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CM Bugti vows to accelerate pace of development in underdeveloped, remote areas of Balochistan

NORTH DERA BUGTI (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti held an open court (Khuli Katcheri) for the third consecutive day in North Dera Bugti, where he directly listened to the grievances and issues of citizens from various districts and issued instructions to the relevant authorities for their prompt resolution.

During the open court, the chief minister also met tribal elders and discussed regional problems, development requirements and challenges being faced by local communities. He reiterated that resolving public issues and ensuring the provision of basic facilities remained among the top priorities of the provincial government.

Speaking on the occasion, Mir Sarfraz Bugti said the purpose of holding open courts was to provide citizens with an opportunity to convey their concerns directly to the government leadership while ensuring accountability of the concerned departments for timely solutions.

He directed officials to take immediate action on public complaints and avoid any unnecessary delays in addressing citizens' problems. The chief minister stated that there were no "no-go areas" in Balochistan and that the people of the province stood firmly with the state and security forces. He added that members of both the government and opposition parties regularly visited their constituencies and remained in close contact with the public through participation in regional events and gatherings.

Highlighting the importance of regional connectivity and infrastructure development, Bugti said efforts had been made to secure federal funding for the construction and improvement of a highway linking Taunsa in Punjab with Balochistan. He further revealed that survey orders had been issued for the construction of a road from the Chhapar National Highway to Kharar Buzdar.

He said the completion of the road project would provide Balochistan with an additional route connecting the province to Punjab, facilitating smoother transportation and boosting trade and economic activity between the two regions.

Referring to development initiatives in backward areas, the chief minister said special directives had been issued to reopen government schools in Ander Pahor, Mereri Wah, Rara Sham and other adjoining areas that have recently been included in Barkhan district.



LAHORE: A delegation of the Founders Group of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif



NORTH DER BUGTI: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti offering dua after inaugurating newly constructed Administration Office.

No compromise on health, safety of children: Bilawal Bhutto

KARACHI (APP): Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, in his message on World Polio Day, said a polio-free Pakistan was the dream of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and that protecting every child in the country and securing a healthy future for them is a national responsibility we all share.

He said the effective use of modern technology, sustained political commitment, strong coordination between the federal and provincial governments, and full public participation are essential to eradicating polio completely.

Thr PPP Chairman said that in 1994, despite fierce opposition from conservative elements and negative propaganda, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto launched the country's first national anti-polio campaign.

She personally administered polio drops to her own daughter, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, first of all, sending a clear message that there can be no compromise on the health and safety of children.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said Aseefa Bhutto Zardari has been working tirelessly for several years to make anti-polio efforts a success. Her struggle, he said, is an important step toward fulfilling Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's dream that no child in Pakistan should suffer lifelong disability because of polio.

He paid tribute to the workers serving in the anti-polio campaign, especially those carrying out their duties in remote and difficult areas, and described the polio workers who laid down their lives in the line of duty as national heroes. Their services and sacrifices, he said, will always be remembered.



Displaced Palestinians, including numerous children holding empty containers and cooking pots, crowd around a community aid distribution center to receive hot meals in the Nuseirat refugee camp, central Gaza Strip, Palestine

PM Shehbaz vows to promote economic activities in country

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Assembly (PA) Deputy Speaker Malik Zaheer Iqbal Channar and MNA Malik Munir Iqbal Channar called on Prime Minister (PM) Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Matters relating to public issues, their resolution and constituency affairs were discussed during the meeting.

The Prime Minister directed them to strengthen public outreach efforts to address the problems faced by the people.

Meanwhile, a delegation of the Founders Group of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) met Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Saturday.

During the meeting, matters relating to the country's overall economic situation, promotion of business and trade, challenges faced by industries and provision of facilities to the business community were discussed.

Appreciating the important role of the business community in the country's economic growth and stability, the Prime Minister said that the government was working in collaboration with the private sector to promote economic activities and create a conducive environment for businesses.

The importance of mutual cooperation in promoting business and industry, increasing investment and expanding trade activities was also emphasized during the meeting.

The delegation apprised the Prime Minister of the issues faced by the business community and shared its proposals.

The delegation appreciated the government's economic policies and lauded its investor-friendly initiatives.

During the discussion, the delegation also acknowledged the services rendered by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to the Chamber of Commerce during his tenure as its president.

Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar and Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik were also present at the meeting. The LCCI delegation comprised Mian Misbah-ur-Rehman, Farooq Iftikhar, Sheikh Muhammad Asif, Shahzad Malik, Almas Haider, Shahid Hassan Sheikh, Abdul Basit, Mian Tariq Misbah, Kashif Anwar Sheikh and Mian Khalid Misbah.

Pakistan rejects Khalilzad's 'unsubstantiated' allegations of arming Afghans to fight Taliban

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Ministry of Information categorically rejected the baseless and misleading allegations by former US envoy to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad of arming former Afghans to fight the Taliban and terrorist groups. "Pakistan categorically rejects the baseless and misleading allegations by Khalilzad of arming former Afghans to fight the Taliban and their supporter terrorist groups.

His sweeping baseless assertions merely recycle speculative narratives as part of his personal agenda to prop terrorism supporting Taliban regime," said the ministry in a statement issued on X.

The statement came in response to a post by former US diplomat Khalilzad on X, in which he claimed that Pakistan was arming Afghans to fight the Taliban in Afghanistan and that the "Pakistani military was recruiting Afghans to fight anti-Pakistan insurgents."

Outstanding situations must be addressed; resolved through dialogue: Pakistan

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has underscored the fundamental importance of equitable, non-discriminatory civil nuclear cooperation to help secure its national energy future.

"Efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction ... must not impede international cooperation in the peaceful uses of dual-use technologies, which is vital for the economic development of the Global South," Pakistani delegate Syed Atif Raza told the United Nations General Assembly on Friday during a debate on the annual report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Vienna-based UN organization. At the same time, Raza, a counsellor at the Pakistan Mission to the UN, highlighted that Pakistan is a party to the principal international instruments of nuclear safety and security. "All countries must retain their inalienable right to utilize nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, consistent with their respective non-proliferation and international legal obligations," the Pakistani delegate said. Pakistan, he said, maintained that compliance or safety issues should be resolved through technical bodies like the IAEA without political bias.

"Outstanding situations must be addressed and resolved through dialogue and diplomacy, in a manner that upholds the non-proliferation regime while ensuring regional and international peace and security," Atif Raza said.

"Countries should refrain from irresponsible and destabilizing rhetoric, actions, and postures that could escalate tensions and increase the risk of conflict."

Pakistan, he said, operates six nuclear power reactors – all under IAEA safeguards, supplying about 20 percent of the national energy needs and one-third of low-carbon power generation.



