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Chief Editor: Syed Abdul Wadood Shah

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"Pakistan extremely important example of mediation": UN Secretary General

ISLAMABAD, (APP): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday praised Pakistan for its role as a trusted mediator between the United States and Iran, saying Islamabad's credibility with countries at odds with each other had helped create conditions for negotiations and de-escalation in one of the world's most dangerous conflicts.

Speaking alongside Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar during a joint press stakeout at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Antonio Guterres said Pakistan's initiative in relation to the Gulf conflict was remarkable and demonstrated the importance of having countries that could be trusted by opposing sides.

"What Pakistan has done in relation to the conflict in the Gulf, namely between the United States and Iran, is a remarkable initiative. And what is important is for the world to have countries that can be trusted, …. And that trust that Pakistan deserved was essential to allow for peace negotiations to take place," the UN Secretary General said.

He said Pakistan's diplomatic efforts had helped deliver the June 17 Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, the subsequent ceasefire and a framework for future negotiations.

"Pakistan has been an extremely important example of mediation," Guterres said, adding that Islamabad's role showed the value of bridge-building and diplomacy at a time of deep international divisions. DPM/FM Ishaq Dar said Pakistan's efforts had brought the United States and Iran to direct dialogue after 47 years, describing Islamabad's contribution as a humble but significant effort rooted in the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, non-interference, self-determination and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Antonio Guterres urged all parties to end conflict, return to diplomacy and fully restore navigational rights and freedoms in accordance with international law.

The UN chief also warned that the international community's focus on the wars in Ukraine and the Gulf must not overshadow the suffering of the Palestinian people. He stressed that the scale of death and destruction witnessed in Gaza was unprecedented in his tenure as UN secretary-general.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at a special investiture ceremony to confer the Nishan-e-Imtiaz on United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres at Aiwan-e-Sadr



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti expressing his views during the assembly session.

Balochistan's resources to be utilized for public welfare through better management: CM Bugti

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Tuesday said that police are playing key role in war against terrorism with the aim to maintain durable peace in the province.

He said that all possible support would be provided to enhance their operational capacity of police for interest of peace and development of Balochistan. He said this while presiding over a meeting here, in which discussed for making the province's security and policing systems more effective and modern.

The meeting included a detailed review of the overall security situation, police reforms, the use of modern technology, and measures to tackle the challenges posed by terrorism. During the meeting, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Muhammad Hamza Shafqat and Inspector General of Police (Balochistan) Muhammad Tahir Khan provided detailed briefings on the security situation, the policing system, departmental reforms, and security measures. It was decided during the meeting to launch the 'Quetta Integrated Security Project' to align the province's security and policing systems with modern requirements. The briefing revealed that 2,900 cameras would be installed across the city under the 'Quetta Green Digital Corridor' initiative to enhance the effectiveness of the security surveillance system. It was also stated that new stations for the Quick Response Force (QRF) would be established under the project to ensure a swift and effective response to any emergency situation.



QUETTA: Former chief minister and MPA Dr Abdul Malik Baloch expressing views on point of order during the assembly session.

Pakistan, KSA, Turkiye vows to work closely for regional peace, stability

RIYADH, (APP):Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, and the Chief of Army Staff & Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir attended the Emergency Meeting of the Strategic Political and Defence Committee (SPDC) established under the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement here on Monday.



The meeting endorsed the nomination of Lieutenant General Nauman Mahmood(Rtd), Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Military) as the first Secretary-General of the Makkah Alliance for Defence .

The meeting also strongly condemned the attempted targeting of the Holy Cities of Makkah and Medina, as well as continued attacks against the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The three countries exchanged views on the latest regional developments and expressed their resolve to work closely for regional peace and stability.

During the meeting, Pakistan expressed its unwavering solidarity with the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and expressed its full support for the Kingdom's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security. Pakistan also reiterated its continued commitment to making all efforts for achieving lasting peace and stability in the region.

Pakistan successfully test-fires extended-range version of Fatah-4 missile

RAWALPINDI, (APP): Pakistan on Tuesday successfully conducted the test launch of an indigenously developed extended-range version of the Fatah-4 Ground-Launched Cruise Missile (GLCM). Equipped with advanced avionics and state of the art navigational aids, the weapon system is capable of engaging targets at extended ranges with high precision and lethality, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The test also validated additional technical parameters of various sub-systems incorporated for improved accuracy and enhanced survivability.

Today's launch was witnessed by senior officers from Pakistan Army along with scientists and engineers of developing agency.

The President, the Prime Minister, Chief of Army Staff & Chief of Defence Forces and Services Chiefs commended successful test launch of Fatah-4 Extended Version.

BA endorses Balochistan Citizens Facilitation and Governance Act

QUETTA (ANN): The Balochistan Assembly has approved amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, and passed the Balochistan Citizens Facilitation and Governance Act, 2026, while referring the Balochistan Cadet Colleges Amendment Bill, 2026, to the relevant standing committee for detailed consideration.

The session, presided over by Speaker Capt. (retd.) Abdul Khaliq Khan Achakzai, commenced about an hour later than scheduled. Provincial Communications and Works Minister Mir Saleem Ahmed Khan Khosa, representing the home minister, moved the proposed amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898. The legislation was subsequently approved in accordance with recommendations submitted by the Standing Committee on Home Affairs.

The House also endorsed the Balochistan Citizens Facilitation and Governance Act, 2026, following recommendations of the concerned standing committee. During the proceedings, MPA Mir Zabad Ali Reki raised concerns over restrictions on his international travel. Speaking on a point of order, he said officials of the Federal Investigation Agency had stopped him at the airport while he was scheduled to travel to Madinah.

Balochistan launches GBViE framework to safeguard vulnerable groups during disasters

QUETTA, (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Balochistan has formally launched the province's Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (GBViE) Framework, aimed at safeguarding women, girls, and other vulnerable groups during crises. The ceremony was held at the PDMA Conference Hall in Quetta under the chairmanship of Director PDMA Balochistan, Naveed Ahmed Sheikh.

The event was attended by representatives of relevant government departments, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Australian Aid, and other partner organizations. The framework seeks to establish an effective system and coordinated strategy to protect affected populations from gender-based violence during natural disasters, emergencies, and other crisis situations. Under the theme "From Preparedness to Protection — Together for a Safer, More Resilient Balochistan", participants reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring not only disaster response but also the protection of rights and safety of women and marginalized groups.

Speakers highlighted that risks faced by women and vulnerable communities increase during emergencies, making preparedness, timely protection, institutional coordination, and effective relief systems indispensable.

