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'Armed forces are our red line':

We want peaceful, political solution to all outstanding issues: Bilawal

MUZAFFARABAD, (Monitoring Desk): Expressing concerns over violent protests in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Wednesday demanded a high-powered commission to launch an investigation according to the state laws.

Addressing the PPP leadership and ticket holders in Muzaffarabad, Bilawal said the situation in AJK was a matter of concern not only for Kashmiris but for every Pakistani.

His remarks came amid a surge in violence linked to ongoing sit-ins and protests in parts of AJK ahead of the July 27 elections for the region's 53-member Legislative Assembly.

The AJK government on June 5 declared the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) a proscribed organisation under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), saying the group was engaged in terrorism.

The ban was imposed days ahead of the banned outfit's planned June 9 protest seeking the abolition of 12 seats in the AJK reserved for refugees from Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) who migrated to Pakistan after 1947. Bilawal called for the formation of a commission with full powers to investigate recent developments and said law enforcement agencies should conduct inquiries strictly in accordance with state laws.

The PPP chairman said politicians in Pakistan and AJK, as well as those involved in protests, should carefully reflect on their conduct.

He stressed that everyone must choose their words responsibly during the current circumstances and urged all political parties to play their role to establish peace in the region.

Bilawal said Pakistani armed forces were a red line for his party and warned that any rhetoric directed against them would not be tolerated.

He said any statements emerging from AJK against the Pakistan Army were unacceptable and reiterated that the PPP would never tolerate anti-state narratives.

Referring to the people of Kashmir, Bilawal said his party was deeply hurt whenever offensive language was used against Kashmiris.

He added that no remarks against Kashmiris would be tolerated and stressed that commitments made to the Kashmiri people must be honoured.

The former foreign minister said violent protests and demonstrations could not be permitted under any circumstances.



MUZAFFARABAD (AJK): Pakistan Peoples Party chief Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari addresses the party workers.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting on the affairs of Federal Board of Revenue.

Business community backbone of national economy: PM Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said the business community was the backbone of the national economy and should be provided with every possible facility to enhance production and boost exports.

Chairing a meeting to review the affairs of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the prime minister directed the Board to work closely with the business community and resolve their legitimate concerns on a priority basis.

He also instructed senior FBR officials to visit Karachi during the first week of every month to maintain direct engagement with the business community and ensure the prompt resolution of their issues.

He expressed his confidence that Pakistan's economy was on the path to stability, and the current year will be marked by economic growth and the expansion of business activities.

He said companies that comply with tax laws would be officially recognized and encouraged in appreciation of their contribution.

The prime minister emphasized that the government's objective was to promote ease of doing business, encourage investment and exports, and make the tax system more transparent and simpler to strengthen the confidence of the business community.

The meeting was also briefed on the performance of the FBR and the implementation of ongoing reforms.

It was informed in the meeting that production monitoring systems had been installed in the sugar, cement, tobacco, tiles, and fertilizer industries.

The installation of production monitoring systems in the textile and beverages industries is currently underway.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, in a meeting with Ms. Jane Marriott CMG OBE, British High Commissioner to Pakistan, to discuss Pakistan's reform agenda and Pakistan–United Kingdom economic cooperation

Public healthcare services restored as YDA postpones Balochistan-wide protest

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Commissioner Quetta Division Shahzeb Khan Kakar and Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehrullah Badini met a delegation of the Young Doctors Association (YDA) Balochistan, Pakistan Medical Association (Quetta Zone), and the Allied Health Organization at the Commissioner's Office in Quetta today.

During the meeting, the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner requested the Young Doctors Association to postpone its ongoing protest and restore all medical services, including outpatient departments (OPDs), in government hospitals across the province in view of the current provincial situation, the fragile law and order conditions, and the hardships faced by the public.

They assured the delegation that the government would play the role of mediator between the authorities and the doctors and would make serious and effective efforts to resolve the protesters' demands.

The delegation was led by YDA Balochistan President Dr. Hai Baloch, Pakistan Medical Association (Quetta Zone) President Dr. Nadir Baloch, and Allied Health Organization President Jamal Shah Kakar, along with their colleagues.

On the occasion, YDA Balochistan President Dr. Hai Baloch said that the association fully understands the deteriorating law and order situation in Balochistan, the ongoing sit-in at Ziarat, the grief of the families of the martyrs, and the urgent need for medical treatment for the public during these difficult circumstances.

He announced that, in light of these extraordinary conditions and in response to the special request of the Commissioner Quetta Division, the Young Doctors Association Balochistan has decided, in the public interest, to temporarily suspend its protest and fully restore all medical services, including OPDs, in government hospitals across Balochistan from tomorrow.

Commissioner Shahzeb Khan Kakar held detailed discussions with the doctors regarding their issues, public healthcare services, and the ongoing protest.

Iran says no talks with US planned, focus remains on defending country

US targets Iranian missile sites on Greater Tunb Island in new wave of strikes: CENTCOM

TEHRAN / WASHINGTON, (Monitoring Desk): Iran has no plans to engage in talks with the United States and is focused solely on defending the country, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said on Wednesday, according to Al Jazeera.

Speaking to reporters, Baghaei said Tehran would honour its international commitments only if Washington fulfilled its own obligations. "Our commitments remain in effect only as long as the other side fulfills its pledges," he said.

Baghaei added that Iran had ceased implementing its obligations under the memorandum of understanding after the United States failed to uphold its side of the temporary agreement.

"After the other party violated its obligations, we also refrained from implementing ours in any area where it was required," he said.

"Iranian state media claims that US forces struck a civilian wheat storage facility in Hoveyzeh on July 14. This is FALSE," CENTCOM posted on social media.

Sacrifices of martyrs unforgettable; should not be politicized: Dummar

QUETTA (ANN): Pakistan Muslim League (N) central leader and Balochistan Provincial Minister for Food, Noor Muhammad Dummar, said that the government stands with the victims of the Ziarat tragedy and will ensure the implementation of all legitimate demands of the affected families.

He said that in recent days, terrorists martyred police personnel who were bravely performing their duties in the Mangi area of Ziarat district. He and the entire government strongly condemned the attack, adding that the sacrifices of the martyrs are unforgettable and should not be politicized.

Speaking at a press conference alongside tribal elders, Dummar reiterated that the government strongly condemns the terrorist attack in Mangi and emphasized that the sacrifices of the fallen police officers must not become a subject of politics.

Noor Muhammad Dummar said that the Chief Minister of Balochistan immediately took notice of the incident and suspended the SP of Ziarat. He added that legal action would be taken against all those found responsible for negligence. He said the government's intentions are sincere and that all necessary measures are being taken to ensure justice.

The provincial minister said that a jirga of tribal elders has also been convened regarding the Ziarat tragedy.

