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Army's top brass affirms Pakistan's right to self-defence; targeted action against terrorism emanating from Afghanistan

Any attempt to create 'May 9-like situation' will be dealt with decisive force

RAWALPINDI, (APP): The Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) while underscoring the importance of internal stability, on Friday resolved that any attempt to cause agitation or create 9th May like situation, on any pretext whatsoever, would be dealt with decisive force and in accordance with the rule of law, without hesitation and discrimination. The 277th Corps Commanders' Conference which met with Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, here at General Headquarters (GHQ) in the Chair reviewed the prevailing security environment and resolved to maintain a high state of readiness, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). The forum affirmed Pakistan's right to self-defence and targeted action against terrorism emanating from Afghanistan, stressing that only the Taliban delusional leadership, facilitating terrorism on behalf of India, bears responsibility for its consequences. Forum appreciated sustained successful intelligence-based counter-terrorism operations by law enforcement agencies, however, emphasised complementing these kinetic efforts with non-kinetic measures; including people-centric governance at grassroot level, strategic engagement with public, dismantling of terror-crime nexus operating under patronage of vested interests and police capacity building, in line with the National Action Plan and Vision Azm-e-Istehkam. The forum welcomed the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, noting its contribution to longstanding strategic and collective defence ties. It strongly resented Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia, expressed solidarity with the Kingdom and affirmed Pakistan's commitment to the security and sanctity of the Haramain Sharifain, the news release further said. It also reiterated Pakistan's principled position on IIOJK and support for resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with relevant UNSC resolutions.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir addresses 277th Corps Commanders' Conference at General Headquarters (GHQ)

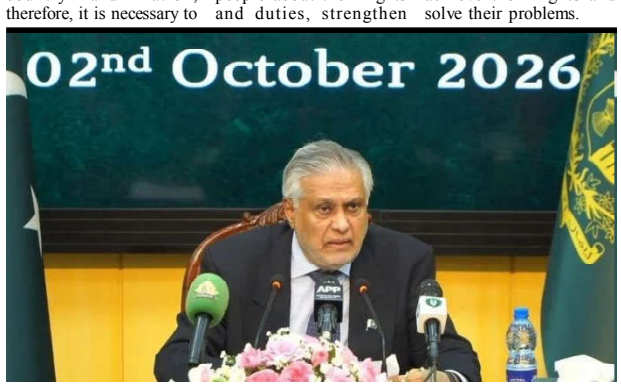


ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on Regulatory Reforms in ease of doing business.

Governor for promotion of national unity, public trust, mutual respect

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhel on Friday said that democracy is not just the name of the electoral process but a political system of democratic governance, collective responsibility and bringing everyone together, we are taking concrete steps to strengthen the government at all levels for interest of progress of the country.

He said that at this time, it is extremely important to bring the youth closer to us and include them in the national mainstream, youth are the real asset of the country and nation, therefore, it is necessary to provide them with quality education and employment opportunities and teach them digital skills compatible with modern requirements. He expressed these views while talking to Provincial Ministers Mir Asim Kurd Gellu, Noor Muhammad Dummar, Member of Provincial Assembly Zarak Khan Mandokhel and Parliamentary Secretary Muhammad Khan Lehri at the Governor House, Quetta. On this occasion, the Governor Balochistan said that the basic duty of democratic institutions is to raise awareness among the people about their rights and duties, strengthen social justice and ensure the protection of the constitutional rights and powers of citizens. He said that the newly elected public representatives have important responsibilities in political and social terms, instead of creating division and distance in the society, they would have to make practical and conscious efforts to promote national unity and mutual respect. He said that public representatives should become an effective voice in their constituencies, especially for the silent majority who could not raise their voices fully to achieve their rights and solve their problems.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar addresses a press conference

Business community important component of Balochistan's economy: PkMAP leaders

QUETTA (ANN): Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) leaders have called for concerted measures to improve the security environment in Balochistan, saying traders, industrialists and transporters face growing difficulties in conducting business amid law and order concerns.

PkMAP Central Secretary General Abdul Rahim Ziaratwal, Nawab Ayaz Khan Jogezai, Abdul Qahar Khan Wadan and other party leaders expressed these views while congratulating the newly elected office-bearers of the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry Balochistan.

The PkMAP leaders congratulated newly elected President Ahmed Gul Kakar, Senior Vice President Mirza Khan Khilji, Vice President Jangian Dashti and other members of the Chamber leadership. They expressed the expectation that the new office-bearers would effectively present the concerns of traders, industrialists and transporters before the relevant authorities.

They described the business community as an important component of the provincial economy and said sustained commercial activity and investment required a secure and conducive operating environment. They called for greater coordination among the government, political stakeholders and relevant institutions to address issues affecting businesses. Speaking on the occasion, Ahmed Gul Kakar and Mirza Khan Khilji said the confidence placed in the newly elected leadership by the business community had increased their responsibility, particularly at a time when traders and transporters were confronting multiple challenges. Kakar said security concerns and disruptions affecting the movement of freight vehicles on provincial highways were creating difficulties for businesses. He also referred to incidents involving attacks on transporters and the burning of goods vehicles, saying such incidents were affecting investor confidence and leading some investors to consider opportunities in other provinces. He said the Chamber's new leadership would take up the concerns of traders, industrialists and transporters with both provincial and federal authorities and seek practical measures to address obstacles to business activity and investment.

Indian military should explain whom it killed in fake encounter: Tarar

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Friday said that following the DG ISPR's press conference, questions had arisen over the Indian Army's fake encounter, asking whom it had killed if Pakistani soldier Muhammad Asif was alive and well.

In a post on social media platform X, the minister said that since DG ISPR had presented Muhammad Asif during his press conference, the Indian side had a lot of explaining to do.

"This is an embarrassment at the highest level for India," he said.

The minister questioned which innocent Kashmiri the Indian Army had killed in the fake encounter, adding that the question remained unanswered.

PM pays tribute to security forces for killing terrorists in N. Waziristan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday paid tribute to the security forces for killing seven Khawarij terrorists during an intelligence-based operation in the Eidak area of North Waziristan.

"The successful operations against terrorists are a reflection of the professionalism of our security forces and our national resolve," the prime minister said in a statement issued by the PM Office.

He said the security forces also destroyed the hideouts of the Fitna al-Khawarij terrorists during the operation, which was commendable.

"The outstanding performance of the officers and personnel of the security forces and law-enforcement agencies is a guarantee of the country's peace and security," he said and added that the entire nation stood shoulder to shoulder with the security forces in thwarting the nefarious designs of the Fitna al-Khawarij terrorists.

He said that the security forces will continue their full-scale operations until the elimination of all terrorist elements.

"The entire nation is proud of its brave armed forces," the prime minister said.

Dar for Balochistan's energy security, restoring SSGCL's financial sustainability

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday chaired a high-level committee meeting on the issue of mounting Unaccounted-for Gas (UFG) losses of Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL).

The committee was briefed on the critical operational challenges, financial impacts, and rising distribution losses affecting SSGCL's network. The committee evaluated strategic measures to curb illegal connections, upgrade pipeline infrastructure, improve revenue collection, and stabilise gas supply for legitimate consumers.

The deputy prime minister underscored the vital importance of ensuring energy security in Balochistan while restoring the operational and financial sustainability of SSGCL.

He directed the authorities concerned to formulate a targeted, time-bound strategy to cut UFG losses, enforce strict protocols, protect public resources, and ensure public facilitation.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Science and Technology Khalid Hussain Magsi, Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Federal Minister for Public Affairs Unit Rana Mubashar Iqbal, SAPM Tariq Bajwa; Secretary Interior, Secretary Petroleum; Chief Secretary Balochistan, and senior officials from the ministries of energy and foreign affairs.