Hon'ble Chief Justice of Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan, Mr. Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, meets Azerbaijan's Minister of Justice and Chairman of Constitutional Court of Azerbaijan during official visit.

DPM for continued dialogue, diplomatic engagement to prevent conflicts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar reaffirmed the special bond between Pakistan and Turkiye and their longstanding ties of friendship and high-level strategic cooperation.

At the conclusion of the Regional Four (R4) and R4 meeting along with the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, Italy and the UK, the participating Foreign Ministers called on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkiye in Istanbul. The deputy prime minister/foreign minister conveyed greetings from President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir to President Erdogan, the Foreign Office Spokesperson, said in a press release.

Dar thanked President Erdogan for Turkiye's warm hospitality and for hosting the meetings.

President Erdogan welcomed the foreign ministers and appreciated their deliberations under the R4 and R4+ E4 formats. "The meeting featured candid exchanges of views on regional and global developments and underscored the importance of continued dialogue and diplomatic engagement," it was further added.

The Foreign Ministers of Regional Four (R4), France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, expressed their commitment to continue contributing towards diplomatic efforts aimed at promoting peace and stability in the region and beyond, and addressing the security, economic and trade implications of these issues.



THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

Monday October 26, 2026

United Nations unable to restore global trust

The United Nations was established in 1945 by the victorious powers of World War II. Despite the confrontational nature of the bipolar world system, it established a relatively successful world order. However, its collapse began at a time when expectations for the organization were at their peak. The United States, the architect of the organization, turned its back on the U.N. because it believes the organization no longer serves its interests.

The most recent U.N. General Assembly (UNGA), held in New York from Sept. 22 to 28, showed that the prospect of making the U.N. functional and effective again is diminishing day by day. The theme of the 81st session of the UNGA was "Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A United Nations That Delivers for All."

Today, the U.N. is unable to restore global trust because it has failed to find solutions to major regional and global crises. Furthermore, it is unable to effectively manage the ongoing global transformation. As every state is preoccupied with saving itself and maximizing its national interests, states have started to ignore global interdependence. Unfortunately, the projects developed under this mandate, such as "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) and "Make Europe Great Again" (MEGA), are mostly destructive rather than constructive.

More than 130 heads of state and government attended the meeting to deliver their message to the world. The primary goal of world leaders is to announce their states' agendas to the global public. They want to be understood. However, the global powers, namely, the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, do not want to relinquish their privileged positions. Consequently, the U.N. Security Council has lost much of its effectiveness and, therefore, much of its significance. The UNGA has taken its place; however, the decisions it adopts are not binding. As a result, the U.N. has lost much of its meaning and effectiveness. Overall, the U.N.'s executive power has been destroyed.

The reality of today's world is simple. The threats facing humanity as a whole can only be met and overcome through collective efforts. No state can overcome the threats it faces on its own. On the other hand, if the boundless wealth of one state is achieved at the cost of the unbearable poverty of others, no one will be safe. Therefore, all states, whether small or large, will need a global order in which the behavior of key actors is predictable.

All states know very well that the worst peace is better than the best war. The world and the international public opinion are exhausted and fed up; they want to be free of these hardships. Most leaders have emphasized the importance of the U.N. and the global order it established.

However, the recent meeting indicated that it is unlikely that the U.N. will change its stance in the near future. The host country, the U.S., did not allow Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas to attend the meeting. Denying Abbas a visa, the leader of the most suffering nation in the world, is one of the greatest acts of lawlessness and lack of conscience on earth. Palestinians subjected to genocide were not allowed to make their voices heard by the world. It was ironic to see that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, against whom the International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant, was allowed to speak at the UNGA. This is also an indication that the U.N. has gone bankrupt. Therefore, one of the biggest ironies of today's world is that global powers call for a predictable global order. They do not want international norms and rules to constrain their foreign policies. They do not want to be constrained. Despite being the ones who violate international rules and norms, the global powers continue to use the U.N. system as a tool against weaker parties. As several leaders have stated in numerous speeches, this situation will persist until a more just world order is established. This is a main precondition for global interdependence and the implementation of a win-win strategy. It seems that the world will continue to need greater fairness in international organizations.

Proxy wars reality

DR ANUM NAZ

Understanding Middle Eastern politics through slogans, emotional claims and a single narrative of "secret conspiracies" may be convenient, but history is rarely that simple. One question, however, deserves serious consideration: did the balance of power in the Middle East change after Iran's 1979 revolution in a way that weakened the possibility of a united Arab front against Israel?

To answer that question, we need to move beyond slogans and examine history, wars and developments on the ground.

It would be historically inaccurate to suggest that Arab states never fought Israel. In 1948, the armies of Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq participated in the war, while Saudi Arabia also dispatched a military contingent that fought under Egyptian command. In 1956, Egypt confronted Israel, Britain and France during the Suez Crisis. In 1967, Egypt, Jordan and Syria went to war with Israel. Within six days, Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

Then came the 1973 war. Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel, placing the Israeli military under considerable pressure during the initial phase. By the end of the war, however, Israel had regained much of its military position. The conflict also had consequences far beyond the battlefield: Arab oil-producing states imposed an oil embargo on the United States and some Western countries, sending shock waves through the global economy.

The first historical lesson, therefore, is clear: Arab states did fight Israel, but Arab unity was neither permanent nor uniform.

What changed in 1979?

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 represented a fundamental geopolitical and political transformation in the Middle East. The pro-Western monarchy of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was overthrown and replaced by an Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The new Iranian leadership made the projection of the revolution and opposition to Western influence important elements of its foreign policy. A new form of regional competition began to emerge. Rather than relying exclusively on conventional warfare, Iran expanded its regional influence through relationships with armed groups, providing varying degrees of financial support, training, weapons and political backing. This network is now commonly described as Iran's regional armed network or the "Axis of Resistance".

It has included Hezbollah in Lebanon, several armed groups in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen and some Palestinian groups.

But an important qualification is necessary.

It would be an oversimplification to claim that Iran simply created proxies in every Arab country that had fought Israel. Hezbollah, for example, emerged in Lebanon during the 1980s amid the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon and the particular political and social circumstances of the Lebanese Shia community. Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps subsequently provided it with substantial financial and military support. Similarly, Iran's role in Syria became closely associated with its support for Bashar al-Assad's government. In Iraq, the influence of Iran-aligned militias was shaped by the political and security vacuum following the 2003 US invasion and later by the war against the Islamic State. In Yemen, the roots of the Houthi movement lie in local Zaydi politics and a prolonged conflict with the Yemeni state. Iran later provided the Houthis with varying forms of support, including technology and training. To describe the Houthi movement simply as an "Iranian creation", however, would ignore its complex local origins.

