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Escalating tensions in region could adversely affect country's economy: PM

Says "just as the people extended full support during the previous simplicity campaign, austerity must now be embraced at the national level"

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed the relevant authorities to maintain complete preparedness to counter any potential challenges arising from the prevailing uncertainty in the region and lauded the public support for the austerity and fuel-saving drive of the government.

Chairing a high-level meeting to review the impact of regional tensions on the national economy, the prime minister said that by the grace of Allah, the national economy remained stable at present, but stressed the need to formulate a comprehensive strategy to enable timely action.

The meeting was briefed that the country currently possessed sufficient reserves of petroleum products to meet domestic requirements, and that measures had been put in place to ensure their continued supply in the future.

PM Shehbaz commended the effective and timely response of the government's strategy, which he said, had ensured optimal management of the fuel supply situation in the country.

He noted that the government had extended protection to the common man, motorcyclists, rickshaw drivers and transporters, and that subsidies provided by the state had helped contain the impact of any increase in fuel prices. The prime minister directed that, in coordination with provincial governments, strict action be taken against elements responsible for creating an artificial shortage of petroleum products in the market.

Reflecting on the government's earlier austerity campaign, the prime minister expressed heartfelt gratitude to the public for the role they had played in its success, and called for the same spirit to be adopted nationwide going forward. "Just as the people extended full support during the previous simplicity campaign, austerity must now be embraced at the national level," he said.

He also acknowledged the public's cooperation in the national campaign for the conservation of petroleum products and energy.



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar witnessing the signing ceremony of agreement on the establishment of the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization (WAICO) held in Shanghai, China



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting to review austerity measures in the evolving economic situation.

Quetta, Turbat to be connected with major cities by launching domestic flights: Governor

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Governor Balochistan, Jaffar Khan Mandokhel on Thursday said that they would connect Quetta and Turbat with all the major cities of Pakistan through domestic flights inauguration and God willing, very soon they would start air flights for the people from Zhob and Panjgur. Governor Mandokhel said that today was a proud moment for Pakistan, especially Balochistan to restore air connectivity, it was an honor for them that after starting Quetta-Jeddah and Quetta-Zaidan flights in a short period of about two years, they would not inaugurate the first domestic flight of South Airline, and want a future where every small and big city of Pakistan become accessible to the people of Balochistan. He expressed these views while addressing the participants of the inauguration ceremony of South Airline Limited's Quetta-Turbat first domestic flight.

Provincial Education Minister, Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani, Member Provincial Assembly Rehmat Saleh Baloch, Brigadier Amir Abrar of South Airlines Limited, Chief Executive Officer of BRSP Dr. Tahir Rashid, Principal Secretary to Governor Balochistan Abdul Nasir Dotani, GM Balochistan SOS Group of Companies Abdul Sattar Achakzai and Manager of Quetta International Airport Khalid Khan Kakar were also present on the occasion.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of South Airlines' first domestic flight from Quetta, Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhel said that it was a proud and historic moment for Pakistan and Balochistan.



ISLAMABAD: The Hon'ble Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mr. Justice Yahya Afridi, in group photo with delegation of officers from the Supreme Court of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, at Supreme Court of Pakistan.

JUI leaders condemns defamation drive against Maulana Fazl

QUETTA (ANN): Central and provincial leaders of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) said a systematic campaign was underway to defame the party's chief, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, adding that JUI is an organized and democratic force and would respond at every level. They urged the government to focus on improving the situation instead of worsening it, saying Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have gone beyond the government's effective control and that the same policy is now being repeated in Muzaffarabad, which is not a good sign.

The statement was jointly issued by JUI Central General Secretary Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, Central Joint Secretary Malik Sikandar Khan Advocate, Provincial General Secretary Agha Mahmood Shah, and District Ameer Maulana Abdul Rahman Rafiq. They said the country was passing through an extremely sensitive period, but instead of addressing the situation, the rulers were aggravating it with policies that continue to worsen conditions. They questioned why the government insists on such policies despite lacking a parliamentary majority and, according to them, coming to power through illegitimate means. They said the public knows who the real representatives of the people are and who has been rejected. The leaders further alleged that efforts had now extended to a campaign to defame Maulana Fazlur Rehman. They advised those responsible not to assume that social media campaigns could intimidate JUI or force it to change its course. They said JUI had faced every period of dictatorship and would continue to oppose the government's wrong policies and attempts to create chaos. They added that the country and its institutions belong to everyone, and every institution should remain within its constitutional limits and work for national stability and prosperity. JUI, they said, would support such efforts but would criticize any institution that exceeded its authority.

DPM, Chinese FM review relations

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a bilateral meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Shanghai on the margins of WAIC and reviewed the broad canvas of Pakistan-China bilateral relations and reaffirmed their shared commitment to further deepening the All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership.

According to a press release, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister was accompanied by Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja , Minister for Information Technology & Telecommunications; Ali Mustafa Dar, Adviser to the Chief Minister of Punjab on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Special Initiatives; Bilal Bin Saqib, Chairman of the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA); Dr. Syed Asad Ali Gillani, Additional Secretary (Asia Pacific), Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Aizaz Khan, Pakistan's Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing, China.

They underscored the importance of advancing high-quality development under CPEC 2.0 and enhancing collaboration in trade, investment, science and technology, the digital economy, and artificial intelligence. The two sides also exchanged views on the latest regional and global developments and reaffirmed their resolve to maintain close coordination on issues of mutual interest.

Balochistan govt to thwart malicious intentions of terrorists: Khosa

QUETTA (ANN): Pakistan Muslim League (N) parliamentary leader and Provincial Minister for Communications Mir Saleem Khosa said the government has condemned every incident of terrorism. He described the Ziarat tragedy as a heartbreaking incident in which innocent people were martyred and said the government stands with the victims' families and will continue to do so. He appealed to the families to end their sit-in in accordance with the government's commitments so that public hardships could be reduced.

In his statement, he said the government has always stood by the people, who are its greatest strength. Referring to terrorist incidents, he said they affect not only a few individuals but everyone, from security forces and police to ordinary citizens. He said it is everyone's responsibility to work together for the region's peace and prosperity and to defeat the malicious intentions of terrorists.

He reiterated that the Ziarat tragedy was a deeply tragic and regrettable incident in which police personnel were martyred. The government, he said, has condemned the incident from the beginning, remained in continuous contact with the families of the martyrs, and will continue to do so. He appealed to the affected families to end their protest.

FCCP demands detailed reports from federal, provincial govts on child abduction and forced labor

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Federal Constitutional Court has directed the federal and all provincial governments to submit detailed reports regarding the issues of child abduction, forced begging, child labor, and overall child protection.

The court has further instructed authorities to present a comprehensive, data-driven overview of the situation to the bench. A three-member bench, presided over by Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, heard the case on Thursday.

During the proceedings, Justice Rizvi emphasized that the government must develop a complete database regarding children in vulnerable situations. The court inquired specifically about the number of children forced into begging or child labor, demanding a granular report on these figures.

Justice Rizvi expressed deep concern over the prevalence of forced child labor.

Pakistan dismisses impression of stepping back from active regional mediation efforts

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Pakistan on Thursday dismissed the impression of stepping back from its active regional mediation efforts, emphasizing that the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) remained an enduring, highly viable template for promoting peace, mutual respect, and shared prosperity amid renewed hostilities between Iran and the United States.

