

US needs Pakistan, Rubio tells India

United States (US) Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Wednesday that Washington needed to maintain relations with nuclear-armed Pakistan despite some policy differences, saying engagement with Islamabad could help address regional security concerns.

The US has long maintained security and diplomatic ties with both Pakistan and India, whose relations remain strained mainly over the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir and allegations of fanning militancy on the other's land. In 2025, Rubio, who was then a senator, had also pledged to introduce legislation to cut US security assistance to Pakistan if it sponsored terrorism against India.

The US secretary of state is currently visiting India for talks aimed at deepening cooperation between Washington and New Delhi, with discussions expected to focus on defense, trade, technology and regional security as the United States seeks to strengthen its partnership with

India while also managing relations with other South Asian nations.

"In the case of Pakistan, it's a country that we have to have a relationship with. It's a country that possesses nuclear weapons. It's a country that, from a geographic standpoint, we need to be able to interact with them in much the same way as the government of India has to have and has a relationship and meets with leaders from Iran," Rubio said in an interview with India's News 18 broadcaster.

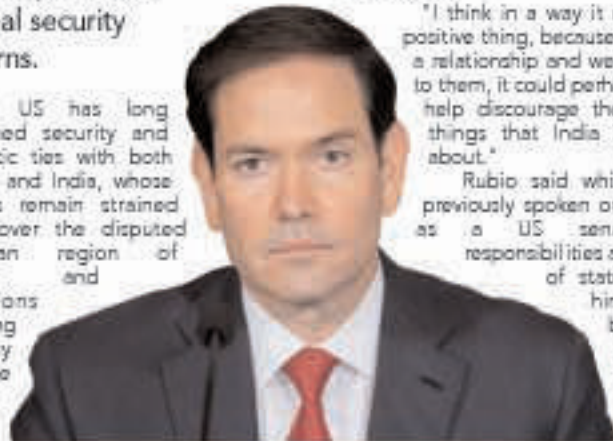
"I think in a way it could be a positive thing, because if we have a relationship and we can speak to them, it could perhaps help us help discourage the kinds of things that India is worried about."

Rubio said while he had previously spoken on the issue as a US senator, his responsibilities as secretary of state required him to balance the broader US foreign policy

considerations.

"We're against terrorism anywhere in the world. We're against anybody who sponsors terrorism," he said.

"In my new role, I'm no longer a senator, I'm the secretary of state. I have to manage the foreign policy of the United States, and that does require us to have relationships with countries, including those that we may have some disagreements with." NEWS DESK



Pakistan, Qatar, Turkiye, Indonesia sign 'Badr' pact

The pact aims at expanding cooperation in defence production, capability building & training

Pakistan, Qatar, Turkiye and Indonesia on Wednesday signed a multilateral pact to promote cooperation in defence production and capabilities, the Turkish defence ministry said.

The Foreign Office has yet to comment on the signing of the defence pact.

According to the Turkish ministry, the signing took place in Qatar, with ministers of the four countries attending the ceremony. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, who was visible in pictures shared by the ministry, signed on behalf of Pakistan.

Reuters quoted the Turkish ministry as saying that the pact, titled 'Badr Memorandum of Understanding', was aimed at defence cooperation and strengthening defensive capabilities.

"The agreement holds substantial economic importance," it said, adding the accord sought to foster cooperation in military production, boost military capabilities, and help collaboration



in technical military training, research and development.

"By leveraging the unique military production capabilities of each country, the initiative will facilitate cooperation and integration, enhance defence industrial capacities, and enable the fulfilment of the needs of allied and friendly nations," it added.

Turkish Defence Minister Yaşar Güler, Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman, and Indonesia's Deputy Minister of Defence Yusuf Jauhari were the other signatories. Heluk Görgün, who heads Türkiye's Secretariat of Defence Industries, was also present on the occasion. Görgün said in a statement that

the accord formed the foundation of a "strategic cooperation" to develop joint production and technology.

"Technology sharing, joint development and strengthening domestic production capabilities lie at the heart of sustainable defence industry. As Türkiye, we value partnerships that go beyond off-the-shelf procurement models, that foster the development of a nation's own human capital and industrial infrastructure," Görgün said.

"We believe that the Badr Memorandum of Understanding will contribute to transforming the complementary capabilities of Qatar, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Türkiye into concrete projects," he added.

Pakistan has strong brotherly and historic ties with the three countries, with intense diplomatic engagement seen in recent months with Qatar and Türkiye particularly.

Pakistan and Türkiye, along with Saudi Arabia, are members of the Mideast Defence Alliance, under which they are to treat an attack against any of them as an attack against all. Qatar had welcomed that pact as cooperation aimed at regional security and stability.

Islamabad and Doha have remained engaged as mediators in the US-Iran war. Meanwhile, Pakistan and Türkiye are part of the Regional Four (R4) Group along with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which emerged in March and has met several times since then. NEWS DESK

Murad directs KFH security overhaul

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Wednesday ordered comprehensive security, administrative and infrastructure reforms at Karachi Fish Harbour to improve law and order, regulate commercial activities, prevent congestion and strengthen transparency in seafood handling and exports.

Chairing a meeting at CM House, the chief minister directed the relevant departments to ensure that the harbour operated as a secure and efficient facility serving fishermen, legitimate seafood businesses and Sindh's fisheries export sector.

The meeting was informed that Karachi Fish Harbour, constructed by the federal government in 1959 over 84 acres, was transferred to Sindh in 1974. The Karachi Fisheries Harbour Authority (KFHA) was established in 1984 to oversee its management and rehabilitation.

Approximately 20,000 people, including fishermen, auction agents, labourers, transporters, seafood processors and foreign nationals, enter the harbour daily.

The meeting reviewed congestion, unauthorized occupation of roads and disputes arising from fish unloading and auctions conducted outside designated areas. A firing incident on September 8, 2026, reportedly linked to a dispute over placing fish catches on a road, left one person dead and six injured.

Murad directed the authorities to ensure that fish unloading, auctions and related commercial activities took place in designated areas, keeping roads and access routes clear. He also instructed the home minister to strengthen security and pursue the establishment of a dedicated police station at the harbour in consultation with the Fisheries Department.

To improve access control, the chief minister ordered an upgraded management information system featuring RFID-based

harbour-user cards, NADRA Verisys verification, a mobile application and integration with the Crime Record Management System (CRMS).

According to the briefing, 5,196 boats were registered with the authority, which processes an average of 1,450 registrations and renewals annually. Since 2001, it has issued 170,000 computerised cards to harbour users, including 155,000 crew cards.

The meeting reviewed an electricity billing dispute raised by the Fishermen's Cooperative Society, which reported that its meter had been removed despite the issuance of a Rs5.7 million bill. The chief minister directed the authorities to arrange a separate electricity connection and ensure proper metering and billing. He tasked Fisheries Minister Muhammad Ali Malkani with resolving the issue.

Murad also directed the relevant authorities to examine the restoration of the harbour's cold storage facility to improve seafood preservation and handling.

