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## PM Shehbaz reaffirms Pakistan's "resolute" commitment to KSA's security under Makkah pact

***Says Pakistan stands in solidarity with leadership and people of Saudi Arabia***

ISLAMABAD, (Agencies): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday reaffirmed Pakistan's "resolute" commitment to Saudi Arabia's sovereignty and security under the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (MDJA), amid repeated Houthi attacks on the kingdom.

In a post on X, the prime minister condemned the targeting of Saudi Arabia's King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh and Abha International Airport by Houthis, which resulted in loss of life and injuries to civilians. At least three people were killed in attacks on Saudi airports, the country's civil aviation authorities said, as fighting intensified in Yemen between the Houthis and government forces.

One person was killed and eight wounded in an attack on King Khalid International Airport in the Saudi capital Riyadh, and two were killed and 28 wounded in an attack on facilities at Abha airport, it said in a statement.

One of the attacks was on October 6 and the other on October 7, the civil aviation authorities said, without saying which attack had occurred on which day. Meanwhile, PM Shehbaz commended the "vigilance and professionalism of the Saudi armed forces" and the coalition in intercepting multiple ballistic missiles and "their tireless efforts to protect innocent lives and safeguard" the kingdom.

He reiterated that Pakistan stood in solidarity with the leadership and people of Saudi Arabia. "In line with the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement, and recent decisions taken by its Strategic Political and Defence Committee, our commitment to the Kingdom's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security is resolute," the prime minister said.

Pakistan fully supports Saudi Arabia's legitimate right to defend its people and protect its cities and vital infrastructure, he added. The prime minister also called on the Houthi militia to "immediately cease these attacks", saying Islamabad will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with Saudi Arabia in the face of threats. The prime minister's remarks come days after Islamabad, Riyadh and Ankara agreed to ensure the "rapid deployment" of agreed military forces and capabilities in Saudi Arabia.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti chairs the meeting of Provincial Cabinet.



KARACHI: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing inaugural ceremony of the KMC Sports Complex in Karachi's Baldia Town

## Bilawal Bhutto urges PTI to abandon 'extremist politics', calls for dialogue

KARACHI, (Monitoring Desk): PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said on Friday that the PTI's "extremist politics" were hurting the party itself, calling on it to reconsider its political strategy.

"The PTI is a party that has public supporters, but it keeps disappointing the people because of its decisions and extremist politics," Bilawal said while addressing an event in Karachi.

"It has no political role in this city or in the federal government, and if it continues with its extremist politics, it will not remain in [power] in the province [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa] either."

The comments come as the PTI has gone ahead with its long march, aimed to demand the release of jailed party founder and former prime minister Imran Khan, despite warnings from the Centre, which has vowed to prevent any gatherings in Islamabad.

"Instead of fulfilling their responsibilities and taking care of their province and its people, this party is stuck on the politics of hate," Bilawal said.

He added that a week earlier, the federal government and the entire system had been prepared to impose an emergency in KP. The PPP, he said, had consistently maintained that imposing an emergency or introducing governor's rule was a constitutional and legal option, but one that should be treated as a "legal atom bomb" and used only as a last resort.

In an apparent reference to talks between the government and opposition, he said, without explicitly naming anyone, that although all political parties including those in the opposition, had reached an agreement, the chief minister of one province had chosen "negative politics" instead of pursuing dialogue.



QUETTA: Deputy Speaker Balochistan Assembly Ghazala Gola presenting a joint resolution during the assembly session.

## CM Bugti vows to ensure peace, stability, development in entire Balochistan

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has said that the future of Balochistan's youth lies not in the mountains, but in sports grounds, employment opportunities, and a peaceful Pakistan. Baloch youth were pushed into a futile war and handed guns; however, the provincial government is taking practical steps to bring them into the national mainstream by providing opportunities for positive activities, employment, and development. Sports grounds will remain active in all districts of Balochistan, and major sporting competitions will be organised regularly for young people.

He expressed these views while speaking to the media on Friday on the occasion of the final of the All-Pakistan Chief Minister Balochistan Gold Cup Football Tournament at Ayub Stadium, Quetta.

The Chief Minister congratulated the Sports Department, the provincial sports minister, the sports secretary, the tournament organisers, and the spectators who attended the match on the successful conclusion of the final. He also presented trophies to the winning and runner-up teams, including the Afghan club that won the championship.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that today was an extremely happy day for Balochistan. Keeping sports grounds active and providing young people with opportunities for healthy activities are among the provincial government's priorities. The government will organise major sporting competitions in all districts of Balochistan so that young people can have opportunities to demonstrate their abilities and sports activities can be promoted across the province.

He said that the provincial government is launching employment and livelihood programmes for young people. The youth must understand that their future lies not in terrorism and violence, but in education, sports, employment, and building a peaceful society.

He said that, through a specific and misleading narrative, Baloch youth had been alienated from the state, handed guns, and made part of a war from which they would gain nothing.

The Chief Minister said that in the past, attempts had been made to create the impression that state representatives could not go among the people.

## Archbishop Gallagher lauds Pakistan's positive role in promoting regional peace

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher on Friday, commended Pakistan's constructive role in promoting regional peace and stability through mediation, dialogue and diplomacy. He was talking to Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar her at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The archbishop is visiting Pakistan to mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the Holy See. The deputy prime minister welcomed the Archbishop and acknowledged the Holy See's role in promoting peace, interfaith harmony and dialogue.

## Public service delivery key measure of institutional performance: Governor

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has said that the timely provision of justice plays a fundamental role in strengthening public confidence and improving the credibility of institutions in any society.

He said that when a deserving complainant receives timely justice in accordance with merit and the principles of fairness, it not only brings satisfaction to that individual but also increases public confidence in state institutions.

He stressed that the institution of the Provincial Ombudsman must be made more active and effective to provide the public with affordable, prompt and accessible justice. He expressed these views during the weekly hearing of applications and complaints received by the Provincial Ombudsman against various government departments at the Governor House in Quetta.

On the occasion, Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail directed the heads of government departments to take practical measures to improve public service delivery within their institutions, ensure transparency in administrative affairs, uphold merit in recruitment and promotions, and eliminate all forms of corruption and irregularities.

He said that the true measure of the performance of government institutions must be the timely resolution of public problems and the protection of citizens' legitimate rights.

## Pakistan reaffirms support for KSA's defence; rejects reports of fighter jets in Yemen

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Pakistan on Friday reaffirmed its commitment to Saudi Arabia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security, while rejecting reports of Pakistani fighter jets participating in cross-border operations against Houthi forces in Yemen.

Foreign Office Spokesperson, Ambassador Sajjad Haider Khan, during a weekly press briefing, said the Makkah Alliance for Defence was a defensive arrangement aimed at protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member countries and strengthening their collective deterrence capabilities.

Referring to the emergency meeting of the Strategic Political and Defence Committee of the Makkah Alliance, held in Riyadh on October 5, he said Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye had agreed to move towards the practical implementation of their collective defence commitments.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif and Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir attended the meeting, he added.

The spokesperson said the committee reviewed the security situation and threats facing Saudi Arabia and condemned attempts to target Makkah and Madinah, as well as attacks on cities, civilians and economic infrastructure.