Street crime claims another life as robbers kill youth in Quetta

QUETTA (ANN): Another tragic incident occurred in the provincial capital, Quetta, amid the deteriorating law and order situation, where unidentified armed robbers shot and killed a young man after he resisted during a robbery.

According to details, Hussamuddin, an employee of a private hospital, was returning home on his motorcycle late at night after completing his duty. Near Arbab Karam Khan Road, on Marri Street, unidentified armed men stopped him and snatched his motorcycle.

Sources said the suspects also attempted to take his mobile phone. However, when Hussamuddin resisted, the robbers opened indiscriminate fire, killing him on the spot. The attackers managed to escape after the incident.

As soon as the incident was reported, police and law enforcement agencies reached the scene. The body was shifted to the hospital for necessary legal formalities.

Israel kills 13 Gazans in 24 hours as it continues to violate truce

GAZA, (Monitoring Desk): A fresh Israeli strike on Gaza killed a 6-year-old girl and her parents Wednesday, Palestinian health officials said, as talks to advance the U.S.-brokered Gaza cease-fire deal faltered. The strike on an apartment building in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza killed Omar Abu Qassem, his wife, Asma, and their daughter, Habeeba, medics said. Their son survived, but was injured, medics said.

The Israeli military claimed the strike targeted a Hamas member. In the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza City, an Israeli airstrike killed one person, medics said. The Israeli military didn't immediately comment on this incident. Overall, at least 13 Palestinians were killed and 18 others injured in Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours despite the truce, the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza said Wednesday.

No place in Balochistan for anti-state elements: CM

QUETTA, (VoM Report): The 26th meeting of the State Defense Conference (Hardening of the State Conference) was held on Wednesday in Quetta under the chairmanship of Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

The meeting reviewed the overall security situation in the province, ongoing measures against terrorism, and coordination between federal and provincial institutions for maintaining peace and stability.

The forum expressed satisfaction over the progress of the joint operation Shaaban, being conducted by the Pakistan Army, FC Balochistan, and the Police in Balochistan, and reaffirmed its commitment to continue operations against terrorist elements more effectively.

The participants paid tribute to the martyrs of Hanna Urak and Mangi Dam, expressing the resolve that their sacrifices would not go in vain and that operations against terrorism would continue with full force to ensure peace and stability in Balochistan.

Addressing the meeting, Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said terrorism is a national issue and that the country's political and military leadership is working jointly with the support of the public to combat it.

He said that miscreant elements and their facilitators would be brought to their logical end and that there is no place in Balochistan for anti-state elements.

The Chief Minister said reform measures are being undertaken to make governance more effective so that the performance of state institutions can be improved and better public services ensured.

He further stated that the provincial government, in complete coordination with the security forces, is focusing not only on maintaining law and order but also on the development and reconstruction of Balochistan.



QUETTA: Vice Chancellor Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University Professor Dr. Rubina Mushtaq called on Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail

SBKWU shaping bright future of educated, developed Balochistan: Governor

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Governor of Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail said that the remarkable progress of the province's first Women's University is a proud example of the courage, determination, and transformation of half of the population.

He said that in view of its outstanding progress, the university is producing information technology experts, engineers, researchers, managers, teachers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers.

He said that Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University is not merely educating women but is shaping the bright future of an educated and developed Balochistan. The Governor stated that although significant improvements have been made in the university's ranking and scoring due to the outstanding performance of Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Rubina Mushtaq and her entire team, much more remains to be done.

He expressed these views during a meeting with Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Rubina Mushtaq at the Governor House in Quetta. Governor Mandokhail said that after considerable efforts, the Women's University has now embarked on the path of progress and stability.

He added that every step taken and every serious crisis overcome during the past two years was the result of collective wisdom, teamwork, continuous effort, and intellectual guidance.

He directed Vice Chancellor Dr. Rubina Mushtaq to focus not only on quality education but also on modern skills development in accordance with the changing demands of the world, so that women can make meaningful contributions to the country's economic and social development and prosperity. He further said that today, not only are the Senate and Syndicate meetings of the university being held on schedule, but progress is also being made in both quality education and modern skills, which is a matter of pride and honor for the province.



KARACHI: First Lady, Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari, MNA, receives a commemorative souvenir from the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Pakistan, Mr. Chandra Warsenanto Sukotjo, at Bilawal House

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Starting a war is easy, ending it is hard

The proposition that "starting a war is easy, ending it is hard" has proven itself once again. The cease-fire reached between the U.S. and Iran could not be sustained. Starting the war required only a unilateral political decision. But now the difficulty of building a new order that Iran itself would accept to stop the war has become clear.

At the outset of the war, the U.S. terms were clear. The war produced new problems that had to be resolved. Because the war was entered into without political and military objectives being fully defined, the U.S., despite achieving military superiority, could not produce an outcome it could call a victory.

The terms put on the table before the war were ending Iran's nuclear ambitions and reducing its missile capacity and the capacity of its proxy forces. Now the problem has changed. For Iran, the Strait of Hormuz has become a more important strategic lever than the nuclear program. Iran wants the strategic leverage it gained during the war to be recognized and accepted.

The temporary framework that resulted in a cease-fire agreement in June envisioned reopening Hormuz and a 60-day negotiation process on the nuclear program and sanctions. Except for the duration of late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's funeral, the cease-fire could not be operationalized. Although the intensity of the conflict decreased, mutual attacks continued.

Iran wants to permanently convert its de facto control over the Strait of Hormuz into political, economic and strategic status. Iran's new objective is not whether the strait opens or closes, or whether oil tankers pass through. This much is clear. Iran wants ships' passage to occur along a route it determines itself, according to security arrangements it sets itself. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) views the U.S. establishing an alternative passage route south of the strait as interference in its jurisdiction.

Iran wants to establish hegemony over the Gulf states by gaining control of Hormuz. To put it more plainly, it has set control of Hormuz as its primary objective, as the key determinant of the order to be established after the war.

Therefore, the reason behind breaking the cease-fire is to focus the war entirely on Hormuz, thereby redefining the content of the negotiations to be pursued after any truce.

The clearest indicator of this objective is that one day before its most recent attacks, Iran even fired a missile at Oman, the country that was at the negotiating table for the cease-fire and had all but sided with Iran since the beginning of the war.

At present, sustaining the cease-fire does not appear possible. Iran does not want to return to full-scale war. However, it intends to keep the war going specifically around Hormuz, which has become an important front of the conflict. By creating an environment of controlled insecurity in Hormuz, it is trying to strengthen its hand, demonstrating that it will exhibit similar behavior even if an agreement is reached Even if an agreement is reached, costs will always be higher on a route where security cannot be fully guaranteed, due to insurance costs and some companies avoiding the area.

It is known that there are hardline circles within Iran, outside of central control, insisting on maximalist demands regarding the nature of the cease-fire and negotiations. It is no secret that there is division even within the IRGC on this matter.