The meeting discussed proposals concerning the removal of hotels, construction of a new auction hall at K-6 and allocation of designated space for fishmongers. The chief minister directed the fisheries minister to develop appropriate arrangements to reduce congestion, facilitate legitimate businesses and prevent disputes over roads and common areas.

The chief minister called for stricter monitoring of seafood exporters operating outside the harbour to ensure that export activities were properly

documented and accurately reflected in official records.

The meeting also examined concerns about unauthorised fish godowns allegedly affecting the Fishermen's Cooperative Society's revenue, as well as discrepancies in recorded weights in traceability documents and export claims.

Murad directed the authorities to investigate these issues and take action under the applicable rules to prevent revenue losses, improve traceability and strengthen accountability and transparency in seafood handling and exports.

The meeting also discussed financial assistance for completing K-1 and a proposal for the provincial government to take over Koring Harbour. The chief minister asked the fisheries minister to submit proposals on the grant and the harbour's takeover. NEWS DESK



PRIME MINISTER SHEHBAZ SHARIF SAYS WATER IS 'RED LINE'

Pak-Maldives agree \$200m trade

Sign 20 MoUs to strengthen bilateral ties across multiple sectors

Maldives president urges revival of SAARC regional summit stalled since 2014 amid tensions

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday announced that Pakistan and the Maldives had agreed to increase the volume of their bilateral trade from around \$13.9 million to \$200 million within the next two years, opening new avenues of shared prosperity for the peoples of the two countries.

Addressing a joint press stakeout alongside Maldivian President Dr Mohamed Muizzu, the prime minister said the existing trade volume represented only a fraction of the economic potential of the two brotherly countries.

Earlier the two sides also signed 20 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and agreements to strengthen



cooperation in multiple sectors.

PM Shehbaz Sharif said both sides would make joint efforts to achieve the ambitious target through enhanced economic cooperation and the effective implementation of agreements signed during the visit.

The prime minister said the 20 MoUs and agreements covered important areas of bilateral cooperation and assured that he would personally work with the Maldivian president to ensure their timely implementation.

Welcoming the Maldivian president to Pakistan on his first visit to the country in 11 years, the prime minister said the visit coincided with the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

He said the two sides had held

productive discussions on trade, investment, strategic defence cooperation, education, health, policing and capacity building, besides exchanging views on regional and international issues.

He noted that many Maldivian students had received education at Pakistani universities and colleges, particularly in the health sector. Around 250 Pakistani doctors, along with paramedical staff, were serving in the Maldives, he added, expressing Pakistan's willingness to expend medical and professional support according to the country's requirements.

As part of environmental cooperation, Pakistan would provide 100,000 olive cuttings and 100,000 seeds of different plant species to support the

Maldives' initiative to plant five million trees, the prime minister announced.

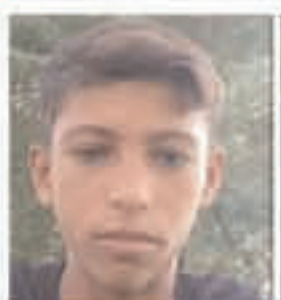
On regional and international matters, the prime minister appreciated the Maldives' steadfast support for the Palestinian cause.

He reiterated that Jammu and Kashmir remained an internationally recognised dispute, whose just resolution must come in line with UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Prime Minister reiterated that water remained a "red line" for Pakistan, warning that any violation of the Indus Waters Treaty by India would be regarded as an "act of war."

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National



Accused in Multan boy's death killed in encounter



World



Macron rejects claims Muslims behind French riots

Money



UK, Pakistan vow cooperation on development

Sports



Pakistan overtake Australia in ICC ODI rankings

Glamour



Victoria on Harper's school makeup ban

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Websites go dark worldwide as AI exposes critical security flaws

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Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Shrajeel Inam Memon on Wednesday said that anyone found responsible for negligence in the Mir Raza case would be brought to justice. In a statement, Memon said that the Judicial Commission had been constituted in accordance with a decision of the Sindh Cabinet, and its report was presented at the cabinet meeting held on Tuesday.

Negligence in Mir Raza case will not go unpunished: Shrajeel

He said that Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah had constituted a three-member committee comprising senior ministers Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar, Saeed Ghani and Nasir Shah to review the report and brief the cabinet. The recommendations of the Judicial Commission will be implemented to ensure compliance, he added.

Memon said that it would be unfair to hold an entire department responsible for the mistake or negligence of an individual. He pointed out that the Sindh Police had successfully solved several major cases. He said that the incidents of terrorism, targeted killings and extortion had occurred in Karachi, adding that such incidents were not confined to the city but also took place elsewhere in Pakistan and around the world.

The senior minister stressed that the police had a responsibility to conduct transparent investigations and ensure that those responsible were brought to justice. He described the Mir Raza case as a lesson for the police, emphasizing the need for thorough investigations rather than hasty action in the future.

Speaking about transport infrastructure, Memon said that Karachi's Orange Line project was ready, while work on University Road had posed a major challenge during the execution of the Red Line project. He said that commuters were now facing fewer difficulties on University Road, although

encroachment-related issues remained. Work on the Yellow Line project yet to begin, while the second section of Jam Sadiq Bridge will also be completed soon, he added.

Memon said that the Green Line was originally a federal government project that had subsequently been handed over to the Sindh government. Following the transfer, the number of passengers using the service had increased, he claimed.

He said that the Orange Line, Red Line and Yellow Line were projects of the Sindh government. A large number of double-decker buses were also expected to arrive in Karachi in November.

The minister said that sustained efforts were being made to address Karachi's transport challenges and provide citizens with improved commuting facilities.

Highlighting initiatives aimed at improving women's mobility and empowerment, Memon said that Pink Buses were operating to facilitate women's travel, while free Pink Scooters were also being provided to them.

He said that a year ago, only 125 women across Sindh held motorcycle driving licenses. Since then, the number of women applying for motorcycle licenses had risen significantly, with 50,000 applications received and more than 25,000 licenses issued so far.

Commenting on the city's sanitation situation, Memon claimed that approximately 95 percent of Karachi's cleanliness-related problems had been resolved. He acknowledged that Karachi's large size meant further improvements would take time, adding that efforts to improve cleanliness across the city would continue. **NEWS DESK**

Karachi mayor, Japanese consul discuss Hub Canal pumping station

Japanese Consul General Hattori Masaru met Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Wednesday at the head office of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC).

The Mayor welcomed the Japanese delegation. Deputy Consul General of Japan and Managing Director Karachi Water Corporation Ahmed Ali Siddiqui were also present on the occasion.

During the meeting, matters relating to the installation of a pumping station at Hub Canal and areas of mutual cooperation were discussed.

Barister Murtaza said that Japan is one of Pakistan's key partners and a close friend. He appreciated Japan's support for development projects and rehabilitation initiatives in Karachi, particularly in Sindh.

Expressing gratitude to the Japanese government for its cooperation regarding Hub Canal, the Mayor said that bilateral cooperation between the two countries should be further strengthened. He also invited Japanese investors to explore investment opportunities in Karachi. He said that international cooperation plays a significant role in the development of Karachi and the provision of essential facilities to its citizens. Support from friendly countries in development projects can help improve the city's infrastructure and enhance the delivery of public services.

