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People of Balochistan played key role in creation of Pakistan: PM

Reaffirms federal government's commitment to providing full resources for the development and prosperity of Balochistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed the federal government's commitment to providing full resources for the development and prosperity of Balochistan and said all provinces must progress equally for the country to move forward.

Addressing participants of the "National Workshop Balochistan" here, the prime minister said the Rs300 billion project for a dual carriageway from Karachi to Chaman would be completed within the next one and a half to two years.

He said Punjab had contributed Rs150 billion to Balochistan under the NFC Award, while other provinces had also played their part in the province's development.

He said Balochistan's quota for laptops and scholarships had been increased by 10 percent, and the Kachhi Canal project would be completed on a priority basis. He said the solution to Pakistan's problems lay in a transparent system of governance.

The prime minister said India was behind terrorism in Pakistan, and the country needed to confront this challenge collectively. He said Pakistan had tried to convince Afghanistan to take action against terrorist organisations and prevent its soil from being used against Pakistan.

The prime minister said Islamabad was home to people from all four provinces and welcomed the sons and daughters of Balochistan.

He said Balochistan was the largest province of the country by area and its Baloch and Pashtun people had played a key role in the creation of Pakistan, with several princely states voluntarily joining Pakistan in 1947 and 1948.

He said although Balochistan was the smallest province by population, it was the largest by area, and its scattered towns and long distances required comparatively more resources for development.

He said this was recognised in the 2010 NFC Award, when the other three provinces, particularly Punjab, voluntarily agreed to a 100 percent increase in Balochistan's financial share, with Punjab providing 11 billion rupees annually since then, amounting to 150 billion rupees to date.

The prime minister said nearly 27,000 tube wells in Balochistan had been shifted to solar energy under a 75 billion rupee project, of which the federal government provided 50 billion rupees.



RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshall Syed Asim Munir inaugurates Sky47, Pakistan's first purpose built AI Ready Tier III/IV data center and sovereign cloud platform.



QUETTA: Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail and Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti offering fateha for the departed soul of martyred District and Sessions Judge Abdul Hakeem Kakar.

Governor urges strong family planning campaigns to manage rapid population growth

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Governor of Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail said that the population of any country is fundamentally linked to its people, their standard of living, employment opportunities, and economic well-being. Pakistan's population is expected to reach 260 million by the end of 2026, presenting the country with two major challenges. The first is managing the rapidly growing population. The second, and perhaps even more important, is transforming this large population into a skilled, productive, healthy, and competent workforce. Both are highly challenging responsibilities.

He said that Prince Agha Omar Ahmadzai and his entire team deserve appreciation for organizing today's successful ceremony. He expressed these views while addressing participants at an event held at a local hotel in Quetta in connection with World Population Day. Provincial Minister Mir Asim Kurd Gello, Parliamentary Secretary Prince Agha Omar Ahmadzai, Member of the Provincial Assembly Dr. Nawaz Kabzai, Provincial Secretary Zafar Baloch, UNDP's Zulfiqar Durrani, former Senator Roshan Khursheed Bharucha, BRSP Chairman Malik Anwar Saleem Kasi, Chief Executive Officer Dr. Tahir Rashid, Director of the Governor Secretariat Ata-ur-Rehman Khilji, and individuals from various walks of life were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail said it is encouraging for both Pakistan and Balochistan that Pakistan has the youngest population in the region, while Balochistan has the youngest population among all provinces of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Drug Pricing at the Finance Division.

Regional peace depends on ending terrorism emanating from Afghan soil: DPM Dar

CHOLPON-ATA, (Monitoring Desk): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar urged the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to press Afghanistan's Taliban rulers to honour their counter-terrorism commitments, saying durable peace and stability in the region depended on ending terrorism emanating from Afghan soil. Addressing the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting (SCO-CFM) in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, Dar said, "Our region is passing through an eventful time." He noted, however, "It has always been, and continues to be, Pakistan's desire to see a peaceful, stable, regionally integrated, and prosperous Afghanistan, which is at peace with itself and its neighbours."

This, the foreign minister said, was in the best interest of all SCO member states and beyond.

At present, Dar said, "the threat of terrorism emanating from Afghanistan is one of the most serious security challenges for us," noting that terrorist organisations including the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) "continue to recruit, train, and operate from Afghan soil, under the watch and facilitation of the Afghan Taliban regime." "The enabling environment provided to terrorist organisations by the Afghan Taliban regime has been well-documented by the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team," the foreign minister stated. Citing over 560 innocent Pakistani civilians martyred in over 2,000 terrorist incidents this year, Dar expressed deep concern over Afghan nationals found to be involved in these terrorist incidents.

Saying that durable peace, stability, and economic development could only be achieved "with the eradication of the menace of terrorism emanating from Afghan soil," Dar urged the SCO to call on the Afghan Taliban regime to "honour its international counter-terrorism commitments to the international community and fulfil its responsibilities towards global peace and security."

Turning to regional diplomacy, Dar said Pakistan believed "dialogue, diplomacy and mutual respect provide the only sustainable way forward to resolve conflicts and achieve durable peace and security." Guided by this conviction, he said, Pakistan led efforts to host talks between the United States and Iran in Islamabad in April, facilitating the first high-level direct diplomatic contact between the two countries in 47 years.

President Zardari calls for faster development in Balochistan

KARACHI, (Monitoring Desk): President Asif Ali Zardari called for accelerating development in Balochistan, stressing that providing basic facilities to the province's residents and promoting its overall development remained among the government's top priorities.

The president made the remarks during a meeting with a delegation of Balochistan provincial ministers at Bilawal House in Karachi, according to a statement issued by the Presidency.

The meeting reviewed the law and order situation in the province, progress on development projects, and Balochistan's overall situation.

President Zardari directed the relevant authorities to expedite the implementation of ongoing development projects in the province.

He also emphasised the need for all relevant institutions to work in a coordinated manner to improve law and order, promote public welfare, and boost economic activity across Balochistan.

Pakistan can accomplish world-class initiatives through unity, vision, determination: PM Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD, (APP):Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif described the newly inaugurated AI and cloud computing facility as a landmark achievement for Pakistan reflecting the country's growing technological capabilities and demonstrated that Pakistan could accomplish world-class initiatives through unity, vision and determination.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the country's first ever AI Cloud Sky47, the prime minister said he was deeply inspired after touring the state-of-the-art facility, which had been completed in record time. Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif praised the engineers, experts and institutions involved in the project, and said the successful execution of the facility showcased the extraordinary talent available in both Pakistan's military and civilian sectors.

Quoting the national poet Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the prime minister said nations were built through fresh ideas and visionary thinking rather than bricks and stones alone. He stressed that innovation, commitment and collective resolve were the driving forces behind national progress. Paying tribute to Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir's leadership, the prime minister said the project stood as a testament to what could be achieved when state institutions worked together with a shared national purpose. He expressed confidence that if the same model of coordination and execution was replicated across other sectors, Pakistan could not only recover from past setbacks but also emerge as a modern, dynamic and forward-looking nation.