Lawmakers demands practical measures to tackle Balochistan's issues

QUETTA (ANN): Several Balochistan Assembly members have voiced concerns over the province's law and order situation, limited employment opportunities and economic difficulties, calling on the provincial government to take practical measures to address issues affecting the public, particularly young people.

National Party lawmaker Mir Rahmat Saleh Baloch, Jamaat-e-Islami Balochistan Amir and MPA Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman Baloch, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam lawmakers Mir Zabid Ali Reki and Dr. Nawaz Kibzai, and MPA Fazal Qadir Mandokhail expressed their views while speaking to the media. The lawmakers said maintaining law and order was a fundamental responsibility of the provincial government and expressed concern over what they described as continued insecurity in different parts of the province.

We will continue our journey towards goal of export-led economic growth: PM

Says enhancing access to global markets for Pakistani agricultural products is the government's top priority

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said the export of an additional 70,000 metric tons of Pakistani rice to Malaysia would prove to be a significant step for the national economy besides ensuring the prosperity of farmers.

He said enhancing access to global markets for Pakistani agricultural products was the government's top priority.

"We will continue our journey toward the goal of export-led economic growth through sustained hard work," he said in a statement. PM Sharif lauded the relevant ministries and authorities for their concerted efforts, which had successfully secured an additional export volume of 70,000 metric tons of Pakistani rice to Malaysia for the period spanning October to December 2026.

He said the government would continue its journey toward export-led economic growth through persistent dedication and hard work. The achievement of an additional 70,000 metric tons of Pakistani rice to Malaysia reflects effective diplomatic and commercial endeavours aligned with the prime minister's vision, he added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz commended the dedicated team behind this milestone, specifically praising Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Ishaq Dar, federal ministers and federal secretaries of National Food Security and Commerce for their commendable contributions.



ISLAMABAD: Govt, PTI negotiating committees hold talks at NA speaker's office.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye to review regional developments in Riyadh

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday said that a meeting of the Strategic Political Defence Committee (SPDC), established under the Makkah Agreement among Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye, would be held soon in Riyadh to review the prevailing situation on the ground, particularly developments in Saudi Arabia. "The meeting of the entire Strategic Political Defence Committee (SPDC) will be held soon in Riyadh. The principals are almost ready, and under the Makkah Accord, the current situation on the ground, particularly the situation in Saudi Arabia, will be examined," the deputy prime minister said while addressing a media briefing here at the Foreign Office. He said the outcome of the meeting and the future course of action would be shared with the media once finalized.

Highlighting Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's extensive engagements during the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and his meetings on the sidelines, he said that this year's diplomatic activities were "more than average". Ishaq Dar said the prime minister effectively presented Pakistan's perspective before the international community during his address to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), particularly on the issues of Palestine and Jammu and Kashmir. He said the prime minister also highlighted Pakistan's efforts and diplomatic initiatives regarding the Pakistan-India conflict and the US-Iran tensions, besides apprising the international community of Pakistan's role in promoting dialogue and peace. DPM/FM Dar said Pakistan had played an important role in bringing the United States (US) and Iran to the negotiating table in Islamabad after 47 years, describing it as an important diplomatic achievement. The prime minister, he said, also drew attention to the possible implications of tensions around the Strait of Hormuz, warning that any disruption could adversely affect global energy supplies and ordinary people through higher petroleum prices.



Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Emir Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman speaks to media alongwith TTAP leaders in Isalmabad.

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Another oil shock

The sharp increase in the domestic price of petrol and diesel is an unavoidable correction amid external price shocks triggered by the US-Israel war on Iran.

That the petrol price was reduced by Rs80 — after increasing it by Rs137 to Rs458 per litre — in less than 24 hours shows political pressure and confusion in officialdom.

Alongside the fuel price adjustments, the government has also ordered early market closures to conserve energy and announced targeted subsidy for motorcycle owners, farmers and transporters.

For weeks, the authorities had resisted passing on the full impact of rising oil prices to consumers, absorbing the surge in the budget.

Following an earlier increase of Rs55 per litre almost a month ago, the authorities were seemingly banking on a swifter resolution to the Gulf crisis, a bet that cost the national exchequer Rs129bn.

That space has now run out.

The move shows that Pakistan simply does not have the capacity to sustain fuel subsidies.

Years of weak tax revenue mobilisation, coupled with rising public sector expenditures, have left the government with little room to absorb such shocks without risking macroeconomic instability.

The pressure is not confined to the fiscal side. The external sector supported by a fragile foreign exchange buffer painstakingly rebuilt over two years is also vulnerable.

Higher global oil prices translate into a heavier import bill, threatening to erode reserves and destabilise the exchange rate. Given the ongoing Middle East crisis, the government had no other choice.

While the decision is fiscally justified, its consequences for the public will be immediate and severe. A fresh wave of inflation is inevitable. In fact, transporters have already raised fares, freight operators have sharply increased charges, and businesses are passing on higher input costs to consumers.

This will cascade through the broader economy, significantly raising the cost of living.

The burden will fall disproportionately on low- and middle-income households, many of whom are already struggling to cope with persistent inflation.

Targeted subsidies may offer some relief but are unlikely to fully offset the broader price shock that is unfolding.

More fundamentally, this crisis underscores a deeper policy failure. For decades, governments have delayed tax reforms and avoided difficult fiscal adjustments. Resultantly, the state remains heavily reliant on indirect taxation.

Today, a large part of fuel prices consist of government taxes and levies. Had revenue and spending reforms, such as broadening the tax base and curbing government expenditure, been undertaken earlier, the burden on consumers could have been significantly lower. Instead, citizens are now facing a double squeeze: soaring global energy prices as well as elevated indirect FBR levies imposed to meet the government's revenue needs.

While the fuel price hike was unavoidable it also serves to remind us of the heavy cost the masses are paying for delayed structural reforms.

Engineered stability

Farooq Arby

Pakistan's external account signals aren't comforting. Export momentum is uneven, imports are rebounding and the current account has been oscillating between deficit and modest surplus. But the rupee has been unusually calm. That combination typically shows up as visible pressure on exchange rates in emerging markets. The missing puzzle piece is policy. The State Bank of Pakistan has been purchasing extensively from the exchange market over the past two years. Is the SBP merely smoothing volatility through interventions or actively shaping the market?

Currency market intervention isn't necessarily controversial, and central banks do routinely step in to dampen disorderly swings, curb speculative overshooting and maintain market functioning. If transparent and proportionate, such action can lower uncertainty, support trade planning and anchor expectations. But there's a difference between episodic smoothing and persistent purchases. When a central bank repeatedly becomes the dominant buyer in the market (a monopsony), it influences price discovery, even if it insists it's not targeting a specific exchange rate. Over time, participants stop focusing only on trade flows, remittances and portfolio sentiment and begin pricing in its likely presence. The bank's presence alone can dictate price formation.

When one player consistently absorbs supply, the exchange rate may stop reflecting underlying demand-supply fundamentals and, instead, begin to reflect administrative intent. As a monopsony, the central bank can dictate the dollar's price. The result can be an exchange rate that appears stable but is actually managed at an artificially low level. The rupee has exhibited a degree of parity stability in the last couple of years. But while reassuring on the surface, it may not fully correspond to macroeconomic realities. If this process keeps the rupee stronger than what fundamentals would imply, the costs keep accumulating quietly before arriving loudly.

First, an artificially strong currency is effectively a subsidy to imports and a tax on exports. Imports become cheaper in rupee terms, while exporters lose pricing power in competitive global markets. For Pakistan, which is still constrained by limited export diversification and a structurally fragile external account, this weakens the one lever that can generate durable foreign exchange, trade competitiveness.