The Mayor expressed hope that the longstanding friendship and mutual cooperation between Pakistan and Japan would continue to grow in the future. He said that Karachi offers extensive investment opportunities and that Japanese investors could play an important role in promoting economic activities by investing in various sectors of the city.

The meeting also included discussions on matters related to the installation of a pumping station at Hub Canal, which is significant for the city's water supply system. Both sides expressed their commitment to further strengthening mutual ties and cooperation. **NEWS DESK**



10 killed in passenger coach crash

At least 10 people lost their lives, and 32 others were critically injured when a passenger coach hit a road divider due to overspeeding in Rajhan on Wednesday morning.

The accident took place near Sitara Pump in Bangla Hidayat on Indus Highway. Soon after receiving the report, Rescue 1122 and police teams rushed to the spot and shifted the dead and injured persons to District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) in Rajanpur, where an emergency was declared.

The doctors at the hospital said six of the injured were in critical condition and four of them have been referred to Rahim Yar Khan. The passenger coach was going from Dera Ghazi Khan (DG Khan) to Karachi. **BP**

Husband held for killing wife

A 21-year-old woman was allegedly murdered by her husband just one and a half months after their love marriage in New Karachi, police said.

The victim, identified as Sawera, was found dead at her husband's house. Her family has accused her husband, Sarfaraz, of being involved in her murder. According to the victim's mother, Zeenat, Sarfaraz was already married before marrying Sawera, making the marriage his second.

Zeenat alleged that other people were also involved in her daughter's murder and called for a thorough investigation into the case. She appealed to Sindh Inspector General of Police Javed Alam Qadhi to ensure protection for her family and bring those responsible to justice.

She also expressed concerns over the investigation, alleging that the police were not investigating the case properly. Zeenat said Sawera was an orphan whom she had raised despite facing severe financial and personal difficulties. She demanded justice for her daughter and punishment for those responsible for her death. Police said the investigation was ongoing and further action would be taken after the DNA report was received. **BP**

Acting Governor Awais calls for review of PPL Head Office relocation

Acting Governor of Sindh Syed Awais Qadir Shah has expressed concern over reports regarding the proposed relocation of Pakistan Petroleum Limited's (PPL) head office and related administrative operations from Karachi to Islamabad.

He emphasised that the administrative, financial, economic and employee-related implications of this important decision must be comprehensively assessed. He said that, Karachi is one of the country's major commercial and industrial centres, offering PPL access to port facilities, business entities, suppliers and technical services. Given the company's gas fields and production activities in Sindh, the potential implications of relocating its head office must be considered on facts and transparency.

The Acting Governor stated that any major administrative decision should prioritise the organisation's operational

requirements, efficient utilisation of financial resources and business continuity. He said the costs associated with relocating offices, staff, records and other administrative operations must also be assessed to determine the potential benefits of the proposed move for the company's performance and financial stability.

He noted that Karachi's port facilities and established business infrastructure play an important role in the transportation of equipment, technical supplies and other essential resources. Therefore, the potential impact of the relocation on supply chains, technical support and relationships with local businesses should not be overlooked.

Highlighting the welfare of employees and their families, the Acting Governor said that consultations with the relevant staff, employee welfare and the retention of the organisation's experienced workforce must be considered before any relocation decision is made. He emphasised that such decisions should be taken through a transparent process and supported by clear administrative justification.

He added that the organisation's financial and administrative interests must remain the foremost consideration in any decision. Making clear information available regarding the benefits, costs and any possible repercussions of the proposed relocation is essential for informed decision-making.

The Acting Governor of Sindh stressed that the option of retaining PPL's head office in Karachi should be given serious consideration. He called for an independent, technical, financial and administrative assessment of the proposed relocation before any final decision is taken. Syed Awais emphasised that the important decisions concerning national institutions should be based on transparency, consultation and long-term institutional interests. **NEWS DESK**



Karachi police chief reviews Shaheen Force performance

Additional Inspector General of Police - Karachi Azad Khan on Wednesday visited Malir District Headquarters to review the deployment and performance of the Shaheen Force and inaugurated a police post in Sohrab Goth.

According to a Karachi Police spokesperson, DIGP East and SSP Malir were also present during the visit, where the SSP Malir briefed the police chief on the force's deployment, performance, patrolling and measures to prevent crime.

Inspecting the control room, Azad Khan described the Shaheen Force as Karachi Police's frontline unit against street crime.

Addressing its personnel, he directed them to maintain physical fitness, discipline and professional competence, follow standard operating procedures (SOPs) and ensure prompt and effective measures to protect citizens.

He announced that the "Shaheen of the Month" award and a cash prize would be given each month to recognize and encourage outstanding performers.

Later, accompanied by DIGP East, the additional IG inaugurated the Zaman Shaheed Police Post near Jamali Bridge in Sohrab Goth. The facility has been established with the support of the Sohrab Goth Builders Community.

Azad Khan said the police post would strengthen police presence in the area, improve response times and help prevent crime.

He added that effective deployment and patrolling by the Shaheen Force would also help protect citizens at locations where traffic congestion made access for police mobile vans difficult.

The ceremony concluded with an exchange of shields among the officers. **NEWS DESK**

KDA offers relief on outstanding dues for auctioned plot

The 1200th meeting of the Governing Body of the Karachi Development Authority (KDA), chaired by Sindh Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, was held at Civic Centre.

The meeting reviewed the Authority's administrative, financial, and development-related affairs in detail. Key matters discussed included the payment of outstanding dues and pensions to retired employees, increasing the Authority's financial resources, removal of encroachments from government land, and digitization of land records.

The Sindh Local Government Minister directed that soft encroachments be removed immediately and a final list be prepared. He further stated that immediate action would be taken against those unlawfully occupying or misusing KDA's welfare plots.

The meeting also decided to grant a 25 percent concession to owners of auctioned plots who pay their outstanding dues in a lump sum. Members of the KDA Governing Body attending the meeting included Ali Ahmed Jan, Member of the Provincial Assembly; Muhammad Yousuf Baloch, Member of

the Provincial Assembly; Dr. Waseem Ahmed Shamshad, Additional Chief Secretary, Local Government; Hassan Naqvi, Commissioner Karachi; Abdul Samad Jamrani, Member Technical; Naveed Anwar Siddiqui, Member Finance; and Fareed Sheikh, Member Administration.

During the meeting, Secretary of the Governing Body and Director General KDA, Zain-ul-Abideen Ansari, briefed the Local Government Minister on the Authority's current financial position and the payment of outstanding dues to retired employees. He stated that clearing the dues of pensioners and retired employees remained one of the Authority's foremost priorities and that effective progress could be achieved with the support of the provincial government.

On this occasion, Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah emphasized that the timely payment of employees' salaries and pensions must be prioritized, as these are their fundamental rights. He observed that employees depend on their pensions and outstanding dues after retirement and, therefore, unnecessary delays in payments must be avoided. He assured the meeting that the Sindh Government would continue to extend its support for the payment of retired employees' outstanding dues. He also stressed the need to develop a

practical and workable strategy to relieve pensioners and retired employees of their financial difficulties.