Did Iran's proxy strategy make Israel safer?

This is an important question, but it cannot responsibly be answered with a simple "yes" or "no".

On the one hand, Iran has supported armed groups that have carried out attacks against Israel. Its relationships with Hezbollah and Hamas are prominent examples. The Houthis have also launched missiles and drones towards Israel and attacked shipping in the Red Sea linked to Israel. On the other hand, Iran itself has directly attacked Israel. In April 2024, Iran launched a large-scale drone and missile attack directly against Israeli territory for the first time.

Regional groups aligned with Iran also became involved in the wider confrontation. It is therefore inaccurate to claim that Iran has never fired a shot at Israel.

The more meaningful question may be different: Has the confrontation between Iran and Israel contributed to diverting Arab states from the possibility of a common anti-Israel front towards dealing with their own competing security concerns?

There is a strong case for viewing this as one of the significant regional consequences.

Lebanon: Resistance or a State Within a State?

Hezbollah emerged in the name of resistance to Israel and developed into a powerful military force opposing Israeli presence in southern Lebanon. Over time, however, it also became a major actor within Lebanon's political system.

This creates a fundamental dilemma. When a country has an exceptionally powerful armed organisation operating alongside the regular state military, questions of sovereignty and decisions about war and peace become considerably more complicated.

Lebanon's predicament, therefore, is no longer simply a matter of Israel versus Hezbollah. It involves the Lebanese state, domestic politics, Iran, Israel and a range of regional actors whose interests intersect and often conflict.

Syria: From the Israeli Front to Civil War.

Syria fought Israel in 1948, 1967 and 1973. But after 2011, Syria itself became engulfed in a prolonged and devastating civil war.

Iran supported the government of Bashar al-Assad, while Hezbollah and other armed actors also fought on the government's side. The conflict severely damaged Syria's military and economic capabilities. It would nevertheless be an unjustified attribution of motive to claim that Iran "destroyed Syria simply to prevent it from fighting Israel". Such a claim would require compelling evidence.

The reality was considerably more complex. Syria's war involved the government, opposition groups, Islamic State, Russia, Iran, Turkey, the United States and Israel, among others, with different actors pursuing different objectives at different stages.

The fall of the Assad government in 2024 also represented a major setback for Iran's regional network.

Iraq and Yemen: What Is the Real Story?

Iraq fought Israel in the 1948 war and also participated militarily in the conflicts of 1967 and 1973. But the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 transformed the country's political and security structure.

In the resulting environment, Iran-aligned Shia militias acquired considerable influence. Their importance increased further during the war against the Islamic State.

Yemen presents another complicated picture. The Houthi movement emerged from local political and social conflicts, but its military relationship with Iran subsequently deepened. Houthi missiles and drones have been used against regional targets, including Saudi Arabia, and against Israel.

It is therefore difficult to sustain the argument that Iranian-aligned armed groups target Muslims but never Israel. The available record shows otherwise.

Qatar Raises a New Question.

Recent tensions involving Iran and the United States have highlighted another reality: the costs of war are not merely military. They are economic as well.

Damage to Qatar's Ras Laffan LNG infrastructure following Iranian missile attacks led QatarEnergy to invoke force majeure on gas supplies. Severe disruption to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz also affected the global LNG market.

By September 2026, QatarEnergy had warned that the Hormuz crisis could affect the schedules of new LNG projects, while disruptions were also affecting gas availability and prices in Asian markets.

The question, therefore, is not simply: "Who is whose agent?"

The more important question is: Who ultimately pays the economic price of regional wars?

The answer is straightforward. Wars are not fought only by armies. Ports, energy routes, industries, employment and ordinary citizens also bear their costs.

Is "Greater Israel" Becoming a Reality?

This is another subject that requires an examination of facts rather than emotion.

The term "Greater Israel" has been used in different ways by religious, historical and political movements. Some extremist and nationalist groups have advocated visions of expanded Israeli borders. But treating such visions as a settled, universally accepted or operational policy of the Israeli state would be misleading.

More importantly, drawing a territory on a map and permanently controlling that territory are two very different things.

The 1967 war provides an important example. Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. Yet the Sinai was subsequently returned to Egypt under the Egypt-Israel peace treaty.

Even today, permanently controlling a large territory requires much more than advanced aircraft, drones, missiles and technology. Governance, population, water, infrastructure, economic sustainability, local resistance and long-term political administration are fundamental challenges.

The war in Gaza has also demonstrated that military superiority and a political settlement are not the same thing. A military force may inflict enormous damage on a territory, but establishing sustainable political control is a fundamentally different challenge.

By September 2026, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remained severe, with a large proportion of its roughly 2.1 million inhabitants displaced or facing shortages of essential services and other serious humanitarian difficulties.

The real danger may not be the map, but the fragmentation of power.

The central problem of the Middle East may not simply be whether a particular country dreams of reaching "from the Nile to the Euphrates".

The deeper problem is that regional states have struggled to translate their collective potential into effective power because of internal divisions, sectarian conflicts, economic dependencies, weak institutions and external intervention.

Israel, on one side, enjoys strong military and political support from the United States. Iran, on the other, has expanded its regional influence through non-state armed groups. The Gulf Arab states have relied heavily on the United States, advanced weapons systems and diplomatic partnerships for their security. The result is that the traditional model of state-versus-state warfare has increasingly been supplemented—and in some cases displaced—by multi-layered conflicts involving proxies, missiles, drones, cyber operations, economic pressure and political competition.

And in this entire process, ordinary people often pay the highest price.

What really changed after 1979?

Israel did not suddenly become invincible after 1979. Nor can it be established that Iran entered into a secret arrangement with Israel to eliminate the military power of the Arab states. But a major historical transformation did take place.

The Arab-Israeli conflict ceased to be the Middle East's only central strategic confrontation.

It became intertwined with the Iran-Saudi rivalry, Shia-Sunni political competition, the US-Iran confrontation, Turkey-Arab tensions, domestic civil wars and the growing power of non-state armed groups.

That transformation made the regional balance of power far more fragmented and complicated.

If the question is whether the Arab states presented a more unified state-based front against Israel before 1979 than they did afterwards, the historical record suggests that the regional power structure became considerably more fragmented after 1979.

But if the question is whether Iran is secretly protecting Israel, such a claim would require credible evidence. The available record instead shows a prolonged and intense confrontation between Iran and Israel, involving both direct attacks and proxy warfare.

Perhaps this is the bitterest lesson of the Middle East's long conflict:

The problem is not only the strength of one's adversary. It is also the fragmentation of one's own strength. If the Arab world genuinely seeks to play an effective role in advancing Palestinian interests and protecting its broader collective interests, slogans alone will not be enough. It will require stronger state institutions, greater economic self-reliance, political stability, regional diplomacy and sustained cooperation.