A credible exchange rate must balance three imperatives.

Second, an overvalued rupee distorts investment signals. Exchange rates aren't only a macro indicator but are also economy-wide price signals that guide capital allocation. If firms and investors believe the rupee is policy — rather than fundamentals-driven, incentives shift.

Tradable-sector firms hesitate to scale, import dependence becomes rational and domestic industry faces sustained pricing pressure from cheaper foreign goods. The long-run outcome is slower productivity growth and fewer jobs in sectors that can actually earn foreign exchange.

Third, credibility becomes the hidden balance sheet item. Once markets internalise the fact that the exchange rate is 'guided', expectations become path-dependent and traders ask what the central bank will tolerate rather than what fundamentals imply. Stability becomes brittle. In such a setting, a guided exchange rate ultimately proves costlier and more painful than market-based adjustment, as inevitable corrections arrive abruptly, triggering inflation, eroding real incomes and forcing emergency stabilisation.

To be clear, re--serve accumulation itself is not a policy sin. Ade-quate buffers str-e-n-gthen sovere-i--gn resilience, im--prove credit ratings and provide insu-r-ance agai-nst external shocks. But method and magnitude matter. If reserves rise primarily through sustained market dominance rather than through organic inflows, exports, remittances and FDI, the policy begins to resemble market engineering rather than market management.

A credible exchange rate framework must balance three imperatives: volatility management, price discovery and reserve adequacy. When intervention shifts from stabilisation to structural influence, the exchange rate stops performing its macroeconomic role as a shock absorber and instead becomes a policy variable.

The objective should not be a rupee that is politically comfortable, nor reserves accumulated at any cost. It should be a currency that reflects economic fundamentals while the central bank intervenes only to prevent disorderly conditions. Smoothing volatility is prudent. Sustained dominance is not. The distinction between the two determines whether policy strengthens the exchange market, or muddles it.

If Iran unravels

Moazzam Husain

Pakistan has long viewed the sudden collapse of the Iranian regime as a national security threat. That assessment, which has been held quietly for years, acquired fresh urgency with the outbreak of the Gulf conflict. Pakistan is already confronting heightened militancy and terrorism in its western regions, where groups such as the TTP and BLA operate from sanctuaries in Afghanistan. In our worst-case calculations, a sudden power vacuum in Tehran would risk unleashing a flood of advanced Iranian weapons — particularly kamikaze drones — into these networks.

Field Marshal Asim Munir met President Donald Trump last year in June, during the height of the 12-day war with Iran, and again in September. Iran featured explicitly in their discussions, with Trump publicly noting that Pakistan "knows Iran very well, better than most". These meetings gave Islamabad insight into the Trump administration's thinking on Iran while also conveying Pakistan's concerns to him.

The US-Israel campaign that began on Feb 28, 2026, opened with heavy decapitation strikes and deeper attacks on Iranian military and nuclear sites. Israel saw the moment as a historic opportunity to eliminate what it regards as an existential threat. Reports indicated that certain Arab capitals, while publicly calling for de-escalation, also privately encouraged a more decisive outcome. In Washington, hawkish quarters initially leaned towards regime change, though President Trump has since shifted towards declaring major objectives achieved and exploring a negotiated exit.

What Pakistan fears most is a rapid fracture of central authority in Tehran. The IRGC has already demonstrated its ability to function in a decentralised manner. Even after the early loss of the Supreme Leader and dozens of senior commanders, IRGC units continued launching missiles and drones on local initiatives. In the most plausible scenario, dozens of battle-hardened IRGC battlegroups, each with its own internal command chain, would survive the collapse of central authority. Some would seize control of the vast underground 'missile cities' and weapon caches. Others would take physical possession of dispersed Shahed-136/238 drone production lines.

The region could quickly turn into an arms bazaar.

With no foreign power willing to put boots on the ground, reconfiguration of power would be decided by whoever controls the guns and the factories. A younger generation of IRGC commanders, needing funds to expand their influence, would have strong incentives to turn to the black market.

Advanced munitions, including kamikaze drones, could potentially find their way into the hands of arms dealers, non-state actors and militant groups across the region. Iran shares long borders with several countries, creating multiple pathways for proliferation. The region could quickly turn into an arms bazaar, with deadly weapons finding their way to groups that currently operate with far more rudimentary capabilities.

In consequence, the low-tech drone incidents of today could tomorrow become deadly campaigns using Iranian-origin Shaheds and Mohajer systems. Pakistan has already witnessed in the recent skirmishes with Afghanistan when low-tech drones arrived over Islamabad. The leap from those rudimentary systems to sophisticated, long-range Iranian drones would represent a qualitative escalation — and the danger would not stop at Pakistan's borders. The combination of rogue militias and deadly weapons such as Shahed drones combined with vast ungoverned spaces would create a powder keg stretching from the Kurdish mountains and Iraq to Yemen and across the Red Sea into the Horn of Africa.

Which is why Pak-istan has quietly co--unselled restraint on both sides thro-ug-h-out this crisis. It has urged Iran to avoid targeting Gulf civilian and economic in--frastructure and wo--uld have conveyed to Washington the severe risks of a regime collapse. These efforts reflect Islamabad's understanding that uncontrolled collapse in Tehran would create a security vacuum far more dangerous than the current stalemate.

The silver lining is that beyond the rhetoric, initial drafts have been exchanged, with the US presenting 15 points and Iran responding with five. The positions are far apart, as is normal at the start of serious talks. Yet the process has begun.

For Pakistan, the priority remains clear: to bring these two positions closer. Maintaining open channels of communication with all parties Islamabad remains in daily contact with the Iranian leadership, frequent engagement with GCC capitals, and close coordination with Washington as well as Beijing. As Pakistan mediates the initiative the real question in the days ahead is whether the parties can narrow the gap so that the region does not cross into further dangerous territory.

Economic security buffers

Ishrat Husain

Two recent developments offer compelling reasons for policymakers to prioritise the building of buffers for economic security. First, Pakistan has earned international goodwill by playing a proactive role in encouraging dialogue among parties engaged in the Gulf conflict. Second, the IMF has shown unusual flexibility by reaching a staff-level agreement without imposing additional conditions at this critical juncture. With no end in sight to the conflict, Pakistan must leverage this goodwill and policy space to derive tangible economic benefits. However, this mustn't follow the well-trodden path of a rentier state, where geostrategic positioning is exchanged for short-term financial inflows. Instead, a strategy to build durable buffers against future shocks must be adopted. Four key pillars of economic security merit attention.

Strengthening foreign exchange resilience: This requires boosting non-debt-creating inflows, re-profiling short-term external liabilities and maintaining market-determined exchange and interest rates. The recent relocation of transshipment activities to Pakistani ports is an opportunity to be sustained through improving capacity, governance and operational efficiency of maritime institutions. Temporary waivers of financial instruments for exports to Iran and Central Asian Republics should be institutionalised to facilitate regional trade. Construction of the Iran-Pakistan pipeline should be initiated. Gwadar Port must be made fully operational and completion of the western route linking it to the Karakoram Highway prioritised.

Security for oil and gas, mining and Chinese companies and joint ventures is a sine qua non. Providing electricity and water to Gwadar residents and developing infrastructure in the mining districts of Balochistan and KP is necessary as is the development of districts along the western corridor. Liberal import of goods, fuel and electricity from Iran would benefit Makran coast inhabitants and generate jobs. Third-country mediation efforts for Pak-Afghan rapprochement can be expedited as a reciprocal gesture for Pakistan's constructive regional peace effort.

