Daily

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

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dailyvomqta@gmail.com

Chief Editor: Syed Abdul Wadood Shah

Quetta

Safar 13,1448 AH | Vol: XIX No. 343 Tuesday July 28, 2026 | Pages 4, Price Rs. 5 | Ph: 2823307

Govt fully facilitating Chinese businesses, investors: President

KARACHI, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari chaired a meeting to review progress of various Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and other cooperation initiatives between the Government of Sindh and Chinese companies, directing that the agreed projects be advanced expeditiously and any remaining procedural and technical requirements completed at the earliest.

President said this during a meeting with Chinese delegations of Anhui Nengtong New Energy Technology Co., Ltd. and Luoyang Modern Biology Group at CM House here on Monday. Facilitated by the China-Pakistan-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation Promotion Association, the meeting reviewed the implementation status of previously agreed areas of cooperation and discussed steps to advance their execution.

President was briefed on the progress made on cooperation in areas including electric vehicle charging infrastructure, veterinary biological vaccines, animal identification and traceability, agricultural technology, healthcare, fire safety equipment and other sectors. The briefing also covered the steps taken by the Government of Sindh to coordinate with Chinese companies and facilitate the implementation of these initiatives.

President said the government is fully facilitating Chinese businesses and investors. He said Pakistan highly values its All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership with China and remains committed to further strengthening economic cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), with CPEC 2.0 now underway. President said his regular visits to China reflect Pakistan's commitment to deepening bilateral relations and promoting mutually beneficial economic cooperation. During the briefing on cooperation with Anhui Nengtong New Energy Technology Co., Ltd., the President was informed about the company's interest in manufacturing and supplying EV charging stations and developing related infrastructure in Sindh. The discussions covered the development of EV charging stations, solar-storage-charging facilities, energy storage solutions, smart charging networks, technology transfer and training. President said Karachi and Hyderabad offer significant potential for the development of EV infrastructure, while the Karachi-Hyderabad M-9 corridor could serve as an important starting point for intercity charging facilities. He expressed the confidence that cooperation in this area will support Pakistan's transition towards green mobility.



RAWALPINDI: Member House of Representatives (State of Montana) Mr. Ryan Keith Zinke, and Member House of Representatives (State of Washington) Mr. Michael James, called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, at General Headquarters (GHQ).



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti presiding over a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBoIT)

Sustainable regional stability deeply anchored in economic growth, connectivity: CDF Asim Munir

US Lawmakers call on COAS Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir; acknowledges Pakistan's critical role in regional stability and economic resilience

RAWALPINDI, (APP): Member House of Representatives (State of Montana) Mr. Ryan Keith Zinke, and Member House of Representatives (State of Washington) Mr. Michael James, called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, here on Monday at General Headquarters (GHQ).

During the meeting, discussions focused on matters of mutual interest, regional security, bilateral defense cooperation and avenues for enhancing economic collaboration and prosperity, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The Field Marshal highlighted Pakistan's vast economic potential, emphasizing that sustainable regional stability was deeply anchored in economic growth, trade expansion and connectivity.

He underscored Pakistan's ongoing structural reforms aimed at fostering a business friendly environment and attracting foreign investment. The visiting dignitaries acknowledged Pakistan's critical role in regional stability and economic resilience. Recognizing the professional backgrounds and insights of the delegation, both sides discussed potential opportunities for bilateral economic engagement, private sector partnerships and enhancing bilateral trade ties, the news release said.

The visiting delegation thanked the military leadership for the warm hospitality and expressed a shared commitment to promoting deeper economic, commercial and institutional linkages between the United States and Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Malik Chairs First Meeting of Committee to Audit NITB Directives

Balochistan govt taking practical steps to protect rights of women

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Secretary Women Development Saira Atta on Monday said that incumbent government was taking steps in collaboration with relevant institutions to protect the rights of women, and their empowerment.

She expressed these views while addressing at an inaugural ceremony of the "Provincial Media Fellowship Program" organized by the Department of Women Development, Government of Balochistan, in collaboration with Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUITEMS), Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO) and the United Nations agency UNFPA, at the Pink Hall of BUITEMS.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Women Development, Saira Atta said that media was an effective tool for bringing positive change in the society, responsible reporting of sensitive issues related to gender-based violence (GBV), child marriage and women and children was the need of the hour.

She said that the Balochistan government was taking practical steps in collaboration with all relevant institutions to protect the rights of women, empower them and create a safe society.

She said media fellowship program would enhance the professional skills of journalists, which could enable them to play an effective role in raising public awareness through factual, balanced and sensitive reporting. Addressing the ceremony, Vice Chancellor, BUITEMS, Prof. Dr. Khalid Hafeez said that universities were not limited to education alone but also play a key role in social betterment and national development. He said that BUITEMS would continue to provide all possible support to equip young journalists and media professionals with modern research, training and practical skills.

He said that responsible media reporting not only promoted positive thinking in society but also played an important role in protecting the rights of women and children, social justice and achieving sustainable development goals.

He termed this joint initiative as an important milestone towards further improving the quality of journalism in Balochistan.

Gilani vows to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare for every citizen

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has called for renewed national resolve to eliminate hepatitis, stressing that greater awareness, early diagnosis, and timely treatment are the cornerstones of protecting public health and achieving a hepatitis-free future.