Iran rejects temporary ceasefire until Strait of Hormuz demands met

CHOLPON-ATA, (Agencies): Iran will not accept a temporary ceasefire and will continue its current course until its demands regarding the Strait of Hormuz are met, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) foreign ministers' meeting in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, Araghchi said Iran would not discuss a temporary truce "unless our demands regarding the Strait of Hormuz are fulfilled," according to Iranian media.

He said consultations with Russia and China were ongoing, adding that he held detailed talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the meeting.

Araghchi also said Pakistan had conveyed proposals as a mediator but argued that Tehran's dispute with Washington was "not about mediation but about the US approach."

Taxpayers' money should be spent on public welfare: Saleem Khosa

QUETTA (ANN): PML-N parliamentary leader in the Balochistan Assembly and Provincial Minister for Communications and Works, Mir Saleem Khosa, said that the immediate resolution of public issues and transparency in government departments are his top priorities. He said delays in development projects and substandard work will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Speaking to various delegations, he said there should be no compromise on the quality of roads, buildings, and other development schemes, and that every project must be monitored effectively. He said taxpayers' money should be spent on public welfare. A special package is being prepared to provide basic facilities to remote areas so that underdeveloped districts can also benefit from the fruits of development. He emphasized that better road connectivity not only makes life easier for the public but also promotes peace, trade, and development in the province.

CM Bugti vows to eliminate terrorists from Balochistan at any cost

Visits family of martyred judge, announces educational support for children

QUETTA (ANN): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti visited the residence of martyred District and Sessions Judge Abdul Hakim Kakar, where he offered condolences, recited Fateha, and met the martyr's children and other family members.

The Chief Minister prayed for the elevation of the martyr's rank, forgiveness, and patience for the bereaved family.

Speaking with the family, he said that the Government of Balochistan would never leave the families of martyrs alone. He said that Shaheed Abdul Hakim Kakar sacrificed his life while serving the rule of law and the justice system, and he will always be remembered in history with honor.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti announced that the Government of Balochistan would bear all expenses related to the upbringing and education of Shaheed Abdul Hakim Kakar's children to ensure that their education and future are not affected.

He said that caring for the families of martyrs is the government's responsibility, and it will spare no effort in fulfilling this obligation.

The Chief Minister said that every conspiracy aimed at harming Balochistan's peace, development, and state institutions through terrorism would be defeated. He added that terrorist elements would never succeed in their malicious objectives, and the government stands in complete solidarity with all state institutions and security forces in eliminating terrorism.

He said that the sacrifices of the martyrs would not go in vain and that enemies of peace would be brought to justice in accordance with the law.

The Chief Minister also visited a local hospital, where he inquired about the health of Additional Sessions Judge Tariq Lashari, who was injured in the terrorist attack.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses National Workshop on Balochistan.

Political leaders urges positive politics to safeguard democracy

QUETTA (ANN): Leaders of political and religious parties have said that everyone must play their role for the country's stability and equality. They said that taking traders' cargo trucks off the Quetta–Karachi and Quetta–Punjab highways into orchards in broad daylight, looting them, and then setting the vehicles on fire is the height of (oppression). They said the government has failed to provide security on national highways instead of protecting the public. They added that trying to humiliate others only brings disrepute to democracy, and that political thinking must change in order to move forward. Until people stop viewing each other solely through a political lens, they said, success cannot be achieved.

These views were expressed by JUI Balochistan chief Senator Maulana Abdul Wasey, National Party Central Secretary and Member of the Provincial Assembly Mir Rahmat Saleh Baloch, Jamaat-e-Islami Balochistan chief and MPA Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Balochistan President Daud Shah Kakar while commenting on the country's current situation. They said the current federal and provincial governments are responsible for the province's deteriorating situation, adding that there is no trace of law and order in Balochistan. They said that not only traders but also ordinary citizens are now avoiding travel on the Quetta–Karachi and Quetta–Punjab highways.

Hybrid terror: BLA executes, BYC sympathizes, and ISKP obsecures Mastung judge's killing

ISLAMABAD, (APP): With the assassination of District and Sessions Judge Abdul Hakeem Kakar in Mastung drawing nationwide condemnation, the security experts and analysts unmasked a foreign-backed hybrid warfare strategy driven by the BLA–BYC nexus operating under handlers in Delhi and Kabul.

The targeted attack took place near the Wali Khan Bypass crossing as judicial officers were traveling from Quetta to Mastung in which Sessions Judge Kakar and his security guard were killed while Additional Sessions Judge Tariq Lashari sustained injuries.

Security analysts view this targeted killing as an attempt to intimidate the judiciary, subvert the rule of law, and force a retreat of state authority in Balochistan. Having failed to break the resolve of law enforcement agencies, banned insurgent groups have increasingly turned toward judicial officers, prosecutors, and civilian institutions.

Hybrid Terror

Intelligence experts describe a distinct multi-layered tactic taking root in the region as BLA executes physical ambushes, targeted assassinations, and infrastructure destruction.

The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) functions as an urban proxy—providing ideological messaging, framing narrative cover, and building public sympathy to shield armed militants from accountability.

The transnational terror groups like ISKP step in with rapid claims of responsibility hours after an attack to absorb public outrage and obscure the true operational hands.

Given the geographical footprint and BLA's established presence in Mastung, intelligence analysts view ISKP's opportunistic claims as part of an operational convergence designed to deflect backlash when civilian or judicial figures are targeted. Security assessments point to external handlers operating out of Delhi and Kabul who supply logistics, secure communication channels, and financial backing to sustain proxy warfare in Pakistan.

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

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No talks with terrorists

Pakistan's enigma, as it faces an uptick in terrorism, is owing to its failure to implement the National Action Plan. A spokesperson for the military yesterday pointed out that the gap in governance process in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, in particular, is responsible for the revulsion and its "cost is being paid by the blood of security forces". The comments from the Director General ISPR came as there were reports of sorties being flown over Kabul to target TTP leader Noor Wali Mehsud. The reports, not confirmed by the military leadership as well as Foreign Office, came a day after 11 armed forces personnel were gunned down in Kurram Agency, amidst an uptick in terror activities.

The causes behind the soaring terror activities, as listed by the military spokesperson, include non-implementation of NAP; politicisation the issue of terrorism; India's hoodwinking in Afghanistan; and the US-abandoned modern weapons falling in the hands of non-state actors. This surely has bred a nexus between crime and terrorism, and stands multiplied with Taliban 2.0 looking the other way and not being able to act against the disgruntled elements holed up in Afghanistan. The DG ISPR rejected prescriptions from a political party that insists on entering into talks with these elements.

Afghanistan, being the epicenter of terrorism, poses a serious security risk to the entire region. The onus rests with Kabul to act against the TTP operatives, and the likes, who have been operating on both sides of the divide. That strata of terror not only goes unchecked inside Afghanistan but also enjoys the patronage of extra-territorial forces, especially India, with the apt strategy to push the region over the brink. The involvement of Fitna-Al-Khawarij i.e. Indian proxies in terror activities in the restive provinces of Balochistan and K-P is a case in point.