Iranian negotiators want to avoid large-scale U.S. attacks. They tend to want to preserve economic gains and keep talks going. However, hardline and maximalist groups that aim to continue the war and keep power under control domestically are still the ones calling the shots. Both sides agree on Iran's control over Hormuz. But the disagreement is tactical; they diverge over whether to achieve the objective through negotiation or through continuing the war.

Over the past week, many countries from the region, particularly Gulf states, attended Khamenei's funeral, signaling a tendency toward starting a new normalization process. However, Iran's renewed targeting of the countries that attended the funeral has once again undermined this process.

The attempt to secure control by continuing the war in Hormuz will, in the long run, work against Iran. Iran is once again weakening the partial legitimacy it gained during the war and its chance to return to the international order. By showing its intent and objective to shape the regional power struggle through Hormuz, it is once again fueling hostilities.

Positive response to fuel crisis

MUHAMMAD ZAHID RIFAT

The recent escalation in the Middle East, triggered by the USA–Israel coalition strike on Iran, did not only raise tensions in an already volatile region; it also exposed the vulnerability of fuel-importing economies. The disruption of shipping routes, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, sent shockwaves through global energy markets. For countries like Pakistan, heavily reliant on imported petroleum, the crisis translated into immediate economic pressure. Pakistan's response offers a notable case study in crisis management under constraint. Faced with a sudden external shock, the government chose not to pass on the immediate burden to consumers. Instead, it absorbed the initial impact, committing approximately Rs129 billion over a three-week period to stabilise domestic fuel prices. This decision helped cushion households and businesses at a time when global prices were surging sharply.

Equally significant was the administrative handling of the situation. While several countries experienced fuel shortages, rationing, and long queues, Pakistan's domestic supply remained largely uninterrupted. Fuel stations continued to operate normally, even during the high-demand Eid period. This relative stability was not incidental; it was the result of proactive supply chain management, close coordination with refineries and importers, and continuous monitoring at the highest levels of government.

However, such broad-based price shielding was never sustainable. With global prices continuing to fluctuate upwards, the government recalibrated its approach. Rather than abruptly withdrawing support, it transitioned towards a targeted subsidy framework aimed at protecting the most vulnerable segments of the economy. This shift was institutionalised through a national-level consultation led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, bringing together all provinces, as well as Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The outcome was a coordinated subsidy regime focused on transport operators, motorbike users, small farmers, and public transit systems—sectors most exposed to fuel price volatility and with the strongest knock-on effects on inflation. These measures were designed not merely as relief, but as economic stabilisers. By containing transport and agricultural costs, the government sought to limit second-round inflationary pressures, particularly on food prices and the urban cost of living. Provincial governments followed through by adopting and implementing the agreed framework, reinforcing a rare instance of effective intergovernmental coordination. Further relief came through a reduction of approximately Rs80 per litre in the petroleum levy, easing retail fuel prices at a critical moment when global rates had peaked and domestic absorption capacity was under strain. Taken together, the response reflects a phased and adaptive strategy: initial shock absorption, administrative stabilisation, targeted subsidies, coordinated execution, and eventual tax-based relief. In a resource-constrained environment, this approach underscores a model of governance that balances fiscal prudence with public protection, demonstrating that even under severe external pressures, calibrated policy can mitigate the worst effects of a global crisis.

The writer is Lahore-based Freelance Journalist, Columnist and retired Deputy Controller (News), Radio Pakistan, Islamabad and can be reached at zahidriffat@gmail.com

Brain drain through a teacher's eyes

DR INTIKHAB ULFAT

Nearly two decades ago, upon completing my PhD in Sweden and defending my dissertation, I was asked a question that seemed simple at the time: "Why do you want to go back to Pakistan?" The assumption behind the question was clear. Many professionals from developing countries prefer to stay abroad, where systems are efficient, research funding is abundant, and merit is not perpetually negotiating with influence.

I replied without hesitation, and with genuine enthusiasm: "There may be many like me here, but Pakistan needs me."

I believed it. I believed that returning home was not merely a personal decision but a moral one. A country struggling with educational gaps, institutional fragility and intellectual dependency required its trained minds to come back and build.

I returned with hope, armed with degrees, research exposure, and a conviction that classrooms could be transformed, that students could be mentored into confident thinkers, that institutions could slowly evolve through persistence and integrity. For years, I invested myself in teaching, supervising research and encouraging students to believe that merit and hard work would eventually find space in our national landscape. I often told them that change is incremental; that nations are not built by escape but by commitment. But something unsettling has changed over the years.

Today, when my students walk into my office seeking recommendation letters for graduate studies (often with a quiet but unmistakable resolve not to return) or for jobs abroad, I feel a subtle pause within myself, a moment of reflection that words seldom capture.

Outwardly, I smile and say, "Of course, you should apply." And I write strong letters - because they deserve an opportunity. Because talent should not be caged by geography. Because I cannot, in good conscience, ask them to sacrifice their future for an abstract ideal.

Yet inwardly, my thoughts are no longer as simple as they once were.

I see in them the same spark I once carried, i.e. the desire to contribute, to innovate, to serve. But I also see their fatigue. They speak of limited research funding, shrinking academic positions, delayed recruitments, opaque selection processes, and a job market that undervalues intellectual labour.

Many of them have watched seniors struggle for years despite impressive qualifications. For them, migration is no longer an adventure; it is risk management.

This is how brain drain becomes normalised, not through disloyalty, but through accumulated disillusionment.

It would be dishonest to romanticise the situation. When educated youth repeatedly encounter barriers unrelated to merit, when institutional inertia suffocates initiative, and when economic uncertainty overshadows aspiration, departure begins to look rational.

A country cannot rely solely on emotional appeals to retain its brightest minds; it must offer them dignity, structure, and a predictable professional path. As a university teacher, I now stand at a moral crossroads. Two decades ago, I returned because I felt needed. Today, when my students seek my endorsement to leave, I feel conflicted. I want them to stay and build. I also want them to thrive. The deeper tragedy is not that they want to leave. It is that I can no longer confidently promise them that staying will reward their talent.

Patriotism should not demand professional stagnation. Commitment to one's homeland should not require surrendering ambition. If Pakistan truly needs its educated youth, as I once declared with conviction, then it must create an environment where staying is not an act of sacrifice but a viable choice.

I still believe in this country. I still enter my classroom with hope. But hope, to survive, must be matched by reform. Otherwise, the day may come when even the most enthusiastic among us struggle to answer Sweden's question with the same certainty.

And that would be a loss far greater than migration statistics can measure.