## PPHI Balochistan introduces AI-based digital recruitment, assessment system

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Executive Officer of the People's Primary Healthcare Initiative (PPHI) Balochistan, Dr. M.B. Durraijo, has said that, in line with the vision of Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti for digital governance, transparency, institutional reforms and merit-based recruitment, PPHI Balochistan has introduced ProMetriX, a modern artificial intelligence-based digital recruitment and assessment system.

The purpose of this initiative is to align the recruitment process with modern technology, promote transparency at all stages of selection, and ensure merit-based recruitment on the basis of the competence and eligibility of qualified candidates. The system will also help make the recruitment process more effective.

### Endorses wide-ranging reforms:

## Balochistan cabinet unveils new measures for public welfare, economic development

QUETTA, (VoM Report): The Balochistan cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, approved wide-ranging reforms aimed at strengthening economic development, education, health, industry, tourism, women's protection, and public services.

The cabinet endorsed the policy for effective utilization of the Balochistan Mineral Development Fund, ensuring that financial benefits from natural resources are directed towards provincial development and public welfare. It also approved the draft Balochistan Tourism Policy and Cultural Policy to promote tourism, safeguard heritage, and create employment opportunities through cultural and natural assets.

In education, the cabinet passed the Balochistan Non-Formal Education Act 2025, targeting the enrollment of nearly 1.6 million out-of-school children aged 10 to 16. It also approved the introduction of double-shift schooling to maximize existing infrastructure and accommodate more students, alongside the reconstitution of the Balochistan Education Foundation's board.

Industrial revival was prioritized with a policy to reactivate closed and non-functional units, offering financial support and incentives to generate investment and jobs. The cabinet also approved administrative adjustments to Quetta's revenue boundaries, dividing North and South Quetta for improved governance and service delivery.

Health reforms included the interim appointment of Professor Abdul Razzaq as CEO of the Balochistan Institute of Kidney Diseases, pending open recruitment, and the passage of the Telemedicine and Remote Health Services Act 2026 to extend medical expertise to remote areas. The Public Health Act 2026 was also approved to strengthen the legal framework for healthcare delivery. Women's protection measures featured amendments to the Balochistan Commission on the Status of Women Act 2026 and the Shelter Homes and Dar-ul-Aman Administrative Control Act 2026.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar receiving H.E. Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## Pakistan's national interests closely linked to regional peace, stability: DG ISPR

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Director General Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Lt General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has said that Pakistan's military presence in Saudi Arabia dates back several decades, stressing that the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement is not a newly formed alliance but the outcome of longstanding bilateral relations.

In an interview with US broadcaster CNN, the DG ISPR said Pakistani troops had been stationed in Saudi Arabia for decades, serving in various capacities and across multiple domains.

He clarified that the implementation of the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement and its potential outcomes would be purely defensive in nature.

Explaining the operational aspects of the agreement, he said decisions regarding the deployment of military units, their utilisation and the conduct of operations would be made by operational commanders.

Terming the agreement as a mechanism for strengthening collective defence and deterring potential threats before they escalate into conflict, the DG ISPR said that the region had faced emerging security challenges in recent years. Under the agreement's collective-defence principle, an attack on one partner would be considered an attack on all, serving as a deterrent against potential aggression.

He said the combined military and diplomatic capabilities of the participating countries would compel potential aggressors to think twice before pursuing hostile actions.

Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said that the agreement was not intended to label any country as a friend or enemy, but rather to ensure regional security and defend Saudi Arabia against potential threats.

Commenting on efforts to end the ongoing conflict between the United States and Iran, the DG ISPR said Pakistan remained committed to achieving a peaceful resolution through negotiations and diplomacy.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, in a group photo with Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Pakistan, Robert-Jan Siegert, and Merlin Melles, Founder and CEO of Founders Carbon Network (FCN), along with members of the Dutch business delegation.

# THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

Saturday October 10, 2026

## Burnham surprised everyone

**British Prime Minister Andy Burnham surprised everyone – including many of his Cabinet colleagues – when, in his speech to the Labour Party's annual conference, he unexpectedly reopened the question of the UK's relationship with the EU.**

**Brexit, he declared, had "done more harm than good," and, if we wanted to "restore a higher level of growth and prosperity," then we needed a "clear path … into the rest of the century." Accordingly, he continued, he would soon "take the opportunity … to lay out to the country what … the different options are" after which he would "see if we could find consensus around one which will give us clarity about our position, and the future of the continent we live in."**

**In so doing, Burnham broke a taboo that has, since 2016, effectively condemned the majority of the UK's center-left politicians to going no further than promising, just as his predecessor Keir Starmer did, to "make Brexit work" – largely out of fear of appearing to want to renege on what Leave campaigners still insist on calling the "will of the people" as expressed in the 2016 referendum.**

**That Burnham's words did not trigger a backlash amongst "the people" (or, tellingly perhaps, a detailed defense of Brexit's benefits by its advocates) is testament to the fact that a majority of Brits have, since early in 2021, been telling pollsters that the decision the country came to 10 years ago was the wrong one. Currently, some 57% of voters, including 23% of those who voted Leave, agree, while some 55% say they want to rejoin the EU. And Burnham's decision arguably makes even more electoral sense when one realizes that around eight out of 10 voters whose support he needs for Labour (or else to vote tactically at the next election so as to keep the Conservatives and Reform UK out of office) support rejoining the EU. Just as importantly, his intervention makes economic sense. Indeed, it is likely that the research suggesting Brexit has done severe damage to the UK's trade, growth and public finances is (along with this shift in public opinion and the concern that the USA is no longer such a reliable ally) one of the main reasons why Burnham has, after just 10 weeks in the job, concluded that more has to be done to reverse or at least further mitigate the colossal act of self-harm that Brexit constituted.**

**Under Starmer, the Labour government was pursuing a series of incremental moves to reduce the trade friction created by the UK's departure. But no economist thinks that this strategy – much like the various trade deals the UK signed with other countries under the Conservatives – will add much more than a fraction of a percent to its GDP. In truth, the only move that will make more than a marginal difference will be joining not just the customs union but the single market too. Yet to do that without going the whole hog and rejoining would mean the UK becoming, in the jargon, a "rule-taker" – something such a large economy with a particularly deep attachment to its sovereignty would probably find it impossible to accept both in principle and in practice.**

**The smart money is on Burnham inserting into Labour's next election manifesto a commitment not to rejoin per se but to opening negotiations on a new, closer relationship with the EU, with any deal that might be arrived at being subject to a referendum.**

**Winning such a vote, however, is far from a racing certainty, especially if it were to involve full membership. That is because the current member states would almost certainly refuse to grant the UK most of the opt-outs and the budget rebate that it enjoyed before it formally left in 2020 – and current polling suggests that support for rejoining among the British electorate drops significantly once they are presented with that scenario.**

**Moreover, this assumes that every EU member state (and, under the rules, it really would have to be every member state) would welcome the UK back into the fold, and that cannot be guaranteed.**