Pakistan has no choice but to go after the terrorists. At the same time, there is a need to exhaust the diplomatic opportunity by making it crystal clear to Kabul and other regional entities that broad-based cooperation in counterterrorism is the way to go.

Valley of the shadow of death

FARRUKH KHAN PITAFI

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for you are with me; your power to protect and your presence to guide, they comfort me." - Psalms 23:4

"As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I take a look at my life and realise there's nothin' left." - Coolio, Gangsta's Paradise

James Jesus Angleton, the celebrated CIA counter-intelligence czar, codenamed Mother, called the world of espionage "a wilderness of mirrors". That is true. However, I prefer to call it the valley of the shadow of death because of the existential nature of the threats spies face. But not all spies are created equal. Some can live to tell the tale. Others may face exposure, capture or death. The most interesting cases are those of agents facing a burn notice, which is issued when an agent, asset or source is officially disavowed for being unreliable or making an unforgivable mistake. Bear this in mind, as it will prove useful.

Ironically, all of this is happening in the dying months of 2025. Later, I will tell you why. However, I first heard of his name in 1999, and it was in connection with something monumental. Oh wait. Now you feel you are missing something. You are not. The missing piece has not yet been provided. I am not burying the lede. Just a tease, a weapon in a writer's arsenal. For a good reason, as you will see.

Before introducing the trigger for this piece, a reminder of our current position. Pakistan faced a flurry of activities and attacks this month. Suddenly, the TLP, which was sleeping during the entire length of the Gaza tragedy, woke up right when a peace plan had already come into effect. It wanted to protest in front of the US embassy. The US, under President Trump, has brokered a tense peace, which has seen a dramatic reduction, if not total cessation, of violence there. Was the purpose just to protest, to gain attention, or to create a Benghazi-like situation? Incidentally, this was happening when the Afghan Taliban had decided to send its acting foreign minister (he has been acting for four years) and send proxies into Pakistan to wreak havoc. As if that were not enough, they decided to attack Pakistan. As you read these lines, a tense ceasefire is ending, and talks between Pakistani and Taliban officials are reportedly set to begin. The PTI, in its infinite wisdom, decided to remove and replace its chief minister in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Sounds like a sequel to "Everything Everywhere All at Once", right?

This suggests someone powerful is unhappy, angry or in a hurry due to a looming change. This brings us to the state of play in India. The Modi government is facing a three-body problem: the looming Bihar elections, growing Pakistani influence, partly due to its own flawed policies and a misguided war, and the rising cost of its foreign policy mistakes. Could it unleash elements on Pakistan as a punitive measure?

Meanwhile, in the US, buoyed by his successful diplomacy in the Middle East, President Trump has set his eyes on the intractable problem of the Ukraine war. His foreign policy is coming together, and he has assembled a strong national security team. He is also trying to fulfil one of his 2016 campaign promises of "draining the swamp". The swamp, for the uninitiated, is the army of lobbyists, influencers and middlemen whose job it is to influence policy outcomes, even at the cost of bringing an administration to its knees. His India policy is interesting because, even when he does not intend to rile up New Delhi, he manages to do so, due to the Indian government's hypersensitivity.

For a leader who ran on the platform of challenging the obsessive political correctness of the DC elites, to tiptoe around the growing circle of this hypersensitivity is a big ask.

Amidst all this comes the story that triggered this piece: the arrest of the Indian American defence expert Ashley Tellis, the man I mentioned earlier. As I was saying, his name came to my attention in 1999 when an Indian outlet boasted about a wargame report called "Asia 2025". It was a forward-looking study of various postulated geopolitical shifts in the next 25 years. The scenario the publication celebrated was the dismemberment of Pakistan and Afghanistan, their merger with India and the emergence of a powerful Indian superstate. Now you get the irony, too. And Mr Tellis was one of the contributors. Since then, I have been following his career. Born in a Christian family in Mumbai, he had come a long way. His career was devoted to two things: American national interest, and finding ways to convince the US of the importance of an alliance with India. This report has fuelled the imagination of the Hindutva dream of Akhand Bharat for the past quarter of a century. And I have quoted many BJP leaders predicting that after 2025, Pakistan will become a part of India.

However, Mr Tellis has not been arrested for passing on information to India, which he frequently visited. No. It is a case of stolen classified documents and at least one meeting with Chinese officials, in which he is accused of leaving behind a manila envelope. Intriguing, right? Why would a card-carrying Indophile, unpaid adviser to the State Department, and a paid contractor of the Defence Department pass on critical information to China? Could this be a trap?

But the plot thickens. He had started writing against the Indian government and the country as an ally since 2023. Looks like Mr Modi's policies were not sitting well with his constitution.

Now there are two distinct possibilities: that all of this is true, and he was caught with his hand in the proverbial cookie jar, or that he was framed.

The Indian intelligence community's influence operations function in such a way that it would kill your loved ones, frame you for their murder, and if I tried to help you and was successful in proving you innocent, frame me for framing you. Could Mr Tellis be an Indian asset who was issued a burn notice because he reacted as any conscientious minority member would when asked to defend an extremist government of the country of his origin, instead of the country itself? Only time will tell.

One thing is for sure: India under Modi is capable of doing such a thing. Pakistan is the last place where its influence should be felt, but it is. I have illustrated that many times, and the above-mentioned flurry of attacks is one such example. Indophiles and Indian expatriates in the world, beware. Your long service to India will amount to nothing if you cannot carry water for Modi's regime.

Impending Pak-Afghan talks and the way forward

IMTIAZ GUL

Regardless of the outcome of the impending Doha talks, the current state of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan signals the onset of another prolonged and complex conflict. This situation must be assessed from four key perspectives: humanitarian, security, internal stability, and geopolitics.

Life along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border has come to a virtual standstill - for the third time this year - due to border closures stemming from rising political tensions. These shutdowns have disrupted the lives of thousands, halted commercial activity and strained cross-border relations. Each episode carries a direct human and economic cost, particularly for border communities that rely heavily on daily movement and trade.

The continued presence of terrorist groups in Afghanistan - particularly the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is not just a concern for Pakistan, but for the wider region and the international community. These groups operate with relative impunity, often launching attacks across the border, triggering standoffs and military responses.

Equally concerning is the presence of non-state actors within Pakistan. Their domestic influence - combined with historic links to Afghanistan - highlights the urgent need for an approach based on rule of law. The state's renewed resolve to counter such actors is a welcome and necessary development.

For too long, extremist groups centred on Kashmir and Afghanistan have been allowed to disrupt public life. Their religio-political ideologies were weaponised, resulting in repeated crises. Groups like Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), for example, have paralysed public life multiple times since 2017. The recent violent episode, which resulted in tragic loss of life, underlines the danger of allowing such actors to operate unchecked. The government crackdown in Muridke was not only necessary - it was overdue. Those defending the TLP should instead hold its leadership accountable for inciting violence and targeting diplomatic missions.

If this marks the beginning of a serious policy shift, it must be rooted in the principle that no individual or group should be allowed to endanger public safety or national stability.