In his message on World Hepatitis Day 2026, observed under the theme "Hepatitis: Let's Break It Down," the Chairman Senate stressed the need to break down barriers to awareness, testing, and treatment.

India sponsor of terrorism; perpetrator of instability in South Asia: Khawaja Asif

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif strongly dismissed recent irresponsible remarks by the Indian defence minister on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, calling them irresponsible and misleading.

Asif said the comments were another attempt to distort internationally recognised legal realities through political rhetoric and coercive posturing, he wrote on his social media platform X.

He said that such statements do not change the status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, nor do they help promote regional peace, stability, or meaningful dialogue.

He said Jammu and Kashmir remains an internationally recognised disputed territory, the final disposition of which is to be determined in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the freely expressed will of the Kashmiri people.

Asif said India's repeated attempts to malign Pakistan lack credibility in light of its own well-documented record of state-sponsored terrorism and criminal activities.

In fact, India remains the biggest sponsor of terrorism and perpetrator of instability in South Asia, holding the region hostage to its aggressively revisionist designs.

The Minister said equally alarming is India's irresponsible rhetoric which risks lowering the threshold for interstate conflict in the region.

CM Bugti directs to ensure sustainable measures for effective traffic system in Quetta

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, has announced that modern AI-based traffic signals will be installed in Quetta to provide a permanent solution to the city's growing traffic problems. He said that resolving traffic issues through advanced technology is a key part of the provincial government's reform agenda, and all available resources will be utilized to achieve this goal. The decision was taken during a high-level meeting chaired by the Chief Minister at the Chief Minister's Secretariat on Monday. The meeting reviewed strategies for managing increasing traffic pressure and implementing a modern traffic management system. Officials briefed the participants that AI-powered signals will help improve traffic flow, reduce unnecessary waiting times at intersections, and provide citizens with better travel facilities. Sarfraz Bugti directed relevant institutions to ensure coordinated and sustainable measures for an effective traffic system.

PM, Chinese ambassador discuss regional developments

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Jiang Zaidong, Ambassador of China, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House on Monday and discussed matters of mutual interest. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sen. Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal, Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr. Syed Tauqir Shah and Foreign Secretary Ambassador Amna Baloch were also present.

The Prime Minister conveyed his warm regards and greetings to President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang. He reaffirmed the Pakistan-China All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, while fondly recalling his visit to China in May this year. He stated that both sides would continue working closely to implement the important decisions and agreements between the leadership of the two countries, for the mutual benefit of their peoples.

The regional situation, including developments in the Middle East, Afghanistan and South Asia, were also discussed during the meeting.

The Chinese Ambassador thanked the Prime Minister for receiving him and said that China regarded Pakistan as an iron brother and would always lend its full support in ensuring Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity while also strengthening its socio-economic development.

Balochistan to achieve sustainable economic development: CM Bugti

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, on Monday said that the province, with its rich natural resources, strategic geographical importance, and economic potential, possesses immense capacity for growth.

He emphasized that these strengths would be fully utilized to promote investment, industry, and trade.

The Chief Minister was presiding over a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBoIT) held at the Chief Minister's Secretariat on Monday. The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary (Development and Planning) Zahid Saleem, Vice Chairman BBoIT Bilawal Khan Kakar, Chief Executive Officer Qaim Khan Lashari, Principal Secretary Imran Zarkoon, and other senior officials.

During the session, various agendas of the Board were discussed in detail, and the Board of Governors approved several financial and administrative matters.

Addressing the meeting, Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti said that promoting investment and expanding trade opportunities were among the government's top priorities. He directed all relevant institutions to work in close coordination to provide investors with a transparent, business-friendly environment.

Sarfraz Bugti highlighted that Balochistan's natural wealth and strategic location make it a province of extraordinary potential.

He instructed the BBoIT to take effective measures to facilitate investors, simplify investment processes, and strengthen the confidence of the private sector.

Reaffirming the government's commitment, the Chief Minister said that Balochistan would continue to take all possible steps to encourage investment, create new employment opportunities, and achieve sustainable economic development.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Mr. Jiang Zaidong, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House

Pakistan strongly condemns Indian defense minister's remarks on Kashmir dispute

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Government of Pakistan on Monday condemned in the strongest possible terms the highly provocative and irresponsible comments by the Indian Defence Minister in the context of Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

"His statement not only distorts facts regarding the UN and internationally recognized Jammu and Kashmir dispute that remains on the agenda of the UN Security Council but also shows Indian government's deliberate policy to threaten regional and international peace and security," Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said in a statement.

He said that such insinuations were an attempt to divert attention from India's continued occupation of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), its sponsorship of terrorism across the region, as well as its domestic instability.

He said that while resorting to its misplaced rhetoric of aggression and belligerence, India must not underestimate the people and Government of Pakistan's unwavering resolve and determination to thwart any Indian adventurism as demonstrated by the entire Pakistani nation and its valiant armed forces during Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos last year.

"Pakistan urges the international community, in particular the United Nations, to take note of India's continued rouge behavior and to hold it accountable for its failure to uphold the relevant UN Security Council resolutions that guarantee the right to self-determination to the Kashmiris," the spokesperson added.



QUETTA: Central Chairman Mazloom Awami Tehreek Haji Sadiq Khan Adozai called on Director General Public Relations Balochistan Askar Khan

No journalist should face arbitrary dismissal, says Atta Tarar

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Monday said media policies introduced in 2019 were the primary cause of the financial difficulties facing Pakistan's media industry, saying those measures significantly shrank the sector's financial space and their effects continued to be felt years later.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the National Press Club's website, the minister said it was the government's responsibility to formulate policies that strengthened the media industry and ensured journalists could earn a dignified livelihood.