Govt striving to improve Balochistan's entire economy

QUETTA, (APP): Vice Chairman Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBoIT), Bilal Khan Kakar on Tuesday said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, the provincial government is striving to mobilize the entire economy of Balochistan rather than relying on any single sector or a major project for development.

"Our goal is to create an economic environment where local businesses can grow, young people move towards creating employment opportunities rather than seeking jobs, and investors consider Balochistan a reliable business destination", he said. Speaking to business personalities at his office, he said that Balochistan's greatest strength lies in its exceptional economic potential, from minerals to the blue economy, agriculture, livestock, fisheries, tourism and technology

Pakistan committed to peace, stability in South Asia: President Zardari

President confers Nishan-i-Imtiaz upon UN Secretary-General Guterrers; says Afghan territory must not be used against Pakistan or any other country

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari, Tuesday, conferred Nishan-e-Imtiaz, one of Pakistan's highest civil awards, on United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in recognition of his distinguished international service, leadership of the United Nations and contribution to global peace and development.

The award, first to any UN Secretary General by Pakistan, was conferred in a special investiture ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr which was also attended by Prime Minister Muhammed Shehbaz Sharif, Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Speaker of the National Assembly, members of the Federal Cabinet, members of Parliament and members of the diplomatic corps.

Earlier, during a meeting with the UN Secretary-General, the president appreciated his principled leadership of the United Nations, his efforts for international peace, dialogue, diplomacy and peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as his constructive engagement with Pakistan and attention to the concerns of developing countries.

The president said Pakistan remains steadfast in its support for the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination.

He appreciated the UN Secretary-General's consistent advocacy for Palestinian statehood and a two-state solution and said Pakistan would continue supporting efforts towards implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

The president reiterated Pakistan's commitment to peace and stability in South Asia.



QUETTA: Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail presiding over the 19th meeting of the Board of Governors for Balochistan's cadet colleges.

Governor vows to align Balochistan's cadet colleges with national standards, top institutions

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail on Tuesday said that instead of increasing the number of cadet colleges in the province, concrete and effective measures are being taken to bring the standards and performance of existing cadet colleges in line with the country's best institutions. He emphasized that rather than simply creating capacity for more students or imposing additional fee burdens, the priority is to provide better facilities, quality education, and a conducive learning environment for the teachers and cadets currently enrolled, saying that all administrative, academic, and infrastructural needs of the cadet colleges would be met on a priority basis.

He expressed these views while presiding over the 19th meeting of the Board of Governors for Balochistan's cadet colleges. Attendees included Provincial Education Minister Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani (participating online), Chief Minister's Adviser Rubaba Buledi, MPA Dastgir Badini, Secretary of Higher Education Hashim Khan Ghilzai, Principal Secretary to the Governor Abdul Nasir Dotani, Additional Secretary S&GAD Rahmat Changezi, principals of all cadet colleges, representatives from the Finance and P&D departments, and Aftab Buzdar. A briefing regarding the twelve cadet colleges of Balochistan was presented during the meeting, followed by a detailed discussion on their performance, the challenges they face, and future courses of action.

Speaking on the occasion, Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail said that the faculty and staff of the cadet colleges would be provided with excellent facilities on par with the country's best cadet colleges, enabling them to perform their duties with full dedication and focus.

Modern sports complexes, featuring gyms and high-quality sports grounds, would be constructed along the lines of the country's premier cadet colleges, he said and added that, additionally, convocation halls would be built, and arrangements for efficient transport and foolproof security for students and staff would be ensured.



QUETTA: MPAs Farah Azeem Shah and Salma Kakar exchanging views during the assembly session.

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Pakistan's significant role in US-Iran mediation process

On June 15, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced via the social media platform X that a peace deal between the US and Iran had been reached, following over two months of mediation by his country. Sharif expressed gratitude to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkiye for their significant contributions, stating that the official signing ceremony would take place on June 19 in Switzerland. Following this announcement, a memorandum of understanding was signed electronically by US President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance on the US side, and by Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf on the Iranian side. The reported agreement is characterized as a framework peace deal aimed at ending the 2026 Israel/US-Iran war and transitioning the current ceasefire into a broader diplomatic process. Although the text of the agreement has not yet been published, key reported elements include immediate cessation of military operations, reopening of the Strait of Hormuz to international shipping, and a 60-day negotiation period to address unresolved issues, particularly Iran's nuclear program, alongside discussions on sanctions relief and access to frozen Iranian assets during follow-up negotiations. This agreement follows two significant developments. First, Israel conducted military strikes on Iranian targets in western and central Iran around a week ago, marking the first such actions since April. Explosions were reported in Tehran, Tabriz, Isfahan, and other cities in response to Iranian missile launches that were highly performative. Second, Trump warned that Iran would "pay the price" for what he described as slow progress in negotiations to end the conflict, indicating that the US could resume strikes against Iranian infrastructure.

Although the agreement does not necessarily mean that the root causes that prompted the war have fully disappeared, a few observations are worth mentioning and analyzing.

First, a lot of narrative spinning is occurring publicly at the moment. While the main parties are trying to sell the agreement as a victory, there are factions within the broader regional camps (such as hardliners in both Iran and Israel) that oppose it. Critics in Iran have labeled the agreement a "humiliating capitulation," arguing that it involves unjustified concessions. Hardline opponents have publicly criticized the negotiating team, with Iranian MP Mahmoud Nabavian stating that the latest draft is "more damaging" than previous versions. Similarly, Israeli officials emphasized that Israel was not directly involved in negotiating the US–Iran deal and does not necessarily consider itself bound by its provisions. Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz declared that Israel would not withdraw from territory seized in Lebanon and would continue to act against threats from Hezbollah and Iran if necessary. Second, the timing of the agreement suggests that Iran was running out of options. As the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) focused on messaging and performative measures, the gap between their narrative and reality widened, with Iran's ability to endure further pressure significantly diminishing. Trump's counter-blockade against Iran's restriction of the Strait of Hormuz imposed significant economic costs on Iran, leading to the decision to sign the agreement. It is estimated that the blockade could have cost Iran over $24 billion in just two months — almost equal to Iran's reported total reserves of foreign currency — leaving the regime with little choice but to agree to the terms or face economic collapse.