Ye ek ishara hai aafat-e nagahani ka
Kissi jagha se parindon ka kooch kar jana

The writer is a Professor of Physics at the University of Karachi

Blaming parents: oversimplification of social deviance

M ZEB KHAN

I recently listened to a sermon on parenting in which a religious scholar spoke passionately about the moral decline of society. Disrespect for elders, drug use and other forms of antisocial behaviour, he argued, were largely the result of poor parenting.

While there was some truth in his concern, what struck me was the sweeping nature of the claim. It felt intuitively unsatisfying because such a claim overlooks the many other forces that shape who children become.

It also seemed that beneath the moral urgency of the message lay a subtle push towards religious schooling as the corrective path. A closer look reveals why such explanations, though persuasive, are incomplete. No serious body of knowledge - whether in Sociology, Psychology or Behavioural Genetics - supports the idea that parenting alone determines behaviour.

Human development is shaped by an intricate interplay of factors: biological predispositions, peer influences, schooling systems, media exposure, economic conditions and cultural norms.

The appeal of blaming parents lies partly in its clarity. It offers a neat cause-and-effect relationship in a world that often resists such simplicity and a quick fix. By locating the problem within the family, it creates a sense of control - fix the parents, and the children will follow.

But this clarity comes at a cost. It shifts attention away from structural issues such as inequality, weak educational systems and limited social support or community indifference.

Complex social problems are thus reframed as personal moral failures and a matter of individual concern.

There is also an institutional dimension to such narratives. By emphasising parental shortcomings, the sermon implicitly positioned religious education, particularly madrassas, as an effective and exclusive solution. This is not unusual. Institutions, whether religious or secular, often frame problems in ways that reinforce their own relevance.

The diagnosis of a problem and the proposed remedy are rarely neutral; they are shaped by underlying assumptions about authority, morality and social order. But this ignores structural factors which, research suggests, profoundly determine the way we think and behave.

Equally important is the reality that human behaviour does not follow predictable patterns. We often encounter individuals who defy expectations: children raised in stable, supportive homes who engage in destructive behaviours, and others who emerge from deeply troubled environments with remarkable resilience and ethical clarity.

These are reminders that human development is probabilistic rather than deterministic. Outcomes are shaped by multiple, interacting forces, many of which lie beyond any single actor's control.

Moreover, as insights from Criminology and Critical Theory suggest, societies have a tendency to amplify deviance in ways that construct a sense of crisis. By highlighting extreme cases, narratives of decline become more persuasive, often justifying particular forms of intervention.

In such contexts, blaming parents becomes not just an explanation but a tool for shaping behaviour and directing social responses.

None of this is to deny the importance of parenting. Families remain foundational in shaping values, discipline and emotional development. But to treat parenting as the sole or even primary cause of social deviance is to oversimplify a deeply complex reality. If there is one lesson to draw from this, it is that complex problems demand nuanced and balanced solutions. Addressing social deviance requires looking beyond the family to the wider structures and cultures within which individuals live. It requires shared responsibility - between parents, schools, communities and institutions.

Most importantly, it requires a willingness to move beyond the comfort of simple explanations and engage with the complexity of the world as it is because the real challenge is not identifying someone to blame but understanding how multiple forces come together to shape human behaviour - and how, together, we might respond more wisely.

The writer holds PhD in Administrative Sciences and teaches at the University of Plymouth, UK. Email: zeb.khan@plymouth.ac.uk

Between play and pixels: children growing up in modern times

SAIRA BATADA

A digital transformation has been introduced to the quiet, bustling homes everywhere, replacing the sounds of children playing on the streets. If you visit a typical household today, it is likely to observe a child bent over a phone with headphones in, completely lost in a digital world.

At times, they are watching videos, at times, gaming, or just scrolling endlessly, or you'll find a toddler captivated by a rhythmic Coco melon rhyme while their older sibling battles in a virtual arena on a smartphone.

Millennials spent their childhood playing outside until evening, enjoying games like football, cricket and hide-and-seek. They climbed walls, rode bikes and came home sweaty and exhausted. Their boredom forced them to create games, use imagination and converse with others.

The crisis of screen addiction globally is unique and culturally specific, even though the world is grappling with technology. We created a supportive environment for it.

The smartphone is becoming the 'third parent' in many homes, and with the decline of the joint family system nowadays, the traditional support network of grandparents, aunts and cousins that once shared the burden of childcare has become weaker.

Screen time has changed drastically over the years. Earlier, children had very limited exposure. Mostly, they had very limited exposure to television for a short time each day, often with family. The use of smartphones, tablets and constant internet access has resulted in an increase in screen time.

Children are often exposed to screens for extended periods, often alone instead of with their elders or supervisors. While technology can aid in learning and staying connected, too much screen time can impact health, sleep and behaviour.

Previously, children spent their time playing outdoors, reading or interacting with others, but now the eradication of public space is a key reason for screen addiction that is yet to be fully understood. Playing outside has become a high-risk activity for many parents due to rising street crime and fears of kidnapping. Due to the normalisation of extreme heatwaves, outdoor play is often physically impossible for six months of the year, as per climate reality. If there is no safe or comfortable place in the physical world, the digital world, which has infinite 'green' landscapes like Minecraft or Roblox, becomes the sole accessible playground, unfortunately.

Universally, there's a cultural inclination towards 'getting ahead'. Numerous parents have introduced tablets at an early stage, believing they would provide their children with a 'digital dominance'. We misinterpreted a toddler's ability to swipe and unlock a phone as evidence of their intelligence, rather than an automatic behaviour shaped by repeated dopamine rewards from digital media.

The damage had already been done when we realised that the 'tech-savvy' was the Screen Dependency Disorder (SDD). Research does show that excessive screen or gadget use (around 3–4 hours or more daily) is associated with negative effects on children's mental health, like increased anxiety or mood problems, sleep disturbances, reduced attention span, and social activity.

A correlation between high screen time and obesity has been found in recent studies. Instead of learning the richness of their native languages, children are imitating the accents they hear on YouTube. Similarly, less sunlight exposure and almost no physical activities are adding to childhood health problems such as obesity and Vitamin D deficiency.

Even though they are connected, many teenagers have reported feeling more alone and anxious than previous generations.

We made the mistake of using technology to avoid our children instead of helping them. We gradually lost the warmth of our real communities because of our reliance on the online world. The internet's "global village" replaced social interaction that took place around us, where people talked, shared and grew together.

Telling a child to take their phone away can be tough when the father is scrolling through TikTok and the mother is constantly receiving WhatsApp group notifications. The child follows our actions, not our words!

The aim is not to eliminate technology, which is difficult to do nowadays, but to restore places for kids to grow, play, and connect in a healthier environment. It's vital to allow children to be bored, as it's a place where creativity and homemade play mode can be activated.

Using the phone like a medicine: beneficial in small doses, but harmful in excess. If our streets are no longer safe for children, then we must bring play closer to home. Children can enjoy the simple joy of being children once again by freely moving, playing happily and enjoying the small, safe corners of rooftops, courtyards and community spaces.