"Admittedly, the mediation process is currently facing severe challenges because the logic of escalation is prevailing. However, we hope that this logic of escalation will eventually be overcome by the rationality for peace and dialogue. A peace process never dies; it may be placed on the back burner temporarily, but it remains viable," Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said.

Iranian army warns US to expect 'surprises' if escalations, memorandum violations continue

TEHRAN, (Agencies): Iran's army warned Thursday that the US should expect military "surprises" if it continues attacking Iranian territory and violating a memorandum of understanding.

Army spokesperson Brig Gen Mohammad Akraminia said President Donald Trump would face unexpected action from the Iranian military if Washington continues its "adventurous" and "malicious" policies and attacks.

"US officials will face new and unexpected challenges from the army of the Islamic Republic of Iran, both in terms of weapons and the geography of the war, that they could never imagine.

The United States should expect surprises from the army." Akraminia told the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA).

He argued that the US could not fully control developments even in areas where it claims military dominance. Akraminia said Iranian vessels continue to sail from the Strait of Hormuz toward the Indian Ocean, warning: "Any threat by the US or its allies would draw an immediate and severe response" from Tehran. His remarks came amid escalating tensions between the US and Iran over the Strait of Hormuz, as both sides continued exchanging attacks despite a Pakistan-brokered memorandum of understanding aimed at ending the conflict and reaching a lasting peace agreement.

US strike near children's cancer hospital as 'barbaric attack', says Iran

Iran on Thursday condemned a US strike near a children's cancer hospital in the southwestern city of Ahvaz as a "barbaric attack," saying it forced the emergency evacuation of 211 pediatric cancer patients.



QUETTA: Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail inaugurates office of South Air Line at Quetta International Airport. Provincial Minister for Education Raheela Hameed Durrani, MPA Rehmat Saleh Baloch are also present.

National Party rejects Balochistan Digital Media Policy 2026, calls it threat to press freedom

Says a free press is a symbol of a strong state

QUETTA (ANN): A spokesperson for the National Party, in a statement, rejected the Balochistan government's Digital Media Policy 2026, calling it contrary to press freedom, local journalism, the public's right to information, and democratic values.

The spokesperson said the policy is, in fact, a systematic attempt to eliminate Balochistan's local newspapers and magazines, create economic insecurity for the journalist community, and restrict freedom of expression. Local newspapers in Balochistan have, for decades, served as the voice of public issues, government performance, regional deprivation, and remote areas. If the policy is implemented, it could lead to the closure of dozens of newspapers, while journalists, editors, compositors, printing workers, and other employees associated with them would lose their jobs, further devastating an already crisis-stricken media sector.

He said the ground reality in Balochistan is that, apart from Quetta, internet services in most districts of the province are either extremely poor or completely unavailable. Under such circumstances, declaring digital media a complete substitute for traditional newspapers amounts to ignoring the facts and depriving the public of their fundamental right to access information. Even today, millions of citizens rely on local newspapers for government announcements, job advertisements, tenders, educational information, and other public affairs. If local newspapers disappear, a large segment of the province's population will be pushed into an information blackout. The spokesperson said it was highly regrettable that neither journalist organizations, representatives of local newspapers, nor civil society were consulted during the drafting of the policy. Apparently, the objective of the policy is to benefit a few large institutions and vested interests, marginalize local newspapers, and weaken independent voices critical of the government, which is not a positive sign for any democratic society.



QUETTA: A view grand protest camp set against martyrdom of 19 Police officials in Ziarat incident

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No further sanctions

US President Donald Trump's meeting with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin delivered exactly what Moscow wanted — no deal and no further sanctions. Trump, who had threatened "serious consequences" if no immediate ceasefire was reached, instead retreated empty-handed. The result was a diplomatic win for Putin, with only the vague prospect of a peace process that leaves Russia free to seize more land at no cost. With Trump unwilling to take a harder line on Russia, Europe's only choice is to turn the tables on Washington, taking the initiative and intensifying the pressure on Moscow.

For Ukraine and Europe, the only relief was that Trump did not strike a territorial concession deal with Putin in pursuit of a short-term political victory. But the press conference made clear that such a deal in exchange for a ceasefire was never on Putin's agenda. The Kremlin leader emphasized the need to address what Moscow calls the "root causes" of the conflict — namely Ukraine's independent statehood and Euro-Atlantic future. Convinced that Russia is winning and that Kyiv will eventually crack, he showed no interest in compromise.

Faced with Putin's hardline position, Trump dropped the immediate ceasefire as his central objective — a move that directly contradicted the approach agreed with Ukraine and European leaders before the summit. Yet this reveals Europe's underlying weakness: a cycle in which Trump sets the strategic goals, while European governments limit themselves to providing the means to achieve those goals, from the Coalition of the Willing to the new scheme of financing US weapons through NATO.

Such a division of labor can work. It did during the Cold War, when US leadership steered the West to victory but it relies on a strong transatlantic bond and genuine trust, both of which now appear increasingly fragile. And if Trump unilaterally shifts the strategic objective in Ukraine from a ceasefire to an illusory full-scale peace deal, what purpose will these European-crafted mechanisms serve?

The lesson of the Alaska Summit is clear: Trump is unwilling to make Moscow pay for its aggression against Ukraine, no matter how many ultimatums he issues. The only viable path for Europe is to seize the initiative, demonstrate leadership to Washington and increase pressure on Moscow. In this context, it is encouraging that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was joined in Washington on Monday by several European leaders, including German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Finnish President Alexander Stubb, French President Emmanuel Macron, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Their presence sends a powerful message that Ukraine is not alone and that the EU regards Kyiv's fate as an integral part of its own security. However, it is not enough for the leaders merely to exchange views or receive Trump's account of the situation. They should also come prepared to put forward concrete solutions.

This is where symbolism must give way to substance. Europe must start acting with confidence, as it "has the cards" to play a more active role. Europe already provides more military aid to Ukraine than the US, whose latest package is nearly exhausted. Moreover, Washington is increasingly shifting the financial burden of US weapons onto European allies. The Coalition of the Willing led by France and the UK should not wait for a ceasefire but deploy in a non-combat role to boost Ukraine's defense away from the frontlines by providing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, boosting air defenses to protect Ukrainian critical infrastructure and civilian areas, as well as assisting with training of Ukrainian military and providing logistical support. Europe should also stop wrangling over frozen Russian assets, seize them outright and channel the funds directly into Ukraine's war effort.

At the same time, the EU must recognize that its foreign and security policy machinery is unfit for an era of great-power competition and urgently reform it, starting with the slow and ineffective unanimity rule on sanctions and other decisions. Without such change, Europe risks sliding into even greater irrelevance and resigning itself to the role of a secondary player, even on its own continent. The gravest danger for Europe is that Putin will read both Europe's perceived weakness and Trump's reluctance to confront Moscow as a green light for further aggression, eroding the NATO deterrence that has preserved peace on the continent for 76 years. Addressing these weaknesses is essential not only to save Ukraine but also to prevent a wider war.

A fee-paying postdoc at KU? Disturbing drift of our academia

DR MUHAMMAD IBTESAM MAZAHIR

There are moments when a single policy decision reveals deeper structural cracks in a system. The recent announcement by the University of Karachi (KU) concerning a postdoctoral fellowship programme is one such moment. Not because postdoctoral opportunities are unwelcome, but because the model on offer appears fundamentally misunderstood.