Referring to the financial challenges confronting media organisations, Tarar said a policy introduced in 2019 had capped federal grants for press clubs at Rs1 million for the National Press Club and Rs500,000 for smaller press clubs.

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

Tuesday July 28, 2026

Balochistan's development momentum grows

The concluding address of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti during the Balochistan Assembly's budget session for fiscal year 2026–27 reflected a government confident in its achievements and committed to delivering lasting change for the people of the province. His message was clear: Balochistan has embarked on a path of reform, merit, good governance, and stability, and this journey is now irreversible.

Over the past year, the provincial government has translated promises into tangible results. Despite skepticism from critics, the administration has demonstrated that effective governance is built on action rather than rhetoric. The progress reported across key sectors highlights a growing commitment to public service, transparency, and institutional reform. Education has emerged as one of the government's most significant success stories. With nearly all schools across the province now functional, the transparent recruitment of 14,000 teachers, rehabilitation of thousands of educational institutions, and enrollment of more than 720,000 children have transformed opportunities for Balochistan's youth. These initiatives have contributed to a notable reduction in out-of-school children, lower dropout rates, and a substantial increase in literacy levels, laying the foundation for a more prosperous future.

Equally impressive are the reforms in the healthcare sector. The recruitment of medical personnel, activation of basic health units, expansion of maternal and child health services, and introduction of modern healthcare facilities demonstrate the government's determination to improve the quality of life for citizens. The establishment of advanced medical institutions, digitization of pharmacies, and expansion of telemedicine services are bringing quality healthcare closer to communities across the province. The absence of polio cases since late 2024 further reflects the effectiveness of public health initiatives.

Governance reforms have also produced measurable results. Improved attendance in government offices, significantly faster decision-making processes, and full utilization of development funds indicate a more efficient and accountable administration. By prioritizing digitalization and merit-based systems, the government has strengthened public confidence and enhanced transparency in public affairs.

Looking ahead, the provincial government's ambitious development agenda signals a new era of modernization. Projects such as the Quetta People's Train, metro-style transport services, expansion of digital connectivity, construction of new classrooms, solar energy initiatives, and clean water schemes will further improve the lives of citizens while promoting inclusive growth. The scholarship program for Balochistan's daughters reflects a strong commitment to empowering women and investing in human capital. The Chief Minister also reaffirmed the government's unwavering stance against terrorism. While remaining open to constitutional political dialogue, the administration has made it clear that violence and extremism have no place in Balochistan's future. By combining robust security measures with governance reforms and public service delivery, the government is strengthening the bond between the state and its citizens. The announcement of enhanced compensation for martyrs and increased support for security personnel is a fitting recognition of the sacrifices made in the pursuit of peace and stability. These measures underscore the government's commitment to honoring those who have dedicated their lives to protecting the province and the nation. Balochistan today stands at a pivotal moment. The achievements highlighted by Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti reflect a province moving steadily toward stability, development, and opportunity. While challenges remain, the direction is clear: Balochistan is advancing with renewed confidence, and its march toward progress appears stronger than ever.

Violence against women

SAIRA SAMO

Not all men, but the man. This phrase has long circulated on social media whenever violence against women – such as honour killings, acid attacks, and harassment – is broadcast or published. Femicide has been deeply entrenched for centuries, but the twenty-first century has witnessed a new version of cruelty inflicted upon women for a meagre sin or no sin at all.

The case of Dr Mahnoor, who was severely injured in an acid attack by a hospital employee while on duty at Civil Hospital Quetta, again raises questions. Is woman still shackled everywhere, her education deemed unacceptable by a patriarchal society? Has throwing acid on her face shrunk to a simple act of revenge, meant only to disfigure her forever? Is this the justice that prevails for women in our mainstream society? Is this the ultimate status granted to them?

Femicide statistics show that over 7,500 women were killed between 2021 and 2024 in reported gender-based violence (GBV) cases. At least 1,553 were killed in the name of honour (karo-kari) and 3,385 lost their lives to domestic violence. Such numbers reflect the vulnerable status of women in a male-dominated society because the perpetrators are often fathers, brothers and husbands who feel justified in beating and even killing their spouses, sisters and daughters for fear of shame within their communities. Most domestic violence cases are often not reported to the media, yet violence against women continues to spark debate on social media and speaks loudly through its severity.

Domestic violence often harms a woman's self-respect and dignity, making her feel insecure in her own home. She is expected to remain confined within four walls and assume household duties at any cost. In cases of negligence, particularly in rural areas, she is often chastised severely by patriarchal family members for delaying household chores. In fact, such violence leaves deep scars, resulting in vulnerability and poor health.

Karo-kari is most prevalent in the countryside, particularly among feudal communities and illiterate segments of society that associate it with honour. This widespread practice needs to be eradicated in order to build an egalitarian society.

In urban areas where gender-based differences have reduced to some extent, women have progressed educationally, economically, politically and socially – often excelling in various fields of development. Yet we still encounter cases like that of Dr Mahnoor, wherein women are targeted for rejecting a man's proposal. To these men, a rejected proposal is an affront to their honour, prompting them to use acid throwing, physical violence and sexual abuse to strip women of their dignity.