Trade policy also needs recalibration. The trade agreement with China should be renegotiated for a more balanced arrangement as seen in Asean agreements, while a trade agreement with Asean itself should be expedited. Exporters' long-standing constraints must be addressed through a comprehensive policy framework. Instead of piecemeal interventions, a five-year policy guaranteeing consistency and predictability should be formulated. Effective implementation should ensure that arbitrary actions by tax and regulatory authorities do not undermine confidence. FDI is another avenue to boost external buffers. Agreements with GCC countries should be finalised to attract investments, increase jobs for Pakistanis and convert short-term deposits into longer-term equity investments. We should also revisit tariff arrangements with the US to improve market access. While expanding the Roshan Digital Account to non-resident investors is a positive step, safeguards are necessary to lessen the risk of sudden capital outflows in times of financial stress.

Four key pillars can help strengthen Pakistan's economic security in these troubling times.

Energy security: Increasing behind-the-meter solarisation has raised the share of indigenous energy to around 88 per cent; this must be reinforced by offering attractive incentives to MNCs for exploration and development of domestic resources. Regulatory bottlenecks must be removed to allow producers to sell directly to end users and introduce competition in gas and electricity distribution. Strategic oil reserves by the government in addition to enhanced stock by MNCs should be built up. Infrastructure investment is just as important. Projects such as the rail link between Islamkot and Mirpurkhas and transmission line to evacuate Thar coal should be brought to fruition. New pipelines, expanded use of railways for fuel transport and upgradation of oil refineries to convert furnace oil into higher-value products would boost efficiency and preserve foreign exchange. Addressing the circular debt is essential, as it constrains liquidity and discourages investment in capacity expansion and operational improvements.

In transport, the transition to e-vehicles — particularly two- and three-wheelers — should be accelerated and bottlenecks removed. Expanding e-bus services in urban centres beyond Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad-Rawalpindi would reduce reliance on imported fuel. Energy conservation, including rationalising commercial operating hours, can also contribute. Introducing multi-tariff pricing for industrial consumers to encourage off-peak usage would help optimise capacity utilisation and rationalise energy pricing.

Food and fertiliser security: Reassuringly, locally produced urea and DAP are significantly cheaper than imported alternatives. Continued gas supply from the Mari fields to fertiliser manufacturers is a prudent policy and should be sustained. Given tightening global fertiliser markets and potential supply chain disruptions, ensuring domestic availability is critical for agricultural productivity. Wheat policy, however, needs careful management. The deregulation attempt in the previous crop year created uncertainty and hardship for farmers and consumers. The current target of procuring six million tons for strategic reserves is appropriate, but reverting to a system of compulsory procurement that has historically been marred by corruption, market distortions and fiscal losses must be avoided. Strategic reserves should be released during lean months to stabilise prices. Support for small farmers must also be strengthened. Financing initiatives such as Kissan Cards should be better targeted, while provincial programmes, such as procurement from Hari cardholders in Sindh and direct subsidy payments, can enhance equity in agriculture. Social protection: Rising fuel and transport costs translate into higher prices for food and other essentials, disproportionately affecting low-income households.

Across-the-board fuel subsidies are fiscally unsustainable and poorly targeted. Instead, Pakistan should build on its well-established BISP by expanding coverage to include more vulnerable households and increasing transfer amounts to reflect inflationary pressures. Similarly, the expansion of health insurance through provincial health card schemes should be prioritised, ensuring uniformity in coverage, eligibility and service delivery. Health shocks are a major cause of impoverishment, particularly for daily-wage and informal workers. Effective health protection can be a critical buffer against such vulnerabilities.

While there are many other aspects of economic security in need of structural reforms, the current regional uncertainty and domestic constraints necessitate prioritisation.

The urban cost of war

Dr Noman Ahmed

Since the past several weeks, a war has been raging in the Gulf and Middle East region. While missiles, interceptors and drones are instruments of 21st-century warfare, a trait shared with conflicts in the last century is the grave impact on cities. Whether it is Tehran or Beirut, the brunt of the impact is borne by the urban population. Tens of thousands of residential buildings in Tehran have been partially or completely damaged. Cultural sites, university buildings and military and civilian institutional structures add to this estimate. There is limited information from Tel Aviv but multiple missile attacks by Iran have caused widespread destruction in the city and the wider region. Beirut, sadly home to several earlier conflicts, has reported the forced eviction of over a million residents on account of Israeli attacks. Cities in Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and even Oman and Turkiye have experienced infrastructural damage. With no ceasefire in sight, it is feared that even tougher times lie ahead.

Cities are a natural target of aggression by belligerent countries. The attacking forces intend to cause critical damage to the enemies' decision-making apparatus. In Tehran, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and some of his family members, Dr Ali Larijani and some of his family members, and many other high-ranking Iranian officials were martyred. Military command structures, communication channels, financial hubs and other important economic and strategic assets make cities vulnerable to war damage. As cities grow, military and civilian jurisdictions often overlap. In some cases, cities continue to re-zone, generating buffers to keep civilian locations away from military assets. But all too often, the conflict does not spare civilian sites, even those located at a distance. And sometimes passive military sites become a hazard for the urban population. The tragic Ojhri Camp incident in April 1988 is an example. An explosion at this ammunition depot caused rockets and projectiles to fly all over Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Over 90 people died; hundreds were believed to have been wounded, some with permanent injuries.

When at war, there are hardly any principles that belligerents abide by. One observes military planes carrying out air strikes on hospitals, clinics, universities, schools, elderly care facilities and other social infrastructure. Gaza's tragic situation is a case in point. One of the densest settlements, Gaza saw almost all its social facilities targeted by Israel. The Minab school tragedy in Iran shows that small children can also become fodder in a reckless war. Some wars have seen military commanders use human shields and conduct their operations from civilian facilities where they take cover. As a result, innocent people become targets or are caught in the crossfire when belligerents attack each other. Sometimes even urban centres in states that are not engaged in war are affected as the predicament of the GCC countries shows; the flames of war can consume even those places not meant as direct targets. Had it not been for today's superior air defence systems, the scale of damage in the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Turkiye may have been much larger.

Military structures, communication channels and financial hubs make cities vulnerable to war damage.

Wars challenge the principles of city planning and development. Almost all cities are planned and developed for peacetime conditions. Even a momentary interruption, in which war breaks out, questions such an approach. For instance, compact cities with a properly outlined morphology, grid-based and well-laid-out landscapes, streets and public congregation spaces, and solid social and physical infrastructure are desirable in the eyes of planners. But such cities are predictable targets during times of conflict. Convoluted and ambiguous layouts and invisible social and physical infrastructure is what war-zone habitats may require. The present war experience in the Middle East may give city planners and managers cause to consider an alternative approach if they are to ensure the safety of citizens and governance institutions.

Wars also end. Post-war redevelopment is an established area of expertise. Many cities across the world have been destroyed during conflicts. But once these conflicts ended, they bounced back, thanks to a scientifically steered process of redevelopment. During the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s, many cities saw extensive damage. Mostar, an idyllic town on the Neretva river, saw colossal destruction. It was a friendly urban settlement boasting a multicultural society and was a site of immense interest to architects, planners, engineers and other design professionals who focused on its heritage and conservation. Its most iconic landmark was the Stari Most bridge dating from the Ottoman era. The bridge, destroyed in 1993 by shelling, represented a unique architectural example. When the war ended, concerted efforts began to rebuild it. Active citizen participation accelerated the process. The restoration of other cultural artifacts was also prioritised. In 2004, the restored historic quarters of Mostar were inaugurated by a galaxy of international figures, led by then Prince Charles. It is hoped that Tehran will see similarly better times once the war ends.