Third, despite the negative reactions from hardliners in both Iran and Israel, the agreement highlights Trump's genuine interest in reaching a resolution with Iran, especially following last year's swift 12-day war between Israel and Iran. However, radical elements in Israel seem intent on using procrastination, escalation, or military actions to sabotage meaningful attempts to achieve peace. Given that there is reportedly a 60-day negotiation period following the signing of the agreement, it is likely that these factions will continue to work against a comprehensive resolution. Fourth, while Pakistan played a significant role in the mediation process, Qatar's involvement was also crucial, as acknowledged by American, Pakistani, Saudi, and Turkish officials. Notably, neither the Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman nor the ministry itself reported any independent measures taken by Qatar, apart from endorsing Pakistan's mediation efforts. In fact, a Qatari spokesman denied any independent role in the mediation at this stage. Qatar's involvement appears to have been executed at the request of the United States and had several dimensions.

Primarily, Qatar facilitated technical issues between the US and Iran, such as enabling the transfer of Iranian funds without direct US involvement, thereby avoiding the perception of it being a US initiative or taxpayer-funded. Additionally, Qatar played a role in establishing a communication channel between the United Arab Emirates and Iran, which emerged later in the mediation process. Finally, Qatar aligned itself with Saudi Arabia's position, providing support for the Pakistani initiative. Fifth, two awkward positions regarding the agreement can be highlighted. Firstly, the Europeans have been largely inactive in resolving the crisis yet somehow managed to host the official signing ceremony between the Americans and Iranians. Instead of crediting Pakistan, Switzerland offered to host the ceremony, which can be seen as an act of opportunism. Secondly, Oman, historically a favored mediator between the US and Iran, has been notably absent from this current arrangement. Oman's position during this war was not popular in the Gulf Cooperation Council and beyond. According to a senior US administration official, Oman was removed from its mediation role in negotiations with Iran after the US concluded that Muscat had acted "very duplicitously" during the talks. Finally, we must approach the prospects of the agreement with caution. It is essential to recognize that this is not a comprehensive peace agreement but rather a transitional framework. The future of the agreement will largely depend on the outcomes of negotiations in the next 60 days. Given that several factions within Iran and Israel are opposed to the agreement, we should not dismiss the possibility of sabotage, particularly from Israel.

While Atlas stands

Aqdas Afzal

This is a story about a government that collects more money every year and yet can't build anything that works. Govern-ment schools are abandoned for private alternatives, while people only visit government hospitals when they have no choice. Meanwhile, the salaried class pays taxes with mathematical precision, while big land--lords, traders and property dealers con--tribute almost nothing. This is Pakis-t-a--n's story, where the salaried class has be--come the nation's Atlas, bearing the entire fiscal burden on its shoulders, while the elites walk free beneath it.

Will this budget finally say something honest? Consider what has happened to Pakistan's economy over the last two decades. Remittances, which stood at around $6 billion in 2007, have risen to over $38bn in FY25. This steep rise enabled Pakistan to reduce poverty on paper without transforming the structure of its economy. It did not build competitive industries. It did not develop an export base. For a while, this arrangement worked.

Then came the rupture. Inflation peaked at nearly 38 per cent in May 2023. Food prices rose 30-40pc. The rupee fell from 160 to above 280. Real incomes collapsed for the bottom half of the population. Pakistan today is not simply a poor country; it's an economically fragile country with millions hovering just above subsistence, one life shock away from falling back. This is the economy the budget must address.

Sadly, the government seems only focused on stabilisation and IMF compliance. We are told that the IMF programme is on track. Pakistan's external position is stable. Reserves rebuilding has exceeded projections. The current account is balanced and inflation has retreated from its peak. And yet the IMF's own documents acknowledge that poverty remains elevated and growth subdued. The Middle East conflict adds fresh risks in the shape of upward pressure on inflation and a weaker balance-of-payments. The fact is that stabilisation is not the same as recovery. A country's economy can stabilise, even as its middle class quietly disappears.

In FY2024-25, the salaried class paid Rs606bn in taxes, a 55pc increase in a single year. FBR collection rose from Rs4.7 trillion in FY21 to Rsl 1.7tr in FY25. Still, the tax-to-GDP ratio barely moved. More money is being collected from the same people. The tax base has not broadened. The burden has only deepened.

A salaried worker cannot hide income. Employers deduct taxes before the salary is credited. Each year, tax authorities return to the same well, not because it is the most productive well, but because it is the easiest one to find. The Rs600,000 annual tax-free threshold has become a symbol of this failure. Fifty thousand rupees a month in most urban centres in Pakistan is not prosperity. It is barely subsistence. When a salary increase is granted merely to keep pace with 30pc inflation, the tax system treats it as additional income. Taxing it is not a revenue policy. It is penalising people for remaining in the formal economy.

Meanwhile, the agricultural income of large landowners enjoys near-total protection. Speculative real-estate gains move largely outside the documented net. Informal wholesale and retail sectors operate in comfortable obscurity.

The im--balance is not incidental. It is structural.

Budget FY2026-27 has a narrow window to begin correction. Six things must happen.

First, the tax-free threshold must be raised substantially and indexed to inflation going forward — automatic ind-e-xing, not ann-ual po--litical discretion. Seco--nd, the tax base must be genuinely broadened to include agricultu-ral income, real-estate gains and the informal economy. Third, energy circular debt, now Rs5tr across the power, petroleum and gas sectors, must be subjected to an in--de--pend-ent audit as the current arran-gem-ent is fiscally uns-ustainable and po--litically protec-ted. Fourth, the fiscal de--ficit must be bro-ught to zero over three years through Rs3-4tr reductions in current expenditure, cabinet ratio-nalisation, pensio--ns reform and PSDP cleansing. Fifth, commercial bank lending to the government must be repriced away from Kibor-plus commercial rates.

Three crises, one silence

DR RAKHSHINDA PERVEEN

Suicide

May 18, 2026. The Federal Shariat Court restored Section 325 of the Pakistan Penal Code. No protests. No emergency session. No coalition demanding reversal. A law that criminalises surviving a suicide attempt came back with less noise than a routine budget notification and that quietness tells you everything about whose lives this country considers worth protecting.

Section 325 was never Islamic in origin. It was lifted from British colonial legislation in 1860, inherited at Partition, and never examined because the people it harms have never been a constituency worth fighting for – those in psychiatric crisis, women with nowhere to go, transgender persons surviving without documents or shelter, men undone by debt. The court said decriminalisation was against the Quran and Sunnah. Classical Islamic jurisprudence says otherwise: legal responsibility requires sound intellect, severe mental illness suspends accountability, and preservation of life is a foundational obligation of the law. None of that was apparently the point.