Global organisations and experts have identified different forms of violence, such as physical violence, sexual violence, emotional or psychological violence, cultural violence, verbal abuse, harassment and digital violence. Women in both rural and urban areas continue to suffer these diverse forms of violence.

When a woman is physically out of reach, she is harassed through social media platforms. Studies show that around 58% of women are harassed online globally, whereas around 40% of women in Pakistan have been victims of cyberbullying. Female students rank among the most frequent targets of digital abuse.

Deep-seated traditions in South Asia - including non-consensual and forced marriages, denial of female education and use of women as compensation to resolve conflicts - continue to be legitimised as acceptable cultural practices. The constant assault on women inflicts deep psychological trauma, dampening their spirit. These misogynistic tendencies, injustices and cruelties push countries to the bottom of the Gender Parity Index (GPI).

There is an urgent need to reform such mindsets that undermine the dignity and chastity of women through oppressive customs. We must do away with these misogynistic customs and gender discrimination, ensuring that no more women have their faces scarred by acid.

To acknowledge the status Islam bestowed upon women centuries ago is to recognise an epitome of dignity that the world has seldom matched.

The writer is an educationist based in Larkana. She can be reached at sairasamo88@gmail.com

Peace by piece

MALEEHA LODHI

With the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the US and Iran, an interim deal has been agreed. In what will be a two-step peace process the first phase freezes the war by extending the ceasefire for another 60 days. It commits Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz and the US to end its blockade. That process is already underway. But the hard part lies ahead as the second phase has to address the nuclear file and other thorny issues. If reaching a preliminary agreement proved so difficult, negotiating a comprehensive settlement will be tougher, especially with Israel's malign presence looming in the background.

After four months of war, both sides wanted an exit ramp from the fighting. President Donald Trump seemed to want it more. Domestic political and economic pressure mounted on him, especially the fear that higher oil prices and inflation would hit American consumers and damage the US economy. This, as mid-term Congressional elections loomed with an unpopular war and the Republican party increasingly divided.

Moreover, continuing the conflict did not seem to bring Trump closer to any of his ever-changing objectives. If regime change was a core objective, the war failed to achieve that. More bombs would not have secured that outcome or his other stated aims. Around 40 times in 90 days Trump claimed "a deal is imminent". This reflected his desperation for one as well as the constant effort to calm markets and drive down oil prices. The economic consequences of the Strait of Hormuz's prolonged closure had begun to weigh heavily on Washington.

Iran was prepared to play the long game, especially as its control of the Strait of Hormuz gave it crucial strategic leverage. Its retaliatory attacks on US bases and energy infrastructure in Gulf countries raised the costs of war for America, its regional allies and the global economy. Tehran used the economic weapon to full effect. But there were limits to this strategy because of the substantial losses Iran also faced. Its ailing economy came under severe stress by reduced access to oil markets, restrictions on shipping and higher inflation. Another round of war heightened the economic risks. Having attained the upper hand in the conflict, a deal made sooner rather than later made more sense when Tehran's negotiating position was relatively strong. Iran had already emerged as a symbol of defiance.

The US was unable to achieve its objectives both on the battlefield and negotiating table.

The deal ending the four-month war shows the failure of military force. The war imposed by the US and Israel did not compel Iran to surrender and accept terms dictated by them. A militarily weaker country under sanctions was able to hold out because of what the US has historically underestimated — the power of nationalism. While the US waged a war of choice with unclear objectives, for Iran it was an existential challenge. The will to survive powered by nationalist sentiment proved decisive in Tehran's ability to resist aggression. The broader question raised by this is about the limits of military power. The might-is-right paradigm is being challenged in an era where big powers can't get their own way because modern warfare has levelled the ground between them and smaller countries. Military superiority does not guarantee dominance or victory, as exemplified by America's operation Epic Fury, Russia's unwon war against Ukraine and India's aggression against Pakistan last year.

Whether the tentative US-Iran truce is followed by lasting peace depends on how issues deferred to the next stage of negotiations are tackled. This involves a 60-day, extendable period to reach agreement on Iran's nuclear programme and sanctions relief for Tehran. But before that, Lebanon remains an obstacle if Israel, opposed to the US-Iran deal, continues its military rampage there. While the MoU says Lebanon is part of the "immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts", Israel seems intent on playing a spoiler. The nuclear negotiations will of course be the key to a permanent settlement. Iran has already reaffirmed it will not "procure or develop nuclear weapons" in the 14-point MoU. The document also refers to agreement to resolve the stockpiled enriched uranium issue in the talks ahead. It holds out the option to resolve it by down-blending (diluting) the material on site under the IAEA's supervision. This is what Iran offered all along despite Trump's frequent declarations that the "nuclear dust" will be removed from Iran. Negotiations will also have to find common ground on the duration of a moratorium on enrichment of nuclear fuel. Sanctions relief will be tied to accord on these issues.

The MoU is a testament to US inability to accomplish its objectives both on the battlefield and the negotiating table. It sets out multiple concessions that Iran secured with Washington abandoning many of its red lines. This is reflected in Trump's defensive remarks during his press conference at the G7 meeting. Iran can keep some ballistic missiles, which he had vowed to destroy, because other regional countries have them. He also said Iran could have its own nuclear programme because "other adjoining states have it". Iran will receive waivers for oil exports immediately after signing of the MoU and before nuclear talks begin. As for the release of billions of dollars of Iran's frozen funds, Trump said "We have taken a lot of their money, it's not our money" and has to be returned. But he made it clear that the funds will be released in return for "good behaviour" by Iran and implementation of the MoU. The document also sets out a pathway for substantial financing for Iran's reconstruction. Significantly, Iran's support for its regional allies doesn't figure in the MoU.