Trump's anger over Iran thrusts NATO into fresh crisis

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON/BRUSSELS/PARIS: The NATO alliance has in recent years survived existential challenges - ranging from the war in Ukraine to multiple bouts of pressure and insults from U.S. President Donald Trump, who has questioned its core mission and threatened to seize Greenland.

But it is the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran, thousands of miles from Europe, that has nearly broken the 76-year-old bloc and threatens to leave it in its weakest state since its creation, say analysts and diplomats.

Trump, enraged that European countries have declined to send their navies to open up the Strait of Hormuz to global shipping following the start of the air war on Feb 28, has declared he is considering withdrawing from the alliance.

"Wouldn't you if you were me?" Trump asked Reuters in a Wednesday interview.

In a speech on Wednesday night, Trump criticized U.S. allies but stopped short of condemning NATO, as many experts thought he might.

But combined with other barbs aimed at Europeans in recent weeks, Trump's comments have provoked unprecedented concern that the U.S. will not come to the aid of European allies should they be attacked, whether or not Washington formally walks away.

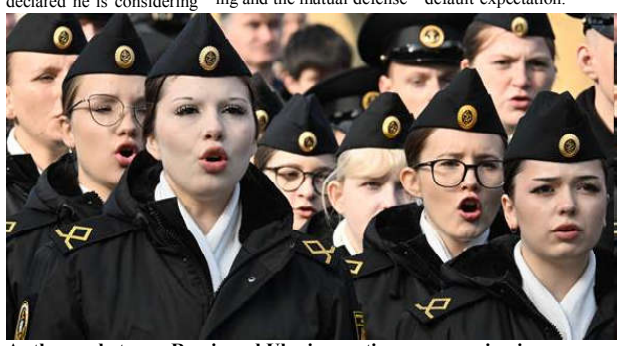
The result, say analysts and diplomats, is that the alliance created in the Cold War that has long served as the basic fabric of European security is fraying and the mutual defense agreement at its core is no longer taken as a given.

"This is the worst place (NATO) has been since it was founded," said Max Bergmann, a former State Department official who now leads the Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

"It's really hard to think of anything that even comes close."

That reality is sinking in for Europeans, who have counted on NATO as a bulwark against an increasingly assertive Russia.

As recently as February, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte had dismissed the idea of Europe defending itself without the U.S. as a "silly thought." Now, many officials and diplomats consider it the default expectation.



As the war between Russia and Ukraine continues, a swearing-in ceremony was held at Anchor Square in Kronshtadt, Russia, for students graduating from the Admiral Senyavin Naval Technical Academy.

Zelenskiy urges lawmakers to act as Ukraine funding hangs in balance

Monitoring Desk

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelenskiy called on lawmakers to pass key legislation next week to avert a funding crisis, help Ukraine fight the war against Russia, and enact key reforms required for European Union accession.

Due to lagging reforms and slow legislative progress in late 2025 and early 2026, Ukraine missed deadlines to unlock billions from its key lenders, economists said.

With the need for external financing standing at $52 billion this year - equivalent to around a quarter of annual economic output - the budget situation is desperate.

"I have a list of key draft laws that are critical for securing funding," Zelenskiy said in remarks released on Friday.

They range from strengthening the court system to reforming energy sector procedures.

"I believe that members of parliament from all parties must understand the importance of these bills for Ukraine's budget," said Zelenskiy, who has a majority in parliament but relations have soured.

David Arakhamia, head of the ruling Servant of the People faction, said lawmakers planned to meet on Monday to discuss the legislation with the key ministers. Voting is planned for April 7 and 8.

Ukraine depends on Western financial support as it fights a bigger and better-equipped enemy. Since the 2022 invasion, Kyiv has received about $174 billion in economic aid.

But this year, key funding has been stalled after Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who maintains close ties with Moscow, blocked a 90 billion euro loan to Ukraine.

By contrast, Russia will benefit from the surge in global oil prices due to the war in Iran. Economists from several Ukrainian think tanks said the country was critically late with meeting obligations under the EU's Ukraine Facility programme, failing deadlines on 14 indicators and risking more than $3.9 billion in financing.

In a March 30 letter to the speaker, seen by Reuters, EU Enlargement Commissioner Marta Kos said progress on the legislation would send a signal about Kyiv's commitment to reforms.

Forget democracy, Burkina Faso military leader Traore says

Monitoring Desk

DAKAR: Burkina Faso's military leader, who seized power in a coup in September 2022, told journalists that "people need to forget about democracy" and that "democracy kills", the latest sign he aims to rule for the long term.

Ibrahim Traore's military government had originally committed to organising an election in 2024. But a year after the coup, he said there would be no elections until the country—which has struggled for more than a decade to contain Islamist insurgencies linked to al Qaeda and Islamic State—was safe enough for everyone to vote.

When asked about elections during a roundtable with journalists aired on state television on Thursday night, Traore said his administration was focused on other challenges.

"People need to forget about the issue of democracy," he said. "We have to tell the truth: democracy isn't for us."

Invoking the example of Libya, where he said outsiders tried to "impose democracy", he added that "democracy kills."

Traore's government dissolved all political parties in January, after earlier suspending political activities. Before the coup, the country had more than 100 registered political parties, with 15 represented in parliament after the 2020 general election. Neighbouring Mali and Niger, also led by military rulers who took power in coups, have similarly dissolved political parties. Islamist insurgencies in all three countries have killed thousands and displaced millions over the past decade.

Earlier on Thursday, Human Rights Watch published a report indicating that Burkina Faso's military and its allies have killed more than twice as many civilians as Islamist militants have since 2023.

U.S. fighter shot down over Iran as Trump threatens to hit more infrastructure

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON/CAIRO: Iran shot down a U.S. warplane on Friday, setting off a search by both sides for surviving crew as the war looked set to intensify with President Donald Trump threatening more attacks on civilian infrastructure.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps said it was combing an area near where the plane came down in southwestern Iran. The regional governor promised a commendation for anyone who captured or killed the pilot.

A U.S. military official confirmed that a fighter jet had been shot down and a search was under way.

Iranian news agencies said U.S. helicopters were flying low on apparent search missions and carried videos of residents shooting at them.

There were no confirmed details of the searches or the type of aircraft shot down.



Demonstrators gathered in Puerta del Sol in Madrid, the capital of Spain, are continuing their protests demanding a solution to the housing and rent crisis in the country.



KARAJ, IRAN: Iranians registered with the 'Sacrifice for Iran' program gather for a mass demonstration led by the IRGC-affiliated Basij Resistance Force.

South Korea, France agree to deepen defence and energy ties amid Middle East conflict

Monitoring Desk

SEOUL: South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and French President Emmanuel Macron said on Friday they planned to boost defence cooperation and work together to address the economic and energy crises triggered by the war in Iran.

Macron arrived in South Korea on Thursday for a two-day state visit after also visiting Japan, and held a summit in Seoul on Friday.

It is the first state visit by a French president since 2015 and French officials have said the trip aims to strengthen France's strategic and economic role in the region at a time of "strong international and regional tensions."

"President Macron and I agreed to share policy-related experiences and strategies in order to jointly address the economic and energy crises triggered by the Middle East war," Lee said after the summit. The leaders also confirmed their commitment to bolstering energy security including by collaborating to secure safe maritime transport routes through the Strait of Hormuz, he said.

Like other Asian economies, South Korea relies heavily on energy imports, including through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has effectively shut down the waterway in response to U.S.-Israeli attacks that began on February 28, driving up energy prices and stoking fears of a global recession.

Macron said on Thursday that it would be unrealistic to launch a military operation to force open the strait, after U.S. President Donald Trump challenged U.S. allies to work towards reopening it.

Macron said after Friday's summit that the countries, both major arms manufacturers, would strive to boost their defence ties.