Regarding the protection of government land and increasing the Authority's revenue, the meeting was informed that KDA intended to take measures to remove illegal occupations from its land and make effective use of available properties. The Local Government Minister directed that all encroachments on the relevant plots be removed before auction and that the plots be offered for auction only after fulfilling all legal and administrative requirements.

He further instructed that the market value of the plots be assessed through an independent third party to ensure fair and transparent valuation. This, he said, would help the Authority obtain better financial

returns from the disposal of government land and strengthen its financial resources. The meeting also discussed a plan to modernize the

Authority's land records in line with contemporary requirements. Director General KDA Zain-ul-Abideen Ansari informed the participants that a plan for digitizing land records had been prepared and that implementation would begin soon. The initiative is expected to improve the security of land records, facilitate access to information, simplify record verification, and enhance transparency in administrative processes.

The meeting concluded with a commitment to undertake coordinated measures to resolve the Authority's financial challenges, safeguard the rights of employees and pensioners, ensure effective management of government land, and improve KDA's overall performance through the use of modern technology. **NEWS DESK**



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PM Shehbaz welcomes Maldives President Dr Muizzu at PM House

President of the Republic of Maldives, Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, on Wednesday was presented with a guard of honour at the Prime Minister's House upon his arrival to meet Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and hold high-level delegation talks.

Prime Minister Shehbaz warmly welcomed the Maldivian president as he arrived at the formal welcome ceremony.

The national anthems of Pakistan and Maldives were played as the two leaders stood at the salute dais.

The smartly-turned out contingent of the Pakistan armed forces presented a guard of honour to the visiting dignitary, which he reviewed.

Following the ceremony, the two leaders introduced their respective delegations before proceeding to one-on-one and delegation-level discussions.

President Muizzu, who arrived here on Tuesday for a three-day state visit along



with First Lady Sajida Mohamed and a high-level delegation comprising cabinet members and senior officials, also planted a sapling in

the lawns of the PM House. This is the first visit by the President of Maldives to Pakistan in eleven years, which shows special signifi-

cance as the two countries commemorate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1966. NEWS DESK

Amir Muqam discusses Afghan refugee issues with UNHCR official

Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, Engineer Amir Muqam, on Wednesday met UNHCR Representative in Pakistan Noriko Takagi to discuss Afghan refugee issues and humanitarian concerns.

The minister welcomed Takagi and congratulated her on taking up her new responsibilities as the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Pakistan.

The meeting was attended by the secretary and additional secretary of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, the Chief Commissioner Afghan Refugees (CCAR), and UNHCR representatives.

During the meeting, Amir Muqam reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to implementing its national laws and policies while taking genuine humanitarian concerns into account, said a press release issued here.

He also appreciated UNHCR's cooperation and support for Pakistan over the past four decades.

Takagi appreciated Pakistan's longstanding hospitality towards Afghan refugees and acknowledged the government's policy framework. She also highlighted concerns about

vulnerable individuals who could face serious risks if returned to their country of origin and called for their cases to be considered carefully.

Responding to these concerns, the minister said cases involving credible threats to life and safety required careful attention. He stressed that such cases should be assessed by the relevant authorities in line with Pakistan's laws, policies, established procedures and applicable international obligations.

He also emphasized the importance of stronger coordination between the government and UNHCR. He said a more structured mechanism could be explored to review particularly sensitive cases within the existing legal and policy framework.

Takagi reaffirmed UNHCR's willingness to continue working with the Pakistani government to address humanitarian and protection concerns through dialogue and cooperation. The meeting concluded with both sides agreeing on the importance of continued engagement and

coordination to address refugee-related issues while respecting Pakistan's laws, government policies and humanitarian responsibilities. NEWS DESK



IHC disposes of plea against NAB remand ordinance

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday observed that courts cannot issue pre-emptive rulings to restrain the enactment of possible future laws.

The court disposed of a constitutional petition challenging the NAB Amendment Ordinance 2024, which had extended the period of physical remand in NAB custody from 14 to 40 days, after declaring the matter infructuous.

In a written judgment, Justice Inaam Ameen Minhas held that the ordinance had ceased to have effect upon the expiry of its statutory period, leaving no live dispute before the court. He observed that examining its constitutionality after its expiry would serve no useful purpose.

The judgment further noted that the petitioner had failed to establish that any proceedings had been initiated against him, or that he had been punished, under the ordinance. The court reiterated that judicial intervention could not be sought to pre-emptively restrain possible future legislation.

The petition challenging the NAB Amendment Ordinance 2024 was accordingly disposed of.

The ordinance, promulgated by the acting president on May 27, 2024, had extended the maximum period of physical remand from 14 to 40 days. However, it was neither extended by Parliament nor converted into a regular Act.

Notices issued: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday issued notices to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the Ministry of Law and other respondents, seeking their replies to a petition challenging the appointments of NAB Prosecutor General Sohail Nasir and Deputy Chairman Ehtesham Qadir.

Justice Umair Majid Malik issued the notices while hearing a petition filed by Dr G.M. Chaudhry, who appeared in person before the court.

During the hearing, the petitioner contended that Sohail Nasir described himself as a former judge, although he had served as an additional judge of the Lahore High Court. He argued that an additional judge could not describe himself as a former judge.

The judge asked whether the petitioner wanted an investigation into the appointments, remarking that the argument had complicated his own case. The petitioner requested that the NAB prosecutor present in the courtroom be served notice, while the court observed that other parties were also involved and had been issued notices.

The petitioner argued that the appointments had been made without advertisement and in violation of Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the NAB Ordinance, 1999.

The court also issued notices to Deputy Chairman NAB Ehtesham Qadir and Prosecutor General NAB Sohail Nasir on separate applications seeking their suspension from work and the production of records relating to their appointments. The hearing was adjourned. In his petition, Dr Chaudhry has sought a declaration that the appointments of the two officials were illegal, unconstitutional and mala fide, alleging violations of the NAB Ordinance, 1999, and a lack of lawful authority for the appointments.

The petitioner claimed that the appointment process lacked transparency, merit and good governance, alleging that the requirements of competitive selection and public advertisement had not been fulfilled.

He has requested the court to set aside both appointments and direct the recovery of salaries, allowances and other benefits received from the public exchequer, with the amount to be recovered in the manner applicable to arrears of land revenue. NEWS DESK

Pakistan, Maldives vow to curb illegal immigration

Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry met with Maldives Interior Minister Ali Ihsan on Wednesday and both have discussed strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation in internal security, law enforcement and efforts to prevent illegal immigration, human trafficking and organised crime.

During the meeting, the two sides held a detailed exchange of views on bilateral relations and ways to expand cooperation between Pakistan and the Maldives.

They discussed promoting mutual assistance to prevent illegal immigration, human trafficking and organised crime, with a focus on closer coordination to address these shared challenges.

Talal Chaudhry said Pakistan attached importance to security cooperation and the exchange of experiences with friendly countries to promote peace and stability in the region.



He said Pakistan wanted to further strengthen bilateral cooperation with the Maldives in internal security and law enforcement.