The Geopolitical Trap

Once again, Pakistan appears to be getting drawn into the vortex of Afghan geopolitics - this time with more bitterness and public polarisation. Hatred and distrust are hardening, fueled by both mainstream and social media platforms amplifying external narratives and domestic frustrations. The long-term consequences of this dynamic could be deeply damaging to regional stability and national cohesion.

Pakistan's Options And Way Forward

The Pakistani military has demonstrated its technological and operational superiority during recent confrontations. However, history provides a sobering lesson: superior firepower does not guarantee strategic victory. NATO's failure to subdue the Taliban, despite massive technological and intelligence advantages, should not be forgotten. Even a poorly equipped force like the Afghan Taliban can cause persistent harm through asymmetric warfare, as it did for two decades.

Pakistan must adopt a long-term strategic framework rather than reacting tactically to each border provocation. Infiltration, subversion and low-intensity conflict - reminiscent of the 1970s and 1980s - must not be allowed to define current policy.

Key Principles Going Forward

No knee-jerk reactions: Minor provocations by rogue border officials or skirmishes must not result in suspending visa services or closing border crossings.

Keep borders open: Even amid political tensions, Pakistan must avoid closing the border. Such actions harden public opinion, fuel resentment and generate longlasting mistrust.

Avoid public humiliation of Afghans: Publicly mocking or taunting Afghan counterparts, particularly Pashtuns, is counterproductive. It may momentarily assert dominance, but it will only deepen resentment and hostility. Dignity and mutual respect must underpin all official engagements.

As the larger and more stable neighbour, Pakistan must maintain the moral high ground while firmly pursuing its strategic interests. Let trade continue. Let people cross borders. At the same time, non-state actors must be dealt with decisively, and national policy must be guided by law, not ideology or short-term political expediency.

Instead of weaponising vis services or trade concessions under the transit trade agreements, Pakistan must preserve the high moral ground by letting the people and goods flow across the border. The best bet is to keep all neighbours on board – regional consensus for any engagement with Afghanistan or action against TTP – because almost all are wary of terrorist groups that are using the Afghan soil.

Bottom Line

Engage with Afghanistan diplomatically and economically, but never allow extremists - whether domestic or external - to dictate the national agenda. For too long have the religio-political groups enjoyed a privileged status for multiple, shortsighted considerations. That has undermined the rule of law and exposed common citizens to intimation of all sorts. TLP tried to precisely do that and this must stop for good.

The great corporate exit

MOHSIN SALEEM ULLAH

When a global consumer giant like Procter & Gamble (P&G) shuts down its local manufacturing in a country of 240 million consumers, it sends a message louder than any statistic: Pakistan is losing investor confidence. P&G's decision to exit manufacturing as part of its global restructuring strategy might sound routine, but in a market of this size, such moves reflect more on the host country's business environment than on corporate plans. In recent years, a steady stream of multinationals – Shell, Microsoft, Careem, Telenor, Uber and several pharmaceutical and energy firms – have either downsized or departed entirely. While corporate exits happen globally, the pace and scale of withdrawals from Pakistan reveal deeper structural flaws. Once viewed as a promising emerging market, Pakistan is increasingly seen as a high-risk, low-return destination.

The departure of these companies carries real consequences, such as loss of jobs, tax revenues and technology transfer, as well as the loss of local manufacturing erodes employment and supply-chain opportunities. Over time, this shrinks the industrial base and discourages future investment. The pattern spans sectors. Microsoft closed its office in 2025 after 25 years, while Careem suspended ride-hailing services, citing unsustainable conditions, and Telenor sold its Pakistan stakes. These departures signal a growing trust deficit between Pakistan and international investors. Macroeconomic instability, erratic policymaking and governance failures have made operations increasingly difficult. Since 2021, the rupee has lost over half its value, while inflation has averaged above 25%, wiping out profit margins for firms reliant on imported inputs. Taxation is another deterrent. With a corporate tax rate of 29% among the region's highest, plus an additional 10% super tax and 18% sales tax, Pakistan's fiscal framework discourages investment rather than incentivising it. Policy reversals, sudden import restrictions and arbitrary price controls create uncertainty that few multinationals can tolerate. Even exiting the market is complicated. Delayed profit repatriation, blocked remittances and prolonged liquidation procedures make leaving Pakistan a bureaucratic ordeal. As investors often note, "If it's hard to exit, it's harder to enter."

Undoubtedly, weak infrastructure and regulatory unpredictability deepen investor frustration. Power shortages inflate costs, while frequent internet disruptions undermine Pakistan's ambitions as a digital hub. The IT sector reportedly lost around $300 million in 2023 due to shutdowns.

Venture capital funding, once a bright spot, has collapsed from $355 million in 2022 to just $43 million in 2024. Meanwhile, thousands of Pakistani firms have re-registered in Dubai, drawn by lower taxes, smoother regulations and stable policies. As global companies consolidate into regional hubs, Pakistan's failure to compete for such roles is glaring.

Reversing this corporate flight requires real reform, not rhetoric. Profit repatriation and business closure processes must be transparent and time-bound, ideally completed within 90 days. The SBP should ensure predictable access to foreign exchange for legitimate corporate remittances.

Tax reform is critical. Gradually reducing corporate tax to 25% and harmonising sales tax at 15% would align Pakistan with regional peers. To safeguard the IT sector, the government should declare no-shutdown zones in technology parks and stabilise internet access. Offering return packages, tax holidays and regulatory fast-tracking for firms that relocated abroad could also help restore confidence.

The exodus of global firms is more than a business concern; it is a verdict on Pakistan's economic governance. Left unaddressed, it risks triggering wider disengagement by both foreign and domestic investors. Yet, the crisis also presents an opportunity. If Pakistan can restore predictability, ensure fair taxation and uphold investor rights, it can still reclaim credibility as an investment destination. The message must be clear: Pakistan is open for business, and this time, it must mean it. Fail to act now, and the "exit" signs flashing across corporate Pakistan could soon mark the fading of an economy once full of promise.

Unfolding the question of one's place & spirituality

ZORAIN NIZAMANI

This question seems to garners similar replies. When asked, people tend to start talking about their profession, "I am a doctor, I am a lawyer, I am an engineer, I am a psychiatrist." But that particular answer might be incorrect. It only tells us what you do for a living but it doesn't tell us who you are.

Some may say they are Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist. But is that really who they are? Merely products of their God and nothing else? Is your religion your only identity?

Who you bow down before is who you believe in and for some, it becomes their entire identity. They dress a certain way and look a certain way. No harm in that. Each to their own.

But sometimes, you can learn a lot about someone from where they're headed in life or what their goals in life are.

Some may be working towards a great discovery; some might be prophesying with their pen, and some might just be surviving.

Interestingly, the holy Quran also poses this rhetorical question, it asks 'So, where are you going?' (81:26)

A piece of advice. Hang this verse in front of your work desk and each time you begin to think too much, read it again and again until things start falling in place. Where are you headed?