The law does not fall on everyone the same way. Women facing domestic violence and/or workplace harassment and torture, transgender people with no institutional safety net, men without social capital or legal recourse – all they meet this law at their most exposed. For a woman already running from her home, surviving now carries a criminal charge. That is not protection. That is the state deciding her crisis is her fault.

Femicide

We are not short of coverage. Femicide appears on Instagram, in television segments that run the story for two days and move on, in donor reports that circulate at hotel conferences and then get filed. What it almost never appears in is a parliamentary debate where someone actually has to answer for the numbers, or a meeting of lawyers and judges asking why conviction rates are so low that most perpetrators walk free, or a civil society campaign that does not shut down the moment the donor money runs out. Femicide in Pakistan is not hidden. It is managed. Women and girls are disproportionately its victims. The attention spikes when a case is upsetting enough to hold an audience and evaporates when it is not. The institutional response in between is silence the kind that gets called normalcy.

Filicide

This is where the failure is most complete and most invisible because we have not even built the language for it. A parent kills a child. Our vocabulary gives us qatl, gives us saffak in a headline, gives us a moral verdict applied almost exclusively to mothers, and stops there. The word filicide, as used in psychiatry and law, demands a different set of questions: what broke down, and when, and who was supposed to notice and did not?

Pakistan has no postpartum mental health screening system. The Thinking Healthy Programme – developed and clinically tested here, endorsed by the World Health Organization as part of its global mental health programme, proven to achieve remission in three out of four women with perinatal depression – is not systematically implemented in the country that produced it. Women in postpartum psychosis, women ground down by domestic violence and economic dependence, women with no shelter bed and no helpline that answers they become the headline. Saffak. The headline does not ask what came before. Neither does the planning commission. Neither does the funded project that will close regardless of what the data is still showing.

We built a programme the world adopted and did not use it ourselves. That is not an oversight. That is a decision about whose suffering counts.

I have worked on these three issues for over thirty years. Most of that work has been done outside funded projects, outside donor priority lists, outside the rooms where decisions get made. I am not saying this for sympathy. I am saying it because the pattern matters. All three crises share the same mechanism of neglect. Attention arrives when there is a project behind it. The project has a three-to-five year life. When it ends, data collection stops, coalitions disperse, recommendations sit in reports no ministry requested. The problem continues on its own schedule. So here is what needs to happen, and none of it requires a new idea. Lawmakers need to stand on the floor of the National Assembly and name femicide as a legislative emergency not in a press release, on the floor, with conviction data demanded from the relevant ministries. Benches and Bars need to publicly examine why perpetrators of gender-based violence routinely avoid punishment. Section 325 needs to be repealed and replaced with mandatory psychiatric evaluation and care for anyone who survives a crisis, regardless of gender. Postpartum mental health screening needs to be mandated through the lady health worker network that already reaches rural communities. A national database on femicide, filicide and suicide - disaggregated by sex, gender identity, relationship to the perpetrator and province - must exist, be publicly accessible, and be updated annually.

These are not proposals. They are the minimum. The question is not whether anyone in a position of power knows they are needed. The question is whether anyone in that position will act when there is no grant cycle, no donor delegation, no conference deadline making it temporarily convenient to care.

The writer is a published author and can be reached at dr.r.perveen@gmail.com

Regulation and deregulation

ISHRAT HUSAIN

Time has shown that the ideological debate between regulation and deregulation is largely misplaced. Governments and regulators have different roles under varying market structures and circumstances. In some areas, they regulate more actively; in others, they oversee operation of market forces. Evidence and outcomes, not ideology, should determine the state's role. In Pakistan, the formal sector is often overregulated and burdened by procedures and discretionary powers that discourage innovation, investment and technological adoption. Regulatory enforcement is weak. Quacks, unsafe buildings, counterfeit drugs, etc, escape oversight.

Excessive regulation in the formal sector and lax enforcement elsewhere encourages informality. Hence, thousands of enterprises prefer to remain outside the documented economy. Had they not had to face needless constraints, many could have grown into medium-sized firms, increasing output, employment, tax revenues and efficiency, while reducing the informal economy.

Why is regulation required? In a mixed public-private economy, regulation is essential to ensure fair competition and protect consumers.

Until the early 2000s, the same ministry made policies, owned enterprises and regulated the sector in which those enterprises operated. Recognising the inherent conflict of interest, the government initiated reforms to separate the functions. Ministries were assigned responsibility for policy formulation, SOEs for commercial operations and independent regulators for oversight and consumer protection.

The logic was simple. A private firm can't compete fairly with an SOE if the regulating ministry also owns one of the competitors. The ministry can alter policies, provide subsidies, absorb losses, grant tax concessions or create barriers that disadvantage private firms. Hence independent regulators were set up to create a level playing field and encourage competition. Have the aims of reform been achieved 25 years later?

Take the energy sector. Though it has specialised regulators, we still face high energy tariffs, unaffordable electricity, poor service delivery and a circular debt running into trillions. One reason is that ministries and bureaucracies never fully accepted the transfer of authority to regulators and SOEs; conflicts between ministries and regulators weakened regulatory autonomy. The regulators' governance structures, too, have been problematic.

Appointments to bodies such as ene-rgy sector regulators Nepra and Ogra have often been influenced by considerations of loyalty and post-retirement accommodation, instead of exper-tise. Many positions are occupied by retired bur-e-aucrats, instead of specialists in economics, fin-a-n--ce, engineering, law or energy markets. Ro--l-es and responsibilities are blurred. Regulators make po--licy and regulatory decisions while exercising ope--rational oversight over management, thus weaa--kening accountability and creating confusion. Experience of over two decades suggests that Nepra and Ogra need significant restructuring.

Removing direct price determination from their mandates is the first step. The SBP provides a model. It regulates the banking system and enforces prudential standards but doesn't directly determine banking services prices. Similarly, petroleum and gas prices should gradually be deregulated and determined through market competition. Ogra should evolve into a modern supply-chain regulator, ensuring efficient utilisation of refineries, storage facilities, pipelines, terminals, etc. It should facilitate investment across the value chain, support development of strategic reserves and promote digitalisation of the fuel supply ecosystem. Ogra needs strong legal powers to act against hoarding, cartelisation, collusion, market manipulation and non-compliant OMCs, which requires a clearer demarcation of responsibilities between Ogra and the CCP.

The Directorate General Petroleum Concessions' regulatory functions should also be separated. Contract administration and compliance with concession agreements may remain with the concessionaire authority, while regulatory oversight should be transferred to Ogra. The Department of Explosives should also be integrated into Ogra. Power sector reform must begin with dismantling the single-buyer model and implementing the CTBCM, allowing multiple buyers and sellers to participate in electricity markets. The government would continue to own the transmission network and recover wheeling charges, while suppliers compete for customers.