**For one thing, European governments will worry about the possibility that any decision on the part of the UK to rejoin could be reversed by a future Eurosceptic government. For another, any deal would need to be negotiated with an EU whose largest members, France and Germany, might at that stage be run by two far-right parties (the French RN and the German AfD) whose affection for and affinity with Britain are, to say the least, questionable. Against that, we should remember that Britain is still a relatively rich middle power with an outsized diplomatic and defense presence. And the positive reaction to Burnham's opening gambit by France's current president, Emmanuel Macron, is a reminder that many European politicians and publics would, whatever the obstacles negotiations might throw up, be happy to see the UK finally admitting to itself that, in an increasingly unstable economic and geopolitical environment, being inside the EU is the safest place to be.**

# Geopolitics' inflection point

IMRAN MALIK

Geopolitics, in all its manifestations, is now in a state of severe flux. It has reached a critical inflection point where pure, gentle diplomacy is being brusquely replaced by the application of ruthless power, undaunted military force and blatant coercion in interstate relationships. The change, though slow to start with, has now acquired a malign, overbearing momentum of its own. A callous use of brute, overwhelming force to secure national interests and objectives is fast becoming the new normal in regional and global geopolitics. Morals and ethics, in all their definitions, avatars and incarnations, appear to have been sacrificed at the altar of national interests. Portentously, militarily and economically powerful states now tend to dismiss international law, its writ and reach, with downright contempt and disdain. International organisations like the UNO, UNESCO, ICC, etc. have not only been belittled, berated, criticised and starved of funds but also accused of being wasteful and ineffective. The rule of international law has been scornfully derided. The writ of the ICC has been circumscribed and its judgements disregarded. The hubris that emanates from this vile, misplaced megalomania now defines the dynamics of brutal power in interstate relationships as well as the domestic politics/policies of an increasing number of states. The US (currently Venezuela, Iran); Israel (genocide in Gaza, West Bank, Lebanon, Syria); India (Pakistan, Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir Region — IIOJK&R); and a few others are the main exponents of this horrendous, malignant malaise.

Severely brutalised geopolitics will henceforth define most interstate relationships.

Apparently, it was PM Netanyahu's hysteria and paranoia over a possibly nuclear-armed Iran which compelled President Trump to initiate this war. A critical look at its grand strategic design is, however, warranted. Deeper, more profound strategic objectives seem to lurk beneath the surface as well. At the grand strategic level, apart from Iran, China and its booming economy appear to be crucial targets too. A virtual stranglehold on China's supply chain of oil, and thus its economy, could help contain its mercurial rise and multifarious challenges to US global pre-eminence and exceptionalism. China imports oil from all across the globe, taking care that no source provides it with more than 20% of its requirements. Its supply chain of energy, oil and gas is spread from the Middle East (ME), to Russia/ Eurasia (17.4%), Latin America, Africa and so on. The ME provides anywhere between 31–50% of its oil imports, depending upon the geopolitical situation at any given point in time. KSA provides 14% of its oil requirements, while in 2025, Iran, on average, exported 1.38 million barrels of oil per day to it. This amounted to 80–90% of Iran's seaborne oil exports. China imported roughly between 389,000 and 470,000 barrels of oil per day from Venezuela, which came to about 3–5% of its total seaborne imports.

In a deep strategic manoeuvre that preceded the Gulf War, the US kidnapped Venezuela's erstwhile President and later coerced its government into a one-hundred-year, lop-sided deal, literally acquiring total control over its oil wealth. Consequently, the supply of Venezuelan oil to China dwindled to almost zero! Furthermore, the closure/near closure of the Hormuz Straits and Bab el Mandab waterways/choke points has disrupted China's supply chains of oil from the ME too. This makes for a crucial double jeopardy for China, with serious implications for its economy and strategic oil reserves as well. Was targeting China's economy, through such an indirect approach, an intended, albeit undeclared, strategic objective of this war too?

At the regional level, the Gulf Arab states and Iran have had their exports of oil and gas seriously curtailed by the disruption of the SLOC/usual trade routes through the Hormuz Straits and the Bab el Mandab. This has critically truncated their oil and gas exports to the world, especially China, and seriously weakened their economies too. President Trump claims to have eliminated Iran's nuclear programme and its related infrastructure in totality. However, there seems to be no incontrovertible proof to that effect. Iran has borne the brunt of the US-Israel Combine's assault and continues to stand tall, defiant and unyielding. Israel is no longer considered the uncontested, overwhelming military power and domineering, fearsome hegemon of the region.

The US has failed to defeat Iran militarily, coerce it economically or cripple it through widespread isolation in the diplomatic arena either. In his speech at the UNGA, President Trump spoke of three main options that he was considering, two of which bordered on the diabolical: one, making a deal with Iran; two, annihilating it completely; three, "driving it to hell with no chances of survival". Were these mere statements, a part of his relentless rhetoric on the war, or could these threats be truly manifested? If so, then how? Could these be interpreted as subtle indicators of the imminent/ future use of non-conventional/nuclear weapons? Is the US-Israel Combine now running out of viable options at the conventional level to bring this war to an acceptable closure? Does the US now feel compelled to ratchet up the escalation ladder and resort to non-conventional means and measures, not used in anger since World War 2? If so, then does it imply that all efforts at diplomacy and mediation have failed and that there are no other non-violent, non-lethal options left or available? Have all other options been tried and found wanting? Has the strategic environment deteriorated to the extent that the employment of non-conventional means has become inevitable? Nuclear weapons are generally not considered war-fighting tools. They are supposed to deter war and, vitally, preserve peace. If the US-Israel Combine considers employing non-conventional means an operational necessity, then how is it likely to be operationalised? A shot across the bow or absolute, unadulterated Armageddon?

The term "shot across the bow" is derived from the naval practice of firing a cannon shot ahead of an adversary's ship to force it to stop, change course or submit itself to the firing ship's diktat. It is a proactive coercive measure. This term has been borrowed for use in nuclear strategy, where it refers to a deliberate, low-casualty, low-yield or non-lethal use of a nuclear weapon. It demonstrates political resolve, will and the requisite capacities, capabilities and competencies to deter further aggression, without triggering an all-out nuclear exchange/war. However, it also reflects a willingness to go right up the escalation ladder to full-scale nuclear war if an adversary refuses to yield. This may generally apply to cases where both belligerents are nuclear powers. However, if the aggressor is the only nuclear power in the conflict, the core objectives become distinct: one, restore deterrence. Shock the adversary into halting its conventional or strategic aggression by demonstrating the political and military will to cross nuclear thresholds; two, escalation control. To signal that the nation does not seek a full nuclear exchange but will not back down either; three, communication. Send an unambiguous message of unrelenting political resolve and will when all other options, moral, diplomatic, economic and conventional military, have failed. However, where the immediate capitulation of a resolute, unyielding belligerent is required, it may be used against it even though it may not possess nuclear weapons. The nuclear strikes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II literally unleashed Armageddon upon them/ Japan. These civilian population centres were ruthlessly obliterated without any warnings/ shots across the bow!