But my philosophically futile question remains. Who are you? And to add to the misery, where are you going?

This allows for a moment of self-reflection. You don't have to be of a certain religion to self-reflect. You have to be human. Each time you find yourself in a fix, ask yourself who you are and what your destination is? Sometimes the most difficult questions have the simplest of answers. You're just seeking them in the wrong place.

Who am I, you ask? Here's the answer to the question you probably did not inquire into.

I don't know, yet.

I am as oblivious, unfounded and incomplete as you are.

I've spent some time here on what they call the earth and where they say humans allegedly reside. But so far, I haven't come across any humanity. Maybe little pockets of kindness here and there but the rest has been a terrible ride, to put it mildly.

But who am I? I am still on the journey where I seek an answer to this question. I have travelled a handful of countries but I did not find myself there.

I wandered the battered streets of Rome; did as the Romans do. I trotted along the Freedom Trail of Boston, Massachusetts. I strolled along the West 42nd and Broadway Street in New York City, and amongst the chaos, I found only silence and its accompanying stillness.

On a damp, snowy night in the woods of Northeast America, what did I find? The abyss.

In the deepest jungles of Balochistan, camping around the fire, I found myself feeling quite small under the vast sky full of stars.

I found something else too. The eerie leisure of nothingness. Oh, the longing to attain nirvana.

When was the last time you sat down quietly in a room and ruminated over these things? When was the last time you wrote your thoughts down to answer questions which you just could not answer?

As Bulleh Shah said in his poem, "I am neither a believer in the mosque nor do I follow the way of the infidels. I am not Adam or Eve, nor do I carry any name given to me, neither water, nor air, neither earth nor fire. Bulla, who am I?".

I am a believer, Bulla. That's all I am. As disappointing as that may sound. I might be different from the one you believed in, but hey, they all wanted us to be kind human beings, right?

No one's better or worse, Bulla.

Bulla, you yourself said, "Nor am I in the argument of pure or impure". Then why should I be?

Houthis attack Saudi tankers to open likely new front in Iran war

SANAA, (Monitoring Desk): Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels said they attacked two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea, potentially opening a new front as the U.S. military conducted a 12th night of strikes against Iran.

The Houthis have threatened to shut down another key trade route, with the world economy already reeling from Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran and the U.S. have meanwhile stepped up their attacks as they vie for control of the strait, through which a fifth of the world's oil and gas passed in peacetime, setting off a scramble for alternative routes.

U.S. President Donald Trump threatened "major military punishment" against the Houthis if their attacks on ships continue. "If they do this again, the U.S. will hold Iran responsible, in that the Houthis are a Surrogate and/or Proxy of Iran, and major military punishment will be inflicted upon Iran and, of course, the Houthis, themselves," Trump wrote on social media. As the rhetoric escalated, so did the economic fallout. The price of a barrel of Brent crude oil, the international standard, spiked 4.3% to $98.16, its highest level since early June, before the two sides reached a preliminary peace agreement that has since collapsed. Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi of Iraq, which has close ties to both the U.S. and Iran, was in Tehran to call for peace and dialogue, a spokesperson said. Al-Zaidi met with Trump earlier this month in Washington. An Arab diplomat said Gulf states are increasingly pessimistic about finding an off-ramp. The diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the situation, said regional countries, in addition to Pakistan and Türkiye, continue to push for de-escalation. The Houthis' SABA news agency said the rebels had struck two tankers, the Encelia and the Layla, in the Red Sea, leading to fires on both. There were no reports of casualties.

It was their first reported attack on a vessel since they announced a blockade of Saudi-linked shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait earlier this week in retaliation for the kingdom's blockade on Yemen and a recent attack on the international airport in Yemen's rebel-held capital, Sanaa.

'Double whammy'

Bab el-Mandeb, at the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, is a vital shipping chokepoint connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

Around 12% of the world's trade, including a fourth of global container traffic, passes through there, moving between Europe and Asia via Egypt's Suez Canal. The state-run Saudi Press Agency reported an attack set the Encelia ablaze overnight in the Red Sea. It did not mention the Layla.



A drone strike on a warehouse belonging to Wildberries, Russia's largest e-commerce platform, in the Leningrad region

Gaza hunger crisis eases, but aid cuts threaten renewed surge

GAZA, (Monitoring Desk): The humanitarian situation in Gaza has improved since famine conditions were declared in parts of the territory last year, but millions remain trapped in a deep food crisis, with aid agencies warning that funding shortages and reduced humanitarian access could erase recent gains by the end of 2026.

A new report released Wednesday by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), the global authority that assesses food insecurity, found that improved aid deliveries and reduced fighting following the October 2025 cease-fire between Israel and Hamas significantly lowered acute malnutrition rates, particularly among children.

However, the organization warned that the recovery remains fragile and could quickly unravel if humanitarian assistance continues to decline.

The IPC estimates that between April and June, about 1.2 million people, or 59% of Gaza's population, experienced acute food insecurity classified as Phase 3 "Crisis" or worse. Of those, more than 212,000 were living under Phase 4 "Emergency" conditions, one step below famine.

Unless aid levels are sustained, the number of people facing acute hunger is expected to climb to more than 1.4 million, roughly 67% of Gaza's population, by the end of the year.

Although famine conditions identified in parts of Gaza in August last year have eased, the IPC stressed that food consumption remains insufficient for most households. Many families continue to skip meals, rely on charity kitchens, beg for food or scavenge for anything edible as the territory struggles to recover after nearly two years of war, repeated displacement and widespread destruction.

The report credited increased humanitarian deliveries after the cease-fire with driving measurable improvements, but emphasized that those gains have been uneven across Gaza and remain heavily dependent on continued international assistance.

"Even small disruptions to humanitarian access could rapidly reverse recent gains," the IPC warned.

Children remain among the most vulnerable. While acute malnutrition has declined to levels considered acceptable by international standards.

Ebola outbreak tops 1,000 deaths as containment efforts intensify

DAKAR, (Monitoring Desk): The deadliest and fastest-growing Ebola outbreak on record has claimed more than 1,000 lives in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where health authorities are struggling to contain a strain of the virus that has no approved vaccine or treatment.

The latest update from Congo's public health institute reported 2,536 confirmed infections and 1,033 deaths since the outbreak was declared on May 15. At least 738 patients remain hospitalized or in isolation as health workers race to curb transmission across the country's east.

Unlike previous Ebola emergencies, the current epidemic is driven by the Bundibugyo strain, a rare variant for which no licensed vaccine or proven treatment exists. The absence of medical countermeasures has made the outbreak especially difficult to control.

Most infections are concentrated in the remote eastern province of Ituri, which accounts for nearly 90% of confirmed cases. However, the virus has spread to five provinces, including the major city of Kisangani, and crossed into neighboring Uganda.

Congolese health officials say the explosive increase in infections appears to be easing, but they warn the outbreak has not yet reached its peak. The country's latest epidemiological report says transmission remains widespread, with recent fluctuations in case numbers partly reflecting reporting delays and ongoing data verification.