At an appropriate stage, Pakistan should gradually replace the uniform national tariff with targeted subsidies for remote, disadvantaged reg-ions. Such a system would improve efficiency, re--duce leakages and manipulation, lower end-user prices, encourage higher consumption and reduce capacity charges.

Privatising Discos should not merely replace public monopolies with private monopolies. The underlying assets, including surplus land, should remain publicly owned and be leased to competitively selected operators. This would promote competition and safeguard public assets.

Under this framework, Nepra's role would shift from price setting to market surveillance, consumer protection, prevention of anti-competitive behaviour, enforcement of grid neutrality and promotion of transparent governance. It would focus on reliability, loss reduction, digitisation and service quality rather than tariff determination. The National Grid Company must also expedite investment in transmission infrastructure, especially removing bottlenecks between southern generation centres and northern demand hubs. Governance structures needed corresponding changes. Provincial representation should continue, but board members must focus on oversight, policy, transparency, audit, accountability and approval of plans and budgets. Once they become members, they can't take directives implicitly or explicitly from the centre or provincial government to preserve neutrality and objective decision-making. Operational management should report to a professional CEO rather than directly to board members. Board composition should be broadened to include independent experts in energy, law, economics, finance, technology and information systems. Finally, recruitment and promotion within the regulators must be merit-based. Professional staff should be selected through open competition, while advancement should depend on performance. Continuous training and exposure to international regulatory best practices should be an integral part of capacity building.

Pakistan's real challenge is not to choose between regulation and deregulation, but to regulate intelligently, promote competition and enforce rules impartially. Strong, independent and professionally managed regulators are essential for attracting investment, protecting consumers and ensuring affordable, reliable energy supplies. Only then can regulation become an instrument of economic efficiency, instead of remaining an obstacle to growth.

Pak-Russia relations entering new phase of pragmatic cooperation: Leghari

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari on Tuesday said that Pakistan-Russia relations had witnessed a highly positive and pragmatic trajectory over the past two decades, transforming the two countries into trusted partners amid a rapidly evolving global order.

Delivering a keynote address at a webinar titled "Pakistan-Russia Bilateral Relationship at the Cusp of Shifting Global Order," the minister said the residual distrust from the Soviet era had faded, elevating the partnership from an "unfriendly country" to a "trusted friend" across sectors including trade, energy, defense, and technology, said a press release release.

He said this diplomatic momentum is driven by high-level leadership, underscored by four recent meetings between Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

As Co-Chairman of the Russia-Pakistan Intergovernmental Commission (IGC), the Minister emphasized regular engagements with his counterpart, Russian Energy Minister Sergey Tsivilev, describing the IGC as the foundation of their multi-faceted ties. Bilateral cooperation has expanded through structured frameworks, including consultations on security, strategic stability, and counter-terrorism, alongside mutual alignment at the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to advocate for an inclusive, multipolar international order. A key focus of the address was regional connectivity, with Pakistan signaling its intent to join the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). The minister welcomed the statement by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexey Overchuk regarding connecting the INSTC with Pakistan's Gwadar Port, which would bridge a crucial link in China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Awais leghari also highlighted that Russian leadership has praised Pakistan's recent diplomatic role in mitigating conflicts between Iran and the United States, further validating President Putin's acknowledgement of Pakistan as a genuine global stakeholder. To unlock the substantial potential for bilateral trade and address structural hurdles like payment mechanisms, both nations have agreed to sign the Program of Economic Cooperation between the Russian Federation and Pakistan for the Period until 2030. Furthermore, the recent signing of the long-pending Russia-Pakistan Readmission Agreement in Bishkek will ease visa regimes, facilitating business travel and people-to-people exchanges.



King Philippe and Queen Mathilde of Belgium received Belgian athletes who have achieved significant success in the past two years at Laeken Castle.

Govt to support NTUF-KOICA partnership to strengthen textile innovation, research: Rana

FAISALABAD (APP): Coordinator to Prime Minister (PM) for Trade Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan said on Tuesday the government was committed to supporting international academic and technological partnerships.

He also emphasized the importance of strengthening collaboration between the National Textile University Faisalabad (NTUF) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) to boost innovation, research and capacity-building in Pakistan's textile sector. The PM's Coordinator expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation from National Textile University Faisalabad led by its Vice Chancellor/Rector Prof Dr. Rashid Masood.

The delegation also included NTUF Registrar Salman Saif, Project Coordinator Dr. Qamar Khan and representatives of Korea International Cooperation Agency. The meeting reviewed the ongoing cooperation between NTUF and KOICA and discussed future avenues for collaboration aimed at enhancing educational excellence, technological advancement and industrial competitiveness.

During the briefing, the NTUF delegation apprised Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan of the current status of projects being implemented with KOICA's support and highlighted progress made in various academic and technical initiatives.

The participants also exchanged views on strategies to further strengthen institutional cooperation and maximize the benefits of international partnerships.

PM directs to accelerate privatisation process of power DISCOs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday directed the relevant authorities to accelerate the privatisation process of electricity distribution companies (DISCOs), reiterating that offloading loss-making State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) was a priority for the government.

Chairing a high-level review meeting here, the prime minister instructed officials to ensure complete transparency throughout the privatisation process and establish a robust regulatory framework immediately following the transition of the DISCOs to the private sector. During the briefing on the progress regarding the privatisation of DISCOs, it was told that in the first phase, Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO), Gujranwala Electric Power Company (GEPCO), and Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) would be privatised as the Expression of Interest (EOI) for the purpose had already been published in national and international newspapers.

It was told that the Cabinet Committee on Privatization had approved the transaction structure regarding the privatisation of the said three DISCOs.

The international roadshows are being organized starting this month to attract investors from Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, and China. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, federal ministers Azam Nazeer Tarar, Ahad Khan Cheema, Muhammad Aurangzeb, and Sardar Awais Leghari, Adviser to the Prime Minister Muhammad Ali, Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani, and relevant senior government officials.



British comedian Russell Brand (not seen) leaves court with his wife, Laura Brand, following a preliminary hearing related to rape and sexual assault allegations against him in London



Members of Fossil Free London stage a protest in front of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero against new oil and natural gas projects in the North Sea, in London, United Kingdom

Governor, SAPM discuss industrial development in KP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday held a meeting with Minister of State and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan to discuss industrial development, investment promotion and economic growth in the province.