The minister of state said closer contacts and cooperation between the two countries were necessary to address common challenges, including illegal immigration and human trafficking. Talal Chaudhry also conveyed Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's assurance that Pakistan would extend all possible support to promote bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

He said Pakistan was ready to facilitate efforts aimed at strengthening cooperation in the relevant areas.

During the meeting, Maldives Interior Minister Ali Ihsan said both countries could effectively address the challenges they faced through mutual cooperation and joint efforts. The meeting focused on opportunities to strengthen coordination between the two countries in areas of shared interest, particularly internal security, law enforcement and the prevention of cross-border crimes.

Special Secretary Interior Shoaib Akbar and other relevant officials were also present at the meeting. NEWS DESK

ATC seeks arguments on Swati's acquittal

An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Wednesday sought arguments from the parties on an acquittal application filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senator Azam Swati in the Sangjani rally case against PTI leaders.

ATC Judge Tahir Abbas Supra issued notices on the acquittal application and directed the parties to present their arguments. During the hearing, Azam Swati appeared before the court and filed the application seeking his acquittal in the case. The court adjourned further proceedings until November 12. A case against PTI leaders has been registered at Sangjani Police Station under provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Bail pleas in kidnapping of Chinese nationals: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Wednesday rejected the post-arrest bail applications of four suspects arrested in a case involving the kidnapping of four Chinese nationals from Sector F-10 of the federal capital.

ATC Judge Abul Hasanat Muhammad Zulqarnain announced the decision after hearing arguments from both sides. During the hearing, the prosecutor submitted that the suspects had allegedly kidnapped the Chinese nationals for ransom and demanded payment in Bitcoin. He said the police had conducted an operation and recovered the hostages.

The prosecutor further argued that the suspects were part of an organized gang involved in kidnapping for ransom. After hearing arguments from both sides, the court reserved its verdict and subsequently dismissed the bail applications of all four suspects.

A case has been registered at Shalimar Police Station under the relevant provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act, police said. NEWS DESK

IHC bans shisha cafes until rules framed

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday imposed an interim ban on all shisha cafes operating within the federal capital until relevant rules and regulations are finalized and enforced.

In its detailed written judgment, Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dagar directed law officers to ensure that the process of framing rules for shisha cafes was completed without unnecessary delay. The court ruled that the issuance of no-objection certificates (NOCs) to shisha cafes could not legalize an activity prohibited under the law in the absence of the requisite regulatory framework. It clarified that the ban would also apply to cafes holding previously issued NOCs, which would be deemed withdrawn.

The court directed the chief commissioner, deputy commissioner and inspector general of police to ensure implementation of its order and ordered that copies of the judgment be provided to all relevant authorities.

The judgment observed that no activity harmful to public health should be permitted without an appropriate regulatory framework. It noted that despite an Islamabad High Court order issued in 2022, the relevant authorities had failed to establish a comprehensive regulatory mechanism for shisha cafes.

The court further observed that the federal government had not finalized the proposed Shisha Rules 2023 despite the passage of considerable time. The draft rules had repeatedly been returned to the concerned ministry for revision by the Cabinet Committee for Legislative Cases.

The court said the proceedings had been initiated after repeated judicial extensions and assurances failed to produce a final regulatory framework.

Highlighting the health risks associated with shisha smoking, the judgment noted that both flavoured and plain shisha exposed users to nicotine, carbon monoxide and cancer-causing toxic substances. It added that tobacco smoke also posed serious health risks to children and other vulnerable people in the vicinity.

Referring to World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, the court observed that restrictions on waterpipe smoking were necessary in indoor public places and shopping malls. It noted that water filtration did not eliminate the toxic substances in shisha smoke and that its health risks were scientifically established.

The judgment further stated that the

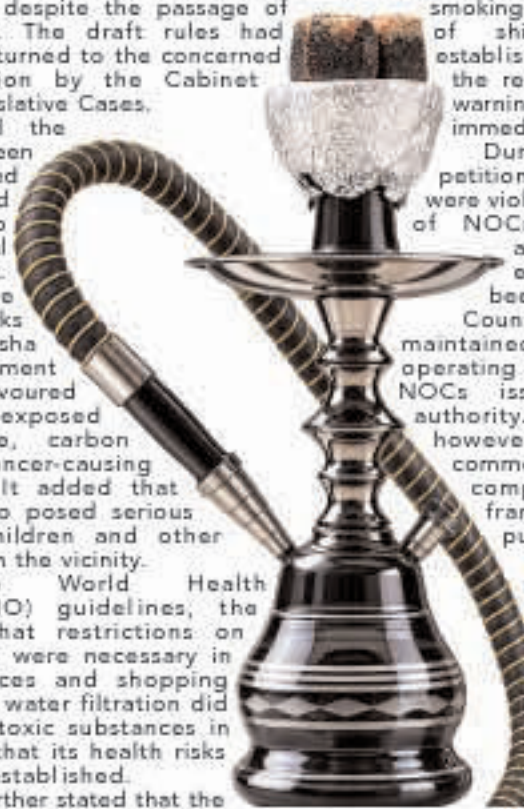
absence of appropriate regulations could not be treated as a license to continue shisha smoking. It directed that the provision of shisha at all commercial establishments remain prohibited until the relevant rules came into force, warning that violations would invite immediate and strict legal action.

During the proceedings, the petitioner argued that shisha cafes were violating the law under the cover of NOCs issued by the district administration and that no effective inquiry or action had been taken despite complaints.