One of the biggest concerns remains contact tracing. Officials say only about 77% of known contacts are currently being monitored, far below the 95% threshold considered necessary to interrupt transmission. Health responders also continue to grapple with major gaps in understanding how widely the virus has spread, as many infections cannot be linked to known transmission chains.

Researchers at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently used computer modeling to examine the epidemic's trajectory.



In northern Nigeria, societal prejudices that limit women's participation in the workforce are being overcome through the production of goods by entrepreneurial women.



A Palestinian university applicant celebrates with family members after the results of the Tawjihi secondary school examination, which determines admission to universities, were announced at a tent camp in Gaza City, Gaza

Trump returns for correspondents' dinner address after shooting

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): U.S. President Donald Trump is set to address the White House Correspondents' Association at its rescheduled annual dinner, nearly three months after a shooting outside the original venue forced the event to be canceled.

The black-tie gathering of journalists, politicians and administration officials was called off April 25 after a man attempted to breach a security checkpoint and fired a shotgun outside the ballroom at the Washington Hilton, where Trump and members of his Cabinet were taking their seats.

The suspect, Cole Allen, pleaded not guilty in May to multiple charges, including attempting to assassinate the president.

The dinner has since been relocated to the Waldorf Astoria and will be held under heightened security. Secret Service Director Sean Curran said Wednesday that an advance team had put a comprehensive security plan in place to protect attendees and secure the venue.

"We do expect bad people to show up," Curran said. "It's just a reality of where we are, but we're treating it no differently than any other site that the president goes to."

Trump has said the April shooting demonstrated the need for a $400 million ballroom being built at the White House, arguing that holding such events there would improve the president's security.

The dinner will honor Secret Service officer Victor Gonzales, who was shot at a security checkpoint outside the ballroom in April and is credited with helping stop the attack. He was wearing a protective vest and was the only person injured that night. Washington Hilton staff members who assisted guests also will be recognized, the WHCA said.

The gala, an annual fixture on Washington's calendar for more than a century, raises money for journalism scholarships and celebrates the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which protects freedom of speech and the press.

Bangladesh president to resign as Hasina prepares return from exile

NEW DELHI, (Monitoring Desk): Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin will resign, clearing the last senior state official closely associated with ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from office just months before she plans to return from exile.

Shahabuddin's resignation comes days after Hasina told media she intended to return to Bangladesh around December and surrender following her conviction by a war crimes tribunal.

The president's spokesperson, Sarwar Alam, said Shahabuddin would submit his resignation to Parliament Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad upon the speaker's return from Thailand on Friday.

"According to the Constitution, the president's resignation becomes effective upon submission of a signed letter to the speaker," Alam said.

Under Bangladesh's Constitution, the parliamentary speaker will serve as acting president until lawmakers elect a successor.

Alam did not specify why Shahabuddin was stepping down. However, three sources familiar with the matter told media the government had urged him to resign because of his longstanding ties to Hasina after the former prime minister announced plans to return from exile.

The resignation removes Hasina's last remaining ally from high office as Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's government seeks to consolidate power following February's election victory.

Hasina's Awami League has been banned since the 2024 student-led uprising that toppled her government. Many senior party members have since been jailed or gone into hiding.

Last November, Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal sentenced Hasina to death in absentia for ordering a crackdown on protesters during the 2024 uprising. A U.N. report said nearly 1,400 people were killed in the unrest. Hasina, who has been living in India, denies the charges.



The excitement in the Formula 1 World Championship continues with the Hungarian Grand Prix, the 11th stage of the season.

Volker urges action as thousands of seafarers remain stranded in Strait of Hormuz

GENEVA, (Agencies): UN human rights chief Volker Turk has called for urgent action to protect thousands of stranded seafarers facing a worsening humanitarian and human rights crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, a human rights spokesperson said.

At least 6,000 seafarers aboard some 400 vessels remain stranded in the Strait after being unable to evacuate during the ceasefire, according to information from the International Maritime Organization, Shabia Mantoo told reporters in Geneva.

The office has also received reports that some shipowners have abandoned crews at sea without food, water, fuel, medical care, electricity, repatriation or even payment of wages.

"We are aware of at least nine ships, with 93 crew members, abandoned by their owners in the Strait of Hormuz since the start of the war," Mantoo said.

She warned that stranded crews remain exposed to ongoing hostilities, noting that 17 seafarers have been killed since the conflict began, including five in recent attacks in and near the Strait.

Turk is calling on states, shipowners and all relevant actors to ensure stranded seafarers receive consular assistance, essential supplies and safe evacuation and repatriation, she said.

The UN rights chief also voiced concern over attacks on civilian merchant vessels in the Black Sea, where the UN has verified four attacks in Ukraine's Odesa region this month that killed or injured 34 vessel workers, as well as another attack in the Sea of Azov that killed one vessel worker.

"Seafarers should not be forced or compelled to endanger their lives by sailing through conflict zones," the spokesperson said. "Nor should they face the risk of reprisal by shipowners if they decline these assignments."

US extends Iran strikes into 13th night as Gulf tensions escalate

WASHINGTON, (Monitoring Desk): The United States carried out a 13th consecutive night of airstrikes on Iran, targeting military infrastructure linked to Tehran's operations in the Strait of Hormuz, while air raid sirens sounded in Bahrain and the widening conflict threatened to further disrupt global energy supplies and key shipping routes.

The latest wave of strikes lasted just over two hours, ending around 4:30 a.m. local time, according to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM).

The military said it struck Iranian military command centers, drone storage facilities, communications networks, coastal surveillance sites and maritime assets in an effort to weaken Iran's ability to threaten commercial shipping in the Gulf.

CENTCOM said the operation was intended to further reduce the danger posed to civilian vessels traveling through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important energy corridors, while insisting that the waterway remains open under U.S. military protection despite recent Iranian attacks.

Iranian media reported explosions across several parts of the country, including areas near Ahvaz, Andimeshk and Omidiyeh in the southwestern province of Khuzestan.

Blasts were also reported near Bandar Abbas, Iran's largest commercial port, and on Qeshm Island, a strategically important base overlooking the Strait of Hormuz that houses Iranian naval assets, including drone boats.

Air defenses were activated in Tehran, according to Nur News, a media outlet close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

Iranian state media said at least four people were killed and nine others were injured in the overnight bombardment. Separate reports said four people died and five were wounded in a missile strike outside Ahvaz, while additional attacks left two people injured in Lorestan province and two more wounded in Bandar Abbas. Other strikes reportedly hit Isfahan, home to a major air base.



German national football team player Antonio Rüdiger (right) participated in an event at United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York City, USA, as part of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees' symbolic Gamechanging Team, comprised of footballers with refugee or displaced backgrounds.

Trump warns China, Russia against providing arms to Iran, says it 'would be very bad for them'

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): US President Donald Trump warned that it would be "very bad" for China or Russia if either country were to provide weapons to Iran, saying he believes both governments have pledged not to do so.

Trump said Chinese President Xi Jinping assured him during their recent meeting in Beijing that China would neither supply nor sell weapons to Iran, including through Chinese companies.