The deal got swift international applause. But its future remains uncertain. First comes the test of implementation. Will both sides honour the MoU? Then come the technical talks to hammer out a lasting settlement. As the gap between the two sides remains wide, negotiations may be long-drawn-out. For now, the deal has widened the rift between the US and Israel with America's leaders rebuking the Israelis for their criticism of the agreement and Trump even taking a public swipe at Benjamin Netanyahu. Israel is already defying the latest ceasefire in Lebanon. But it is unlikely that its efforts to sabotage the interim deal will succeed.

The writer is a former ambassador to the US, UK and UN.

Strategic shifts

AIZAZ AHMAD CHAUDHRY

At the dawn of the 21st century, the US was the sole superpower. Its main rival, the Soviet Union, had been dissolved a decade earlier. The era of globalisation had begun. The world looked like a global village. China was rising, but not yet in a position to challenge US supremacy. However, this unipolar world did not last long as America became embroiled in distant, unending wars. With its invasion of Iraq, the unilateral, illegal and pre-emptive use of force against adversaries became a norm. Hatred for minority communities took a violent form. The UN began to lose its relevance. Protectionist walls started impeding free international trade. The world descended into disorder.

In this uncertain clime, China opted to avoid wars, focusing instead on economic growth. The US decided to counter-balance a rising China and, in 2011, announced a pivot of its foreign policy towards Asia. Beijing reacted by flexing its economic outreach and launching the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013 to link China to the outside world through connectivity projects and supply chains. The US embarked on its Indo-Pacific Strategy, co-opting Japan, Australia and India. China perceived it as an attempt to threaten the sea routes it used for exports. So it began to explore alternative land routes to Europe. An opportunity arose when, in 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to elevate bilateral ties to a 'comprehensive strategic partnership'. A few years later, when Putin proposed the idea of a 'Greater Eurasian partnership', China decided to work on three land corridors — the Northern Corridor via the trans-Siberian railway, the multimodal Middle Corridor via the Caspian Sea and a direct overland highway to Russia via Central Asia.

These Eurasian land routes practically neutralised America's policy to contain China's rise through the Indo-Pacific Strategy. Unsurprisingly, the US embarked upon another shift in its Asian policy. It decided to change its hitherto confrontational foreign policy with China to one that would work for both countries. Meeting in May 2026, presidents Xi and Donald Trump agreed to work together for "constructive strategic stability". Pursuant to this shift, the US dropped the word 'Indo' from its Pacific command.

Meanwhile, in the West, Trump decided to retreat from liberal internationalism, and prevailed on US allies in Nato and Europe to spend more on their own security. Accordingly, European countries are now diverting resources towards rearmament and a unified European defence, while maintaining their economic contacts with China. America's recent war with Iran has further undermined its global standing and brought China and Russia even closer in their support for Iran.

Today's shifting geopolitics have baffled India.

These strategic shifts in global geopolitics have baffled India, which had aligned its foreign policy with the US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy, QUAD (Australia, India, Japan and the US) and I2U2 (India, Israel, the UAE and US). Accordingly, it never seriously tried to reconcile with China or let BRICS thrive. India failed to anticipate that the US and China might one day agree to stabilise their relationship for peaceful competition. Nor did it foresee a steep rise in Pakistan's military profile post-May 2025 and diplomatic profile during the Iran-US war. India's decade-long efforts to isolate Pakistan had failed. Instead of reading these strategic shifts correctly, its leadership under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has relentlessly pursued its partnership with the US and its ally Israel.

Meanwhile, Pak-is-tan has continued to work with China, the US, Russia and key West Asian countr-ies for regional pea-ce and stability. It has also endorsed Chi--na's Global Security Initiative. The latter promotes the concept of indivisible security for all and overwrites the Western idea of hegemony and dominance, laying the foundation of a new world order predicated on collective and cooperative security and respect for each other's sovereignty. Regionally, Pakistan's ties with Bangladesh and other South Asian countries are also improving. Since India has made Saarc dysfunctional, Pakistan and Bangladesh could join hands to form a new grouping in South Asia with China as a full member. It is not clear whether the Modi government will be able to see these regional trends and reverse its hostile policies towards China and Pakistan. It must realise that a hegemonic approach to international relations has failed at the global level and will also fail regionally. The only way forward is to live and let live. Regardless of India's policy approach, Pakistan must keep its doors open for dialogue with all its neighbours while maintaining its deterrent against possible Indian aggression in the years ahead.

The writer is chairman Sanober Institute and former foreign secretary of Pakistan.