In what should have been a step toward strengthening Pakistan's research ecosystem, the programme instead resembles an undergraduate admission notice. According to the university's own announcement, selected "fellows" are expected to pay an admission processing fee (Rs10,000), an admission fee (Rs30,000), tuition fees (Rs100,000-120,000), departmental charges (Rs50,000-80,000), and even a "mentor fee" of Rs80,000.

This raises a fundamental question: do we, as a country, truly understand what a postdoctoral fellowship is?

Globally, postdoctoral fellows are not students. They are highly trained researchers who have already completed their PhDs and are now contributing to knowledge production, innovation and academic mentorship. At leading institutions across the United States, Europe and East Asia, postdocs are hired as employees or funded fellows. They receive stipends or salaries, access to research grants, and institutional support. In return, they publish, supervise students, build labs and elevate the university's global standing.

In Pakistan, however, the model appears inverted.

When a university charges scholars under the guise of a "postdoctoral fellowship", it is not a mere bureaucratic anomaly, it is a conceptual failure. A fellowship, by definition, is funded. When candidates are asked to pay for the privilege of conducting research under an institution's name, the line between academic development and commercialisation becomes dangerously blurred.

The implications are serious. First, such practices risk excluding talented researchers who cannot afford these costs, thereby reinforcing inequity in academia. Second, they undermine the credibility of the postdoctoral title itself. If postdocs are treated as fee-paying participants rather than knowledge producers, the value of their work is diminished. Third, this approach discourages serious researchers from engaging with local institutions, accelerating the already troubling brain drain.

Ironically, this development comes at a time when Pakistan urgently needs to strengthen its research capacity. The global knowledge economy is driven by innovation, interdisciplinary research and high-impact publications - all areas where postdoctoral researchers play a pivotal role. Yet, Pakistan faces a critical brain drain, losing thousands of skilled professionals annually. A fee-based postdoc programme does nothing to address this crisis, it only deepens it.

The contrast becomes even sharper when viewed through lived academic experience. Those who have navigated international academic environments understand that postdoctoral positions are built on merit, funding and intellectual contribution, not on fee structures. Exposure to global systems reveals a simple truth: universities invest in postdocs because they expect returns in the form of research output, rankings and reputation.

Why, then, are we moving in the opposite direction? Part of the answer lies in systemic gaps. Many faculty members in major Pakistani universities, including the University of Karachi itself, have not had postdoctoral exposure. This is not a criticism of individuals but an institutional reality. Without firsthand experience of how postdoctoral systems function globally, it becomes easier to misinterpret them as extended academic programmes rather than professional research roles.

However, this is precisely where leadership must step in. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has long emphasised improving research quality, international collaboration and academic standards. But such goals cannot be achieved if foundational concepts like postdoctoral fellowships are redefined in ways that contradict global norms. Indeed, the HEC's own Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programme (Phase-III) offers selected scholars financial support of up to Rs2.9 million. Other Pakistani universities, such as LUMS and GCUF, offer postdoc stipends ranging from Rs130,000 to Rs150,000 per month. If Pakistan is serious about building a knowledge economy, it must start by respecting its researchers.

If we are to reverse this drift, I propose the following immediate steps:

For the University of Karachi: Immediately rescind the fee-based model and redesign the programme as a funded fellowship, in line with global norms and the HEC's own standards.

For the HEC: Issue clear, binding guidelines that define postdoctoral fellowships as funded, professional research positions, not fee-paying academic programmes.

For Pakistani academics and researchers: Speak out against this model. Do not apply for fee-charging postdocs. Refuse to mentor scholars who are being charged to work.

For the media: Continue to expose such policies and hold university administrations accountable.

Postdoctoral fellows should be funded, not charged; treated as professionals, not students; and integrated into research ecosystems, not administrative fee frameworks. Anything less risks turning academic aspiration into a transactional exercise.

The issue at hand is not just about one university or one programme. It is about the direction in which our academic culture is heading. Are we building institutions that invest in knowledge, or are we creating systems that extract value from those seeking to produce it?

The answer will determine whether Pakistan's educational vision thrives or withers under the weight of misplaced priorities.

Pakistan: The heart of Asia's destiny

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

In the divine act of creation, the Almighty fashioned the human form with organs so perfectly attuned to one another that health and vigour depend upon their unbroken harmony. No faculty may falter without imperilling the rest. Foremost among them is the heart, which tirelessly propels the life-blood from the seat of intellect in the brain to the remotest vein in the toes. Through carelessness or affliction, however, obstructions arise; vessels constrict, clots form, and the vital current slows. Medicine is first employed to restore flow; when remedies prove inadequate, a stent may reopen the passage; and in the gravest peril, the surgeon must perform a bypass to safeguard existence itself.

Such, in many respects, is the condition of Pakistan today. Like the heart within the body of nations, Pakistan occupies a position of singular importance—geographically, politically, commercially, and strategically. It stands at the crossroads of civilisations, bearing responsibilities far beyond its borders. Pakistan has consistently extended every form of cooperation and assistance to address regional challenges, yet it has been afflicted by a persistent malady; terrorism nurtured from Afghan soil and abetted by Indian design. This external interference has disrupted the nation's stability and hindered its natural rhythms.

With exemplary patience, Pakistan pursued negotiations to resolve these tensions. When dialogue bore no lasting fruit, military operations were undertaken, not out of choice but necessity, to protect the country's integrity and the welfare of its people. Even now, despite these efforts, acts of terrorism continue, guided from across the border. In these difficult times, brotherly nations have extended valuable support for mediation. Qatar and Türkiye, along with other friendly countries, have offered their good offices to facilitate dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan, demonstrating a shared commitment to regional peace and stability. Such mediations reflected the hope that wisdom and mutual understanding could prevail over hostility, but all efforts went in vain due to Afghanistan's obstinacy in stopping hostile activities from their side.

The deeper tragedy lies in opportunities forfeited by continued strife. Central Asia—encompassing Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan—holds some of the world's most abundant reserves of natural gas, oil, uranium, and rare earth minerals. These landlocked states remain largely cut off from global markets. To their south lie Pakistan and Afghanistan, positioned by geography as the most direct overland bridge connecting this resource wealth with the energy-hungry economies of South and East Asia, particularly China and India. China, the planet's largest energy consumer, and India, its fastest-growing major economy, both grapple with structural deficits that could be eased through reliable northern corridors.

Pipelines for gas and oil, efficient road freight networks, and modern rail links traversing Pakistan and Afghanistan could generate billions of dollars annually in transit revenues. Such corridors would ignite industrial activity, multiply employment, develop infrastructure, and enable both nations to evolve from aid-dependent economies into thriving hubs of regional commerce. Ports such as Gwadar and Karachi could serve as vital gateways, while existing roads and proposed railways would knit together markets stretching from the steppes of Central Asia to the bustling ports of the Arabian Sea and beyond. This vision, however, remains locked behind a single critical barrier; the absence of enduring stability and cooperative governance in Afghanistan.