The shot across the bow could be manifested in different ways. It could be a High-Altitude Detonation over an ocean, desert or the upper atmosphere (to generate an Electromagnetic Pulse, EMP) without causing direct casualties. It could also be a Remote Military Target, such as an isolated outpost in an unpopulated area, a naval fleet at sea or a strictly battlefield/ strategic asset. (The Pickaxe Mountains in Iran?). It could also be the employment of a single, low-yield Tactical Nuclear Warhead, rather than a high-yield strategic weapon. In certain circumstances, it could even be carried out in one's own territory, a desert or other unpopulated area, to demonstrate one's capabilities, resolve and will to cross the Rubicon, if needed!

Hermann Kahn, in his famous 44-rung Escalation Ladder, gives a conceptual framework to describe how a minor political conflict can gradually/rapidly escalate into an all-out thermonuclear war, threatening widespread annihilation of mankind. It can be summarised into three stages: one, an intense conventional conflict that does not give decisive victory to either belligerent; two, either belligerent resorts to a shot across the bow; three, panic ensues, a miscalculation occurs and an all-out strategic war breaks out! The risks of a shot across the bow are undeniable. It could lead to involuntary escalation, full-scale nuclear war and cause unlimited environmental and collateral damage. On the other hand, if successful, it could obviate further aggression, avoid total destruction of a country and yet preserve the credibility of nuclear deterrence.

Presently, however, the US-Israel Combine finds itself in a dire strategic cul-de-sac. In sheer desperation, it has been compelled to threaten Iran with annihilation, perhaps through non-conventional means/weapons. Iran is likely to remain unperturbed. Critically, under no circumstances should President Trump become a victim of his own fiery rhetoric or PM Netanyahu's unrelenting harangues and allow the strategic environment to so deteriorate that a resort to non-conventional means becomes inescapable. Furthermore, a major development with phenomenal strategic implications may already be afoot in the Persian Gulf. The US is moving out of Iraq, and this may be interpreted by other Gulf Arab states as a precursor to the US' eventual, total egress from the region, too. They are duly worried. This war has failed spectacularly to achieve any of its strategic objectives. No regime change has taken place. On the contrary, Iran has defied all odds and denied the US-Israel Combine any modicum of victory: military, economic, diplomatic or even moral. The Gulf Arab states now look furtively at an emboldened Iran (potential regional hegemon?) with de facto control over the Hormuz Straits and the Bab el Mandab and, by implication, over their economies. The US cannot possibly egress the region without resolving this emerging, potentially explosive economic imbroglio of its own making. Therefore, it becomes imperative for it to bring this war to a mutually acceptable closure and resolve the issue peacefully. Veiled threats to employ non-conventional means must never be operationalised. Period. The world, and in particular the ME, can ill-afford the after-effects of nuclear strikes/explosions. The collateral damage to Iran's neighbours (including Pakistan), to regional and global economies and their supply chains of oil and gas, to the environment and peace will be colossal, unbearable, even irreversible. Furthermore, such rhetoric alone, much less a practical manifestation of it, might give alarming ideas/options to paranoid, irrational, high-strung, extreme right-wing leaders like PM Netanyahu in the ME and PM Modi in South Asia, potentially spelling disaster for all humanity! Sanity needs to prevail. The US-Israel Combine and Iran must come to a viable, swift, mutually agreeable closure to the war. Diplomacy must replace abrasive rhetoric and any devastating escalation of the war. Both belligerents must step back. The mediation and diplomatic approach must be reinforced with China joining the current mediators, Pakistan and Qatar. They must not only help prevent further war in the Persian Gulf region but also create and preserve peace, progress and prosperity therein!

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# Consciously apolitical

SALEEM QAMAR BUTT

The relationship between the soldier and the state forms the bedrock of national sovereignty. Across civilisations, the primary purpose of an armed force has been to shield a nation's geography and core values from external and internal threats. However, Pakistan, being the first Islamic ideological state, is confronted with multiple internal and external threats hitting at its ideological base. The armed forces took it upon themselves to simultaneously protect the ideological frontiers of the state, which, unfortunately, more often than not resulted in military takeovers. Nevertheless, while guarding the state with deeper sincerity, filled with the precious sweat and blood of ghazis and shaheeds, "the imperative of political neutrality in uniform" has never before been more critical. To achieve this, men in uniform must master a crucial paradox: they must remain unconsciously politically aware, while remaining consciously apolitical. Understanding the political environment is essential for a soldier, to comprehend the geopolitical canvas, the nature of modern hybrid warfare and the intent behind strategic commands. However, acting politically – taking sides, meddling in civil governance or expressing factional bias – fractures military discipline and destroys public trust. As the adage warns, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." When a military shifts its gaze inward to the political arena, it inevitably neglects the horizon where external threats loom.

In order to understand the cost of political entanglement, history provides stark examples of militaries that lost their primary focus by overstepping into governance. The Roman Praetorian Guard: originally established to protect the Roman commander, the Praetorian Guard quickly realised its leverage in civil politics. By assassinating emperors and auctioning off the throne to the highest bidder, they ushered in centuries of institutional corruption and political instability, ultimately hastening the collapse of the empire. The Ottoman Janissaries: once an elite fighting unit, the Janissaries gradually embedded themselves in palace politics, military trade guilds and policy-making. Their resistance to modernising military reforms – driven by political self-preservation – led to severe battlefield failures and their eventual violent eradication during the "Auspicious Incident" of 1826. The French military and the Dreyfus Affair: in late 19th-century France, political factionalism within the military leadership compromised justice, eroded public confidence and distracted the armed forces during a delicate period between major European conflicts. Conversely, the Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz famously noted that "War is the continuation of politics by other means." And, of course, Pakistan has a lot to learn from a deeper, analytical and unbiased study of her own history, especially of 1958, 1968/69 and 1970/71, which resulted in the greatest debacle: the breakup of Pakistan. This formulation underscores that while military strategy serves political ends, the military instrument itself must remain subordinate to the state entity rather than becoming a partisan political actor. As the Latin phrase reminds us: Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? ("Who will watch the watchers?").