"President Xi, at our recent meeting in Beijing, China, told me that he would not, under any circumstances, give or sell Weapons to the Islamic Republic of Iran — And that statement included Chinese Companies. Considering our relationship, I take him at his word and, besides, I am doing him very big favors, also," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

Trump also said Russian President Vladimir Putin had given similar assurances despite the ongoing war in Ukraine, and told him that Russia would not sell weapons to Iran.

"He understands that I do not sell Weapons to Ukraine, but to NATO Countries. They pay full price, and how those Weapons are distributed, I have no idea.

"Therefore, two major Countries that people speak of often in terms of Iran are, in my opinion, not participating.

Pentagon suddenly lowers reported US troop death toll from Iran war: New York Times

NEW YORK, (Monitoring Desk): The Pentagon abruptly lowered the number of US troops it reports were killed during the Iran war on its website from 18 to 14, with military officials and a Pentagon spokesman providing conflicting explanations for the change, The New York Times reported.

The Times report said that, the Pentagon listed a total of 18 American service members who had been killed during the war, but today, the Defense Department had reduced the number of troops killed on its casualties website to 14.

Three military officials told the Times that "one reason behind the change was that the Trump administration decided to remove four service members killed this past weekend from the list (3 in Jordan, 1 in northern Iraq) because their deaths occurred after President (Donald) Trump declared a ceasefire in the war in April." However, the acting press secretary for the Pentagon, Joel Valdez, cited a different reason, telling the Times that "temporary data disruptions" contributed to the change in the number of deaths reported on the website and suggested that the information would be "quickly fixed."

Trump himself continued to refer to the higher number of US troop deaths during a press briefing Thursday, comparing the toll from other American wars to the war against Iran, saying that even one death "is too many, but it's 18." According to the Times, since the ceasefire collapsed, "the Pentagon has provided little information about the American military strategy and has been slow to release information about troops' injuries," saying that the last major Pentagon briefing on the war was held in early May.

The Defense Department previously said that disclosing Iranian strikes on bases where US troops are housed "would compromise operational security." The lack of information being disseminated from the department falls in line with information given to the Times from sources within the Trump administration who said the "Pentagon withheld information about three Iranian strikes last week in Jordan.



QUNEITRA, SYRIA: Families of Syrians detained by Israel demonstrate in front of a United Nations (UN) military base in the Nabaa Favvar region to demand the release of their relatives

Says Bilawal is my brother:

Political differences should never become personal hostility: Nawaz Sharif

MIRPUR, (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif unveiled an ambitious development agenda for Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), promising to complete key infrastructure projects, establish modern healthcare facilities and build an international airport in Mirpur if the party forms the next government in the region.

Addressing a large election rally in Mirpur, he said several landmark projects initiated during his tenure remained unfinished after his government left office and pledged to revive them to accelerate the region's socio-economic development.

Describing himself as a Kashmiri, Nawaz Sharif said Kashmir was not his second home but his first. He recalled launching the Triple M Motorway project during his previous government and said its completion would have transformed connectivity and economic activity across AJK. He pledged to complete the motorway, extend the Murree Expressway to Muzaffarabad and personally oversee development initiatives across the region alongside a future PML-N government.

Outlining the party's manifesto, the former prime minister announced plans to establish new schools, colleges and universities, provide free medicines in government hospitals on the Punjab model and build state-of-the-art cancer, cardiac and children's hospitals equipped with modern medical facilities.

He also promised to establish an international airport in Mirpur, improve access to clean drinking water and expand essential civic infrastructure throughout AJK. Nawaz Sharif added that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz had already gifted Mirpur a fleet of modern air-conditioned public buses as a sign of the party's commitment to the region.

Referring to the political climate, Nawaz Sharif called for respectful democratic competition, saying political differences should never become personal hostility. Mentioning PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, he said, "Bilawal is my brother. Politics may bring differences of opinion, but there should be no bitterness."

The rally was also addressed by PML-N candidates Chaudhry Muhammad Saeed, Chaudhry Tariq Farooq, Azhar Sadiq and Fateh Mehmood-ul-Hassan.



KARACHI: President Asif Ali Zardari in a meeting with a delegation of Balochistan provincial ministers at Bilawal House.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with the participants of National Workshop on Balochistan.

President strongly condemns terrorist attack on govt officials in Kohat

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari strongly condemned the terrorist attack on government officials in Kohat and prayed for the elevation of the ranks of the personnel martyred in the attack and for patience and strength for their bereaved families.

President Asif Ali Zardari also prayed for the speedy recovery of the personnel injured in the terrorist incident.

In a statement, the president said the resolve of the entire nation against terrorism remained unwavering.

He said that the terrorists must be brought to justice and made an example of.

Pakistan making constructive efforts to promote regional peace: Araghchi

DPM Dar expresses deep concern over recent regional tensions and underscores the importance of dialogue, restraint, de-escalation by all sides

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Foreign Minister of Iran, Seyyed Abbas Araghchi agreed to maintain close coordination and regular consultations on issues of mutual interest and reaffirmed their commitment to working together for regional peace, stability, and shared prosperity. The two foreign ministers met on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) meeting in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyz Republic. During the meeting, the two sides reaffirmed the close and longstanding ties between Pakistan and Iran and reviewed the evolving regional situation. The DPM/FM expressed deep concern over recent regional tensions and underscored the importance of dialogue, restraint, de-escalation by all sides, and sustained diplomatic engagement to achieve lasting peace and stability. He emphasized the need to build on the understandings reached under the Islamabad MoU of June 2026. Foreign Minister Araghchi appreciated Pakistan's continued diplomatic support and constructive efforts in promoting regional peace and security.

National outrage as top leadership, civil society condemn killing of judge in Mastung terror attack

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Denouncing the target-killing of District and Sessions Judge Abdul Hakeem Kakar and his gunman in Mastung as a direct attack on the state, Pakistan's political and judicial leadership alongside civil society stood united as top figures—from the President and Prime Minister to the Chief Justice—vowed a relentless response to eliminate terrorism and hold every perpetrator accountable.

The tragic attack occurred on the National Highway as judicial officers were en route from Quetta to the Sessions Court in Mastung. The firing claimed the lives of Sessions Judge Abdul Hakeem Kakar and his security guard on the spot, while Additional Sessions Judge Tariq Lashari and accompanying personnel sustained injuries.

President Asif Ali Zardari expressed deep sorrow over the martyrdom of Judge Kakar and his security guard, offering prayers for the elevated ranks of the martyrs and swift recovery for the injured. "The sacrifices of our martyrs will not go in vain. Hostile elements operating with external backing will never succeed in their malicious designs. Pakistan will continue its struggle until terrorism is completely eradicated," President Zardari said in a statement.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif offered heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families, emphasizing that terrorists and their facilitators cannot weaken the nation's peace or state institutions.