Pakistan and Afghanistan together constitute the natural link between supply and demand in this vast region. Transforming the corridor from a theatre of conflict into an artery of commerce is achievable, yet it requires genuine political will and responsible conduct from Kabul. A landlocked Afghanistan cannot forge a stable and self-reliant future without dependable transit partnerships with its neighbours. It faces a clear choice; become a corridor of commerce that benefits its people or remain trapped as a corridor of conflict that perpetuates isolation and dependence on international charity.

The potential rewards are substantial and mutual. Peaceful connectivity would bring transit fees, vibrant border trade, fresh investment, and thousands of jobs for Afghans and Pakistanis alike. Pakistan, in turn, would secure enhanced access to Central Asian resources and fuller utilisation of its strategic ports and highways. Ordinary citizens on both sides of the Durand Line stand to gain from shared prosperity. Yet no economic endeavour of this magnitude can succeed while terrorism, militant sanctuaries, and cross-border attacks persist. Afghan soil must no longer serve as a base for groups operating against Pakistan. The region's transit promise is therefore inseparable from a firm recalibration of policy in Kabul.

The current Afghan dispensation's tolerance—and in some instances apparent facilitation—of anti-Pakistan terrorist activity remains the foremost obstacle to integration. Kabul must review its posture, cease support for elements hostile to Pakistan, and take credible, verifiable action against networks destabilising Balochistan and the border regions. The Afghan people, who ultimately bear the heaviest cost of their leadership's decisions, would do well to ask themselves whether they desire a future marred by proxy conflict and seclusion, or one illuminated by connectivity, commerce, and collective advancement.

The strategic implications extend beyond immediate neighbours. Balochistan possesses considerable deposits of minerals and rare earth elements essential to modern technology. This wealth cannot be fully realised while terrorism, sustained through Afghan sanctuaries, continues to unsettle the province. Peace in Balochistan therefore serves not only Pakistani interests but aligns with the broader aims of the United States and other stakeholders who seek secure trade routes and diversified supply chains of critical materials. Washington and the international community have every reason to encourage Kabul to act responsibly, deny safe havens to terrorists, and support regional connectivity rather than permit instability to fester.

Central Asia offers the resources, South and East Asia the demand, and Pakistan and Afghanistan the vital corridor between them. Security and mutual trust remain the only missing elements—qualities that depend largely upon a change of approach in Kabul. The Almighty has endowed this region with extraordinary gifts of geography and potential. It falls to its leaders and peoples, guided by foresight and statesmanship, to remove obstructions so that these blessings may flow freely, nourishing prosperity and harmony much as a healthy heart sustains the entire body in balanced and enduring life.

A changed world

ARIFA NOOR

It's been a year since the May that Pakistan will celebrate. A few cycles ago, we had the unfortunate May 9, which too cannot be forgotten but for reasons best not to get into. But last year brought us a May as bright and celebratory as the May of English poetry. The month didn't necessarily begin this way — for the clouds of war darkened the horizon after the Pahalgam event, fighting was predicted and correctly so. The end, thankfully, came quickly as did the victory Pakistan could call its own thanks to the downing of multiple Indian aircraft. This is not to say Pakistan did not face an Indian assault or des-truction but the downing of aircraft in the plural does get more attention than other damage.

Overnight, the conversation about the mess in the country — from elections to economic fragility to the quality of democracy — gave way to debate about Pakistan's air force, its skilled pilots and the capacity of Chinese hardware to down the French Rafale. There was also some talk of Indian adventurism which also received its share of the limelight with the events in Canada. Then came the bromance with the latest inhabitant of the White House and the rest as they say is history.

The Iran war has simply added more feathers to Pakistan's cap, of being a peacemaker and mediator and a trusted ally of sworn enemies that collects accolades from around the world. As Pakistan basks in this international glory, it seems that New Delhi cannot understand the rapidly changing world around it. flummoxed by the noise and attention around Pakistan, it has reacted by passing petty comments at worst.

This has simply added to the celebrations at home — from the critical remarks to the debates about how this change of fortunes happened in India. But at the same time, despite the self-congratulations and praise for individuals who have been given all credit, Pakistan, too, has misread the situation at times. In other words, it may be missing the woods for the trees.

To understand what is happening vis-à-vis Pakistan and the world, it is important to take a view longer than the May conflict or change in the White House. Indeed, some of these events are taking place in a world that has moved on from 9/11; where terrorism is no longer the foremost priority in global politics.

After 9/11 and other high-profile attacks in Western cities such as London, and the spectre of terrorist organisations such as Al Qaeda and IS, Pakistan was viewed through the lens of militancy. Despite being a close ally of Washington, doubts remained. In fact, once George Bush, who shared a close relationship with Pervez Musharraf, left the White House, the Pakistan-US relationship became thornier and stormier, reflecting the questions that were being raised about Islamabad's intentions.

Over time, with incidents such as Mumbai, New Delhi learnt to take advantage of this world — internationally and domestically. From pushing for Islamabad to be placed on the FATF list to having Pakistan-based groups condemned internationally, New Delhi grew more assertive as its economic heft increased as did its relevance to the West. Domestically, the BJP painted Congress as a weak player, which was unable to punish Pakistan for 'attacks' such as Mumbai and promised to avenge each transgression. On both planks it succeeded.

But then, the world began to change. The US withdrew from Afghanistan and terrorism seemed less relevant in the face of economic stagnation; populist politics; and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Terrorism slid down the priority list for the world. Nothing made this more evident than recognition of the new government in Syria. This is also evident in the change of attitudes from Balakot in 2019 to Pahalgam. If Indian accusations were believed in the first incident, in the second they were met mostly with silence. Not just because of the lack of evidence but also the environment.

Oct 7 and the Israeli rampage since has added a second dimension to this world. Islamabad is now being seen and hailed as a peacemaker as well as a security provider in the Middle Eastern region. American President Donald Trump, can't stop praising Islamabad and if the State Department has a view closer to India's, at the moment it is too irrelevant and gutted to make a difference.

Finally, it seems New Delhi is also learning to recognise this new world. There is anecdotal evidence the country is considering showing some flexibility in its approach to Pakistan and the idea of engagement. However, whether or not this leads to some qualitative change and talks is not clear.

At the same time, it is worth remembering that this may not stop New Delhi from fomenting clandestine trouble within Pakistan's conflict zones.

Islamabad remains ready to engage. But it needs to also be aware that the celebrations and the accolades will not last forever. The instability in the Gulf can and will lead to pressures for Pakistan, economically and otherwise. The phrase 'security provider' sounds impressive but there is little clarity on what it means for the country; and there is an aversion at home to discussing it in detail and what its ramifications — good or bad — might be. This is not good; for only a transparent debate can throw light on unexpected and unwelcome outcomes.

There might be renewed pressure from the West (read: the US) with regard to the Pakistan-China relationship as time goes on; it is worth remembering that it was the first Trump administration which began raising questions about Chinese loans to Pakistan. Indeed, this is reminder enough that Islamabad should use this space it has internationally to focus on the multiple domestic challenges, especially the economy.

The good times will not last forever.

U.S.-Iran rift over Strait of Hormuz fees threatens deal

Monitoring Desk

TEHRAN: Strait of Hormuz: Before the ink even dries on the United States-Iran memorandum of understanding, a dispute is emerging that could unravel negotiations to restore peace in the Strait of Hormuz.