How to "conceptualise awareness versus action"? To safeguard a nation's territorial integrity (its borders, airspace and waters) and ideological boundaries (its founding philosophy, constitution and core national identity), military officers destined to reach higher ranks require a nuanced posture. First, "unconscious political awareness": an intuitive, professional grasp of global grand strategy, constitutional mandates, national interests and socioeconomic vulnerabilities. This ensures that commanders understand why they fight and how their operational and tactical choices ripple across international diplomacy. Second, "conscious apolitical conduct": at the most senior command level, a deliberate, disciplined refusal to engage in partisan rivalries, political endorsements, civil administration or ideological favouritism. It requires keeping the sword in its scabbard until summoned by legitimate constitutional authority. When soldiers step into the political arena, they risk becoming like "a sailor who abandons the wheel to argue over the ship's destination, while heading straight toward the reef." In the given milieu, what is the strategic imperative for the Pakistan armed forces? For them, maintaining this equilibrium is a matter of supreme national survival. Situated at a complex geopolitical crossroads – confronting conventional threats on its eastern border, asymmetric security challenges along its western frontier and the ongoing threat of hybrid warfare – Pakistan requires a military whose professional focus is absolute and undivided and, above all, which has wholehearted public support. To preserve its role as the ultimate shield of the nation, the armed forces should consider three core tenets: "strict subordination to the constitution", "professional specialisation over administrative involvement" and "preserving national cohesion". The military is one of the few national institutions that reflects the unity of Pakistan's diverse population. Remaining scrupulously apolitical ensures that every citizen – regardless of political, ethnic or regional affiliation – views the soldier in uniform as an unbiased national protector. By internalising political dynamics without participating in them, the Pakistan armed forces can ensure that their institutional focus remains fixed on guarding the nation's ideological and territorial borders and securing its sovereign future. The tendency of the fire-spitting incumbent spokesperson to tag political opponents as traitors, terrorists and separatists needs to be harnessed, and the hate-spreading monsters need to be leashed with a ban on money-making electronic media; they are all destroying the public's mental peace and tearing apart the fabric of national cohesion. The God-gifted and adroitly used opportunities on the external fronts, owing to the extraordinary regional security environment, must translate into geo-economic dividends for the people of Pakistan rather than mean political point-scoring or playing as a pawn on the global chessboard. Maintaining civil-military balance is one of the most critical challenges for democratic states. The institutional challenge requires keeping the military strong enough to protect the state, while ensuring it remains obedient to civilian leadership—a dynamic political scientist Samuel Huntington termed the "civilian control paradox". A few examples can just be pointed out here as to how, ultimately, a balanced system of governance comes to consolidate itself, ensuring that civil and military institutions function in their respective constitutional orbits. The first case is that of US President Truman vs MacArthur (1951). During the Korean War, General Douglas MacArthur—a national hero—publicly defied President Harry S. Truman's strategic policy, and the President relieved MacArthur of his command. The second case is from post-WWII West Germany, which needed to rebuild its military (the Bundeswehr) without resurrecting Prussian militarism or political independence. Reformers introduced Innere Führung (Internal Leadership), framing the soldier as a "Staatsbürger in Uniform" (Citizen in Uniform). The third example comes from Turkey's post-2000 reforms (dismantling the guardian military). For decades, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) operated as self-appointed guardians of secularism, conducting multiple direct and indirect coups (1960, 1971, 1980, 1997) via the powerful National Security Council (MGK). To resolve this issue, structural legislative reforms throughout the 2000s systematically reorganised the MGK.

Above notwithstanding, modern hybrid warfare—combining cyber operations, cognitive manipulation, and economic pressure with conventional threats—fundamentally destabilises traditional civil-military relations. Historically, the boundary was clear: politicians managed domestic governance and political discourse, while the armed forces managed external violence along defined physical borders. In the digital age, state and non-state adversaries deliberately target the cognitive domain (public perception and social cohesion) inside a nation's domestic sphere, blurring these institutional lines. That necessitates identification of key friction points in contemporary democracies. First is "The 'Domestic Battleground' Dilemma". Disinformation campaigns weaponise social media to exacerbate domestic political divisions, target electoral integrity, or undermine public trust in democratic institutions. Second is "The Boundary Strain"; when foreign adversaries launch cyber or information attacks against civilian targets (e.g., voting infrastructure, public opinion), civilians often lack the technical capability or speed to respond. If the military's cyber or intelligence arms intervene to counter domestic disinformation, they risk being accused of policing domestic political speech or surveilling their own citizens. The third and most relevant challenge is "The Politicisation of the Armed Forces as an Information Target"; adversaries deliberately run targeted psychological operations aimed at military personnel and veterans, attempting to erode command discipline or drag the military into partisan debates. To protect institutional readiness, military leadership may feel compelled to issue public communications or enforce strict digital behaviour standards. However, if military leaders publicly counter narrative attacks, political factions may accuse the military of taking sides in domestic political controversies. Deepfakes, automated botnets, and rapid cyber offensives operate at microsecond speeds compared to traditional diplomatic escalation. To counter hybrid threats without eroding civilian control, democracies are evolving new governance mechanisms, which need deliberation in Pakistan too.

Keeping in mind the political history of Pakistan as well as the current messy domestic front, my columns may seem a far cry to the sceptics. Nevertheless, bear in mind that "Only a fool learns from his own mistakes. The wise man learns from the mistakes of others"; could we just spare a few moments to revisit our national history from 1968–71? Pakistan's domestic political as well as internal and external security situation is too perilous. Pakistan Zindabad!

The writer is a retired senior army officer with experience in international relations, military diplomacy and analysis of geo-political and strategic security issues.

# US, Greece announce $4 billion arms sales as defense ties deepen

ATHENS, (Agencies): The U.S. and Greece announced $4 billion in Foreign Military Sales on Wednesday to support Athens' long-term defense plans as the NATO allies moved to expand security and economic cooperation.
The announcement came after U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Greek Foreign Minister George Gerapetritis presided over the sixth U.S.-Greece Strategic Dialogue in Athens, according to a joint statement released by the U.S. State Department.
The two sides said the military sales would support Greece's defense plans and deepen interoperability, while they would also explore further cooperation between their defense industries, including in innovative technologies.
They also finalized Greece's participation in the U.S. National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program with Florida and said interoperability would be enhanced through the provision of Stryker vehicles to Greece.
Washington and Athens, according to the statement, also agreed to expand law enforcement and counterterrorism cooperation and reiterated their commitment to addressing irregular migration.
On economic ties, the two countries pledged to strengthen trade and investment while cooperating on investment screening and the protection of critical infrastructure procurement.
They also highlighted cooperation in high-performance computing, cybersecurity and advanced technologies as well as energy ties involving the Vertical Gas Corridor and hydrocarbon exploration.
The two governments additionally extended their Cultural Property Agreement to protect cultural heritage and combat illicit trafficking networks.



**Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis speaks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and U.S. Ambassador to Greece Kimberly Guilfoyle during an expanded meeting at the Maximos Mansion in Athens, Greece.**



**Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan (R) shakes hands with Hungarian Foreign Minister Anita Orban in Ankara, Turkiye.**

## Putin to attend CIS leaders'; Caspian environmental summits

MOSCOW, (Agencies): Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Turkmenistan on Thursday for a two-day visit, where he will take part in a leaders' summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and a Caspian Sea environmental summit.
Putin's arrival at Turkmenbashi International Airport, situated near the Avaza National Tourist Zone, where the Central Asian nation is hosting both events, was broadcast by Russian state media.
The Russian president was greeted by numerous officials upon his arrival, including Turkmen Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov.
According to a Kremlin statement on Wednesday, the CIS Heads of State Council meeting will review the results of cooperation within the organization, outline priorities for further joint efforts, and provide an exchange of views on current international and regional matters.