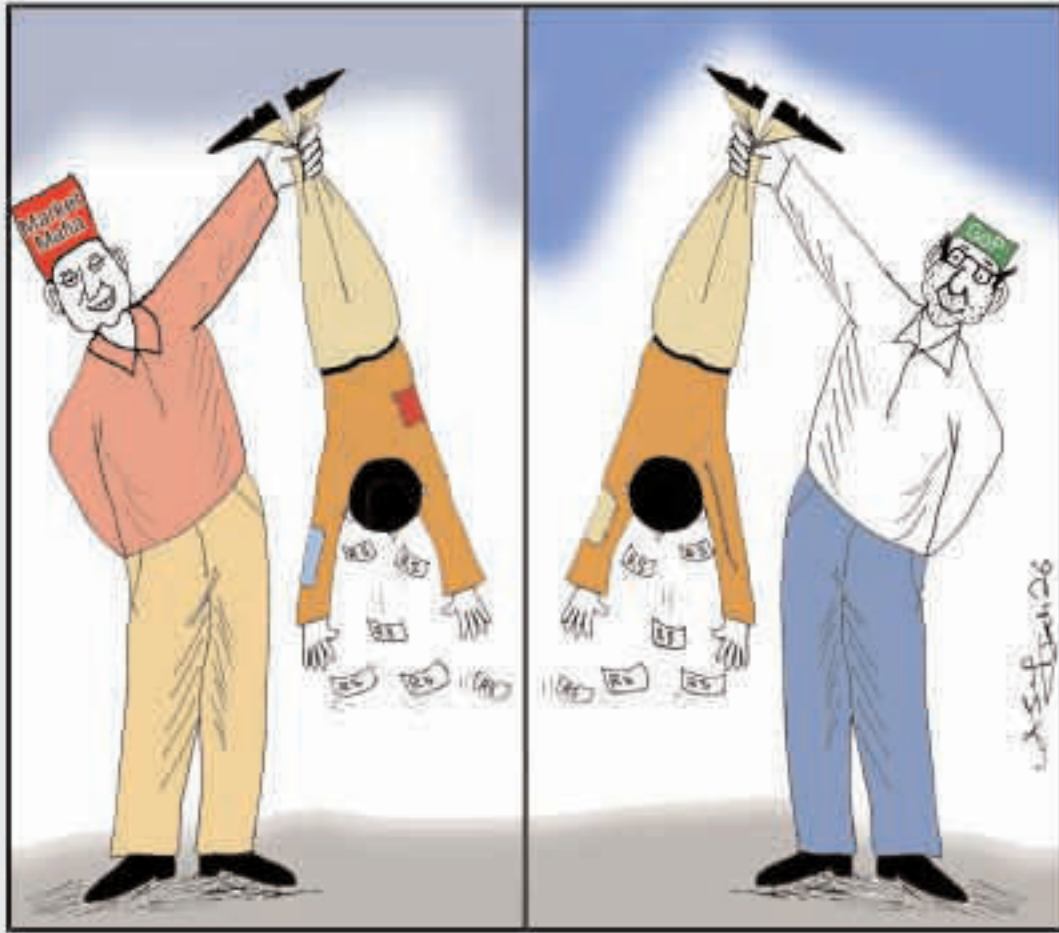
Counsel for cafes and restaurants maintained that their clients were operating legally under permits and NOCs issued by the competent authority. Government lawyers, however, submitted that the commercial use of shisha without a comprehensive regulatory framework posed a serious public health concern.

The court also referred to a 2016 suo motu case in which the Supreme Court had issued directions to the provinces regarding shisha cafes.

The IHC disposed of all petitions concerning shisha cafes with the aforementioned directions. NEWS DESK



EDITORIAL



Pakistan's commitment to Saudi Arabia's security

Pakistan has reaffirmed its commitment to Saudi Arabia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, declaring the security of Islam's two holiest sites in Makkah and Madinah a top priority. Director General Inter-Services Public Relations Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, speaking to Independent Arabia, said Islamabad would continue to provide Riyadh with the support needed to protect its territory and security. His remarks come amid renewed Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia and fears that the conflict could spread across the region. Pakistan's close ties with Saudi Arabia are based on longstanding political, economic and security cooperation. The safety of the Haramain Sharifain holds deep religious significance for Muslims in Pakistan and around the world. Any threat to the holy sites would therefore raise serious concerns far beyond Saudi Arabia's borders. At the same time, protecting these sites requires careful diplomacy and efforts to prevent further escalation.

Pakistan's commitment to Saudi security does not automatically settle the question of direct military involvement in Yemen, where a wider conflict could carry serious regional consequences. Islamabad must protect its strategic partnership with Riyadh while carefully weighing the risks of escalation and the need for a peaceful settlement. Diplomatic engagement should remain the first choice, with any military response guided by clear commitments and a careful assessment of the situation. Chaudhry said the collective deterrence mechanism under the Makkah pact could be activated if diplomatic efforts failed and hostilities intensified. He also indicated that Pakistan was providing Saudi Arabia with necessary military support and remained prepared to assist the kingdom. However, when asked whether Pakistan had received a formal request to support Yemen's internationally recognised government, he said he was unsure. He added that Islamabad would examine any such request before making a decision. Protecting Saudi Arabia and its holy sites is a matter of great importance, but lasting security will depend not only on deterrence but also on preventing a wider war. Pakistan should continue supporting its ally while using its diplomatic influence to encourage restraint and a durable regional peace.

Danish Schools show how education can change lives

The inauguration of a Danish School in Islamabad has brought attention to the role of education in helping children from poor families build better futures. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif became emotional while hearing the stories of students who had overcome hardship to achieve their ambitions. Among them was Irfanullah, from an underdeveloped area of Balochistan, who lost his father at the age of five. Despite financial difficulties, he continued his education after gaining admission to a Danish School, where he received free education, accommodation, books, uniforms and other basic facilities. He was presented at the ceremony as the first Assistant Superintendent of Police and Police Service of Pakistan officer produced by the Danish Schools system. His journey shows how access to education can help children overcome barriers created by poverty and family circumstances. Children from remote areas and low-income families often struggle to continue their studies because their parents cannot afford the costs of education and accommodation.

The Danish Schools initiative, launched in 2010, aims to reduce this gap by providing quality education and residential facilities to talented students from disadvantaged communities. The government has announced plans to expand the network through 27 new schools in different parts of the country, including Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan. The plans also include Rs9.8 billion for 11 new schools in the 2025-26 budget, a tuition-free Danish University in Islamabad and modern laboratories for information technology and artificial intelligence. These proposals could widen access to education, but their success will depend on timely implementation, adequate funding and strong oversight. Building schools alone is not enough. The government must ensure that institutions have qualified teachers, good facilities and a safe learning environment. Admission must also reach deserving children without political favour or discrimination. Education should not depend on a child's birthplace, family income or social connections.

Bypassing the Malacca Strait -Part I

The change in infrastructure poses the potential to split ASEAN and divide its ten members according to a geographical divide. The mainland countries of Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand are becoming increasingly integrated into north-south coordination chains that are anchored in southern China. For these governments, playing host to transit corridors provides great infrastructure investment, revenue from transit, and support from Beijing. The economic future of these states is becoming tied up in the continent.

When talking about the greatest vulnerability of the Indo-Pacific region, the discussion will always be related to the Strait of Malacca. This is because this waterway carries almost 60 percent of the global maritime trade as well as most of China's oil imports. The Malacca dilemma has been identified as a potential problem that might arise during wartime.

New overland infrastructure such as Myanmar's pipelines and Thailand's Landbridge is bypassing the Malacca Strait, reshaping Southeast Asia's geopolitics. By eroding the traditional trade monopoly of maritime states like Singapore and Malaysia, these Chinese-backed projects threaten ASEAN centrality by creating a divide between continental and maritime members. However, relying on sovereign land routes introduces fresh vulnerabilities, merely shifting strategic risks across the Indo-Pacific rather than eliminating them entirely.

When talking about the greatest vulnerability of the Indo-Pacific region, the discussion will always be related to the Strait of Malacca. This is because this waterway carries almost 60 percent of the global maritime trade as well as most of China's oil imports. The Malacca dilemma has been identified as a potential problem that might arise during wartime. In that case, the naval power would block the passage and restrict access to East Asia's energy supply within weeks.

The key transformation occurring in the Southeast Asian region at present does not involve naval power. Rather, it involves a billion-dollar project that aims to get rid of the strait altogether. This project has been launched due to Beijing's security concerns as well as the need for foreign direct investment in mainland Southeast Asia. These overland transport projects have often been celebrated as the victory of economic connectivity, but they have introduced a new element in the geopolitics of the region.