Pakistan Peoples Party Central Secretary Information Nadeem Afzal Chan and Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Farzand Ali Wazir were also present during the meeting.

The two sides exchanged views on ongoing and proposed industrial projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), promotion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), creation of employment opportunities and modernization of local industries.

Governor Kundi said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa possessed immense investment potential due to its rich natural resources, mineral reserves, agricultural output and strategic geographical location. He emphasized the need to accelerate industrial development projects, strengthen special economic zones and improve business facilitation measures to create new employment opportunities for the youth. He stressed that the early establishment of an industrial zone near the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) route in Dera Ismail Khan was essential and would benefit the entire region.



Bolivia's new interim Attorney General, Jose Armando Urioste Viera, answers questions from the press following the swearing-in ceremony held in the Vice Presidency hall in La Paz, Bolivia

Irish Envoy visits SCCI

SIALKOT (APP): Ireland Ambassador to Pakistan Mary O'Neill, on Tuesday visited the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) and met the local business community and discussed the ways to increase bilateral trade. SCCI President Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, Senior Vice President Mohammad Murad Arshad and Vice President Salman Sheikh welcomed the distinguished guest.Briefing the Ambassador, the SCCI President said that trade between the two countries had reached 700 million euros. He proposed setting up direct business-to-business (B2B) links, exchanging trade delegations, and signing an agreement with an Irish chamber to help Sialkot export more sports goods, surgical instruments, textiles, and leather products. Ambassador Mary O'Neill, praised Sialkot's famous self-help industry. She highlighted that many traditional Irish sports items (like hurling balls.

FBR establishes PRAL's front desk at LTO Karachi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has established and operationalized a PRAL's Front Desk at the Large Taxpayers Office (LTO), Karachi on June 5, 2026 headed by the dedicated Chief (Inland Revenue Operations).

The desk set up in line with the directives of the Prime Minister and in response to requests from the business community of Karachi, said a news release.

The office, supported by a specialized team from Pakistan Revenue Automation Ltd. (PRAL) and equipped with the requisite IT infrastructure, will serve as a dedicated facilitation Centre for the Karachi-based business community, providing on-site technical assistance and ensuring the timely resolution of issues relating to IRIS, e-filing, registration, online tax payments, Sales Tax returns, refunds, and other digital tax services.

CDNS exceeds Islamic finance target, mobilizes Rs60 billion in 'Shariah-Compliant Investments'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Islamic finance sector continues its impressive growth trajectory as the Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has mobilized Rs60 billion through Islamic investment products during the first eleven months of fiscal year 2025-26 (July 1, 2025, to June 8, 2026), surpassing its annual target of Rs55 billion ahead of schedule.

According to official sources, the achievement reflects growing public confidence in Shariah-compliant financial instruments and underscores the expanding role of Islamic finance in Pakistan's economic landscape.

Officials attributed the strong performance to an increasing preference among investors for interest-free financial products that comply with Islamic principles while offering secure and competitive returns. The rising popularity of Shariah-compliant savings schemes.

Adviser says:

Govt focusing on agriculture, exports to strengthen economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to the Finance Minister Khurram Shehzad on Tuesday said the government is prioritizing the promotion of agriculture and enhancement of exports to further strengthen the national economy.

Speaking to a private television channel, he said the farming community is being provided with loan facilities to support agricultural growth and improve productivity.

He said financial assistance is being extended to small and medium-scale farmers under the "Zarkhizi" programme.

Responding to a question, he said the manufacturing sector is also playing a significant role in supporting economic growth and strengthening the country's financial outlook.

Commenting on the federal budget, he said extensive consultations were held with all relevant institutions and stakeholders before its preparation to ensure a comprehensive and balanced fiscal plan.

Gold prices increase by Rs 2,830 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The prices of gold registered an increase in the local market on Tuesday, with 24 karat gold per tola gaining Rs 2,830 to settle at Rs 455,063 compared to Rs 452,233 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 2,547 to Rs 389,534 from Rs 386,987, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up by Rs 2,306 to Rs 357,225 against Rs 354,919.



WASHINGTON: U.S. President Donald Trump speaking to reporters on the South Lawn of White House before departing for midterm campaign rally in Nebraska.

CPEC can accelerate blue economy growth: PCJCCI

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) Commercial Ambassador Adeel Munawar said on Tuesday that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) can accelerate blue economy growth and regional economic transformation.

Sharing his views in a think-tank session here at PCJCCI Secretariat, he added that maritime stability and regional peace are fundamental prerequisites for the growth of the blue economy. He emphasized, the CPEC as the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), possesses all the characteristics necessary to drive regional economic transformation and sustainable development.

Adeel Munawar remarked that the future of global prosperity lies in cooperation and peace rather than confrontation. He noted that Pakistan is actively advancing initiatives related to the blue economy to enhance livelihoods, create new economic opportunities, and ensure the sustainable management of marine resources while preserving the health of coastal and marine ecosystems.

He highlighted that Pakistan offers the shortest and most efficient trade route for China and the Central Asian Republics through Gwadar Port, strengthening regional connectivity and trade integration.

CM reviews wheat situation, decides to procure 1m tonnes from PASSCO

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday approved the procurement of one million metric tonnes of wheat from Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO) to help stabilize wheat and flour prices across the province. Chairing a special video-link meeting to review the wheat and flour situation, the chief minister approved the purchase plan under which wheat would be obtained from PASSCO and supplied to flour mills at Rs 3,300 per maund to ensure the availability of affordable flour and bread for consumers. The meeting also reviewed concerns regarding reports of restrictions on the supply of wheat from Punjab to other provinces, particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. A detailed report presented during the meeting stated that claims about restrictions on wheat movement from Punjab to any province were not supported by facts. Officials further informed the participants that no complaint had been received regarding the suspension of wheat supplies to Sindh. During the briefing, officials said the process of wheat stock declaration was continuing across the province and comprehensive data collection was underway to assess and meet Punjab's food requirements. They added that grain size of the current wheat crop was comparatively smaller than usual. The meeting decided that after fulfilling its own food requirements, Punjab would continue to discharge its responsibility of supplying wheat to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz directed the relevant authorities to maintain close monitoring of the wheat situation and ensure effective.

Rain, Wind, and Thunderstorms Expected in Upper and Central Parts of the Country

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast rain, strong winds and thunderstorms in Islamabad, the Potohar region, upper Punjab, Kashmir, upper and central Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit-Baltistan on Wednesday, with isolated heavy rainfall expected in some areas.