## Turkiye rules out ops against Houthis, vows to help Saudi defense

ANKARA, (Agencies): Speaking at a joint news conference with visiting Hungarian Foreign Minister Anita Orban on Thursday in Ankara, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Türkiye was considering defense assistance to Saudi Arabia amid tensions with the Houthis in Yemen. He was answering questions about the Mecca Joint Defense Alliance, which was signed by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. "This is a defense pact, not a pact of offense; Türkiye won't send troops to another country for attacking another," he said.
He also noted that the agreement on the alliance would soon be sent to Parliament for ratification.
Fidan and Defense Minister Yaªar Güler joined Pakistani officials in Saudi Arabia's Riyadh on Oct. 5 for the Strategic Political and Defense Committee of the alliance. This second meeting of the alliance after its inauguration in Istanbul was followed by a blunt statement underlining the collective defense and a pledge of military assistance to Saudi Arabia amid attacks by the Houthis.
"The Mecca agreement is a defense agreement; it is not an agreement of offense. If one country that is a party to the agreement is attacked, you are required to stand with it for the defense," he stressed.
"Türkiye will not send soldiers to another country for an assault. We are forming a defense cooperation with Saudi Arabia. We are discussing what type of defense measures are needed through our military delegations, and how Pakistan can contribute. Saudi Arabia already has a major military infrastructure; they have a high amount of weapons, munitions and defense elements accumulated over the years," Fidan said.
The Turkish opposition also claimed that Türkiye would not be able to send troops to Saudi Arabia as the agreement on the alliance was not ratified by Parliament yet. Fidan responded to this and said that they had completed the work to send it to Parliament. "We presented it to the president on Wednesday and decided to send it to Parliament as soon as possible," he stated.
Sabah newspaper reported on Wednesday that Türkiye would provide low- and medium-altitude aerial defense systems to Saudi Arabia along with assistance in drone technologies and electronic warfare. The newspaper also reported that Saudi Arabia was working on setting up a base for Türkiye.
A Foreign Ministry official told Daily Sabah that the Saudi side conveyed "some expectations" to Türkiye and they would examine those. The move is the most concrete step since the agreement was signed in August by top officials of Türkiye, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to showcase the impact of the alliance in the broader region.
As civil war in Yemen flared up this summer, the Houthis spread it to Saudi Arabia, prompting the central government in Yemen to launch an all-out operation against the group this week. Saudi Arabia's oil and military installations are among the main targets of the Houthis.

## Iran sends Hezbollah $200M for Lebanon war aid

BEIRUT, (Agencies): Iran has provided Hezbollah with $200 million to support Lebanese families displaced by this year's war with Israel, two people with direct knowledge of the transfer said, marking the group's first major aid effort for supporters hit hardest by the conflict.
Hezbollah received the funds last month despite mounting U.S. economic pressure on Iran and growing obstacles to moving money to Tehran's Lebanese ally, the sources said.
Intermediaries handling the transfer charged a 20% fee because of the risks involved in dealing with Hezbollah, according to the sources. One said the rate was four times the usual fee.
A Hezbollah official, asked for comment, confirmed that funds had been secured and said a distribution plan would be announced in the coming days, but did not identify the source of the money.
Iran's Foreign Ministry, its permanent mission in Geneva, the U.S. Treasury Department and the Lebanese government did not immediately respond to requests for comment.
Israel's bombardment and ground offensive in Lebanon displaced hundreds of thousands of people, many from Hezbollah's Shiite support base, after the Iran-backed group entered the regional conflict on March 2.
Hezbollah, founded with support from Iran's Revolutionary Guards in 1982, has suffered heavy Israeli blows during two wars since 2024. The United States designates the group as a terrorist organization.
Many of those displaced have received little or no assistance from Hezbollah so far.
Hezbollah plans to use the funds to provide an initial $3,000 payment to each eligible family, with priority given to people whose villages have been destroyed or remain inaccessible because of Israeli occupation, the sources said.
About 50,000 families fall into those categories, according to one of the sources.
Iran has continued supporting Hezbollah despite years of U.S. sanctions. Tehran transferred $1 billion to the group during the first 10 months of 2025, according to the U.S. Treasury Department.
Tehran has not publicly acknowledged financing Hezbollah. Iran's support for allied armed groups across the region has previously fueled domestic criticism, making the issue particularly sensitive as economic hardship deepens inside the country.
Iran had pledged additional funding for Hezbollah after Tehran reached an interim agreement with Washington in June that allowed it to sell oil. The agreement collapsed in July. Washington has since intensified economic pressure on Tehran, tightening sanctions and imposing a naval blockade aimed at restricting Iranian oil exports. Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem said last month that the group would soon contribute to a project to house thousands of people displaced by the war, using "available resources and donations." He did not provide further details.
Hezbollah's ability to finance social services and postwar assistance has helped sustain support for the group in the past. After its 2006 war with Israel, Hezbollah quickly distributed cash to affected families and helped rebuild Beirut's southern suburbs, one of its main strongholds. This time, however, reconstruction has been slow. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said last month that rebuilding after the two wars since 2024 could cost more than $27 billion.



**MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova addressing the media during a press briefing.**

## Russia says possible deployment of additional NATO troops in Baltics would be escalation

MOSCOW, (Agencies): Russia said Thursday it views the potential deployment of additional NATO troops in the Baltic states as an escalation.
"We unequivocally view the potential deployment of additional NATO contingents – including US troops – and the establishment of corresponding military infrastructure in the Baltic states as an escalation," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told journalists.
Zakharova said such plans, which she claimed are "harbored by the Washington administration," run counter to its stated aim of "fostering diplomatic and political avenues to de-escalate tensions in Europe." "All these confrontational moves align with the North Atlantic Alliance's plans for the accelerated militarization of Russia's western border regions under the false pretext – as we have already discussed today – of a so-called threat from the East," Zakharova said. She reiterated that Russia has no plans for an armed conflict with Western Europe, noting that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov have repeatedly made such statements.
"One might ask those who voice such things – or those who can at least explain what they mean – how they justify these fantasies. What do they cite as the goals, objectives, or reasons for the actions they fabricate?" Zakharova said. She also accused the EU of embarking on a "path of confrontation" with Russia, arguing that this path would "only exacerbate Europe's problems."



**BERLIN: Palestinian associations organized a pro-Palestine demonstration in the square at the intersection of Zimmer and Friedrich streets.**

## Syria mulls military aid to Saudi Arabia as Houthis escalate war

DAMASCUS, (Agencies): Syria is weighing military assistance to key ally Saudi Arabia, U.S. and Syrian officials said, as the Iran-aligned Houthis step up missile and drone attacks on the kingdom that killed three people at Saudi airports this week. The possible entry of Syrian forces into the battle, a spillover of the US-Iran conflict, shows how Yemen's reignited civil war has added new chaos to a region already aflame and risks drawing regional states into grueling mountain fighting. Saudi Arabia has pushed for support from allied nations, including Türkiye and Pakistan, even if only in a logistical or purely defensive capacity, an effort made more urgent by the Houthi strikes on its infrastructure such as this week's deadly airport attacks. A succession of loud booms were reported in Riyadh Thursday morning. There was no immediate official comment and no public early warning alerts, although some diplomats said they had received warnings, and some schools in Riyadh warned parents of shelter in place orders.
Yemen's Houthi rebels, however, claimed Thursday that it had attacked King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh with a ballistic missile. The Saudi government media office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. One person had been killed in a strike on Riyadh airport and two others in an attack on Abha airport in the southwest Tuesday and Wednesday, Saudi Arabia said late Wednesday. Meanwhile, the U.S. and Syrian officials said Damascus was carefully considering military support, including the option of defensive aid to protect Saudi Arabia from attacks or deployment in an offensive capacity to help Saudi-backed Yemeni troops take the fight to the Houthis.