The ultimate effect of bypassing the Malacca Strait lies in the fact that the diplomatic and strategic leverage of maritime Southeast Asia has been severely compromised.

For more than half a century, littoral countries of the strait—Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia—have enjoyed a special geographical advantage. Their monopoly on the major trade route linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans ensured their direct involvement in global trading policy and the security system. Particularly, Singapore has relied on the geographical monopoly of that country as the main principle for its economic success and foreign policy.

Nowadays, the mentioned monopoly is

being undermined due to different overland routes. The most sophisticated one is the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC). The infrastructure corridor, which includes the port of Kyaukphyu in Myanmar's Rakhine State, delivers oil and natural gas from the Indian Ocean to China's landlocked Yunnan Province, bypassing the Strait of Malacca. Despite internal conflict in Myanmar, the port construction proceeds under the 50-year concession granted to the consortium led by Chinese state company CITIC Group. The port is considered the most efficient bypass to the Indian Ocean.

On the other hand, the Thai government has launched the \$28 billion Landbridge project. While abandoning proposals that date back centuries and involve the digging of a canal through the Kra Isthmus, the government is aiming at the construction of deep-sea ports in Ranong, located in the Andaman Sea, and in Chumphon, located in the Gulf of Tonkin. This will be linked by a large highway and rail network for the offloading, transportation, and reloading of cargo containers overland, cutting three to four days from the route around the Malay Peninsula. With bidding set for 2025 and 2026, Bangkok is making efforts to bring in Chinese, American, and Middle Eastern investments into the scheme.

This is in addition to the expansion of the cross-border Eurasian rail systems. Freight railway lines from Kunming to Vientiane and then to Bangkok and beyond into Malaysia are revolutionizing the way high-value, time-critical cargo moves across continental Asia. By moving high value-added freight from shipping ports to transshipment terminals and overland rail, such projects not only augment but also displace the conventional trade routes.

The change in infrastructure poses the potential to split ASEAN and divide its ten members according to a geographical divide. The mainland countries of Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand are becoming increasingly integrated into north-south coordination chains that are anchored in southern China. For these governments, playing host to transit corridors provides great infrastructure investment, revenue from transit, and support from Beijing. The economic future of these states is becoming tied up in the continent.



NISAR KAKAR

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The Flawed Logic Behind Trump's Operation Economic Outcast

On August 19, 2026, President Trump announced the launch of the most crushing economic operation taken against the enemy and threatened Iran with an "Economic D-Day." Following the announcement, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced Operation Economic Outcast against Iran to isolate it economically. Iran has proved to be a strange enemy of the United States, as many American presidents faced the political repercussions of their failed strategies against Iran.

President Carter faced a hostage crisis in 1979, which ultimately resulted in his failure to get reelected as president. Similarly, President Obama's nuclear deal was criticized by Congress, and Benjamin Netanyahu was invited by Congress to argue against the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). In the same manner, President Trump boasted before launching a war against Tehran that the American military might be an overmatch for Iran and Washington would crush Iran's military prowess in no time.

Donald Trump
"Donald Trump" by Gage Skidmore is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

However, the sixth month of the Iran-US war is about to end, and there is no foreseeable end of war except for a disrupted world economy and another military setback for the most powerful army in the world. After the failure of the military campaign against Iran, the new economic war launched by Washington would also fail because it is more of a threat to the credibility of America rather than Iran, as it will fall short of bringing desired political outcomes in Iran.

From Military Campaign to Economic Warfare

The war between Iran and the US-Israeli axis was started with the aim of regime change in Tehran and to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. After weeks of fighting, Pakistan and other Muslim countries, including Turkey and Egypt, brokered a ceasefire between the warring parties. In June, the diplomatic efforts by Pakistan resulted in the "Islamabad MOU," which was seen as the end of the war by the world.

However, due to key unresolved issues such as the future of the Strait of Hormuz, Israel's war in Lebanon, and Iran's nuclear program, the talks could not result in the end of the war. To increase pressure on Iran to accept the American terms for ending the war, Washington has changed its strategy from relying solely on military might to focusing on economic warfare and a naval blockade to cripple the Iranian economy and isolate it.

Current Economic Realities of Iran Under Naval Blockade

The current maximum economic pressure by the Trump administration started against the backdrop of an announcement by Abdolnaser Hemmati, the governor of Iran's Central Bank. He wrote a letter to the Supreme Leader of Iran and informed him about the current situation of the Iranian economy. According to Hemmati, the oil exports of Iran have almost stopped due to a naval blockade by America, and the economic situation is worse than in 2018 when Donald Trump started economic sanctions against Tehran.

For example, in June 2026, Iranian oil exports dropped to their lowest in six years. According to reports from the intelligence firm Kepler, Iranian oil exports were around 2 million barrels per day before the naval blockade, which has been reduced to 300,000 barrels. Tehran was earning around \$6 billion from oil exports, which has

decreased to less than \$800 million.

Economic Warfare as Driver for Further Military Crisis

Operation Economic Outcast is beneficial for Washington, but Tehran considers it a threat, and because of this, Iran would escalate the war to compel America back to a military campaign. By focusing on economic sanctions, America saves the cost of missiles and munitions. For example, one Shahed drone used by Tehran costs \$20,000, while one Patriot interceptor missile of America costs \$4 million.

Moreover, it will reduce risks to American forces, as the US has already lost 13 servicemen, and Washington will not be required to send ground troops to Tehran. However, for Iranian strategic calculations, it leads to a cost disparity, as Iranian missiles and drone attacks have proven costly for America and its allies. For these reasons, Tehran would be more willing to escalate militarily to counter American economic pressure.

Iran has learned from the war that it can outlast American military might, and it retains enough capacity to retaliate using drones and missiles. Therefore, military escalation by Iran can create a compulsion for Washington to resort to a military campaign, which is now the last thing the Trump administration wants because an increasing number of the American people are now questioning the rationale for the current war.

The Limits of Economic Coercion

Additionally, the economic pressure on Iran is aimed at enabling key policy changes conducive to an end to the war. President Masoud Pezeshkian has accepted the economic woes, but the collapse of the Iranian economy as predicted by the Trump administration is not imminent. There are two ways by which Washington can use economic warfare to bring about policy changes in Tehran.

Firstly, there must be an economic incentive along with economic pressure to compel the Iranian government to change its course, as was the case in the JCPOA. Another way to bring about desired changes in Iran's political calculus is to break the Iranian capacity to bear the shocks of maximum economic pressure imposed by

Washington, which would convert economic pain into political pressure. The current American strategy is focused on the second option, but this would not bring fruitful results because Iran has converted its economy into a survival economy.

Crude Oil storage "Crude Oil Storage on Stilts" by A Train is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0.

A national economy collapses if people stop using the national currency, monthly inflation hits 40-50%, and at least 30 percent of the population has zero access to food. However, the Iranian economy is nowhere close to these figures. According to Hadi Khaledzadeh, an economic expert on Iran, the currency devaluation in Iran has a monthly inflation rate of around 5-6 percent, and it is unlikely that inflation will reach the threshold of 40 percent. Similarly, around 10 percent of people in Iran are in extreme poverty, which is not close to the 30 percent figure set by the World Food Program. Based on these estimates, the economic pressure by Washington will certainly make economic matters worse for Iran, but it will fail to bring desired policy outcomes.