Our children's childhoods are very important, so let's not substitute the sounds of playing with the silence of scrolling. It's time to examine ourselves and discover what we're lacking.

Beginning on December 10, 2025, Australia has made it illegal for children under 16 to use major social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and Snapchat. By limiting their exposure to threats like cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and too much screen time, this step aims to ensure children's safety, making parents more aware and helping families build healthier tech habits, while also supervising their children's exposure to harmful online spaces.

Strategies should be taken, like elders should begin with simple, straightforward guidelines like avoiding screens at the dining table or before bedtime and adhere to them nicely instead of making it feel like a punishment.

Explain it in a calm way so children understand it's for their betterment. Involve them in the things they love to do, such as reading, swimming, playing outdoors, creating artwork or interacting with friends. They will naturally miss screens less when they feel involved and connected, and they will set an example for others to follow.

When they see you using mobile devices less, kids are more likely to imitate their parents. Maintain an honest and caring dialogue that makes them sense-guided as opposed to ruled.

The writer is a freelance journalist and also provides mentorship to startups. She can be reached at sairabatada.suggests@gmail.com

US President Trump says

Denuclearisation 'taking place' after US negotiators held 'very good meetings' with Iran

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday the United States was getting along very well with Iran and that recent meetings in Qatar had gone well on the denuclearisation of Tehran.

"The denuclearisation of Iran is moving along well," Trump told reporters. "They've had very good meetings, and we'll see."

The US and Iran held technical talks in the Qatari capital of Doha on Wednesday as they seek to agree on the flow of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and secure a lasting ceasefire, a source with direct knowledge of the talks and an Iranian official said.

Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and envoy Steve Witkoff met the prime minister of Qatar — a mediator in the talks alongside Pakistan — to lay the groundwork for the negotiations, but would not be attending the discussions themselves, the source with direct knowledge of the talks said. "We're getting along very well," Trump said, adding Iran has "come a long way."

"I think they're fine," the president added.

Indirect talks between Tehran and Washington have been ongoing since Tuesday night in Doha, a senior Iranian official told Reuters on Wednesday, adding that discussions were focused on the release of Tehran's funds and the Strait of Hormuz.

"Indirect negotiations began on Tuesday night. Iran held meetings with Qatari and Pakistani officials, who in turn met with the US side. The indirect talks continued on Wednesday, focusing on Iran's frozen assets and the Strait of Hormuz," the official said. Iran's Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi has reacted strongly to a post in which Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said Iran's supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, was "marked for death." "The terms of the Islamabad MoU are crystal clear and public for all to see," Araghchi said. "POTUS has committed the US to muzzling its pets in Tel Aviv. If they ignore their master, Iran will school them." In quotes shared by Israeli media on Monday, Katz described the Iranians as "good merchants" trying to extract concessions in negotiations and said Israel.



ANKARA - President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attended the "15 July on its 10th Anniversary: The Will is Ours, the Victory is Ours" program in the Capital National Garden.

Araghchi warns

Israel of powerful response over Katz's 'death threat' against Mojtaba Khamenei

Monitoring Desk

TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Wednesday warned of an immediate and powerful response after Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said Iran's Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, was "marked for death".

"The terms of the Islamabad MoU are crystal clear and public for all to see. POTUS has committed the US to muzzling its pets in Tel Aviv. If they ignore their master, Iran will school them," Araghchi said in a post on X.

He said any threat against Iran's people and leadership would receive an immediate and powerful response.

Araghchi's X post was attached to comments made by the Israeli defence minister. Katz further said that Israel could target Iran again "if it deems it necessary" despite ongoing US efforts to pursue diplomacy. Speaking at a memorial ceremony for those killed in the 2006 war in Lebanon, Katz said: "We have attacked twice with proactive, preemptive strikes in Iran and, if necessary, we will strike a third time as well."

Israeli forces would remain indefinitely in what he called "security zones" in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza to protect Israeli communities, he added.

Separately, former Israeli army chief and opposition leader Gadi Eisenkot also accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of fabricating claims that Iran possesses nuclear weapons to frighten the Israeli public.

Kim Jong Un vows stronger ties with China in letter to Xi

Monitoring Desk

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un congratulated Chinese President Xi Jinping on the 105th founding anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party and pledged to further strengthen ties between Pyongyang and Beijing in a message published Wednesday by state media.

"There is no new China without Communist Party," Kim wrote in the message to Xi, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. "This is the truth the Chinese people have realized while advancing under its guidance for many years."

"It is the steadfast stand of our Party and government to steadily develop the DPRK-China friendly relations with long and historical roots and with socialism as their core," Kim added, using the official acronym for North Korea.

The message was the latest indication of warming ties between the longtime allies.

Kim traveled to Beijing in September for a military parade marking the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. Last month, he welcomed Xi to Pyongyang for a two-day state visit that marked the Chinese president's first trip to North Korea in seven years and his first overseas trip of the year.

China remains North Korea's largest trading partner and principal economic lifeline, and has repeatedly faced accusations from the United States and U.N. experts of failing to enforce international sanctions against Pyongyang. The relationship appeared to lose some momentum in recent years, however, as North Korea deepened military cooperation with Russia following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Analysts say the connection with Russia has given Kim greater leverage in dealings with Beijing by reducing his dependence on China as Pyongyang's sole major patron.



A commemoration program was held in East Jerusalem, Palestinian territory under Israeli occupation, to mark the July 15 Democracy and National Unity Day.



Citizens, tourists, and workers enter Gibraltar after all the fences are removed in La Linea de la Concepcion, Spain

Israeli occupiers storm Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, perform Talmudic rituals

Gaza: Israeli occupiers stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem on Wednesday under the protection of Israeli police, according to the Palestinian news agency WAFA.

Citing the Jerusalem Governorate, WAFA said dozens of occupiers entered the compound, toured its courtyards and performed Talmudic rituals under the protection of Israeli police.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is the world's third-holiest site for Muslims. Jews refer to the area as the Temple Mount, claiming it was the site of two ancient Jewish temples. Palestinians said Israel was escalating efforts to Judaize occupied East Jerusalem, including Al-Aqsa Mosque, and erase its Arab and Islamic identity.

The Palestinians regard East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state, in line with international resolutions that do not recognise Israel's occupation of the city in 1967 or its subsequent annexation in 1980.

Israeli police have launched a plan to recruit religious Jews and far-right activists to serve at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound to assert Israeli control over the site, according to a report published by the Israeli daily Haaretz.

The newspaper reported early June that Israeli police were recruiting religious Jews to work at the compound and were cooperating with far-right activists who encouraged Jewish visits to the site in an effort to enlist officers from among their ranks. According to the report, Daniel Lerach, deputy commander of the police unit responsible for the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, circulated recruitment calls on social media and WhatsApp groups.