## North Korea refuses medical aid from South, seeks 'respect, solicitude, sincerity'

PYONGYANG, (Agencies): North Korea on Thursday refused medical aid from South Korea, saying Seoul should show "utmost respect, solicitude and sincerity" first if it "really wants to reverse the relations" between the two countries.
Kim Yo Jong, sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, called Seoul's request for a UN exemption to provide medical equipment to North Korea an "insult to our state," a politically motivated provocation and a "grave encroachment" on its national law, according to a statement published by the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).
"Under the present situation, those, who must be aware of the fact that medical equipment supported by the ROK cannot enter our territory and there is no way for introducing them, are resorting to such a farce," she said, also calling it "a sinister political calculation to get anything by comparing their 'well-meaning attitude' with our 'conflicting attitude' to reject them." If Seoul wants to "reverse the relations" between South and North Korea, "they should be conscious of their rival's feelings in every word and action and show their utmost respect, solicitude and sincerity before anything," Kim said.
"We have nothing to exchange or go with the ROK and no need to face to face with it.



**Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji in a meeting with EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas in Beirut.**

## Lebanon looks to EU support for state control of weapons, end to Israeli occupation

BEIRUT, (Agencies): Lebanon said it is counting on EU support for its decision to place all weapons under state control and efforts to end Israel's occupation of Lebanese territory.
"Lebanon has taken a clear sovereign decision to place weapons and the use of force exclusively in the hands of the state throughout its territory," Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji said during a joint news conference with EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas in Beirut.
He described the move as essential to restoring sovereignty, consolidating stability and rebuilding strong and capable state institutions.
"We count on the European Union continuing to stand by Lebanon and its legitimate institutions to achieve this national objective," he said.
"We also count on its support to end the continuing Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory and ensure the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701."
Rajji also welcomed European support for Lebanon's state institutions, including the Lebanese army and Internal Security Forces.
"We want Europe to be an essential partner in this new phase, not only in helping Lebanon manage its crises, but also in overcoming them," he added.

## Venezuela's Maduro, wife to face new US charges over alleged torture

**WASHINGTON, (Agencies): Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, who were abducted by U.S. agents, are expected to face new criminal charges in the U.S. over the alleged torture of Americans detained in Venezuela, a U.S. official said Wednesday. The new charges could come as**



**soon as Thursday, according to the official, who was briefed on the investigation. Maduro and Flores were captured by the U.S. military from their homes in Caracas on Jan. 3 and brought to New York to face drug trafficking charges. They have pleaded not guilty. A spokesperson for the Manhattan U.S. Attorney's office, which brought the charges, declined to comment.**

# Pakistan, Bahrain share long-standing; trusted defence partnership: President Zardari

***Says Pakistan remains committed to constructive engagement with all parties to build trust, bridge gaps and promote lasting peace, security and stability in region***

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday said Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with Bahrain and expressed the desire to further strengthen bilateral cooperation, particularly in trade, investment, economic engagement and security.

The president said this during his meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, who called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr, a Presidency's news release said.

The two leaders first held a restricted meeting, which was followed by a delegation-level meeting.

Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani is on a visit to Pakistan to attend the 3rd Session of the Pakistan-Bahrain Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC).

Talking to him President Zardari said Pakistan is keen to translate strong bilateral political relations into deeper trade and investment ties.

He highlighted opportunities for cooperation in food security, IT and digital services, construction, mining, port handling, research and development, tourism and healthcare. He also encouraged greater business-to-business engagement between the two countries.

The president appreciated Bahrain's warm welcome of the Islamabad MoU and the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement and its recognition of Pakistan's efforts for regional peace, security and stability.

The president said Pakistan and Bahrain share a long-standing and trusted defence partnership, reflected in joint exercises, high-level exchanges and institutional cooperation.

He expressed Pakistan's readiness to further strengthen cooperation in manpower, logistics, training and defence hardware.

The president also appreciated Bahrain's support and opportunities for more than 134,000 Pakistanis residing in the Kingdom and welcomed continued cooperation on matters concerning the Pakistani diaspora.

Talking about the regional situation, the president said Pakistan remains committed to constructive engagement with all parties to build trust, bridge gaps and promote lasting peace, security and stability in the region.



**ISLAMABAD: Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, called on President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr**



**QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti giving shield to Provincial Advisor for Sports and Youth Affairs Meena Majeed Baloch.**

## Pakistan fighting global war against terrorism: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD, (APP): United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres visited the Ministry of Interior and met Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry. The meeting focused on the global and regional situation as well as matters related to United Nations peace missions.

During the meeting, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that Pakistan is fighting the global war against terrorism and continues to face security challenges. He stated that 25 terrorist organizations are currently operating in Afghanistan and pose a serious threat to peace around the world.

Mohsin Naqvi said the international community needs to work together to address this threat. He emphasized that cooperation among countries is necessary to counter terrorism and maintain peace and stability. The Interior Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to United Nations peacekeeping missions.

## IPU stronger platform for peace, dialogue, diplomacy: Gilani

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Thursday held a luncheon and a one-on-one meeting with Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) President Dr Tulia Ackson on the sidelines of the 153rd IPU Assembly in Arusha, Tanzania.

Gilani congratulated Dr Ackson on the successful completion of her tenure as IPU president from 2023 to 2026.

He praised her leadership and efforts to make the IPU more inclusive, representative and effective as the global organisation of parliaments.

"Under your able and inspiring leadership, the IPU has become a stronger platform for peace, dialogue and parliamentary diplomacy," he said.

Gilani said Dr Ackson, as the first African woman to serve as IPU president, had become an inspiration for women parliamentarians, particularly in the Global South. He said he had worked closely with Dr Ackson during her presidency and would continue to work with her to promote parliamentary cooperation and strengthen the role of the IPU.

The Senate chairman also thanked Dr Ackson, the Tanzanian government and its people for the arrangements and hospitality extended to the delegates in Arusha.

He invited Dr Ackson to visit Pakistan as a guest of the Senate at a mutually convenient time. She accepted the invitation and thanked Gilani for the gesture.

## Digitization of performance of ministries vital for preventing corruption: PM

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed all federal ministries to complete, within the stipulated time frame, necessary measures for digitizing relevant data in coordination with provincial governments and concerned institutions and ensuring its provision to the central data centre.

Chairing a progress review meeting on implementation of Digital Nation Pakistan initiative, the prime minister said that the national-level central data centre under the Digital Nation Pakistan Programme would play a key role in the delivery of government services and provision of facilities to citizens. He said clearly defined responsibilities of federal ministries, along with the provision of relevant data to the central data centre, would help bring the government system in line with modern requirements.

PM Shehbaz Sharif said the Digital Nation Pakistan Programme was essentially aimed at ensuring efficient and convenient services for citizens at the national level.

He observed that making useful data from all sectors and government institutions available at one place could contribute significantly to the country's economic development.

Referring to the fuel subsidy scheme for deserving segments of society, the prime minister said data sharing among institutions had played a key role in its successful implementation.