He reiterated the federal government's firm commitment to hunting down every terrorist network. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi strongly condemned the attack, reassuring the public that cowardly acts would never undermine the state's resolve and reiterated that all-out resources would be deployed to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Federal Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi paid tribute to the security forces for their ongoing intelligence-based operations (IBOs) in the Khad Kocha area of Mastung, confirming that security forces have already neutralized six terrorists in the area as operations intensify.

Expressing profound grief on behalf of the country's legal fraternity, Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi stated that the judiciary stands in solidarity with the district judiciary of Balochistan and the bereaved families.

As a mark of respect for the martyrs, the chief justice announced the postponement of the Judicial Wellbeing Conference previously scheduled for July 25, 2026. CJP Afridi emphasized that Pakistan's judiciary will continue to dispense justice without fear or intimidation, stressing that no act of violence can shake the institution's commitment to the rule of law.

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti termed the ambush a direct assault on the state itself. He contacted injured Additional Sessions Judge Tariq Lashari to inquire after his health, assuring full state support for his recovery. "There is no concession or leniency for terrorists and their facilitators. Those who challenge the writ of the state will be crushed. The blood of the protectors of the law will not go in vain," Sarfraz Bugti said in a statement.

Governor Balochistan Jafar Khan Mandokhel, along with Provincial Ministers Mir Ziaullah Langove and Haji Ali Madad Jatak directed law enforcement agencies to execute swift operations to apprehend the culprits.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani in a group photo with the participants of 20th National Workshop Balochistan, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Balochistan central to Pakistan's economic future: Chairman Senate

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani underscored the need for national unity, inclusive development, and sustained security efforts to ensure lasting peace and prosperity in Balochistan.

Addressing participants of the National Workshop Balochistan at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the chairman senate welcomed the participants on behalf of the President Asif Ali Zardari and said the workshop had, since 2016, served as an important platform bringing together parliamentarians, bureaucrats, civil society members, academics, youth, and media representatives from across the country. He described the initiative as a bridge connecting provinces, perspectives, and ideas to collectively address national challenges. Emphasizing Balochistan's strategic importance, the senate chairman said the province was central to Pakistan's economic future and national security owing to its vast coastline along the Arabian Sea, rich mineral resources, and geographic location linking South Asia with Central Asia and the Middle East.

Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani condemned recent terrorist attacks by the Indian-backed proxies and militant groups for attempting to destabilize Pakistan. He said terrorists had shifted their focus from military targets to civilians in an act of desperation. Paying tribute to the armed forces, Frontier Corps, police, and other law enforcement agencies, Mr. Gilani praised their professionalism and sacrifices in combating terrorism.



PML-N president and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif addresses a rally in Mirpur, AJK

JUI for immediate measures to ensure safety of citizens on Balochistan's highways

QUETTA (ANN): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) Central Joint Secretary and former Speaker of the Balochistan Assembly, Malik Sikandar Khan Advocate, said that incidents of murder, lawlessness, robbery, and crime on Balochistan's national highways have become routine.

He said the government has completely failed to establish law and order, while those in authority and law enforcement agencies are not addressing the issue with responsibility and seriousness.

He said ensuring the safety of citizens on national highways is the state's foremost responsibility. Due to the deteriorating security situation, traders and the transport sector have refused to conduct commercial movement to the province's interior districts.

The highways have become unsafe and are beyond the control of the government and administrative authorities.

He alleged that the government has left traders and transporters at the mercy of robbers and terrorists.



Four-year-old Palestinian child Sami Abu Qasim lies in a hospital bed while receiving treatment for third-degree burns sustained in Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip

Indispensable importance of regional, national newspapers cannot be overlooked: PIO

Terms regional newspapers as only source of news and information

ISLAMABAD (PR): Newly appointed Principal Information Officer Raeesa Adil said that electronic and digital media have their own importance and significance; however, in areas deprived of internet and cable facilities, regional newspapers remain the only source of news and information. She said that the indispensable importance of regional and national newspapers published across the federal capital, all four provinces of Pakistan, Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan cannot be overlooked.

She was speaking to a delegation of the Rawalpindi-Islamabad Bureaus Journalists Association (RIBJA) led by President Murtaza Malik, General Secretary Fayyaz Chaudhry, Chairman Sardar Shaukat Mehmood, Senior Vice President Raheel Nawaz Swati, and Vice President Ahsan Narijo. The delegation congratulated the newly appointed Principal Information Officer, Raeesa Adil, on assuming her important responsibility and extended their best wishes to her.

On the occasion, the RIBJA delegation apprised the Principal Information Officer of the pressing issues faced by bureau chiefs, journalists, and media workers associated with newspapers published from all four provinces of Pakistan, Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan, as well as various television channels operating in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

The delegation also highlighted the difficulties faced in paying salaries to bureau chiefs, journalists, and media workers due to delays in the clearance of outstanding dues.

SC rules all NAB cases to be heard by FCCP after legal amendments

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Supreme Court ruled that all cases relating to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) would henceforth be heard by the Federal Constitutional Court following amendments to the NAB law. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar announced the short order in open court.

The judgment stated that after the amendments to the National Accountability Ordinance, the Supreme Court no longer had jurisdiction to hear NAB-related cases and that all such matters stood transferred to the Federal Constitutional Court. The court held that under Article 175 of the Constitution and Sections 32 and 32A of the National Accountability Ordinance, the Federal Constitutional Court was the competent forum to hear all NAB-related cases. The Supreme Court upheld the stance of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the federal government, declaring that the petitions fell within the jurisdiction of the Federal Constitutional Court.

Pakistan possesses significant indigenous capability in robotics, autonomous systems

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja said Pakistan's future economic competitiveness depends on the adoption of robotics, automation and other emerging technologies, stressing that industrial automation is no longer a choice but a necessity.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the two-day Indus RAS (Robotics and Autonomous Systems) Expo 2026 at the Pak-China Friendship Centre in Islamabad,



the minister said, "If Pakistan wants to remain economically competitive, every traditional industry must move towards automation."

She added that reducing taxes or energy costs alone would not be enough unless industries integrated robotics and automation into manufacturing, agriculture and supply chains. Shaza said the Indus RAS (Robotics and Autonomous Systems) Expo 2026 attracted more than 20,000 visitors, including children, students, researchers, policymakers, industry leaders and technology professionals.

She said the large and diverse turnout reflected growing national interest in robotics and autonomous technologies and demonstrated Pakistan's expanding technological capabilities.

Shaza Fatima credited the successful organisation of the expo to the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.



SHAMAKHI: Federal Minister Dr. Musadik Malik Participates in COP31 Heads of Delegations Retreat.

FMs of eight Arab-Islamic states condemn Israeli escalation at Al-Aqsa Mosque

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The foreign ministers of the eight Arab-Islamic states strongly condemned the Israeli escalation at Al Aqsa Mosque, particularly the continued mass settlers' incursions led by extremist Israeli ministers, into the holy place under the protection of the Israeli forces.

The foreign ministers, in a statement, also condemned the raising of the Israeli flag within courtyards of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the erection by Israeli police of two tents, and all other inflammatory acts.

The foreign ministers, who issued a joint statements included those of Pakistan, Egypt, Türkiye, Indonesia, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

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