Putin increases personal security to 800 officers

Monitoring Desk

MOSCOW: Vladimir Putin has increased the number of officers responsible for his personal protection to more than 800.

The Russian president, who has reportedly become more paranoid over his safety in recent months, ordered the increase at the central apparatus of the Federal Protective Service (FSO), according to a draft decree set to take effect on Wednesday.

It is the fourth time Putin has ordered an increase since launching his full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The FSO is responsible for safeguarding top-level members of government, particularly the Russian president, but also his

Zelensky thanks Ireland for support during Dublin Castle address

Monitoring Desk

DUBLIN: Volodymyr Zelensky has thanked Ireland for its support as he addressed the opening ceremony of the country's EU presidency at Dublin Castle on Wednesday afternoon.

The Ukrainian president said Ireland had stood by his country and its people from the "very beginning" of Russia's invasion. He thanked Ireland for its assistance during the war and congratulated the country on its EU Council presidency. Ireland will hold the presidency for six months, during which time the nation will host hundreds of EU meetings as well as visits by leaders across the bloc, starting from next week. The Irish government has said its three priorities will be around competitiveness, values and security.

During his speech, Zelensky took aim at "companies in European countries whose only purpose is to work for Russia." He said: "Unfortunately, there are companies in Europe that are owned or effectively controlled by Russia and its sanctioned oligarchs.

Virginia team in Venezuela describes baby rescue after earthquake

Monitoring Desk

VENEZUELA: A Virginia-based rescue team described the moment they pulled a baby boy and his mother from the rubble of a collapsed apartment building in Venezuela as "quite an emotional experience." Last week, two powerful earthquakes hit Venezuela's northern coast, causing widespread destruction. The government's official death toll stands at over 1,900, with more than 10,500 injured and thousands of others reported missing.

John Morrison, public information officer for the Fairfax County Urban Search and Rescue, told NewsNation his team arrived in the hardest-hit area late last week.



In Berlin, the capital of Germany, a demonstration was held to support a petition demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Friedrich Merz. Demonstrators gathered in front of the Brandenburg Gate with flags, demanding the prime minister's departure from office.

Syria's first post-Assad Parliament takes shape

Monitoring Desk

DAMASCUS: The first Parliament in Syria's post-Assad era took shape Wednesday with the announcement of 70 legislators selected by interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa to join the 140 chosen in elections over the past eight months.

The 210-member Parliament will hold its first meeting on Monday when the members will be sworn in, the head of Syria's electoral committee, Mohammed Taha al-Ahmad, told reporters.

The launch of the Parliament indicates that the country is moving ahead with drafting new laws as it recovers from decades of autocratic rule under the Assad family and a deadly war that killed about half a million people.

The 70 legislators picked by al-Sharaa included 15 women, which raised the number of female members in the legislature to 22. Syria held the first phase of its parliamentary elections in October while excluding the southern province of Sweida, which is controlled by Druze gunmen opposed to the central government. The vote at the time also excluded northeast Syria, which was under Kurdish control. A vote in northeast Syria was held in May after government forces took control of the area.

Germany's Wadephul seeks closer mining coop. on Argentina visit

Monitoring Desk

ARGENTINA: German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul is continuing his tour of South America in Argentina, where he is expected to sign a memorandum of understanding to deepen cooperation on mining and raw materials at a meeting with his counterpart Pablo Quirno on Wednesday. Germany is seeking to reduce its dependence on China and to strengthen partnerships based on shared values and trade in response to the strained trans-Atlantic partnership under US President.



MEXICO CITY, MEXICO: Mexico's president Claudia Sheinbaum speaks during her daily press conference, at the National Palace

Kiev targets Russian defence industry, supply routes in occupied areas

Monitoring Desk

KIEV: Ukraine kept up its campaign against Russian military infrastructure on Wednesday, launching drone strikes on defence facilities deep inside Russia and destroying a key road bridge linking the occupied cities of Donetsk and Mariupol.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said a drone attack early Wednesday targeted an electromechanics institute in the city of Penza that develops and manufactures missile components. Penza lies about 500 kilometres from Ukraine and south-east of Moscow.

Russian regional authorities confirmed the attack but did not comment on possible damage.

Zelensky also reported a strike on the Ufa oil refinery in Russia's Ural region, around 1,300 kilometres from Ukraine. In recent days, Kiev has said it attacked a satellite communications centre in Dubna near Moscow twice and also targeted a missile supplier in the city of Voronezh.

In occupied eastern Ukraine, the Ukrainian military said it had destroyed a bridge on the main highway connecting the major cities of Donetsk and Mariupol. Images posted on social media showed the wreckage in a river valley roughly 20 kilometres north of the port city of Mariupol on the Sea of Azov.

The general staff in Kiev said the bridge over the Malyi Kalchyk river near Hranitne in the Donetsk region had been struck, without disclosing the weapons used. It also reported attacks on a rail bridge in the occupied Luhansk region and another strategically important crossing in Donetsk.

For weeks, Ukrainian forces have systematically targeted bridges and transport links in occupied territories in an effort to disrupt Russian military logistics. Russian attacks continued across Ukraine.

In the southern city of Kherson, two people were killed and nine injured when a Russian drone struck a shared taxi, regional governor Oleksandr Prokudin said. Kherson lies on the Dnipro river.

Mojtaba Khamenei: Iran's unseen leader shadowed by late father

Monitoring Desk

TEHRAN: Mojtaba Khamenei, who has spent his career behind the scenes and is yet to appear in public as Iran's new supreme leader, faces the formidable challenge of occupying the role held by his father for most of the Islamic republic's existence.

Iranians knew little about the younger Khamenei when he was named to the lifetime post shortly after a US-Israeli airstrike killed his father Ali Khamenei, supreme leader since 1989, at the start of the Middle East war.

Said to have been wounded himself, Mojtaba Khamenei has issued over dozen written messages as leader that have carried on his father's confrontational ideology, taking aim at Israel and the United States. In one of his most significant recent interventions, released on June 18, Mojtaba Khamenei said he had given his blessing to talks with the US to end the war despite having a "different view", likely an attempt to stay above the domestic political fray.

Cuba's top diplomat says talks with United States showing 'no progress'

Monitoring Desk

HAVANA: Cuba's foreign minister said on Tuesday that talks initiated earlier this year with long-time foe the United States had stalled, leaving little hope for an end to U.S. sanctions that have laid siege to the island's ailing economy.

Top diplomat Bruno Rodriguez told reporters that U.S. sanctions were "causing deaths" in Cuba the island's economy collapses and severe shortages of food, fuel, medicine and electricity make life nearly unbearable for the island's approximately 9 million residents.