He said digitization of the performance of ministries and relevant data was important for preventing corruption and institutional mismanagement.

The prime minister appreciated the Ministry of Health for taking commendable steps, in collaboration with provincial governments, towards establishing universal medical records at the national level.

He also appreciated the implementation of QR codes to ensure the availability and verification of quality medicines across the country.

The Ministry of Information Technology briefed the meeting that, with the active cooperation of all relevant ministries, comprehensive measures were being taken for sector-specific digitization.

The meeting was informed that, keeping in view public convenience, the digitization process in basic service sectors, particularly health, agriculture and other ministries, was being completed on a priority basis.

The Ministry of Information Technology, in collaboration with the Ministry of Law, was also taking special and effective measures to make relevant national laws available at one place, which would provide better guidance for future legislation. The meeting was further informed that, in accordance with the Prime Minister's directives, work was underway on the digitization of priority sectors, with special measures being taken to achieve the objectives of digital government services, a digital economy and digital public facilitation.

Different federal ministries briefed the meeting on their public services, performance and progress in providing relevant data to the central data centre.

A special briefing was also given on the provision of data related to the Ministry of National Health Services to the central data centre and the use of digitization for verification of the quality of medicines. Minister for Law Azam Nazeer Tarar, Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema.



**ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a progress review meeting on implementation of Digital Nation Pakistan initiative.**

## UK acknowledges Pakistan's economic reform efforts

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Pakistan and the United Kingdom (UK) on Thursday discussed ways to further enhance trade and cooperation in priority sectors and deliver concrete outcomes through the next bilateral Trade Dialogue.

During a meeting between Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriottat here at the Ministry of Commerce, the two sides focused on expanding trade and investment cooperation in healthcare and life sciences, information technology, agriculture and livestock, financial services, aviation and minerals-related services, said a news release.

The British side outlined the possibility of a long-term, non-legally binding investment partnership, supported at ministerial level, to provide a framework for cooperation in mutually agreed sectors. Potential areas included regulatory reforms, trade facilitation, education and workforce skills, and investment financing.

Jam Kamal Khan highlighted livestock as an important area for cooperation, noting the Prime Minister's keen interest in strengthening the sector, improving animal productivity and increasing value addition and meat exports. He underscored the opportunities for British expertise, technology and investment to support modern livestock practices and stronger commercial linkages.

The High Commissioner highlighted the importance of incorporating food safety and regulatory requirements into sector development, enabling Pakistani producers to access UK and other international markets.

The meeting also reviewed ongoing engagement through the healthcare and life sciences working group.

The minister emphasised the need to strengthen the international branding of Pakistani products and help domestic businesses develop a stronger presence in overseas markets.



**ISLAMABAD: Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Danyal Chaudhry speaking at the panel titled "The Value of Information Integrity: Trust, Journalism and Resilience", held as part of the dialogue on "Access to Information for Enhancing Information Integrity"**

## Terrorism could be defeated through collective efforts: Amir Muqam

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan and PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President Engineer Amir Muqam urged the KP government to focus on resolving public issues instead of pursuing a long march.

Addressing a press conference, he said terrorism incidents continued in the province while the provincial leadership was busy with political activities.

He said that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were facing serious hardships and questioned what practical change had been brought about despite the PTI government being in power in the province for the third consecutive term.

Amir Muqam said that the PTI had also governed at the federal level for three and a half years, adding that the people had witnessed its performance. He questioned what measures had been taken during that period to address the province's issues and provide funds.

He said that the provincial government had the responsibility to address public problems and maintain law and order, adding that its focus should not be limited to political slogans and social media activities.

Referring to the proposed long march, the minister said its date kept changing while people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continued to face difficulties due to blocked routes.

He said that the government would not allow anyone to paralyze Islamabad, adding that the authorities would take the necessary decision if the march reached the federal capital.

Regarding negotiations, Amir Muqam said that detailed discussions had been held between the two sides and views were exchanged on various issues. He said the terms of a joint agreement had been finalized, but the Chief Minister later backed out.

## Danyal for responsible journalism, timely govt communication

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Danyal Chaudhry stressed the need for timely, credible and verifiable information to safeguard public trust and informed decision making, as he chaired a panel discussion on information integrity at a national dialogue organised in Islamabad by UNESCO Office Pakistan in collaboration with the Press Information Department (PID), Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) and National Forum of Information Commissioners (NFIC).

Speaking at the panel titled "The Value of Information Integrity: Trust, Journalism and Resilience", held as part of the dialogue on "Access to Information for Enhancing Information Integrity," Danyal said the rapid expansion of social media, digital platforms and artificial intelligence had transformed access to information while creating new risks from misinformation, disinformation and AI generated content.

He called for stronger responsible journalism, timely government communication, greater media literacy and ethical use of artificial intelligence to protect the public from false and misleading narratives.

The parliamentary secretary said information integrity is a shared responsibility of the government, parliament, media, civil society, academia, technology platforms and citizens. Barrister stressed that credible information must reach the public promptly, warning that delays and information gaps could create space for misinformation and false narratives to gain ground.

Danyal appreciated UNESCO, PID, CPDI and NFIC for convening the dialogue, saying closer cooperation among key stakeholders is essential to building a more credible, transparent and resilient information ecosystem in Pakistan.



**ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar & Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain H. E. Dr. Abdullatif Bin Rashid Al-Zayani coming for signing MoU after 3rd Pakistan-Bahrain Bilateral Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.**

## Rubina Khalid for stronger climate-resilient social protection

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Senator Rubina Khalid called for stronger international support to protect vulnerable communities from climate and economic shocks, highlighting Pakistan's experience of linking social protection with skills, employment and climate resilience.

Addressing a panel at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Adaptive Social Protection Forum in Manila, she said Pakistan contributes very little to global carbon emissions, yet its vulnerable communities bear a disproportionate burden of climate change. "The international community must step up support for Pakistan's most vulnerable families by strengthening climate resilience, expanding adaptive social protection and providing practical assistance to help communities withstand future climate shocks," she said.

Senator Rubina Khalid highlighted BISP's response to climate-related emergencies, saying 2.7 million families affected by the 2022 floods received PKR 70 billion in emergency cash assistance.

She said BISP's National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) covers more than 40 million households and has been made dynamic, with climate-related questions incorporated into the survey to identify households exposed to climate risks.

## UN secretary-general winds up 3-day official visit to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres concluded his three-day official visit to Pakistan from October 6 to 8, during which he held extensive engagements with Pakistan's leadership and senior officials. During the visit, the secretary-general met with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, who reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, multilateralism, and the peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue and diplomacy. He reiterated Pakistan's call for a just and peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, besides highlighting India's unilateral decision to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, in blatant violation of international law. Secretary-General Guterres also called on President Asif Ali Zardari which was followed by a special investiture ceremony during which the president conferred Nishan-e-Imtiaz on him in recognition of his distinguished international service and contribution to global peace and development. The secretary-general called on the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and exchanged views on issues of regional and international importance. He also held meetings with the Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, as well as the Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi. The secretary-general visited the headquarters of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) in Islamabad

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