Shipping has been at a near-standstill in the strait, a conduit for one-quarter of the world's seaborne oil, since the U.S. and Israel launched their war against the Islamic Republic on February 28. The threat of Iranian attacks sent insurance costs soaring and prompted many operators to avoid the route altogether, while vessels calling at Iranian ports faced additional complications from the U.S.-led naval blockade.

The 14-point agreement, which U.S. President Donald Trump signed on Wednesday in Versailles during his visit to France for a G7 summit, commits the two countries to negotiating a more comprehensive deal within the next 60 days. When announcing the MOU on Monday, Trump wrote on Truth Social he was "authoriz[ing] the toll free opening of the waterway."

Iran is to immediately begin the process of reopening the strait for the safe passage of commercial vessels, including demining operations and the removal of "technical and military obstacles, according to the MOU. Iran also must "make arrangements using its best efforts for the safe passage of commercial vessels with no charge for 60 days only from the Persian Gulf to the Sea of Oman and vice versa."

While Washington and Tehran appear to agree on toll-free transit during the initial 60-day period, they differ on whether Iran will be permitted to continue collecting fees after that two-month window expires.

Since mid-March, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has been running a "tollbooth" under which foreign-flagged vessels undergo a strict vetting process with the IRGC before being allowed to transit through Iranian waters after paying a fee.

Trump stressed the strait will be "permanently toll-free." Vice President JD Vance told CNBC in a Monday interview that it would remain "toll-free for the long term."

Iran has insisted it intends to collect maritime service fees, not tolls.

The charges would offset the cost of services provided, including navigational assistance, vessel insurance, and environmental protection measures jointly administered by Iran and Oman, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei told the semi-official Tasnim news agency late last month.



Ismail al-Aqqad with his four children in al-Mawasi, Gaza, displaying his medical papers.



Russian President Vladimir Putin, center, attends the Russia-ASEAN summit in Kazan, Russia.

Putin can no longer hide catastrophic costs of his failing war from Russians

Monitoring Desk

MOSCOW: Putin likes to look after himself. Visitors during the Covid pandemic had to sit at the far end of a long table. Officials were obliged to remain in quarantine for a week before meeting him. In videoed sessions he showed off by gouging plain and accurate reports out of ministers. He barked at anyone who failed to give him a straight answer.

So it came as a surprise this week when a former Russian TV executive, Dmitri Skorobutov, claimed that any news that might upset Putin is filtered from the bulletins on the Rossiya-1 channel. Producers apparently stay behind after the end of the evening broadcast and edit a version specially for the man they call the Main Viewer. Skorobutov, now living in Switzerland where he received political asylum in 2020, claims that this practice was strengthened at the start of the Ukraine war. Although he is not a disinterested witness, he deserves a hearing.

It is hardly surprising to be told that political leaders often want to receive information that fits their predilections. But this is a different scenario. Skorobutov is suggesting that the Rossiya-1 production team is so fearful of annoying Putin that they create a nightly data package for him. In authoritarian states, news is power and the games to restrict access are not restricted to the broad viewing public.

Putin is no passive spectator. When starting the Ukraine war in 2022, he relied on reports from Colonel General Sergei Beseda, head of the FSB's fifth service, who assured him that the Ukrainian resistance would be negligible. This quickly proved wildly wrong.

Beseda was removed from his post and probably for a while arrested. But the truth was that he had only been looking for evidence that would back up what he knew Putin to believe and wished to hear.

China says no to new alliance with Iran

Monitoring Desk

BEIJING: China's top diplomat appeared to subtly reject a public call by Tehran to forge a new alliance as Iran looks to recover from months of war with the United States and Israel.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in a call with Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi on Wednesday that China would continue to back Iran's sovereignty and security and had "worked in China's own way to end hostilities."

"China supports Iran's efforts to improve relations with regional countries and explore the joint development of a regional security architecture," Wang said, stopping short of endorsing Tehran's push for a formal Iran-China alliance.

In the hours prior to Wang's comments, Iran's parliament speaker—Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who is also its top China policy official—told Iranian business leaders that Tehran should persuade Beijing to join a new bloc.

Beijing frequently rails against U.S.-led coalitions on its periphery in Asia—including the likes of the Quad with nonmilitary mandates—and rarely if ever enters into formal alliances.

Its back-room interventions in the early days of the Iran war were born out of economic self-interest, observers said, given its heavy dependence on the Persian Gulf for nearly half its annual energy imports.

China was the biggest buyer of sanctioned Iranian crude oil before the war.

The conflict in the Middle East has caused a global surge in energy costs, which are expected to remain higher than prewar levels for the rest of the year, according to commodities analysts.

The spike was linked to market uncertainty over ship safety in the Strait of Hormuz.



Boris Pistorius, German Minister of Defence, speaks at the NATO defence ministers' meeting. (is associated with: «Germany 'ready' for Hormuz mission as minesweeper heads to Red Sea.

European Union has quietly sought to reopen communication with Russia

Monitoring Desk

BRUSSELS: The European Union has reached out to Moscow in a tentative bid to open a line of communication so the continent is not sidelined in any potential talks to end Russia's grinding war in Ukraine, officials said Thursday.

The news emerged as Ukraine launched one of its biggest drone attacks since Russia's all-out invasion of its neighbor more than four years ago, Russian officials said Thursday. A major Moscow oil refinery was hit for a second time in a week and commercial flights at Moscow airports were disrupted.

Against the backdrop of conflict, the EU has been quietly seeking to reopen communications with Moscow even as it doubles down on its support for Kyiv. Russian President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, has tried to cut out Europe and Kyiv and negotiate Ukraine's future with Washington.

"In the past few weeks, brief contacts were made at diplomatic level to open communication channels but nothing was discussed on substance," an EU official with knowledge of the approach said on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive move. A second official, also speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media on the matter, confirmed the Russia outreach is taking place but declined to comment further.

"In any future scenario, the EU has specific interests that will need to be defended, therefore it is important to have established diplomatic channels with Russia. The EU is not a mediator. It supports Ukraine in its efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace," the first official added. The Kremlin did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Putin has repeatedly said Europe cannot play any kind of mediation role in settling the conflict but has not ruled out speaking to the EU.

Russian nuclear chief accuses Ukraine of killing worker at Zaporizhzhia

Monitoring Desk

MOSCOW: The head of Russia's state nuclear corporation Rosatom on Thursday Ukraine of killing a key worker a drone attack on the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in southeastern Ukraine.

There was no immediate response from Ukraine and Reuters could not independently verify the statement.Russia took control of the plant, the largest nuclear power station in Europe, soon after its forces entered Ukraine in 2022 and both sides regularly accuse each other of endangering its safety with military action.

Alexei Likhachev, head of Rosatom, said in a statement that Ukrainian drones had the nearby city of Enerhodar on Wednesday, where most of the station's employees live. He said one power plant employee working at the station's central repair workshop had been killed and doctors were fighting for the life of a second employee injured in the same attack.

Zimbabwe lawmakers back legislation extending president's time in power

Monitoring Desk

HARARE: Zimbabwe's lower house of parliament passed a bill to extend presidential terms from five seven years on Thursday, which would allow President Emmerson Mnangagwa to remain in power until 2030.

Some 216 lawmakers voted in favour of the draft legislation, passing the 187 mark needed for a two-thirds majority.

The bill now moves to the upper house of parliament, where it is also expected to sail through as Mnangagwa's governing ZANU-PF party controls it through traditional leaders and other proxies who generally vote with the party.