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

Monitoring Desk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Monitoring Desk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Monitoring Desk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Putin increases personal security to 800 officers

Monitoring Desk

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

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

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

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

Syria's first post-Assad Parliament takes shape

Monitoring Desk

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

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

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

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

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

Monitoring Desk

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

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

Monitoring Desk

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Monitoring Desk

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

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

Zelensky thanks Ireland for support during Dublin Castle address

Monitoring Desk

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

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

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

Virginia team in Venezuela describes baby rescue after earthquake

Monitoring Desk

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

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

Kiev targets Russian defence industry, supply routes in occupied areas

Monitoring Desk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Executive Engineer, Khirther Canal Division Usta Muhammad is invites Notice Inviting Tender under Balochistan Special Development Initiative (BSDI) Phase-III for the year 2026-2027 through sealed Tenders Form (as per Schedule B) Based on composite schedule of Rates 2026 Government of Balochistan from interested contractors/firms for the works listed below:-

S. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Million)	Bid Security 2% (Million)	Tender Fee Deposited on Head of Account C-03434
01	Construction of Flood Protection Bund around Goth Mir Abdullah Umrani District Usta Muhammad (BSDI) Phase-III 2026-2027) **TSE-2627071136903**	15.00	0.300	Rs; 1000/-

Procurements shall be made under B-PPRA Rules 2014 amended up-to-date Eligibility of Bidders: a. An individual bidder having Valid PEC registration in the relevant Category or above with specialization codes in CE04 Irrigation Only. b. Has completed Three (3) Contract of similar nature as a Contractor (but not as Sub- Contractor) during last three (03) years with completion certificates. c. Has an average turnover of 70% of each Project Cost during last Two years or a fresh bank certificate/ statement showing finical capacity of the Bidder/Firm. d. Active registration certificates from Income Tax Authority FBR (NTN) (BRA) and (PEC) attached online verification receipt (ATPL) after published of NIT. e. The contractor has not been blacklisted earlier by any government agency or private organization (Attach on Company letter head with dully signed and stamped). f. The amount of Bid Security shall be **2%** of the quoted amount in the form of call Deposit by any Scheduled Bank in Pakistan in favour of the Employer. g. List of available Technical/Management Staff & Detail of Machinery available for the assignment should be enclosed on Company letter head with singed and stamped. h. Any firm not meeting the above mandatory requirements shall be declared Non-Responsive **Method of Procurement:** Single Stage-Two Envelope Bidding Procedure. **Issuance of Bidding Documents:** The bidding documents can be obtained from B-PPRA authority website or the office of the under-signed upon payment of bidding document fee through Green Challan in the NBP under Head of account C-03434.(Irrigation) **Deadline Submission of Bidding/ Tender documents:** The Bidding Documents dully filled attached application with copies of supporting documents must be delivered in sealed envelopes by hand or through TCS till **11th August -2026** during working hours. **Tender opening:** The Tenders opening process will be held at office **Deputy Commissioner, Usta Muhammad** on Dated; **11th August -2026 at 01:00 PM** before Procurement Committee in the presence of contractors or their authorized representative/ agents. Envelope containing Technical bid will be opened on **11th August -2026 at 01:00 PM** (2nd Envelope containing Financial Bid of only Technically Qualified Bidder will opened after Evolution of Technical Bid, the Financial Bid of technically disqualified bidders will be un-opened. **Bids Validity**: Ninety (90) days
Address: Office of the Executive Engineer Khirther Canal Division Usta Muhammad.
Phone & Fax No. 0838-612227 Email: xenktr@gmail.com

Executive Engineer
Khirther Canal Division
Usta Muhammad.

DPRQ/PRQ No.391/27-07-2026

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Ayaz Sadiq vows to strengthen country's public health system

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has said that if hepatitis is left undiagnosed or inadequately treated, it can pose a grave threat to human life.

He said that ensuring effective prevention, early diagnosis, access to quality treatment, and raising public awareness are among the government's foremost public health priorities.

He expressed these views in his message on the occasion of World Hepatitis Day, observed globally on July 28 each year.

Ayaz Sadiq said that the observance of World Hepatitis Day aims to promote awareness about hepatitis and underscore the importance of early diagnosis and timely treatment.

He said that the spread of hepatitis can be effectively controlled by adopting preventive measures, promoting safe medical practices, expanding screening programmes, and ensuring timely access to treatment.

Ayaz Sadiq commended Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for launching "Prime Minister's National Programme for the Elimination of Hepatitis C", describing it as a timely and commendable initiative.

He said the programme reflects the government's commitment to make Pakistan free of Hepatitis C by 2030.

He expressed confidence that, under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the government's effective efforts would lead to significant progress towards eliminating hepatitis.

Ayaz Sadiq also appreciated the government's initiatives, including Hepatitis B vaccination for newborns, nationwide public awareness campaigns, and awareness programmes conducted through educational institutions and the media. He said that Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Rural Health Centres (RHCs) are also playing a vital role in raising public awareness and encouraging immunisation.

Ayaz Sadiq reaffirmed Parliament's commitment to strengthening the country's public health system, preventing diseases, promoting preventive healthcare, and enacting effective legislation to ensure the provision of quality healthcare services to the people.

He stressed the need for the federal and provincial governments, healthcare professionals, civil society, the media, and educational institutions to work collectively to enhance public awareness about hepatitis and adopt a coordinated strategy for its elimination. In his message, Deputy Speaker National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah said that public awareness, early diagnosis, and equitable access to treatment are essential for preventing hepatitis. He urged every individual to adopt preventive measures, undergo regular medical check-ups, and follow safe medical practices.



KARACHI: President Asif Ali Zardari chairs a meeting reviewing progress on various Sindh-China cooperation initiatives with Chinese delegations of Anhui Nengtong New Energy Technology Co., Ltd. and Luoyang Modern Biology Group at CM House



QUETTA: Provincial Ministers Mir Sadiq Umrani and MPA Zarak Khan Mandokhail called on Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

PTI leadership engaged in politics of mutual accusations of corruption: Muqam

CHARSADDA (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, and President of PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Amir Muqam, said here that under the leadership of the Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz, the federal government is taking extensive measures to put the country on the path of fast track economic stability and development.

