtime.

She said local repair facilities would reduce the time required to send equipment abroad for repairs and bring it back, while also helping save foreign exchange.

The minister said the government wanted Pakistanis to become builders and users of technology rather than remaining only consumers. "We want that Pakistanis are not just consumers of technology; we should be builders of technology.

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