History also teaches us that wars are not won only on battlefields.

Sometimes nations lose when they become so consumed by the urge to settle solvable political problems through force that they leave no room for negotiation.

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Pakistan's climate hazards

DR. ZAMURRAD AWAN AND DR. DIEGO F. CISNEROS-HEREDIA

Pakistan's 2026 monsoon season has once again hit the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) particularly hard. Now incorporated into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), these communities face flash floods and landslides on landscapes already shaped by decades of conflict, displacement, weak infrastructure and environmental degradation. According to Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the unprecedented monsoon season, which began earlier this year in June 2026, caused widespread damage to standing crops, overflowed seasonal waterways and flooded villages and towns, including urban centres. As of 21 August, fatalities exceeded 163 and injuries surpassed 483, with KP being the most affected among all provinces. The normal monsoon cycle runs from mid-July, but this early heavy rainfall played havoc. According to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), following last year's pattern, the 2026 monsoon has once again caused loss of life, along with rain-related incidents such as flash floods, roof collapses and landslides in KP. The main tribal districts included North and South Waziristan, Kurram and Bajaur. In Lower South Waziristan, flash floods washed away large tracts of agricultural land as seasonal streams overflowed. All of these areas were part of the erstwhile FATA.

Although many factors contribute to this situation, including the global climate crisis, extreme rainfall alone does not explain the disaster's scale. In the conflict-affected tribal areas of KP, climatic hazards interact with damaged infrastructure, displaced communities, poverty, weakened institutions, environmental degradation, and accelerated resource exploitation. The prolonged conflict has damaged agricultural land, irrigation systems and soil conservation structures, accelerating pressure on natural resources and ecosystem services. For example, security forces deliberately cleared hillside vegetation to deny militants cover, compounding a broader deforestation crisis. This has posed a severe threat to the subtropical forest, especially in the tribal agencies, where forest loss accelerated from about 74,600 hectares between 1990 and 2000 to about 95,600 hectares between 2000 and 2010. A substantial share of that loss is concentrated in the North/South Waziristan and Kurram districts, where deforestation in remote mountainous regions has been identified as a key driver of change in the local biophysical environment.

This vegetation loss in the tribal belt is not isolated or incidental but a sustained, measurable trend. The loss and degradation of forest and scrub vegetation can reduce ground cover and root systems that stabilise soil, alter runoff and fragment habitats for the region's insects, birds, mammals and other organisms. Although habitat degradation and biodiversity loss are clearly occurring, we still know remarkably little about their extent, patterns and long-term ecological consequences in the former FATA, as decades of insecurity have severely constrained ecological research and long-term biodiversity monitoring. According to the Inter-Agency Early Recovery Need Assessment (IAERNA), the livestock population declined by 35%, while mortality increased due to disrupted veterinary services. Such losses may also threaten locally adapted livestock genetic resources, although their genetic consequences in the former FATA remain largely undocumented. Forest depletion has been particularly severe, with over 70% of coniferous forests lost, driven by militancy, illegal timber smuggling, and reliance on wood for fuel and construction. Although the flagship Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Project (TBTTPP) planted 150 million trees in the erstwhile FATA, including significant contributions in Kurram and North/South Waziristan, the project faced setbacks due to insurgency and land ownership disputes, leading to the removal of forest guards and the abandonment of enclosures. Tree planting is only one part of ecosystem restoration; recovery also depends on tree survival, native vegetation, soils, watershed functions, biodiversity, and community participation. This matters particularly now, because reconstruction efforts will help determine whether environmental degradation is reversed or carried into the region's next phase of development. Thus, all these challenges have made the beautiful landscape of these areas, which featured "thick forests, lush meadows, healing springs, and majestic mountains", merely a place of suffering for its inhabitants. These dynamics reveal how conflict-induced displacement, neglect, and exploitation can create a cascading ecological crisis in underprivileged tribal areas, undermining biodiversity and agricultural sustainability.

It is worth noting that today's barren, tree-stripped mountains of the erstwhile FATA region carry a history that stretches back to the colonial era, when much of this terrain was forested. Historical accounts describe 19th-century Waziristan as home to tribes occupying the "wooded scrub-covered peaks" of the region, in the shadow of the Sulaiman Mountain Range. When the British fought against tribal uprisings during 1897–98, the largest British operation on the frontier, General Lockhart's forces levelled villages, destroyed crops and felled orchards in retaliation for tribal attacks on the Khyber Pass, while, more broadly, British and Indian troops systematically destroyed over a hundred fortified villages, towers and grain stores across the Tirah Valley to impose economic hardship and deter future incursions. The rationale for targeting villages, crops and orchards was also to deny insurgents cover—a step that directly affected the terrain and tribal livelihoods.

That legacy of vulnerability continues today as Tirah Valley, once celebrated for its beauty, is losing its forests at an alarming rate, with trees that took centuries to grow being cut down in days and timber reportedly being loaded and taken out of the valley.

This has been attributed to a governance vacuum left by decades of insurgency, military operations and mass displacement, which dismantled the valley's customary tribal forest-management institutions and allowed organised criminal timber networks to operate amid a structurally weak state forest administration, with credible allegations of official complicity in smuggling. Tribal elders have tried to intervene, formally petitioning the Chief Minister to act against the "timber mafia", but with limited effect—meaning the mountains that were stripped of cover a century ago under colonial punitive campaigns are, in Tirah's case, still being stripped today, just by a different set of actors and for different reasons. The local scepticism towards state-led conservation also persists, with fears that afforestation projects mask attempts to nationalise forests and strip communities of ownership rights. This is crucial because restoration is not just a technical issue; it also depends on land tenure, trust, legitimacy, and who holds authority over natural resources. Local residents also report "dramatic reductions in snowfall and rainfall, accelerated soil erosion, biodiversity loss, and the emergence of previously unknown disease burdens". Together, these changes reveal how environmental degradation is reshaping a landscape already strained by conflict, climate change, and decades of weak governance. Areas like Shawal Valley, once a summer retreat where people sought relief in its snowfields, are now described as places where snowfall has diminished so severely that people have stopped visiting.

The writers are the Associate Professor of Political Science at Forman Christian College University, and the Professor of Tropical Ecology & Director of the Institute of Tropical Biodiversity at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito.

King Charles to confront Britain's slavery past during Caribbean tour

LONDON, (Agencies): King Charles will confront what Buckingham Palace described as "the darkest days of our past" when he visits the Caribbean later this month, amid renewed calls for Britain to address its role in the transatlantic slave trade.

Charles and Queen Camilla will visit the Bahamas and Guyana before traveling to Antigua and Barbuda, where the king will attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), scheduled for Nov. 1-4.