He said that today the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are themselves asking what they have received after fourteen years.

"The people of the province are still worried about basic facilities,".

On this occasion, Fahd Azam Khan, the nephew of well-known political and social figure Tariq Azam Khan from Charsadda, a senior PTI leader, announced joining PML-N along with his family and thousands of supporters.

CJP vows to promote accessible; citizen-centric justice system

ISLAMABAD, (APP): A delegation of the Punjab Bar Council called on the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) at the Supreme Court on Monday as part of the Court's continuing engagement with the legal fraternity.

The delegation was led by Khawaja Qaiser Butt, Vice Chairman, Punjab Bar Council, and comprised Fakhar Hayat Awan, Chairman, Executive Committee; Malik Ghulam Abbas Nissoana, Chairman, Publication Committee; Sardar Abdul Basit Khan Baluch, Malik Maqsood Khokhar, Rana Sir Buland Khan, Ch. Umar Mahmood, Members, Rafaqat Ali Sohal, Secretary, Punjab Bar Council; Aftab Ahmad, Section Officer; and Ghulam Raza.

The delegation appreciated the justice sector reforms being undertaken across the country, particularly the establishment of e-libraries, solarization of court complexes, and development of Women Facilitation Centres to improve accessibility and service delivery. The Chief Justice underscored the importance of digital literacy among all justice sector stakeholders, observing that effective use of technology was essential for transitioning towards an automated, efficient, and responsive justice system aligned with the needs of litigants and the public.

His Lordship also briefed the delegation on capacity-building initiatives being undertaken through the Federal Judicial Academy and encouraged members of the legal fraternity to make effective use of the available training and professional development opportunities. The delegation thanked the Chief Justice for the interaction and presented login credentials for the Pakistan Law site to facilitate access to digital legal resources.



ISLAMABAD: Hon'ble Chief Justice of Pakistan, in a group photo with the delegation of Punjab Bar Council at Supreme Court of Pakistan

Int'l community acknowledges Pakistan's achievements on diplomatic front: Tarar

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said that an organised India-funded digital propaganda network targeting Pakistan, its state institutions, armed forces and national leadership had been exposed, which was involved in spreading disinformation through digital marketing services and bot farms.

Speaking here, the minister said information obtained from a detained digital marketing service provider, along with digital records and technical evidence, had revealed the network's foreign links.

He said content related to the Joint Action Committee had also been systematically promoted as part of the campaign.

Tarar said Pakistan's security agencies had some time ago detained an individual providing digital marketing services on social media. Investigations revealed that the individual was offering digital marketing services with links extending to India and was receiving payments from India to make specific content go viral in Pakistan.

He said access to the suspect's digital information showed that an extensive disinformation network was being operated through bot farms to spread content against Pakistan, its sovereignty, government, armed forces and state institutions.

The minister said the detained individual confessed during interrogation that much of the content he received was related to the Joint Action Committee in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Tarar said the government had consistently maintained that the objective of the Joint Action Committee was to undermine the Kashmir cause and weaken the relationship between Pakistan and the Kashmiri people. He said these activities were part of an organised conspiracy and had neither any connection with the Kashmir cause nor any concern for the interests of the Kashmiri people.

"If these elements are genuinely sincere to Kashmir and the Kashmir cause, why do they not become part of the electoral process, contest elections and raise public issues through democratic and constitutional means?" he asked. The minister said whether it was the issue of refugee seats or violent protests, the group had consistently promoted the politics of violence.

He stated that during the protests, the group martyred Kashmiri police personnel, created a law and order situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, organised armed groups, blocked roads and attempted to take the law into its own hands.

Tarar said the group had been part of a conspiracy from the outset and that its links with India were supported by irrefutable evidence.

He said the armed movement with weapons and batons was neither in the interest of the Kashmiri people nor connected to the Kashmir cause. The minister said the objective of these conspiratorial elements was to create instability in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, harm the Kashmiri people and weaken the strong relationship between Pakistan and Kashmir.

PPP urges political parties to allow voters to exercise their right to choose their representatives freely

ISLAMABAD, (INP): The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has rejected allegations of election rigging made by Rana Sanaullah, saying that claims regarding a particular polling station were unfounded.

PPP Central Information Secretary Nadeem Afzal Chan, responding to remarks by Rana Sanaullah, said the party had been demanding from the beginning that the AJK elections should be conducted in a free, fair and transparent manner.

He alleged that the polling staff at the station in question had been staying at the residence of a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) worker.

Chan called for facts to be presented instead of making what he described as baseless accusations. He said that any party confident in its public support should compete through the electoral process.

He also expressed concerns over what it described as federal interference and the alleged use of government resources during the Azad Jammu and Kashmir elections.

Chan urged the federal government and its institutions to avoid any involvement that could influence the electoral process.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan chairs a meeting regarding Indus Health Network.