"Talks between Cuba and the US show no progress," Rodriguez said at a press conference in Havana.

"The conduct of US government delegations — generally respectful — has been accompanied by constant threats against Cuba, the application of coercive measures, and offensive statements regarding our country's independence."

"Despite this, Cuba remains open to dialogue and the peaceful resolution of differences, based on mutual respect and non-interference in Cuba's internal affairs."

First Syrian parliament since al-Assad's ousting begins legislative duties

Monitoring Desk

SYRIA: The first parliament in Syria's post-Assad era has taken shape with the release of a list of 70 legislators picked by President Ahmed al-Sharaa. The inauguration of the new parliament on Wednesday shows the country is moving ahead with drafting laws as the nation works on recovering from decades of iron-fist rule under longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad, who was ousted in December 2024 after more than 13 years of civil war, which killed about half a million people.

The head of Syria's electoral committee, Mohammed Taha al-Ahmad, told reporters that the new 210-member legislature will hold its first meeting on Monday.

TENDER NOTICE

The ASSISTANT DIRECTOR KACHHI invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2026 based on Composite schedule rates 2026 on Percentage Rates

Tender Fee 2000 PKR and Bid Security 3% for each work

S.No	Name of Work/s	E/Cost
1	Construction of water reservoirs installation of solar street light and home solar system at UC Ghazi Arri district Kachhi **TSE-2627071123443**	50,000,000
2	Construction of water reservoirs installation of Solar Street Light at Khattan, Maheser Shahwani UC Sani District Kachhi **TSE-2627071123393**	50,000,000

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules – 2014. **Eligibility of Bidders:** Presence in Active Tax Payer List The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required The bidder must have completed 3 Assignment of similar nature of work Turn over of at least 35,000,000 PKR Amount in2 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm Recent Audit Report of firm Firm is blacklisted or debarred by the Procuring Agency, and the matter has been reported to the Authority (Provide Stamp paper original) List of Human Resource with their CNIC Original Completion Certificates of similar nature of projects of previous three years FBR and BRA detailed submission report of recent three years Original authority letter with dully signed stamp paper Updated firm from PEC for current financial year Original CNIC of the owner of the firm 10. Recent and fresh Bank Statement with dully signed from bank (original **Procedure Of Procurement:** Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure **Bid Security:** The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of **Bank Gurantee, Deposit at Call** of 3 % specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. **Tender Documents:** The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gob.pk **Issuance of tender Documents:** Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gob.pk **Last Date of bid submission:** Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by **31 July, 2026** till **12:00 PM** through supplier dashboard. **Tender opening:** All tenders will be opened on same day at **01:00 PM on EPPS System**

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Pakistani youth advancing towards brighter, more prosperous future: PM

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif urged the nation to renew its collective resolve to build a future where the talents and abilities of the youth are fully realized and transformed into lasting national prosperity.

In his message on the occasion of World Youth Skills Day celebrated on July 15, the prime minister underlined that Pakistan joined the international community in observing World Youth Skills Day, marked under the theme Skills for a Shared Future, and paid tribute to the talent, determination, and immense potential of its young people.

PM Shehbaz Sharif said the country's youth were reckoned among its nation's most valuable assets. However, through quality education, character building and the acquisition of contemporary knowledge and skills, the youth were confidently advancing towards a brighter and more prosperous future.

He said the current era of digital innovation, emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, and a rapidly evolving global economy was reshaping the future of labour and employment sector. "In this changing landscape, internationally competitive skills have become the true foundation of sustainable progress. Technical and vocational education and training, equitable access to opportunities, enhanced productivity, and entrepreneurial innovation are the key drivers of economic prosperity and global competitiveness," he added.

Recognizing the central importance of skills development, he said the government had transformed the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) into a modern, dynamic, and future oriented national institution. The prime minister said the Commission was equipped to deliver internationally benchmarked training, globally recognized certifications, and industry aligned skills that would enable Pakistani youth to compete with confidence, both at home and abroad.

He added that this year, the government had allocated a substantial budget through the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) to strengthen technical skills development, reflecting its unwavering commitment to investing in Pakistan's human capital. Under this policy, skills development was established as a fundamental pillar of Pakistan's economic growth and prosperity, he said. The prime minister noted that another central pillar of the government's strategy was not only to expand employment opportunities but also to nurture skilled professionals, entrepreneurs, and a highly competent workforce capable of generating jobs.



ISLAMABAD: United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani addressing during inauguration ceremony of the art exhibition "Sufism & Culture" by Roomi & Aiman at PNCA.

Security forces determined to eliminate terrorism from Balochistan: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday commended Pakistan's security forces after three more militants were killed during Operation Shaban in Balochistan, saying the ongoing campaign against militant elements was progressing successfully.

In a statement, the interior minister praised the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps (FC) Balochistan, and police personnel for what he described as their bravery and professionalism in thwarting the designs of militants. Naqvi said the operation against militants, whom he referred to as "Fitna al-Hindustan," was continuing successfully, adding that security forces remained determined to eliminate terrorism from Balochistan. "The brave personnel of the Pakistan Army, FC Balochistan and police have foiled the nefarious designs of terrorists," he said.

Respect stronger than hatred

Pakistan's cultural heritage connect younger generations with enduring spiritual values: Gilani

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Wednesday emphasized the importance of Pakistan's rich Sufi heritage in promoting tolerance, dialogue and social harmony, stating that the teachings of Sufi saints continue to offer valuable guidance in addressing contemporary challenges of polarization and intolerance.

Addressing the inauguration of the art exhibition "Sufism & Culture" by artists Roomi and Aiman at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), Islamabad, the Chairman Senate congratulated PNCA for organizing the exhibition and appreciated the artists for highlighting a theme deeply rooted in Pakistan's spiritual and cultural traditions.

He noted that Pakistan possessed one of the richest Sufi traditions in the Muslim world, which has profoundly influenced the country's poetry, music, architecture, languages and folklore. He observed that the enduring message of Sufism promoted respect, compassion and coexistence, values that were increasingly needed in today's world. He said that the teachings of Sufi saints remind humanity that respect was stronger than hatred.

Int'l cooperation should strengthen national capacities: Pakistan

UNITED NATIONS, (APP): Pakistan has emphasized sovereign control over natural wealth, particularly standing in solidarity with African nations, as the UN Security Council discussed how the illicit exploitation fuels armed conflicts and explored building a regulatory framework to ensure resource wealth benefits local communities.

"International cooperation should strengthen national capacities, while fully respecting national ownership and development priorities," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the 15-member Council, which met under Arria-Formula format named after a former Venezuelan Ambassador to the UN.

Pakistan, he said, emphasized that the governance of natural resources must remain firmly anchored in the UN Charter and international law.

Organized by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the session addressed the normative gaps linking natural resource exploitation with global security and peace amid the accelerating global scramble for critical minerals.