"What we want to do is give this cooperation a contemporary dimension," Macron said, citing joint exercises and more cooperation in production and in critical military capabilities.

Chinese robotaxis stall in apparent 'malfunction'

Monitoring Desk

BEIJING: A string of self-driving robotaxis owned by Chinese internet giant Baidu stalled in central China, stranding passengers after an apparent "system malfunction", police said on Wednesday.

Local authorities in Wuhan, Hubei province, began receiving calls "one after another" on Tuesday night about "multiple Apollo Go cars stopped in the middle of the road, unable to move", police said in a statement.

Apollo Go is Baidu's driverless taxi service which began charging for rides in Beijing in 2021 and operates in designated areas across several cities. "After investigation, preliminary findings suggest the cause was system malfunction," police added, without specifying how many cars were impacted.

Social media users shared videos of themselves attempting to contact customer service from inside their stalled robotaxis as other vehicles passed by. "Apollo Go, are you paralysed?" one person wrote on social media, alongside a video of unanswered calls to the company dialled from an in-car tablet. The light green Apollo Go logo was visible on the steering wheel.

The social media user said they were "stuck" in the middle of the road for more than 30 minutes.



NABLUS, WEST BANK, PALESTINE: Israeli military forces and settlers intervene against Palestinian farmers and international activists harvesting olives in the town of Beita, in Nablus, West Bank, Palestine. Israeli settlers beat the 46-year-old Palestinian man in the town of Beita, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. Witnesses told Anadolu that a group of Israeli settlers fired stun grenades and tear gas at farmers in the Jabal al-Arma area, forcing them to leave.

Israeli politicians term settler actions 'Jewish terrorism'

Monitoring Desk

JERUSALEM: Israeli politicians and former security officials have denounced violence by extremist Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank as "Jewish terrorism", alleging that perpetrators operate in near-total impunity.

Assaults by violent settlers against Palestinians have persisted for years, often to the indifference of mainstream Israeli society.

But the recent surge has prompted criticism from influential rabbis, settler leaders, and even Israel's military chief Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir, who described the attacks as "morally and ethically unacceptable".

On Sunday, Commanders for Israel's Security an association of 550 retired senior officers, generals, and high-ranking security officials published an open letter urging Zamir to address the "strategic danger" posed to Israel's security by "Jewish terrorism".

Last week, Israel's opposition leader Yair Lapid called on the government to "fight Jewish terrorism by all means".

According to Reem Cohen, a researcher at the Tel Aviv-based Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), "there has been an increase in acts of Jewish terrorism since the start of the war with Iran", along with a rise in "the severity of the acts".

In an interview, Cohen, who authored a report on the issue in January, denounced the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators.

"The Israeli government and security forces... have not responded with determination," Cohen wrote in his report.

One of the first measures taken by Defence Minister Israel Katz upon assuming office in 2024 was to cancel administrative detention a form of virtually unlimited custody for Israeli suspects of violent crimes in occupied West Bank.

French-owned CMA CGM container ship passes Strait of Hormuz, data shows

Monitoring Desk

PARIS: A container ship belonging to French shipping group CMA CGM has passed through the Strait of Hormuz, MarineTraffic vessel tracking data shows, in a sign that Iran may not consider France a hostile nation. The Malta-flagged Kribi, owned by CMA CGM, crossed the Strait. It is the first French-owned vessel to make it through the channel since U.S.-Israeli attacks began on Iran at the end of February. Until the war led to the effective closure of the Strait, it was the route for about a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies. It was not immediately clear how the vessel, which the data shows is sailing south along the coast of Oman, secured safe passage. CMA CGM did not respond to a request for comment. President Emmanuel Macron's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on whether his government had brokered the ships' passage.

Trump fires Pam Bondi as attorney general

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump ousted US Attorney General Pam Bondi on Thursday after mounting frustration with her performance, especially over the release of files on late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Trump also felt Bondi was not moving quickly enough to prosecute critics and adversaries whom he wanted to face criminal charges, according to sources. Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche, a former personal lawyer to Trump, will lead the Justice Department temporarily, Trump said in a social media post.

In the post, Trump praised Bondi as a "Great American Patriot and a loyal friend" who had overseen a "massive crackdown in Crime".

Bondi will soon move to a job in the private sector, Trump said.

Blanche thanked Trump and praised Bondi in a social media post. "We will continue backing the blue, enforcing the law, and doing everything in our power to keep America safe," he said.

During her tenure as the top US law enforcement official, Bondi was a combative champion of Trumps agenda and dismantled the Justice Departments longstanding tradition of independence from the White House in its investigations.

But it was repeated criticism over the Epstein files, including from Trump allies and some Republican lawmakers, that came to dominate her tenure. Bondi was accused of covering up or mismanaging the release of records on the DOJs sex-trafficking investigations into Epstein, a financier who cultivated ties with wealthy and powerful figures.

Trump informed Bondi at a White House meeting on Wednesday that he was looking to replace her as attorney general, according to a source familiar with the matter.

Trump told Bondi multiple times over the past several months that he was unhappy with her performance, a senior White House official said.

The official said Trump has contemplated replacing her with Lee Zeldin, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, but has also discussed other candidates.

Bondi spent much of Wednesday with Trump, riding with him to the US Supreme Court in the morning, attending an Easter lunch where he spoke and later watching his address to the nation on the Iran war. At the Supreme Court, Trump watched as one of Bondi's top officials, Solicitor General D. John Sauer, was grilled by justices about the administration's attempt to limit birthright citizenship.

World food price rise set to continue if Iran war lasts, FAO says

Monitoring Desk

PARIS: World food prices climbed to their highest level since September last year and could rise further if the Middle East conflict that pushed up energy prices continues, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization said on Friday.

"Price rises since the conflict began have been modest, driven mainly by higher oil prices and cushioned by ample global cereal supplies," FAO Chief Economist Maximo Torero said in a statement.

But if the conflict lasts over 40 days and input costs remain high, farmers may reduce inputs, plant less, or switch crops to less intensive fertiliser crops, he said.

"Those choices will hit future yields and shape our food supply and commodity prices for the rest of this year and all of the next," he added.

The FAO Food Price Index, which measures changes in a basket of globally traded food commodities, rose by 2.4% from its revised February level. It is 1% above its value a year ago, although nearly 20% below its March 2022 peak, reached after the start of the war in Ukraine.

The cereal price index increased by 1.5% from the previous month, led by a 4.3% increase in international wheat prices due to worsening crop prospects in the U.S. and expectations of lower plantings in Australia due to higher fertiliser costs.

Global maize prices edged up as ample global supply offset concerns over fertiliser costs, and indirect support from greater ethanol demand prospects linked to higher energy prices.

Rice prices dropped 3.0% due to harvest timing and weaker import demand.