Signs that Mnangagwa, 83, wanted to stay in power beyond the end of his second term in 2028 emerged about two years ago, when his supporters started chanting slogans at ZANU-PF rallies that he needed more time to complete his agenda.

The party last year resolved to change the constitution to lengthen presidential terms and the plan received cabinet backing in February.

Critics say the bill is a ruse for Mnangagwa to stay in power for , though its backers say it will strengthen accountability and foster political stability.

Mnangagwa is nicknamed "the crocodile," an animal portrayed in Zimbabwean lore as stealthy and ruthless.

He came to power after a 2017 military coup

Germany moves two ships to Djibouti

Monitoring Desk

VIENNA: The German Navy is moving two ships to the Red Sea in preparation for a possible mine-clearing mission in the Strait of Hormuz, the country's defense minister confirmed on Thursday.

Speaking to the press before a meeting of NATO defense chiefs in Brussels, German Minister of Defense Boris Pistorius said that the mine-clearing ship Fulda and the supply ship Mosel had passed the Suez Canal. They are bound for Djibouti, which they are expected to reach in five to seven days and where they will be refueled and restocked.

A total of 140 German soldiers are aboard the ships, according to the German Ministry of Defense, including mine clearance divers, vessel protection teams and "autonomous systems."

HRW raises alarm over India's forcible expulsion of Bengali Muslims to Bangladesh

NEW YORK (INP): Human Rights Watch (HRW) has voiced concern over reports that Indian authorities are forcibly expelling ethnic Bengali residents, mostly Muslims living in West Bengal, toward Bangladesh without due process, terming the practice a grave violation of fundamental human rights.

In a report published on its website, the international rights watchdog said many of those targeted are long-term residents and are being detained or deported without adequate legal safeguards. "Indian authorities are cruelly dumping families into Bangladesh or leaving them stranded at the border, ignoring their basic human rights," said Meenakshi Ganguly.



Thick plumes of smoke with flames rise from an oil refinery following a Ukrainian drone attack on Moscow.

Ukraine launches largest attack on Moscow since start of full-scale war

Monitoring Desk

MOSCOW: Ukraine has launched the largest drone offensive on Moscow of the full-scale war, in an attack that damaged a key oil refinery, caused fires, and sent debris raining down across the region.

Air defenses shot down at least 194 drones bound for the Russian capital overnight into Thursday, according to Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin. That's far higher than other days of heavy attacks in recent months, when drones only numbered in the double digits, and provides a stark example of Kyiv's dramatically improved drone capabilities since Russia's full-scale invasion of the country began more than four years ago. The barrage, which left at least 17 people injured, was part of a larger Ukrainian attack over a broad swath of Russia, with air defenses intercepting almost 1,000 drones, according to the Russian Ministry of Defense – including over the Sea of Azov. Flights at all major Moscow airports were temporarily suspended on Thursday, Reuters reported, citing the Russian aviation agency. Kyiv has been stepping up its targeting of Russian energy infrastructure in long-range.

Ebola death toll tops 200 in Congo outbreak, CDC says

Monitoring Desk

EAST AFRICA: The number of confirmed dead in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Ebola outbreak has reached more than 200, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention reported on Thursday. Taken together with patients who have died in neighbouring Uganda, the overall figure is now 204, according to Africa CDC representative Wessam Mankoula. He put the number of confirmed cases at 894, of which 875 in Congo.



People outside José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport were in shock following the deadly shooting.

Patients die in Gaza waiting for medical evacuations Israel keeps blocking

Monitoring Desk

KHAN YOUNIS: Fifteen-year-old Rafa al-Qudra had one hope in life: to get out of the Gaza Strip in time to save her sight. On Saturday, before Israel gave her that permission, everything turned pitch black.

Sitting in an open-sided shelter covered in thick nylon in the al-Mawasi coastal area in southern Gaza's Khan Younis governorate, Rafa continuously pressed her hands over her eyes, either to block the light she can no longer see but still burns her eyes or to hide her falling tears.

"Is this it for me? Will I ever see again? Will I read again? Write? Draw? Or be able to walk around this tent without someone's help?" asked the tearful teenager, the skin around whose eyes was reddened by the constant pressing of her hands.

Her father, Rafat, 57, explained that Rafa's condition was manageable before the war with glasses and check-ups. "What followed compounded everything: months of displacement, carrying luggage she was medically prohibited from carrying, malnutrition, dust and the collapse of specialist care," the father of five said helplessly.

In recent months, Rafa's eye pressure – measured in millimetres of mercury (mmHg), the standard medical unit for pressure – built up: 50mmHg in Rafa's right eye and 35mmHg in her left, compared with a normal range of 12 to 20mmHg, leaving her in unbearable pain.

She had undergone multiple laser procedures, surgery on her right eye during the first week of June and lens removal. The solution used to reduce her eye pressure had expired – out of date since July – because nothing else was available in Gaza.

Then everything went black.

Israeli attacks kill 3 people in southern Lebanon

Monitoring Desk

LEBANON: At least three people have been killed in renewed Israeli attacks in southern Lebanon, Lebanese reports said on Thursday.Two people were killed in an Israeli drone strike on a town south-east of Nabatiyeh in the south, the state news agency NNA reported. Another person was killed in a separate drone strike in the south.The Israeli army announced on Wednesday evening that it had intercepted several missiles fired at Israeli troops in Lebanon. The Israeli Air Force subsequently said it had destroyed the launch pad.

In the war between Israel and the Hezbollah militia, approximately 3,900 people have been killed and 11,800 others wounded in Lebanon since the beginning of March, according to official figures.

The United States and Iran - Hezbollah's main supporter - have agreed to a framework deal to end the Iran war.

NOTICE OF INVITATION

FOR PROCUREMENT OF MEDICINE CONSUMABLE ITEMS, IMPLANTS AND LENSES FOR DIFFERENT SPECIALITIES AND LAB INVESTIGATION OF SHEIKH KHAILFA BIN ZAYYED AL NAYAN MEDICAL COMPLEX, MASTUNG ROAD QUETTA.

Sealed bids are invited from registered firms, pharmacies, and suppliers dealing in business of Medicines, Consumable items, implants, lenses and laboratory investigations.

The procurement process shall be conducted in accordance with and **BHCP Policy Guidelines 2024**, issued by the Health Department, Government of Balochistan.

METHOD OF PROCUREMENT

I. A single-stage, Two -envelope procedure least cost (package wise) selection method through quotation.

II. The data sheet of items has been classified in different categories of Medicines , Consumable items, Implants, lenses and lab investigations. Bidder are advice to quote items as per given categories.

III. The quoted items must fulfill the defined specification as laid down in data sheet; nonfulfillment will lead disqualification of specific items.

IV. The shelf life must be 75% from the date of supply of medicines, consumables and others enlisted local and imported items.

V. After completion of evaluation comparative statement will be issued and work orders will be placed to the successful bidders after signing of contract agreement by procurement committee of SKBZAN as per BHCP policy guidelines.

VI. The list of required medicines, consumables items implants and laboratory investigations details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned during official timings.

MODE OF PAYMENT: Payments will be made within **120 days** after completion, of supply subject to fulfillment of all required official/financial documentation.