Arria-Formula meetings are informal that enable Security Council members to have a frank and private exchange of views on relevant subjects.

In his remarks, the Pakistani envoy stressed that natural resources should drive sustainable development and shared prosperity rather than coercion or geopolitical competition.

Pakistan also advocated for the effective use of existing UN tools, including sanctions and monitoring mechanisms, to counter the illicit exploitation of resources that fuels armed conflict.

Noting the historical contest for resources, he said the growing demand for critical minerals, often driven by the energy transition, digital transformation and advanced manufacturing, has created new geopolitical and geo-economic pressures.

"If not managed responsibly, competition over strategic natural resources can create new risks and vulnerabilities for international peace and security." Ambassador Asim Ahmad also emphasized the importance of shared water resources as a cornerstone of regional peace and sustainable development. Expressing Pakistan's deep concern over India's unilateral decision to place the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, he pointed out that the move was a violation of international law and the Treaty's provisions.

"The international community must urge India to return to full compliance with the Treaty, which remains valid and in force, as affirmed by the August 2025 Award of the Court of Arbitration.'

On minerals, Pakistan also underscored that any further normative approaches must emerge through inclusive, member-driven processes rather than top-down mandates

In conclusion, Ambassador Asim Ahmad said, "The objective should not only be to secure supply chains, but ensuring that natural resources generate shared prosperity for the countries and communities that possess them."



QUETTA: Mir Tariq Khetran called on Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

Pakistan promoting regional peace by utilizing Gwadar Port, CPEC as alternative connectivity routes

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Spokesperson to the President, Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday said Pakistan was pursuing a policy of strategic balance with regional neighbours and proactive diplomacy to safeguard its national interests amid a rapidly transforming geopolitical environment.

Addressing a one-day international conference titled "Pakistan in a Transforming Geopolitical Environment," jointly organized by the Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Solangi termed the event timely and significant for bringing together scholars and policy experts from around the world at a critical juncture in international affairs. He said the world was witnessing a historic transition from a unipolar to a more contested multipolar order, said a news release issued here.

He said the international order established after the Second World War was facing unprecedented challenges, with multilateral institutions becoming increasingly ineffective and power politics replacing the rule-based international system.

Solangi said Pakistan currently stood at the intersection of three major geopolitical transitions, including evolving relations with Afghanistan, the changing strategic landscape in West Asia.



QUETTA: IG Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir presenting shield to Faryal Fareed.

Govt removes sales tax on contraceptives in federal budget: Aurangzeb

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, on Wednesday, warned that Pakistan's future potential could be severely undermined unless the country addresses rapid population growth and climate change, describing both as existential challenges that require sustained policy reforms, institutional coordination and long-term financing. Addressing the World Population Day 2026 commemorative conference, Aurangzeb said the government's efforts had evolved from the National Population Stabilisation Plan to the National Population Council, bringing together civil and military leadership, provincial governments and the federation to ensure effective implementation.

"We have known the 'what' and the 'why' for the longest time.

The real question has always been the 'how' and the 'who'," he said, adding that the council would help deliver results through clear targets, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and regular performance reviews.

PM vows to support relief efforts for vulnerable communities

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said the increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related events underscored the urgent need for greater preparedness, resilience and closer coordination among national, regional and international stakeholders to effectively respond to disasters. Talking to United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Tom Fletcher who called on him at the Prime Minister House, he appreciated the invaluable humanitarian work being undertaken by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in responding to complex emergencies across the world. He acknowledged OCHA's continued support to Pakistan, particularly during the devastating floods of 2022, and thanked the organization for its assistance in strengthening the country's disaster response efforts. The prime minister noted that Pakistan's national and provincial disaster management institutions had significantly enhanced their capacity to respond to climate-induced disasters over the years. Tom Fletcher thanked the prime minister for receiving him and appreciated the longstanding partnership and close cooperation between Pakistan and OCHA. He also commended the Prime Minister's efforts to promote regional peace and stability, noting that sustainable peace was essential to addressing the humanitarian and economic consequences of conflicts.

During the meeting, Mr. Fletcher briefed the prime minister on the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the challenges being faced by OCHA in delivering urgently needed assistance to the affected population. He also expressed appreciation for Pakistan's continued support to OCHA's humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan.

The prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to working closely with the United Nations and OCHA to strengthen global humanitarian cooperation.

Chinese, Pakistani universities ink MoU to boost marine science cooperation

BEIJING, (APP): China's Dalian Ocean University (DLOU) and Pakistan's Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences (LUAWMS) signed a memorandum of understanding on July 8 to strengthen cooperation in marine science and education.

The signing ceremony took place in Dalian, where an LUAWMS delegation led by Vice Chancellor Abdul Malik met Liu Wenhe, vice president of Dalian Ocean University, and other university officials.

According to a statement issued by DLOU, the two universities plan to focus their cooperation on the sharing and application of marine big data, research into changes in the marine environment and modern aquaculture, China Economic Net reported on Tuesday.

The partnership will also include joint training programmes for faculty members and students, collaborative research projects and the proposed establishment of a Belt and Road marine laboratory.



In New York City, anti-Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) protesters held a demonstration in memory of Joan Sebastian Guerrero and Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, who died during ICE operations.

Importance of print media can not be ignored: Senator Sarmad Ali

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday announced a series of measures to protect media workers, strengthen mainstream media and reform the government's advertising policy, warning that media organisations resorting to layoffs, salary cuts or non-payment of wages could face suspension of official advertisements or a downward revision of their advertisement rates.



Responding to the Senate Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting, chaired by Senator Sarmad Ali, the minister said the government's foremost priority was the welfare of media employees and ensuring that public funds released to media organisations benefited journalists and other workers.

Acknowledging concerns regarding regional newspapers, particularly those published from Balochistan and other provinces, Tarar directed the Press Information Department (PID) to constitute a subcommittee to identify genuine regional publications and submit a report on their circulation.

Senator Sarmad Ali observed that the importance of print media could not be ignored and stressed the need to strengthen newspapers.

He also called for improvements in the government's media list.

The committee also discussed certification of the recently released film "Buleha".

Rapidly increasing population affecting delivery of quality services: Mustafa Kamal

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for National Health Services Syed Mustafa Kamal on Wednesday stressed the need for collective efforts to tackle Pakistan's growing population challenge.

Addressing a seminar held to mark World Population Day, the minister said around 26 million children in Pakistan were out of school, while 43 percent of the country's population comprised children.

He said the rapidly increasing population was placing an enormous burden on hospitals, educational institutions and public infrastructure, affecting the delivery of quality services.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board or Investment, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Federal Minister for NHSR&C, Syed Mustafa Kamal and SAPM for Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan addressing a press conference regarding Pak-China B2B Investment Conference at Press Information Department Media Center.

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