The Met Office said hot and humid weather would continue in most other parts of the country. Heavy rainfall from Tuesday night through August 20 could cause urban flooding in low-lying areas of Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Mardan, Swabi, Peshawar, Nowshera, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Sialkot and Lahore. Flash flooding and landslides are also possible in vulnerable areas of Kashmir, Murree, Galiyat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Islamabad-Rawalpindi.

Rain and thunderstorms are expected across several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, while isolated heavy rainfall is forecast in parts of the Potohar region and northeastern Punjab. Similar conditions are expected in Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Sindh and most parts of Balochistan are likely to remain hot and humid, although partly cloudy conditions may develop in some areas.





Israeli army take security measures following Israelis attack Palestinian farmers harvesting olives on their land in the town of Aqraba, south of Nablus, West Bank, Palestine

Pakistan views ILO as strategic partner: President Zardari

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari said that Pakistan views the International Labour Organization as a strategic partner and stressed the need for a more practical and results-oriented partnership, backed by stronger technical support and resources for implementation at country level.

He said this while talking to Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Mr. Gilbert F. Houngbo, who called on him here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, a Presidency's news release said.

The president said Pakistan attaches high importance to the ILO's tripartite system and social dialogue. He highlighted the value of the Decent Work Country Programme 2023–27 and called for stronger implementation, particularly in employment, social protection, labour standards and workplace safety. He requested support for a comprehensive Pakistan Fair and Safe Labour Migration Framework covering recruitment, skills certification, employer matching, migration costs, contracts, protection abroad and reintegration.

He also proposed an ILO-Pakistan partnership, "From Skills to Global Jobs", to align technical and vocational training with the labour requirements of destination countries and facilitate decent employment opportunities for Pakistani workers.

President Zardari called for ILO facilitation in opening and strengthening labour-migration corridors with the Gulf, Europe, East Asia and other emerging destinations. He also sought ILO support to strengthen Pakistan's labour-market information system, building on the country's ratification of ILO Convention No. 160 on Labour Statistics.

The president appreciated the ILO's work under Mr. Houngbo's leadership, including the Global Coalition for Social Justice, the adoption of Convention No. 193 on Decent Work in the Platform Economy and efforts to promote fair recruitment and labour migration. He said these initiatives are relevant to Pakistan's large young workforce and its growing digital and freelance economy. He also highlighted Pakistan's ratification of three important ILO instruments in March 2025: the 2014 Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 and ILO Convention No. 160 on Labour Statistics. He invited the ILO to support Pakistan in translating these commitments into effective implementation through technical assistance, institutional strengthening and better labour-market data. The president said Pakistan is finalising a National Occupational Safety and Health Policy and its implementation framework with ILO support. The president welcomed the ILO reform initiative aimed at making the organisation more effective while protecting its core mandate and technical expertise.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari in a meeting with Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Mr. Gilbert F. Houngbo at Aiwan-e-Sadr



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar and UN Secretary-General António Guterres address a joint press talk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Pakistan's dedication to security of Haramain Sharifain, KSA 'non-negotiable'

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Tuesday reiterated that Pakistan's commitment to the security of Haramain Sharifain and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was non-negotiable, while terming recent reports regarding the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement speculative.

Taking note of speculative reports by Reuters regarding the agreement, the ministry said Pakistan had already made its commitment to the security of Haramain Sharifain and Saudi Arabia abundantly clear.

It said the operational details concerning the actualisation of collective deterrence were a matter of operational confidentiality and should not be made the subject of media speculation.

The ministry said it would be prudent to avoid reports based on non-attributable and unidentified sources.

Guterres commends Pakistan's proactive disaster management

ISLAMABAD, (APP):United Nations Secretary General António Guterres visited the National Emergencies Operations Centre (NEOC) at the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) headquarters here on Tuesday, where he was briefed by Chairman NDMA Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik on Pakistan's shift from reactive disaster response to a proactive, technology driven and pre emptive system aimed at strengthening early warnings, preparedness and resilience against climate-related and other emerging risks. The UN Secretary General was accompanied by Under Secretary General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary A. DiCarlo and senior UN officials during the visit.

Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik briefed the visiting delegation on the strategic role of NEOC as the central hub for disaster monitoring, disaster early warnings, preparedness and coordinated emergency response. He highlighted NDMA's Next Generation Technology (NGT) project, which integrates Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, the Internet of Things (IoT) and advanced data systems to automate the development of precise disaster early warnings and strengthen Pakistan's indigenous capacity for disaster forecasting and preparedness. The initiative is also designed to help address emerging risks, including water scarcity, food insecurity, glacier retreat and other climate-related challenges.

End long marches, sit-ins; then we'll talk: PM Shehbaz tells PTI

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday called on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to abandon its agitational politics and cancel its long march, conditioning dialogue on the cessation of protest, saying that agitation would inflict heavy damage to national economic growth and the country's international standing.

"I still ask them to come to their senses. End your long marches and sit-ins. Once you end them, we will certainly sit down with you and talk so that Pakistan moves forward with mutual hard work, honesty, and integrity. This is the desire of the nation, the voice of every Pakistani," the prime minister said, addressing the groundbreaking ceremony of Kashmir Chowk Underpass being constructed to ease the traffic flow between Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi, Information and Broadcasting Minister Attaullah Tarar, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, and Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, Chairman of Capital Development Authority Sohail Ashraf attended the ceremony, along with parliamentarians and notables from different walks of life.

As per the briefing, the PC-1 cost of the project was Rs1.6 billion, but the contract was awarded at Rs1.4 billion, which would feature four slip roads. The intersection currently handles 107,000 vehicles and faces congestion during peak hours, particularly during VIP movement.

The prime minister told the gathering that the PTI had again resorted to the politics of sit-ins and long marches despite the government's sincere efforts to engage in meaningful negotiations.

He said that a joint committee comprising representatives from the PML-N and the Pakistan Peoples Party had held talks with the opposition, but the process stalled after the PTI demanded last-minute changes to the finalized draft, indicating that their sole objective was to sabotage the dialogue.

"As a result of the politics of sit-ins and long marches, the primary target will be your economy. There will be disruptions in your exports, your manufacturing, and your imports. If your laborer or your engineer fails to reach the factory, the manufacturing site, or their office on time, whose loss is it? It is the loss of this nation, the loss of this country," the prime minister said. He said that the government had successfully restored macroeconomic stability and was striving for growth through collective teamwork, with positive indicators reflected in rising exports, remittances, and industrial production. He cautioned that undermining these hard-won achievements would amount to hostility toward the state. "We will not allow this to happen. The law will take its course. Protecting the lives and property of the people is our responsibility, and we will ensure this by all means," he resolved.