The visit comes as Caribbean and African countries intensify calls for Britain and other former colonial powers to pay reparations for their role in slavery. The issue is expected to feature prominently at the Commonwealth summit.

The British government has ruled out reparations, while Charles, who remains head of state of several Caribbean nations, including the Bahamas and Antigua and Barbuda, has previously expressed his sorrow over the legacy of slavery.

"There are important discussions taking place in various fora about colonial legacy and the intergenerational impact of the transatlantic trade in enslaved persons," a Buckingham Palace spokesperson told reporters, saying the visit was coming at an important time in the relationship between Britain and Caribbean nations.

"The visit program will therefore not shy away from 'the darkest days of our past,' as His Majesty has described them, but, in keeping with the wishes of our host nations, it will principally be oriented to the vibrant present and promising future of each country." From the 15th to the 19th century, at least 12.5 million Africans were abducted and sold into slavery by European merchants, with Britain responsible for transporting an estimated 3.2 million people, making it the second-most active European nation after Portugal. Charles, who is head of the Commonwealth, a group of 56 nations, mainly former British colonies, encompassing some 2.7 billion people, has backed research into the British monarchy's own historical links to the trade.

Last month, the Jamaican government formally asked him to seek legal advice on whether Britain should pay reparations and said it was "encouraged" by Buckingham Palace's engagement.

"It is important to note here the work His Majesty himself has done over many years both to acknowledge the wrongs of the past and to find creative ways to right inequalities that endure," the palace spokesperson said. "As you would therefore expect, opportunities will be found during the visit to reflect and renew his personal, wholehearted and continuing commitment to that process." In February, Commonwealth Secretary-General Shirley Botchwey told media she expected its members to make progress toward beginning negotiations on reparations.



SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, US: San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie declared a local emergency, to accelerate preparations for potentially severe El Niño-related storms this winter.The declaration aims to help city departments respond more quickly to the threat of heavy rainfall, flooding, high tides and strong winds.The emergency measures temporarily ease certain contracting requirements, allowing departments to obtain essential equipment and services without lengthy procurement procedures.



Stuart Seiff, a U.S. oculoplastic surgeon, right, speaks to wounded soldier Mykola Kasiuk after surgery at a hospital, Kyiv, Ukraine

Over 80% of emergency oil release already delivered: IEA

PARIS, (Agencies): More than 80% of the emergency oil stocks pledged by International Energy Agency (IEA) members in March have already been released, the head of the agency said Friday.

"Around 325 million barrels of the IEA collective action announced on 11 March have so far been released," Executive Director Fatih Birol told G7 leaders, according to an agency statement. Birol said this represented more than 80% of the 400 million barrels originally pledged.

Energy markets continued to face significant pressure from the Strait of Hormuz crisis, particularly in diesel supplies, Birol said. Ukrainian attacks on Russian refineries added further pressure to diesel markets, tightening supplies and pushing up prices, according to the agency statement. In March, the IEA agreed to release 400 million barrels from emergency reserves to offset Middle East war-related supply disruptions, which it described as the largest coordinated release in its history.

KSA weighs possible offensive to retake Bab el-Mandeb

RIYADH, (Agencies): Saudi Arabia is preparing for a possible military offensive against Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, with Riyadh considering a limited operation to retake territory around the strategic Bab el-Mandeb strait or a broader assault on several fronts, regional and Western officials told Reuters.

The operation could begin as soon as the coming weeks and would be led by Saudi-backed Yemeni forces on the ground, supported by Saudi airstrikes, according to six people familiar with the preparations.

The officials, who include Gulf and Yemeni officials and Western diplomats, spoke on condition of anonymity because they were discussing sensitive security matters.

The United States is providing intelligence, including targeting information, to support Saudi operations, while several regional and European countries are supplying mainly defensive military assistance. Saudi allies are not expected to take a direct combat role, the people said.

The planned offensive, which has not previously been reported, would seek to reverse recent Houthi advances along Yemen's western coast and restore access to the Bab el-Mandeb, a vital maritime chokepoint at the southern entrance to the Red Sea.

The Houthis seized control of the strait after advancing down the coast last month, giving the group greater leverage over one of the world's most important shipping corridors. The Bab el-Mandeb connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and is a major route for commercial traffic between Europe and Asia.

The officials said Riyadh is considering two main options. The first would be a focused assault around Bab el-Mandeb aimed at restoring control of the coastal areas. The second would involve a much larger, coordinated campaign across several parts of Yemen, including Al-Bayda, Marib, Taiz and Al-Jawf. More than 100,000 Yemeni troops could be mobilized depending on the scale of the operation, the officials said.

Saudi Arabia has concluded that it cannot return to peace negotiations with the Houthis while the group controls Bab el-Mandeb, according to Western diplomats and a Gulf official.

The timing remains uncertain. The six people familiar with the preparations gave estimates ranging from within a week to a launch after the U.S. midterm elections in early November.

Michael Ratney, a former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said he expected any operation to be relatively limited compared with the Saudi-led campaign launched in 2015.

He said Riyadh would have an interest in reversing the Houthis' territorial gains around Bab el-Mandeb without becoming trapped in another large-scale war.

"it would be a fairly limited operation to retake coastal areas and get back to normal maritime traffic," Ratney said.

Egypt's Sisi calls for peaceful solutions to Africa's conflicts

CAIRO, (Agencies): Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on Saturday urged African countries to prioritize peaceful solutions to conflicts, strengthen state institutions and respect national sovereignty, saying stability is essential for economic development.

"Economic development cannot be built in unstable countries, and stability is not a luxury but a fundamental pillar sought by investors, manufacturers and farmers so they can operate in a safe environment," Sisi said in his opening speech at the Alamein Africa Forum, which began Friday in New Alamein on Egypt's northern coast.

"Across our African continent, we fully understand that security begins with supporting the national state and its institutions, respecting its unity and sovereignty, prioritizing peaceful solutions to conflicts and crises, and upholding the principle of good neighborliness," he added.

The three-day forum has brought together about 1,500 government officials, business leaders, investors and representatives of financial institutions from across Africa, with discussions focused on economic development, investment and greater continental integration.

Sisi said Africa's private sector is the main driver of the continent's economies, contributing more than 70% of its gross domestic product. About 85% of transactions by Africa's private sector are conducted with companies from outside the continent, Sisi added.