Vegetable oil prices increased 5.1%, marking the third consecutive monthly rise. Higher quotations for palm, soy, sunflower, and rapeseed oil reflected the impact of rising global energy prices and expectations of stronger biofuel demand. Palm oil prices reached their highest level since mid-2022.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA

GOB The EXECUTIVE ENGINEER-BUILDINGS, CWPP&H DEPARTMENT DISTRICT DERA BUGTI invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2026 based on Composite schedule rates 2026 on Percentage Rates. **Tender Fee 2000 PKR and Bid Security 2% for each work**

S. No	TSE Number	Name of Work's	Last Date and Time of Bid Submission	Tender Opening	Estimated Cost
1	TSE-2627091200463	CONSTRUCTION OF DISTRICT EMERGENCY OPRATION CENTER (DEOC) AT DC OFFICE BAIKER	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	14,427,861
2	TSE-2627091200453	REPAIE & REHABILITATION OF BHU SHAMOOL DISTRICT UPPER DERA BUGTI	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	9,950,717
3	TSE-2627091200443	REPAIR AND REHABILITATION OF BHU SHAM KHAIRAN UPPER DERA BUGTI.	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	9,950,634
4	TSE-2627091200433	REPAIR AND REHABILITATION OF BHU KILLI PIYARA UPPER DERA BUGTI 7000 REPAIR WORKS,BOUNDARY WALL TOILET ELECTRIFICATION, PLUMBING, SOCKAGE PIT & TOUGH PAVER WORKS	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	9,950,250
5	TSE-2627091200423	REPAIE & REHABILITATION OF BHU KALERA DISTRICT UPPER DERA BUGTI	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	9,950,717
6	TSE-2627091200363	REPAIE & REHABILITATION OF BHU JOURAK DISTRICT UPPER DERA BUGTI	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	5,970,151
7	TSE-2627091200343	COMPLETION OF REMAINING WORKS FOR RHC PIRKOH UPPER DERA BUGTI	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	14,925,751
8	TSE-2627091200333	REPAIR & IMPROVEMENT OF RHC SARNAIN THROGH PEPAIR WORK, WATER SUPPPLY SYSTERM TUFF TILES AND CERAMIC WORK S	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	24,290,991
9	TSE-2627091200303	CONSTRUCTION OF LIBRARY AT MIR GHULAM QADIR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL BAIKER	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	8,336,207
10	TSE-2627091200233	CONSTRUCTION OF GENERAL PUBLIC TOILETS (2 MALE & 2 FOR FEMAIL) WAITING AREA FOR DRIVERS & PARKING AREA MIR GHULAM QADIR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL BAIKER.	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	5,970,399
11	TSE-2627091200223	REHABILITATION OF GOVT BOYS HIGH SCHOOL LUNDRA (BEMIS 08212)	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	14,249,183
12	TSE-2627091200163	RENOVATION OF GBPS SHAH ALI (BEMIS 08264)	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	11,444,000
13	TSE-2627091200113	Construction of Tuff Pavers, Boundary Wall, Parking shade, Entry Gate, Kitchen, Toilets (2x) & Floor Tiles for Treasury Office Baiker, Upper Dera Bugti	19 October,2026 12:00 PM	01:00 PM	25,798,184

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules – 2014. **Eligibility of Bidders:** Eligibility Criteria for bidders may be seen in the Bidding Documents **Bidding Procedure:** Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure (TSE-2627091200463, TSE-2627091200453, TSE-2627091200443, TSE-2627091200433, TSE-2627091200423, TSE-2627091200363, TSE-2627091200343, TSE-2627091200333, TSE-2627091200303, TSE-2627091200233, TSE-2627091200223, TSE-2627091200163, TSE-2627091200113) **Tender Documents:** The Bidding document can be downloaded from www.bppra.gob.pk (free of cost) and the same can also be obtained from the office of the under-signed upon payment of prescribed tender fee. **Address:** Mian Road, Dera Bugti **Phone no:** 0835410162 **Fax no:** 0835410562 **Email:** Mohammadejaz0266@gmail.com

Executive Engineer-(Building)
CWPP&H Department
District Dera Bugti.

DPRQ/PRQ No.1660/02-10-2026

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Pakistan, Italy explore new avenues for defence, security cooperation

Khawaja Asif, Crosetto highlight dialogue, de-escalation in Rome talks

ROME, (APP): Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Friday held bilateral talks with Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto here, with the two sides reviewing defence, military and security cooperation and discussing ways to broaden future engagement.
The meeting took place at the Palazzo Aeronautica, where the defence minister was received by Italian Defence Minister Crosetto. An Italian Armed Forces contingent presented a guard of honour, while military bands performed the national anthems of Pakistan and Italy. The two ministers also visited the Air Force Museum at the venue, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs news release said.
The discussions covered the wider spectrum of bilateral defence and security cooperation. The two ministers reaffirmed their intention to deepen and diversify exchanges and discussed maintaining close contacts on regional peace and security, support for United Nations peacekeeping missions and cooperation against terrorism.
The meeting also included an exchange on major international crisis scenarios, with particular attention to the Middle East and efforts to promote de-escalation and security for navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. Crosetto said the two sides discussed the importance of dialogue and ongoing diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving outstanding issues and supporting long-term stability.
Khawaja Asif invited Minister Crosetto to visit Pakistan for bilateral consultations. The Italian defence minister accepted the invitation. The two ministers had previously met on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference in February 2026. During his visit, the defence minister also took part in a series of engagements arranged by the Embassy of Pakistan in Rome. He gave interviews to Italian broadcaster TGl and newspaper Corriere della Sera, followed by an hour-long question-and-answer session with representatives of Italian print, electronic and online media. Representatives of Italy's Rai network, international and Pakistani ethnic media, as well as journalists from organisations including the Associated Press, Al Jazeera, Rome Press Club, ANSA and Adnkronos, attended the embassy-hosted interaction. Think tanks and academic institutions were also represented, including the Italian Institute for Asia, the Center for International Studies, and students and graduates from LUISS and La Sapienza universities.
Defence Minister Khawaja Asif used the engagements to present Pakistan's positions on diplomacy and dialogue, the Indus Waters Treaty, cross-border terrorism and the May 2025 conflict with India. Those descriptions reflect the Pakistani government's stated position.



ROME: Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif holds bilateral talks with Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railway Hanif Abbasi calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

President lauds security forces for killing 7 terrorists in North Waziristan

Says efforts of the security forces to completely eradicate terrorism and establish lasting peace under the Azm-e-Istehkam initiative are commendable

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday commended the security forces for carrying out successful intelligence-based operation against the Fitna al-Khawarij terrorists in Eidak area of North Waziristan. In a statement, the president appreciated the professional capabilities of the security forces for killing seven terrorists in the operation.
"The efforts of the security forces to completely eradicate terrorism and establish lasting peace under the Azm-e-Istehkam initiative are commendable," the president added.

Gilani underscores importance of constructive diplomacy, peaceful resolution of disputes

Appreciates Australia's contribution to Pakistan's development

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani Friday called for further strengthening Pakistan-Australia relations through enhanced parliamentary exchanges, trade and investment, education, defence cooperation and people-to-people contacts.
He expressed these views during a meeting with Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Timothy Kane, at Parliament House, Islamabad. Chairman Gilani said Pakistan highly values its longstanding and cordial relations with Australia, underscoring the shared democratic values, Commonwealth traditions, bicameral parliamentary systems and strong people-to-people linkages between the two countries.
Gilani appreciated Australia's contribution to Pakistan's development, particularly in education and human resource development, and acknowledged the valuable contribution of the Pakistani diaspora to Australia's social and economic development.
The Chairman briefed the Australian High Commissioner on the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference (ISC), of which he is the Founding Chairman. He said the first ISC was held in Pakistan, the second in Cambodia, while the third conference is scheduled to be held in Indonesia in February 2027.