LAHORE: Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani offering Fateha on the demise of the mother of Syed Almdar Hussain Shah, President of the New York chamber of small business corporation, USA

Sending presiding officers in govt vehicle question of transparency: Rana Sana

ISLAMABAD, (INP): PML-N leader Rana Sanaullah has demanded that elections in Kotli LA-10 should be postponed after two AJK election commission officials were suspended and arrested for going to a private residence with polling bags in the constituency. Rana Sanaullah demanded the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir and the Chief Election Commissioner hold inquiry against accused Saqlain and Qaiser Patwari for alleged rigging, and the elections in Kotli LA-10 should be stopped until the inquiry was completed.

He said it should first be found out where the polling bags were being taken, adding Chaudhry Yasin was also the president of Azad Kashmir PPP.

"This incident of being caught red-handed is shameful and highly condemnable. Sending presiding officers in a government vehicle is a question of transparency.

Voting begins in first phase of Azad Kashmir elections

MIRPUR, (INP): The first phase of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections was set into motion in the 13 constituencies of Mirpur Division, with voting began at 8:00 am Monday morning and authorities saying all arrangements were in place for free, fair and transparent polls.

The AJK Assembly elections were being held in 45 constituencies, including 33 territorial seats and 12 reserved for Kashmiri refugees living in Pakistan's Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces.

The AJK Election Commission has introduced a three-phase election schedule for the first time, citing administrative and security considerations.

Polling started at the scheduled time and will continue till 5:00 pm. Today (Monday) has been declared a public holiday in all three Mirpur Division districts Bhimber, Mirpur, and Kotli to facilitate the voting.

A total of 288 candidates are contesting today's election in 13 constituencies. According to the AJK Election Commission, polling will be held at 2,316 polling stations, of which 1,241 have been declared 'highly sensitive' and 724 'sensitive'.

The contest features the PPP, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party, Muslim Conference and other parties. In total, 22 political parties are participating.

A total of 1,265 candidates are contesting 45 AJK constituencies. Of these, 1,047 candidates are competing for 33 territorial seats, while 218 have filed nominations for the 12 refugee constituencies.

Full restoration of flood-hit Gilgit-Skardu Road to be achieved soon: Aleem

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Monday conducted an emergency inspection at the flood-affected bridge near Sassi Haramosh Ansar Camp along the Skardu-Gilgit Road to assess the damage caused by recent flash floods and review ongoing repair operations.

During his visit, he issued strict directives to operational staff to expedite restoration work and deploy additional heavy machinery to relieve the severe inconvenience faced by stranded commuters and local residents, said a press release.

"Immediate and effective measures must be taken to minimize public hardship. By the Grace of Almighty Allah, full restoration of the Gilgit-Skardu Road will be achieved very soon," he added.

Th Minister lauded the dedication and resilience of field personnel from the National Highway Authority (NHA) and the Frontier Works Organisation / NWO working round the clock under challenging environmental conditions.

A high-level official delegation accompanied the Minister, including Chairman NHA, Secretary Communications, Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan, and Commissioner Gilgit.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik held a successful meeting with a delegation of the Oil Tanker Contractors Association (OTCA)

India's Cockcroach Janta Party demands release of protesters after reports of detention

NEW DELHI, (INP): India's youth-led "cockroach" movement, whose protests have forced the education minister's resignation, urged authorities on Monday to release all demonstrators detained in weeks of rallies nationwide.

The online Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), which organised protests over exam paper leaks and other irregularities, said they had received reports of students held in detention, particularly in the states of Assam, West Bengal and Bihar. "Any failure to release those detained or withdraw criminal cases would amount to a breach of public trust," the protest group said in a statement, adding they would take "further necessary steps" if their demand was not met.

Punjab flood crisis deepens after river embankments collapse in three districts

LAHORE, (INP): Monsoon rains caused widespread destruction across Punjab on Monday after three embankments were breached, inundating villages, destroying homes and submerging thousands of acres of farmland, while rising river levels in Punjab and Sindh prompted fresh flood warnings from the authorities.

Embankments gave way at the Khohar area on the River Jhelum near Sarai Alamgir, at Nallah Dek near Kalakhatai close to the River Ravi, and along the River Chenab at Katchay Gurna near Pindi Bhattian. The breaches flooded agricultural land, damaged residential properties and disrupted road links in several areas.

In Sarai Alamgir, severe riverbank erosion following the breach at Khohar swept away several kanals of land. Local residents warned that nearby settlements could face increasing danger if urgent protective measures were not taken.

Near Kalakhatai, River Ravi's floodwaters engulfed a railway track after the Nallah Dek embankment collapsed. Thousands of acres of rice crops were submerged, while connecting roads disappeared beneath floodwater, leaving residents struggling to move between villages.

At Katchay Gurna near Pindi Bhattian, intense erosion along the River Chenab washed away several houses and valuable agricultural land. Frightened residents appealed to the authorities for immediate relief operations and stronger flood protection measures. Families living close to the river have begun relocating to safer areas while affected communities have urged the government to construct protective embankments without delay.

Floodwater from Nallah Dek also devastated rice fields in the village of Khushhal Pura near Muridke, where crops worth millions of rupees were destroyed across hundreds of acres. Residents blamed the Irrigation Department for failing to clear drainage channels, claiming that proper maintenance could have prevented the flooding.

They called on Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to investigate the alleged misuse of public funds allocated for drainage works and to provide financial compensation to affected farmers.

Chief Editor: Syed Abdul Wadood Shah printed at Shah Printing Press, Quetta and Published from Al-Syed Building M.A. Jinnah Road Quetta Ph. 2843190 E.mail: dailyvomqta@gmail.com.