I. All payments will be made via bank transfer to the firm's official account.

II. The procuring agency has the authority to cancel the procurement process at any stage or extend the date of quotation submission.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Sealed Quotations must be submitted by **Monday 27th, July 2026**, no later than **11:00 AM**, at the office of the undersigned.

QUOTATION OPENING: All submitted quotations will be opened in presences of bidders on **Monday 27th, July 2026, 12.30 pm** by Procurement Committee at the office of SKBZAN, Quetta.

SPECIAL CONDITION: The quoted items in the category of medicine **(oral dosage form)** must fall in top 140 manufacturers as per IMS ranking IQVIA list last quarter for Pakistan.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: The firms must fulfill the defined eligibility criteria non fulfillment of any factor will lead to disqualification.

I. The firm must be registered with the Income Tax and listed as an Active Taxpayer with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). Attached NTN Certificate and ATL Certificate.

II. The firm/company must hold a valid sales tax registration with the FBR.

III. Drug Sale License of Pharmacy/firm issued by licensing authority Health Department Government of Balochistan.

IV. Financial Capacity, / the bidder must submit bank account annual turnover of Rs. 10 million. Attach original bank Certificate.

V. DRAP registration, all quoted items must be registered by DRAP.

VI. The bidder Must have Pharmacy/office in Quetta City, Attach latest Paid Utility Bills along-with Tenancy Agreement or Ownership Agreement.

VII. The financial quotation must be less then trade price (TP) and in accordance with institutional rates.

VIII. Declaration on Affidavit duly signed by Notary Public/Oath Commissioner on **Rs.100/-** Stamp Paper declaring past performance of the Bidder, Price reasonability, Delivery time, Non-Black listing, Agreement with all the terms & conditions.

Address:
SHEIKH KHAILFA BIN ZAYYED AL NAYAN MEDICAL COMPLEX, MASTUNG ROAD QUETTA
Phone: 0812892180

DPRQ/PRQ No.195/16-7-2026

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SHEIKH KHAILFA BIN ZAYYED AL NAYAN MEDICAL COMPLEX, MASTUNG ROAD QUETTA

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EU GSP Plus report endorses Pakistan's economic progress, broad institutional reforms

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The European Commission's newly released Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+) assessment report stands as a strong endorsement of Pakistan's economic relevance, active institutional engagement, and continued progress under the special incentive framework.

The assessment confirms that Pakistan remains the largest beneficiary of the arrangement, delivering measurable gains for exports, industrial production, and employment.

Pakistani exporters have shown exceptional utilization of this preferential trade scheme, solidifying the EU as Pakistan's primary export market. In 2024, Pakistan successfully secured trade benefits for EUR 7.115 billion out of EUR 7.482 billion in eligible exports, which translates to an extraordinary 95.1% utilization rate.

This partnership is incredibly strategic, with the EU receiving 28% of Pakistan's total exports in 2024 and yielding EUR 732 million in direct tariff exemptions. This commercial relief has been vital in sustaining key labor-intensive industries—including clothing, textiles, leather, prepared foods, and miscellaneous manufacturing—all of which maintained utilization rates between 93.6% and 97.7%. As per report, beyond trade, Pakistan has demonstrated a solid commitment to its international obligations by maintaining its ratification of all 27 core international conventions linked to the GSP+ status. The country has entered no new reservations, complied with UN reporting timelines, and actively cooperated during the EU monitoring mission in late 2025. On the human rights and justice front, the National Commission for Human Rights achieved prestigious GANHRI 'A-status' accreditation in 2024. Additionally, Pakistan removed four offenses from the scope of capital punishment, maintained a complete halt on executions since December 2019, and saw presidential clemency exercised in October 2025. The country has also made steady progress on prison reforms, anti-torture implementation, and reducing the Supreme Court's appeals backlog.

According to the document, the social, labor, and environmental sectors have shown positive policy momentum as well. Domestic violence laws have now been finalized across all provinces and Islamabad, Sindh secured its first marital-rape conviction, and child-marriage reforms were adopted in several jurisdictions. Pakistan's social safety nets and education systems have expanded significantly, supported by teacher recruitment drives, school reopenings, and the enrollment of up to 30,000 out-of-school children in Islamabad.



ISLAMABAD: Former Chief Minister of Balochistan and Member of the Provincial Assembly, Abdul Malik Baloch called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing the first meeting of the Committee on Genetically Modified (GM) Corn at the Finance Division.

President Zardari approves conferment of Hilal-i-Pakistan on UN envoy on Islamophobia

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday approved the conferment of civil award, Hilal-e-Pakistan, upon Miguel Ángel Moratinos, the United Nations Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia.

The president, approved the summary for conferment of the award, on recommendation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, according to a President House press release.

Approving another summary, the president accepted the resignation of Fazal-e-Haq Abbasi, a member of the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan.

He also approved the appointment of Zafar Hasan as a member of the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC), as recommended by the prime minister.

Peaceful environment foundation of development, public prosperity: Syedaal

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate, Syedaal Khan on Thursday held separate meetings with Interior Secretary Captain (Retd.) Khurram Agha and Director General of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Dr. Usman Anwar here at Parliament House.

According to a news release issued by the Senate Secretariat, the meetings focused on the overall law and order situation in the country, internal security, the performance of law enforcement agencies, and matters relating to public safety and national security.

During his meeting with Interior Secretary, Captain (Retd.) Khurram Agha, discussions were held on internal security, counter-terrorism measures, the maintenance of law and order, and issues related to national security.

On the occasion, Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan said maintaining law and order and safeguarding the lives and property of citizens were among the foremost responsibilities of the state. He emphasised that effective coordination and cooperation among all institutions were essential to achieving these objectives.

He said a peaceful and secure environment was the foundation of development, investment, and public prosperity.

The deputy chairman also appreciated the services and sacrifices of law enforcement agencies in maintaining peace and strengthening internal security across the country.

Monetizing extremism: US think tank report exposes how tech giants fund hate music in India

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Global technology giants and major corporate brands are allegedly hosting, amplifying, and monetizing a violent wave of anti-minority hate music in India, according to an investigative report released by a Washington-based think tank.

The study alleges that mainstream digital platforms have effectively become primary vehicles for spreading highly provocative, dehumanizing content targeting religious minorities, specifically Muslims and Christians.

The findings were detailed in a comprehensive report published by the Center for the Study of Organized Hate (CSOH)—a nonpartisan think tank dedicated to researching extremism, radicalization, and online harms.

Titled "Profiting from Hate Music: The Role of YouTube, Meta, Spotify, and Apple Music in Hosting and Monetizing India's Hate Music Industry," the study maps the rapid ascent of "Hindutva Pop" or "H-Pop," a highly lucrative genre of music that is allegedly weaponized by Hindu nationalist groups to vilify religious minorities, promote a majoritarian ideology, and cultivate fear, anger, and hostility.

Drawing on a database compiled between January 2025 and January 2026, CSOH identified 523 distinct Hindutva pop hate songs actively hosted across YouTube, Spotify, Apple Music, and Meta's Music Library that reportedly violate the platforms' own content policies.

According to the report, "210 songs were identified on YouTube, 109 on Spotify by 53 artists, 103 on Meta's Music Library, and 101 on Apple Music by 59 artists. YouTube songs alone have been viewed over 198 million times; Meta's Music Library songs were used in more than 5.9 million Instagram Reels."