ISLAMABAD: Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Timothy Kane called on Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani

Govt taking effective steps to facilitate business community: PM Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday held a meeting regarding regulatory reforms and to review the measures taken to facilitate business activities, promote investment and make the regulatory system more effective, transparent and business-friendly.
The Prime Minister said that regulatory reforms are indispensable for facilitating business activities and promoting investment.
"The government is taking effective steps to facilitate the business community and eliminate unnecessary regulations," he said adding, Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) has been modernized through reforms and reforms should be brought in other regulatory institutions in the same manner.
The Prime Minister directed that a regulatory registry be established so that all the regulatory requirements and rules and regulations existing in the country could be compiled under a comprehensive system. He said, "The Ease of Doing Business Act should be implemented across the country so that there is harmony in the regulatory system in all provinces and business people are provided equal facilities." He ordered that third-party validation of these reforms should also be conducted to assess their impact and effectiveness so that the practical results of the reforms could be impartially assessed.
The Prime Minister said, "ease of doing business is of fundamental importance for the promotion of investment. The desired goals of domestic and foreign investment cannot be achieved without providing a conducive and easy business environment to investors."
He directed that the regulatory reforms carried out by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) should be effectively highlighted so that the business community was aware of these reforms and could benefit from them to the fullest.
He said that a delegation from SIFC should visit all the provinces and take the provincial governments into confidence about the process of regulatory reforms, so as to create harmony in the business facilitation and regulatory system across the country.
The Prime Minister directed Adviser on Industries Haroon Akhtar Khan to lead the delegation for visits to the provinces and ensure effective coordination with the provincial governments regarding regulatory reforms.
He asked all ministries and divisions to ensure timely implementation of the reforms approved by the cabinet. He directed SIFC and the Chief Secretary Punjab to complete the process of merging 'eBiz Punjab' and 'BFC Islamabad' by March 2027.
The Prime Minister emphasized that the reforms should result in tangible benefits for businesses and directed SIFC to actively collaborate with the private sector and ensure that the facilities provided are effectively communicated and utilized.



QUETTA: Provincial Ministers Mir Asim Kurd Gellu, Noor Muhammad Dummar, Member of Provincial Assembly Zarak Khan Mandokhel and Parliamentary Secretary Muhammad Khan Lehri called on Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

Stronger Pak-Russia cooperation vital for regional stability: Leghari

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Energy and co-chair of the Pakistan-Russia Intergovernmental Commission Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari has said Pakistan has significant potential and a strong appetite to expand cooperation with Russia in key sectors, including energy, agriculture, food security, tourism and information technology, while stressing that closer bilateral engagement is important for regional peace, security and economic growth.
Sardar Leghari said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had consistently availed opportunities to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin on international platforms, reflecting the leaderships' interest in strengthening bilateral relations.
He said the Pakistan-Russia Intergovernmental Commission, which he co-chairs with Russian Energy Minister Sergei Tsiviley, provided an important institutional mechanism for advancing cooperation across a broad range of areas.
Leghari highlighted the considerable untapped potential between the two countries.

General allegations, mere oral assertions could not shift initial burden of proof to opposite party: Supreme Court

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Supreme Court has held that a party alleging fraud, forgery or misrepresentation in a registered sale deed is required to establish the allegation through clear and reliable evidence, and that mere general allegations or denial of a registered document does not shift the initial burden of proof to the other party.
A two-member bench comprising Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan gave the ruling while deciding CPLA No.4211/2023. The court converted the petition into an appeal and allowed it, setting aside the judgments of the Lahore High Court and appellate court and restoring the trial court's decision. The court observed that under Article 117 of the Qanun-e-Shahadat Order, 1984, the burden of proving a fact lies upon the person who asserts its existence for determination of a legal right or liability. It clarified that a party alleging fraud, forgery or misrepresentation must prove the allegation through clear and convincing evidence.
General allegations and mere oral assertions could not shift the initial burden of proof to the opposite party. The court further held that even a mere denial by the signatory of a registered sale deed was insufficient to shift the burden of proof onto the party seeking benefit from the registered document. In the instant case, the plaintiffs failed to produce reliable evidence establishing fraud, forgery or misrepresentation in the preparation of the registered sale deed dated August 21, 2000. In contrast, the petitioner produced both attesting witnesses to the sale deed before the court, whose testimony was found consistent and reliable.

Four Pakistani crew members of hijacked MV Honour 25 retrieved safely: Dar

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Four of the ten Pakistani crew members affected by the hijacking of MV Honour 25 off the coast of Somalia have been safely retrieved and are scheduled to arrive in Karachi on Saturday (October 3), Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar said on Friday.
In a post on social media platform X, the Deputy Prime Minister said the safe retrieval of the four crew members had been made possible following sustained efforts by the Foreign Office and Pakistan's Embassy in Djibouti. The four crew members are Yasir Khan, Aqeel Khan, Amin bin Shams and Usman Ghani.
The deputy prime minister said the mortal remains of three Pakistani crew members who lost their lives in the incident were also being repatriated to Pakistan.
The deceased were identified as Rafi Ullah Khan, Syed Kashif Umer and Mahmood Ahmed Ansari.
He said all necessary legal and other formalities were being fast-tracked to expedite the repatriation process. The deputy PM expressed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families, saying they were going through a deeply painful time.
He said three other Pakistani crew members, Imran Ali, Yasin Muhammad and Syed Yousuf Hussain, continued to remain aboard the vessel along with the Captain.
He said Pakistan was actively coordinating with friendly countries to facilitate their safe extraction and earliest possible return to the country.
The deputy PM said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, remained fully seized of the matter and was continuously making every effort to ensure the return of all Pakistani nationals, including the bodies of the deceased, at the earliest.
He said the government would continue extending all possible support to the affected families.

IHC to hear PTI founder, Bushra Bibi's £190m case appeals on Oct 5

ISLAMABAD, (APP): In a significant development in the 190 million pound case, the Islamabad High Court has fixed the appeals of the PTI founder and Bushra Bibi for hearing on October 5.
Chief Justice Sardar Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif will hear the appeals.
The court has sought final arguments from the counsel for the PTI founder and Bushra Bibi.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, meeting with British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott, at the Finance Division to discuss economic reforms, trade, investment and Pakistan-UK relations.

Mental health essential component of overall health: Dr Luo Dapeng

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Pakistan's National Mental Health Policy will provide an opportunity to expand mental health support to more than 32 million people in need of care.
Speakers said this while addressing the closing session of the two-day Global Mental Health Summit on Friday.
WHO Representative in Pakistan Dr Luo Dapeng said the organization would continue to support Pakistan in reaching families with mental health services, stressing that mental health was an essential component of overall health. "Pakistan's National Mental Health Policy is an opportunity to reach over 32 million persons who need mental health support. WHO stands with Pakistan to reach every family, because there is no health without mental health," Dr Luo said. The two-day Global Mental Health Summit, held in Islamabad from October 1-2, brought together mental health experts, policymakers, academics and representatives of national and international organizations to discuss evidence-based approaches to strengthening mental health services.
The summit followed the launch of Pakistan's National Mental Health Policy 2026-2035, which aims to expand access to mental health care through stronger services and greater emphasis on prevention, early identification and community-based support.

Pakistan, China vows to further strengthen collaboration in healthcare, medical education sectors

BEIJING, (APP): Two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on medical education cooperation and international youth exchange between China and Pakistan were signed on September 30 at Riphah International University, as the Pakistan Chapter of the China Pakistan Medical Association (CPMA) and the China–Pakistan Youth Volunteer Services Team Center were launched.
The agreements recognize the friendship and all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between China and Pakistan, and commemorate the 77th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. Under the medical cooperation track, Riphah International University and the China Pakistan Medical Association signed an MoU providing for cooperation in medical education, medical research, clinical and professional training, and international exchange, aimed at further strengthening bilateral collaboration in the healthcare and medical education sectors.
In parallel, a second track of cooperation was opened between Riphah International University and the Shandong Tongshan Children Welfare and Development Center, covering culture, arts, education and international youth exchange, a reflection of the growing people-to-people dimension of China–Pakistan relations, in which youth exchange and cultural engagement are seen as important pillars of long-term friendship, CEN reported on Friday.



New York Governor Kathy Hochul and New York Attorney General Letitia James attend a press conference regarding an investigation into alleged sexual assault at Cornell University, in New York City, US

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