He appreciated Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and his team for setting the target to complete the Kashmir Chowk project within a month. He said that as the intersection was known as Kashmir Chowk, the milestone would one day reach Srinagar when the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) achieve their inalienable right to freedom. In his address, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that the project was part of the prime minister's vision to transform and beautify Islamabad ahead of the SCO Heads of State Summit.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Gilbert F. Houngbo, Director General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

Pakistan's economic sovereignty depends on strengthening value addition: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday called for a strong national branding strategy to shift Pakistan from low-value commodity exports towards high-value, differentiated products and build globally recognized Pakistani brands.

Addressing a high-level stakeholder roundtable on "National Branding, Pakistan's Rising Soft Power and Brand-Led Exports," organized by the National Center for Brand Development (NCBD), the minister said Pakistan's long-term economic sovereignty depended on strengthening value addition, branding and international market access.

The emphasis on value-added, branded exports is also consistent with the government's broader export-led growth agenda under URAAN Pakistan.

Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the widening export gap between Pakistan and regional economies, noting that while Pakistan's exports had remained around US$ 40 billion since 1990, Vietnam's exports had surged to approximately US$ 475 billion. He said Pakistan had the capacity to produce world-class products, including high-end textiles, surgical instruments, sports goods and FIFA World Cup footballs, but often lost significant value as these products were marketed under foreign brands.

"Our industry produces world-class products; we must ensure that these products carry the name and identity of Pakistan in global markets," he said.

The minister said Pakistan must move beyond being a manufacturer for global brands and develop internationally recognized Pakistani brands.

He said the NCBD would help local industries transition from domestic markets to direct global exports and establish a strong and unified "Made in Pakistan" identity.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister Mir Shoaib Nosherwani and IG Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir Khan called on Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

Ministers vows to make medical treatment system more transparent

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja and Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal on Tuesday reviewed progress on the "One Patient, One ID" project and agreed on a joint roadmap to make it operational soon. The meeting was held on the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

According to the Ministry of IT, under the proposed system, a citizen's Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC) number will serve as their unique medical record number, allowing all medical records to be linked to a single identification number.

The ministry said the system would enable doctors and hospitals to access a patient's complete medical history and previous records when the patient is shifted from one hospital to another.

"Technology and healthcare are being combined in the best possible way to make the medical treatment system more transparent and modern through digital medical records," Shaza Fatima Khawaja said.

The meeting stressed taking practical measures and preparing clear terms of reference (TORs) to ensure the early implementation of the project.

It was also decided in the meeting to conduct a third-party review of the "One Patient, One ID" project to ensure quality and transparency.

The participants agreed that all relevant institutions would work under a unified mechanism to finalise the project at the earliest in the public interest.

The meeting also agreed to activate an IT wing in the Ministry of Health to help understand and properly operate the new system.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja and Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal reviews progress on the "One Patient, One ID" project

Balochistan's digital health reforms gain international recognition

QUETTA, (APP): Balochistan's digital health reforms have drawn international attention after being presented at the DHIS2 Asia-Pacific Conference 2026 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The province's pioneering use of technology in healthcare was highlighted as a model of innovation before delegates from 26 countries, including health experts, government representatives, and development partners.

Provincial Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar attended the opening ceremony as guest of honour, where he outlined Balochistan's progress in digitalizing health services, strengthening data-driven decision-making, improving reporting systems, and enhancing accountability. He emphasized that reforms are aimed at ensuring better service delivery, efficient resource allocation, and transparency in governance.

Representatives of Oslo University, Norway, commended Balochistan's leadership and praised the province's efforts to modernize its health system through digitalization.

The province's experience was presented as a practical example of how technology can be integrated into healthcare delivery.

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti welcomed the international recognition, stating that global appreciation of the province's reforms is a source of satisfaction and encouragement.

He noted that digital health reforms represent a significant step toward modern and effective governance, adding that the provincial government is committed to strengthening transparency and accountability through technology and data-driven systems.

The contributions of provincial coordinators, including Dr. Ababkar Baloch, were acknowledged for their role in strengthening health information systems and implementing digital reforms.

Protection of water resources directly linked to Pakistan's economy: Law Minister

ISLAMABAD, (APP): British Minister of State Stephen Doughty called on Federal Minister for Law and Justice and Human Rights Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Tuesday, with discussions focusing on human rights, protection of women and children, human trafficking, prevention of child marriages, the Indus Waters Treaty and regional peace and security.

The British High Commissioner and other members of the British delegation were also present during the meeting.

The Federal Minister raised the issue of India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty and its potential implications for Pakistan's agriculture, food security and regional peace and security.

Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar said a large segment of Pakistan's population was associated with agriculture, while Punjab served as the country's food hub.

He stressed that protection of water resources was directly linked to Pakistan's economy, food security and the well-being of its people. The minister said India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty was beyond the procedures provided under the agreement. He emphasized that water-related matters should be addressed in accordance with international law and the existing treaty framework.



In the highlands of Van, women patiently and painstakingly process the wool of shorn sheep, first turning it into yarn, and then into rugs that reflect the history and nature of the city.

PTI agreed on terrorism, talks collapsed at final stage after Afridi's intervention: Talal

ISLAMABAD, (APP): State Minister for Interior Talal Chaudhry on Tuesday said a consensus on terrorism had been reached during negotiations between the government and the opposition, but the process failed at the final stage after new conditions were presented by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Chief Minister.

He said the government had agreed to provide political space to the opposition in exchange for full cooperation on efforts to eliminate terrorism.

Addressing a press conference, Talal Chaudhry said negotiations between the government and the opposition had progressed positively on both terrorism and political issues before breaking down at the last moment.

He said discussions began with the government's position on terrorism, the implementation of the National Action Plan, and the KP government's role in supporting counter-terrorism efforts.

Talal said that on the first day of talks, both sides moved forward and agreed on the basic structure of an agreement covering terrorism and political matters. The opposition team later traveled to Peshawar and met the KP Chief Minister, senior party leaders, and ministers. After those consultations, they returned and assured the government that there was complete agreement on the federal government's position regarding terrorism.

He said Mohsin Naqvi had requested even before the talks that a representative of the KP government, preferably the Chief Minister himself, should participate in the negotiations. However, opposition leaders repeatedly assured the government that they had full authority from the party and the KP government and that any agreement reached would be accepted by all concerned.

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