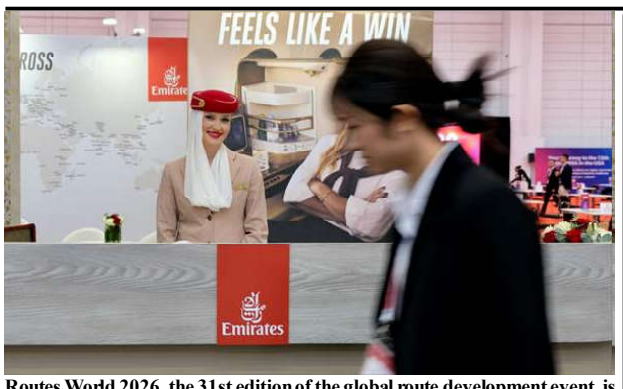
Despite trade agreements and preferential arrangements among African countries, intra-African trade has accounted for only about 18% of the continent's total trade in recent years, Sisi said.

On international developments, Sisi said Africa aspires to "a world characterized by peace and stability, rather than being made to bear the consequences of global crises in which it was not a party but whose negative repercussions it suffers."

He cited the current energy crisis as an example, pointing to the impact of rising fuel and fertilizer prices and disruptions to supply and shipping chains on African countries.

Last February, the African Union summit in Addis Ababa approved plans to hold the Alamein Africa Forum every two years in New Alamein.

Egypt is organizing the forum in cooperation with the African Export-Import Bank and the African Union Development Agency.



Routes World 2026, the 31st edition of the global route development event, is held at Messe Frankfurt in Frankfurt, Germany

Sudan's army inflicts heavy losses on RSF, allies in Blue Nile state

KHARTOUM, (Agencies): The Sudanese army said Saturday it had dealt a "knockout blow" to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the allied Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) in Blue Nile state, inflicting heavy losses in personnel and equipment.

The army's Fourth Infantry Division said in a statement that its troops and supporting forces struck the two groups in the areas of Minza and Bashkarkad.

The operation inflicted "heavy losses in lives and equipment," disrupted their movements and thwarted attempts to advance toward army positions, the statement said. Troops destroyed several vehicles and pieces of equipment and forced attacking fighters to retreat under fire, it added, without providing casualty figures.

There was no immediate comment from the RSF on the army's account.

Earlier Saturday, Sudanese authorities said RSF drones had targeted the Blue Nile governor's home and several civilian sites in Damazin, the state capital. Blue Nile in southeastern Sudan has witnessed a military escalation in recent days, with the RSF and allied SPLM-N launching attacks on several areas in the state.

On Aug. 24, the UN said drone attacks had killed 1,100 civilians in Sudan between January and June this year.

Sudan has been engulfed in war between the army and the RSF since April 2023, following disagreements over integrating the paramilitary group into the military. The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced about 13 million, according to UN and international estimates.



Former U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris laughs while speaking at the third annual SHE LEADS Conference at SLS Hotel, Los Angeles, U.S

Philippines urges ASEAN talks after 50 killed in Myanmar airstrike

MANILA, (Agencies): The Philippines, which holds the 2026 chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, has expressed concern over a deadly airstrike in Myanmar's Rakhine state and offered to facilitate regional discussions on how ASEAN can help address the country's worsening crisis.

Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary for ASEAN Affairs Ana Marie Hernando said in an email response Saturday that Manila was closely monitoring developments after the Sept. 28 attack in Kyauktaw, where the death toll rose to 50 and at least 58 people were wounded, according to local aid workers and the Arakan Army, the ethnic armed group that controls the area.

"The Philippines is closely monitoring developments and expresses concern over the attacks which resulted in destruction, loss of lives and injuries to those affected," Hernando said.

Manila said it would remain mindful of the positions of ASEAN's member states and follow the bloc's consensus-based approach. The Philippines also said it was prepared to facilitate discussions on ways to assist Myanmar, in line with ASEAN's stated goal of finding a solution that is "Myanmar-owned and led."

The statement came days after the airstrike hit a busy market area and a nearby bridge in Kyauktaw, a town in western Rakhine state near the Bangladesh border.

The Arakan Army said a military fighter jet dropped two bombs near the market around midday, when the area was crowded with vendors, shoppers and other civilians.

Spain housing protesters vow new rallies after parliament vote

MADRID, (Agencies): Housing protesters in Spain vowed to return to the streets and continue their encampment in central Madrid after parliament rejected the government's proposed response to the country's deepening housing crisis.

Crowds gathered outside the assembly chanted "your profits, our misery" as lawmakers voted down the minority government's decree that had been drawn up to address mass anger over the eviction of an 87-year-old woman.

Protesters expressed exasperation as the debate in parliament over the measures highlighted bitter divisions about how to address the crisis. Earlier Spanish media said Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez might call a snap election for November if the legislation failed to pass.

Sanchez's office declined to comment on the reports.

The legislation had sought to ban evictions of vulnerable tenants until 2030, impose a two-year rent freeze extension for existing leases and introduce tighter rules for short-term rentals.

The decrees failed after lawmakers from Catalan separatist party Junts - a sometime ally of the left-wing government - joined the opposition in voting it down, arguing that the proposals would exacerbate matters by reducing housing supply. A second decree proposing automatic and indefinite renewal of rental contracts also failed.

The Tenants' Union, which had driven the protests, said it would press on with plans for more mass rallies for Saturday, piling pressure on the coalition.

The eviction of pensioner Maricarmen Abascal last week triggered protests across Spain. Young people pitched tents in Madrid's central square and other cities for almost a week, reviving memories of anti-austerity sit-ins sparked by the global financial crisis in 2008-12.

"The encampment will continue and will continue expanding to other neighbourhoods. We're aiming for a general strike," Tenants' Union spokesperson Alicia del Rio said after the decrees were struck down.



On the eve of an unauthorized demonstration against the high cost of living, some shop windows are being covered with wooden panels for protection in Milan, Italy

Israeli strike kills 2 Christian women, lecturer, her mother

GAZA, (Agencies): A Christian mother and daughter who served displaced families, and a university lecturer and her mother were killed in an Israeli airstrike targeting a residential building in Gaza City early Saturday.

Medical sources said the four women were among five Palestinians killed in the attack that hit the ground floor of the Al-Asala 1 building near Haidar roundabout in the western Rimal neighborhood, in the latest violation of an ongoing ceasefire agreement.

The women were identified as Maysa Abu Daoud, her daughter Mary Najjar, academic Yasmin al-Boubou and her mother, Halloum al-Boubou.