According to the report, roughly half of all identified tracks (263 of the 523 songs) contain explicit calls for violence, urging listeners to eliminate, attack, or expel Muslims and Christians to establish an exclusively Hindu nation.

On YouTube alone, 104 of these songs allegedly contain direct incitement or threats of violence and have received at least 97 million views. The remaining songs, while not explicitly calling for violence, are claimed to promote hatred through dehumanizing language, derogatory slurs, and conspiracy theories designed to foster conditions that contribute to real-world harm.

Unlike global hate groups that operate in the shadows, India's H-Pop industry thrives in the mainstream, enjoying the active patronage and impunity granted by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its ideological parent, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

This political backing and entrenched popularity have allowed the genre to become a core tool for political and social polarization. The report connects this digital wave to a dramatic increase in offline violence. These highly provocative songs are routinely played during religious processions and rallies outside mosques, which the study claims has already been linked to deadly communal violence.



Pakistan's ambassador to France Mumtaz Zahra Baloch met with Omar Yaqoob, the Mayor of Creil and President of the Creil Sud Oise Agglomeration at the Municipal Council of Creil.

Maulana Fazl should apologize over martyrs statement: Armaghan

SIALKOT (APP): Minister of State for Planning and Development, Chaudhry Armaghan Subhani, described Maulana Fazlur Rehman's statement regarding the martyrs as regrettable and demanded that he apologize to the families of the martyrs and the public. He said that today, the families of the martyrs and war veterans who sacrificed their lives for the country, along with the nation's 250 million people, are deeply saddened. He added that the sacrifices of the martyrs are beyond comparison and cannot be assigned any value.

He expressed these views while addressing a press conference. Chaudhry Armaghan Subhani said that the martyrs and war veterans are the pride of the nation, and their sacrifices cannot be measured in terms of salaries or benefits. He emphasized that the sacrifices of the martyrs should not be politicized.

He further said that although Maulana Fazlur Rehman remains a respected figure, it is the responsibility of the entire nation to respect the sentiments of the families of the martyrs. The minister stated that no price can be placed on the sacrifices of the martyrs and war veterans and that the martyrs of the Pakistan Army are a source of pride for the entire nation.

He also called for the retention of the 12 reserved seats for Kashmiri refugees, saying that under no circumstances should Kashmiris in Pakistan be deprived of their identity and political representation.



Pakistani delegation led by Ambassador Ayesha Ali meets the Portuguese delegation headed by Ambassador Helena Malcata, Director-General for Foreign Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic.

PM Shehbaz meets Former CM BalochIstan Dr Abdul Malik Baloch

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met Former Chief Minister of Balochistan and Member of the Provincial Assembly, Abdul Malik Baloch here, accompanied by a delegation.

During the meeting, both the dignitaries discussed issues pertaining to overall law and order situation in the province and other matters of mutual interest, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah, Senator Jan Muhammad Buledi, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Polain Baloch, MNA Jamal Shah Kakar, and National Party Punjab President Ayub Malik also attended the meeting.

Pak-China strengthen strategic cooperation in Marine Science

BEIJING, (APP): Dalian Ocean University (DLOU) of China and Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences (LUAWMS) of Pakistan recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), marking a pivotal milestone for bilateral cooperation in marine science and education.

Building upon this institutional foundation, the two countries should roll out pragmatic and targeted initiatives to advance substantive collaboration across marine academic and research domains.

This was stated by Prof Cheng Xizhong, Senior Research Fellow at the Charhar Institute, a non-governmental Chinese think-tank on diplomacy and international studies based in Beijing.

First, consolidate long-term academic partnership and talent cultivation mechanisms. The two universities could establish sustained faculty and student exchange schemes and launch joint training programs for undergraduate and postgraduate marine majors. DLOU was well-positioned to provide systematic curriculum guidance, professional academic instruction and high-quality internship platforms for Pakistani researchers and students.

Complementarily, LUAWMS can offer exclusive local research resources and field investigation access to the Arabian Sea, jointly cultivating high-caliber interdisciplinary marine talents to support the development of both nations, he said.

Second, conduct goal-oriented joint marine scientific research. The two academic institutions can form interdisciplinary joint research teams to focus on core maritime research areas, including coastal ecological remediation, sustainable mariculture, marine environmental monitoring, as well as marine disaster early warning and risk prevention. Both parties can jointly apply for bilateral and international research grants, share first-hand field survey data and innovative research outcomes.

Traffic Police enforces tarpaulin campaign to ensure safer roads, cleaner environment

QUETTA (APP): The Traffic Police Quetta has intensified its ongoing safety campaign requiring tractor trolley owners to cover their vehicles with tarpaulin sheets.

Speaking on the occasion, SSP Traffic Police Muhammad Baloch said that the campaign has begun to show positive results, as many tractor owners have started covering their trolleys with tarpaulin. The initiative aims to prevent sand, gravel, soil, bricks, and other construction materials from spilling onto roads during transportation, thereby reducing traffic accidents and minimizing environmental pollution.

He explained that the use of tarpaulin on trolleys not only helps reduce road accidents and material spillage but also improves traffic flow. This measure, he added, will enhance the safety of motorcyclists, pedestrians, and other road users by protecting them from potential hazards.

The SSP urged tractor and truck owners to fully comply with traffic laws.

KARACHI: Coordinator National Paigham e Aman Committee Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Ashrafi along with others visiting Jamia Rashid.

Constitutional decisions can only be made through elected assemblies: Rana Sana

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) will secure a clear majority in the upcoming Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections, while party President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif will address two major election rallies in Mirpur and Muzaffarabad, Federal Minister Rana Sanaullah said on Thursday.

Speaking at a ceremony held in honour of PML-N leader Raja Shoaib Abid, who announced his withdrawal in favour of party candidate Chaudhry Muhammad Azhar Sadiq, Rana Sanaullah said the party leadership fully understood Shoaib Abid's disappointment over not receiving the election ticket but appreciated his decision to accept the party's verdict in the larger political interest.

He said the PML-N remained grateful for Raja Shoaib Abid's sacrifice and would honour all commitments made to him. He added that elections were aimed at forming a government capable of addressing public issues and reiterating that constitutional decisions could only be made through elected assemblies rather than protests or long marches. Highlighting the party's development agenda, Rana Sanaullah said the PML-N had delivered landmark infrastructure projects, including motorways and airports, and had also completed major development initiatives in Azad Kashmir. Reaffirming the party's commitment to the Kashmir cause, he said the PML-N had consistently supported the people of Jammu and Kashmir and would continue to do so.

Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, meets senior academic leaders at Boston University during his visit to the United States to promote collaboration in higher education, research, innovation and public policy.

Pakistan, Portugal discuss ways to strengthen ties in diverse areas

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Pakistan and Portugal on Thursday reviewed the full range of bilateral relations and discussed ways to strengthen political engagement and cooperation in trade and investment, labour mobility, agriculture, renewable energy, information technology, education, tourism, culture, and people-to-people exchanges. During the fourth round of the delegation level Pakistan–Portugal Bilateral Political Consultations held here, the two sides also discussed opportunities for greater business-to-business engagement, port connectivity, and cooperation in olive cultivation and processing.

The Pakistan delegation was led by Ambassador Ayesha Ali, Additional Secretary (Europe), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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