Maysa, known as Umm Michel, and Mary, known as Umm Fouad, were Palestinian Christians from Gaza City who devoted their time to helping parishioners and displaced people sheltering at the Holy Family Church, according to Palestine's Higher Presidential Committee for Church Affairs. The committee's chairman, Ramzi Khoury, described their deaths as a "painful loss" for their families, the church and its parishioners. Saint Porphyrius Greek Orthodox Church in Gaza mourned the women, as did Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who offered condolences to their relatives and Gaza's Christian community. Their funeral took place Saturday at Saint Porphyrius Church in Gaza City's Old City

Moldova says 5 Russian aerial weapons violated country's airspace, exploded on its territory

CHI'INÃU, (Agencies): Moldova's president on Saturday said five Russian aerial weapons, including Banderol missiles and drones, had violated the nation's airspace and exploded on its territory. Maia Sandu warned that Russia's attacks on neighboring Ukraine are "dangerously reaching Moldova." "Moscow is putting lives at risk across Europe and must be stopped," she wrote on US social media platform X.



Separately, Moldova's Foreign Ministry "strongly condemned" what it called a violation of the country's airspace, stressing that drone fragments were found outside Causeni, near the village of Dubovca, between the localities of Delacau and Puhaceni, and near Crocmaz, where the incident caused a vegetation fire and property damage. "Russia's war against Ukraine continues to pose concrete threats to our country and to the security of the entire region," it said.

Global investors now assessing Pakistan's economic situation: Finance Minister

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb said on that government's focus was on export-led sustainable economic growth, improvement of tax system, reduction in energy costs and encouragement of the private sector for which implementation of structural reforms for economic stability in Pakistan was underway.

Addressing a ceremony here at a private university, he disclosed that IT exports are expected to reach USD 5.5 billion and remittances to USD 44 billion in the current fiscal year while the country's foreign exchange reserves are sufficient for more than three months of imports.

The Finance Minister said Pakistan must move away from the boom-and-bust economic cycle of the past and adopt a path of growth that creates employment opportunities and brings the fruit of economic growth to the people. He said that due to over-reliance on imports, Pakistan had faced balance of payments crises in the past, after which it took four to five years to stabilize the economy.

To avoid this situation, there is a need to increase exports, improve productivity and strengthen economic fundamentals.

Muhammad Aurangzeb said that as a result of continuous efforts, Pakistan's credit rating has improved three times since April last year.

Steps have also been taken to access global financial markets. In April of this year, Pakistan conducted a private placement, advanced its efforts to access global markets through the issuance of Panda bonds and in the first week of September, issued bonds worth three billion Euros.

He said that orders received from investors for Pakistani Eurobonds were double the volume issued, while investors from Asia, the Middle East, Europe and the US also showed interest. The Finance Minister said, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves are at the highest level in the country's history and are sufficient for more than three months of imports while in the past these reserves were only equal to two weeks of imports.

He said that global investors were now also assessing Pakistan's economic situation after the IMF program. Pakistan's current IMF program was due to end in October next year, so it is necessary to implement reforms to maintain economic stability, increase investor confidence and ensure continuity in policies.

He said that the government was taking steps to improve the tax system, expand the tax net and promote exports.

Various measures have been taken to increase exports, including the abolition of super tax and reduction in tax slabs, while the facility of providing loans to exporters at an interest rate of 4.5 percent has also been included in the budget. He said that to increase competitiveness in regional markets, it was necessary to reduce tariffs and energy costs.



BERLIN: President Asif Ali Zardari being seen off at the airport by senior German officials upon the conclusion of his official visit to Germany



NORTH DER BUGTI: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti meeting with tribal elders and senior citizens.

Ayesha Raza highlights country's journey towards polio eradication

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication Ayesha Raza Farooq has said Pakistan has achieved significant progress in its efforts to eradicate polio, recording a 99.8 per cent reduction in cases over the past three decades.

In her special message on World Polio Day, she said the positivity rate of environmental samples testing positive for polio virus had also declined to below 10 per cent, reflecting progress in the country's eradication efforts. Ayesha Raza Farooq stressed the need to sustain these gains through continued vaccination campaigns, effective surveillance and coordinated efforts to ensure that every child receives polio drops.

She expressed gratitude to the Government of Pakistan and all national and international partners for their continued support throughout the country's journey towards polio eradication.

Young doctors must contribute to Pakistan's development: Ahsan

Urges to protect patients' confidential information

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal urged young doctors to contribute to Pakistan's development through research, modern technology and the promotion of knowledge, while avoiding fake news and propaganda on social media and protecting patients' confidential information.

Addressing the seventh convocation 2026 of Rashid Latif Medical and Dental College as chief guest, he said Pakistan had achieved significant successes since its establishment, but sustainable development required continuity in economic policies, evidence-based decision-making and the promotion of research and innovation.

Congratulating the graduates, he said their hard work and achievements would lay the foundation for their effective role in the country's future.

Medicine was a profession in which people's lives and health depended on doctors' knowledge, skills and expertise, he added.

He said doctors could help mothers recover and care for their children, enable fathers to continue supporting their families, and restore happiness to children and their parents through effective treatment.

The minister said a convocation was not merely an occasion for celebration but also an opportunity to recognize professional and social responsibilities.

Afghan Tabliban's blanket denials cannot address Pakistan's legitimate security concerns: MoIB

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Pakistan's legitimate security concerns cannot be dismissed through blanket denials repeatedly made by the Afghan Taliban regime, said the ministry of Information and Broadcasting in a news statement.

Instead, the "credible explanations and verifiable action" are required to address such concerns, the statement added while taking note of the recent statements of the Afghan Taliban Regime where they have once again "resorted to diversionary allegations instead of addressing Pakistan's legitimate and longstanding security concerns." "Blaming Pakistan's security institutions does not absolve the Regime of its responsibility to prevent Afghan territory from being used for terrorism against Pakistan, " the MoIB maintained"

"Pakistan's concerns are not based on conjecture," it said while citing sixteenth report (S/2025/796) of the UN Security Council's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team that examined the presence and activities of terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

The US Lead Inspector General's Operation Enduring Sentinel report to Congress for January–March 2026 further stated that the Afghan Taliban continued to allow Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to operate from Afghan territory and that Taliban support and greater freedom for the group contributed to increased attacks against Pakistan.

"The report estimated TTP strength at 4,000–6,000 fighters," the MoIB said, adding that these assessments underscore the seriousness of Pakistan's concerns regarding terrorist sanctuaries and support networks operating from Afghan soil.

"The assertion that Afghanistan lacks either the capacity or the interest to destabilise Pakistan does not address these documented concerns. Repeated attempts by armed terrorists to infiltrate across Pakistan-Afghanistan border, the killing of Afghan nationals and members of terrorist groups during Pakistan's counter-terrorism operations, and the recovery of foreign-origin weapons from terrorist elements, all warrant serious scrutiny."

It said Pakistan has also raised concerns over alleged facilitation of terrorist groups by Afghan Taliban officials, including officials in Kandahar. The MoIB clarified that Pakistan's security measures are directed against terrorist threats, not the Afghan people. "Peace and stability in both countries are closely linked, and the Afghan people stand as much to gain from a region free of terrorism as their Pakistani neighbours."

The ministry said Afghan Taliban Regime must end any tolerance, facilitation or support for terrorist organisations, including TTP, BLA and their affiliates, and ensure that Afghan territory is not used to plan, prepare or launch attacks against Pakistan. "Attempts to portray Pakistan's legitimate security concerns and necessary defensive measures as hostility towards Afghanistan will neither deflect attention from the issue nor resolve it. Pakistan will continue to take all necessary measures to protect its citizens, sovereignty and territorial integrity." It said Pakistan remains open to responsible engagement based on mutual respect.



KHUZDAR: Opposition Leader in Balochistan Assembly Mir Younas Aziz Zehri and Deputy Commissioner Khuzdar Abdul Razaq Sasoli preside over the meeting to review monthly progress of various departments.

Major share of development funds intended for national highway projects in Balochistan: Aleem

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan said that government was working to improve road infrastructure across Pakistan through self-generated resources with the National Highway Authority (NHA) revenue target increased from Rs.66 billion to Rs.160 billion for the current year and its expenditure capped at Rs.50 billion. He said, additional revenue generated through toll taxes and other sources would be utilized for constructing new roads and improving infrastructure across the country. While addressing a meeting here at Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), the Federal Minister discussed major road projects, the financial sustainability of the NHA, industrial financing, regional trade connectivity and the need to address concerns raised by the business community.

LCCI President Ali Hussam Asghar, Senior Vice President(VP) Sardar Usman Ghani, members of the Executive Committee and senior members also spoke at the meeting. Abdul Aleem Khan said that a substantial portion of the authority's income was consumed by salaries, routine road maintenance, repairs and emergency rehabilitation of roads and bridges damaged by floods.

Referring to development funding, he mentioned Rs.224 billion allocated for ongoing projects under the 2024 PSDP. He said a major share of the development funds was intended for national highway projects in Balochistan. Federal Minister said that he had already presented proposals to the Prime Minister for Ease of Doing Business and address the difficulties faced by the industrial sector.



ISLAMABAD: Vice Chairman BBoIT Bilal Khan Kakar meeting with Chinese Businessmen Mr. Dojon Ji.

Bilal Kakar for increased Chinese participation in Balochistan's mining sector

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chairman of the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBoIT) Bilal Khan Kakar has called for increased Chinese participation in the province's mining sector, saying investment in mineral development could stimulate industrial growth, create employment and help unlock Balochistan's economic potential.

Kakar expressed these views during a meeting with Chinese business representative Du Junjie in Islamabad. BBoIT Chief Executive Officer Abdul Manan also attended the meeting.

The discussions covered prospects for Chinese investment in Balochistan's mineral resources, exploration and development activities, as well as possible areas of collaboration between Chinese investors and the provincial government. Kakar stressed that interest shown by Chinese investors should be translated into concrete projects that could enable the province to make productive and sustainable use of its mineral wealth.

He said the longstanding Pakistan-China relationship provided a strong basis for expanding economic ties and developing investment ventures that could benefit both sides.

The BBoIT vice chairman said the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had further underscored Balochistan's strategic and economic significance, particularly in sectors such as mining, infrastructure and industrial development.

He maintained that deeper economic cooperation between Pakistan and China could help accelerate mineral exploration, attract industrial investment and strengthen the provincial economy.

Access to essential public services basic right of citizens: Younus Zehri

Says public funds must be utilized efficiently to produce lasting benefits for local communities

KHUZDAR: Balochistan Assembly Opposition Leader Mir Younus Aziz Zehri has said access to development schemes and essential public services is a basic right of citizens rather than a concession, warning officials against neglecting responsibilities in education, healthcare, drinking water and road infrastructure.

He made the remarks while presiding over a monthly review meeting on the performance of government departments at the Deputy Commissioner's Office in Khuzdar. Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq Sasoli was also present. Representatives of various departments presented their monthly reports, outlining departmental activities, ongoing development schemes and the delivery of public services.

Health officials briefed the meeting on medicine availability at hospitals, while education authorities provided updates on teacher attendance and activities at government schools.

Officials from the Buildings and Roads, Public Health Engineering and Urban Planning departments gave updates on infrastructure schemes, road construction and water supply projects. Representatives of the Agriculture, Livestock and other departments also reported on their respective activities.

Zehri said the provision of basic facilities in underserved districts such as Khuzdar should remain a priority and instructed officials to complete development schemes within prescribed timelines while maintaining required quality standards.

He stressed that transparency in development projects was essential, adding that public funds must be utilized efficiently to produce lasting benefits for local communities.



Demonstrators gathered near Porte d'Italie, south of Paris, the capital of France, chanting slogans before a planned march. Security forces took precautions in the area.

Initial project studies should clearly assess viability: Ahad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Establishment Division Senator Ahad Cheema stressed the need for a viable business plan to strengthen the National Highway Authority's (NHA) financial sustainability through realistic project appraisals and sound financing decisions. The minister was chairing a meeting on the National Highway Authority (NHA) to review measures for developing the Authority's business plan, the ongoing assessment with an Asian Development Bank (ADB) consultant, and ways to achieve NHA's financial viability. Officials briefed the meeting on the initial findings of the ongoing study with the ADB consultant, said press release issued by Ministry of Economic Affairs. Different models and options were presented to improve NHA's performance, strengthen its operations and support its financial sustainability.

The Minister emphasized the need for a practical business plan with clear timelines and an assessment of NHA's capacity.

He called for a thorough review of projects under consideration, with PC-I setting out their commercial viability through more realistic indicators to facilitate appraisal by the Central Development Working Party (CDWP).



KARACHI: First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari visits stalls during an event marking United Nations Day

Highlights internal rift in PTI

Sustained efforts necessary to ensure public safety: Abbasi

Criticizes the PTI government over alleged corruption in various sectors; says PTI lacks a clear strategy and planning on how to move forward amid its internal disagreements

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Minister for Railways, Muhammad Hanif Abbasi, highlighted internal differences within Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), saying that party members held differing views on the current political situation and their future course of actions.

Talking to a private TV channel, he said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lacked a clear strategy and planning on how to move forward amid its internal disagreements.

The minister also reiterated the government's resolve to eliminate terrorism from KP, stressing that sustained efforts were necessary to ensure public safety, protect citizen's lives and property, and promote peace and stability in the province.

He added that the people of KP were growing frustrated with the PTI-led provincial government due to lack of public relief measures and persistent security challenges.

Abbasi also criticized the PTI government over alleged corruption in various sectors, including education, health and others.

He claimed that under the current circumstances, the security situation had been changing, giving the KP police greater courage and confidence to fight against terrorism with bravery, determination and resilience.

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