The Missing Link in American Strategy

Another drawback of the economic warfare strategy of the Trump administration against Iran is the exclusion of Iran's lifeline, China, from Operation Economic Outcast. Beijing is the major buyer of Iranian oil exports and buys 80% of Iranian oil exports. According to Kepler, Beijing bought 500,000 barrels of oil per day in August 2026 from Iran. Iran has developed a system where sanctioned tankers from Tehran transfer oil to unsanctioned tankers, which transfer it to Beijing.

Additionally, the Trump administration wants good relations with Beijing, and it is uncertain whether Washington would sanction Chinese banks, which are engaged in trade with Tehran. The Chinese government denounced the current economic operation and termed it "unreasonable and illegal." Moreover, Tehran is using the Chinese yuan as an alternative to the US dollar, which is a major hurdle to the effectiveness of US sanctions in isolating Iran.



ARESHA FATIMA BUKHARI

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OPINION

DTM



RAWALPINDI: Vendors selling second-hand warm clothes from handcarts on Jamia Masjid Road. ONLINE

Letters To The EDITOR

Mother tongue education

Aristotle's timeless wisdom, "Well begun is half done," perfectly encapsulates the recent statement of Syed Sander Ali Shah, Minister for Education & Literacy, Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, Government of Sindh, that teachers must teach in the mother language.

What constitutes a "well beginning" in education? As Minister Shah eloquently observed, "Learning for us began from our mother's lap when the first language we heard was our mother tongue. But society expects us to learn the lingua franca to get ahead in life. It is like taking dictation from colonial culture."

The logic is compelling: if a child's schooling continues in the very language he first heard in his mother's lap, comprehension becomes immediate. No mental translation is required. When the beginning is right, half the battle of learning is already won.

This is not merely an emotional appeal; it is empirically validated.

According to UNESCO (2008), 40% of children globally lack access to education in a language they speak or understand. Research shows that children instructed in their mother tongue during the early grades exhibit a 50% lower dropout rate and acquire a second language six times faster.

Similarly, the World Bank's landmark report, *Loud and Clear* (2021), reveals that 37% of students in low and middle-income countries are taught in a language they do not comprehend. The introduction of even one local language as a medium of instruction can improve learning outcomes by 20 to 30%.

Pakistan's context is particularly alarming. Despite being home to 72 languages, our formal education system utilizes only two or three. Research by the British Council Pakistan indicates that in regions of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where Sindhi and Pashto were retained as the medium of instruction at the primary level, proficiency even in English improved. Moreover, teachers demonstrate three times more confidence when teaching in their mother tongue.

Yet, we persist with a flawed beginning. We impose English for 18 years, and our students remain unable to construct two coherent sentences.

Minister Shah was therefore justified in terming the Single National Curriculum as "curriculum martial law" and in directing private schools to strictly use Sindhi

Textbook Board-approved Urdu and Sindhi textbooks and to appoint trained language teachers.
ATIYA ASLAM
Lahore

The moment frustration met patience

I want to express my appreciation for Pakistan's role in promoting dialogue between Iran and the United States at a time of serious regional tensions. When countries remain locked in conflict, even a small opportunity for communication can help prevent further escalation. Pakistan's ability to maintain relations with both sides reflects the importance of balanced diplomacy and patient engagement.

Diplomacy is rarely an easy process. Differences in political interests, security concerns and national priorities can make negotiations difficult. When one side becomes frustrated or decides to step away from discussions, the chances of reaching an agreement may appear slim. At such moments, the role of mediators becomes especially important. Rather than allowing disagreements to end communication, they must encourage both sides to remain engaged and explore possible solutions.

Pakistan's reported involvement in diplomatic efforts with Iran and the United States highlights the value of maintaining communication even when tensions are high. A country that can speak to opposing sides may help reduce misunderstandings and create opportunities for peaceful solutions. Such a role requires patience, trust and an understanding of different political perspectives. However, diplomatic credibility cannot be established through a single meeting or statement. It develops over time through consistent conduct, respect for international commitments and a willingness to work towards shared interests. Pakistan must continue to strengthen these qualities if it wants to play a meaningful role in resolving regional disputes.

Peaceful negotiations also serve interests beyond those of the countries directly involved. Regional conflict can disrupt trade, increase energy prices and create uncertainty for millions of people.

BEENISH BALOCH
Quetta

Hot Wars, Cold Wars, and the Making of the Modern World

The book effectively links the past with the present-day challenges. Brands connects the world wars to the contemporary conflicts in Ukraine and the Western Pacific and makes them a part of the second Eurasian century. He balances this with geopolitical theorists like Mackinder, Mahan, and Spykman and considers their work as strategic frameworks, not as abstract theories.

Brands takes an approach to foreign policy based on a combination of historical scholarship and policy experience. He is the Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and is also an affiliated researcher, policy analyst, and commentator with the American Enterprise Institute and Bloomberg Opinion. His works, such as *The Twilight Struggle: What the Cold War Teaches Us about Great-Power Rivalry* and *Danger Zone: The Coming Conflict with China*, show a longstanding interest in evolving dynamics of geopolitics. His previous positions as the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense in Strategic Planning and the lead author of the Commission on the National Defense Strategy gave him familiarity with national security institutions, and his position on the Foreign Affairs Policy Board of the State Department indicates the continuation of policy involvement.

The most significant and primary theme of the book is that Eurasia is the pivot of the world order. Based on the writings of Halford Mackinder, the pioneer of the Heartland theory, Brands maintains that the possession of Eurasia has always been the most conclusive of prizes in world politics. This is attributed to the fact that the region has a disproportionate share of the global population, industrial potential, and natural resources. Brands asserts that a dominant power or coalition based in Eurasia could apply that strength to project power worldwide, coercing even other democracies far away. In the words of Mackinder, Brands described Eurasia as a space unlike any other.

The most significant and primary theme of the book is that Eurasia is the pivot of the world order. Based on the writings of Halford Mackinder, the pioneer of the Heartland theory, Brands maintains that the possession of Eurasia has always been the most conclusive of prizes in world politics. This is attributed to the fact that the region has a disproportionate share of the global population, industrial potential, and natural resources.

The second theme is that the struggles of Eurasians are not regional but global in scope and implications. The book explores the major wars of the twentieth century, such as the two deadliest, World War I and World War II, as well as the Cold War. The author says the Cold War was horrific for developing regions, as it resulted in small wars spanning regions from Europe to Asia, Africa, and the Americas for hegemonic struggles. These conflicts throughout Eurasia in many aspects, contributed to the formation of today's contemporary world and liberal order. Moreover, Brands explains them as battles of power between authoritarian states, which wanted to dominate Eurasia, and democratic alliances, which aimed to maintain stability and avert authoritarian rule.

A third theme is the cyclical conflict of authoritarian land powers and democratic maritime alliances. Imperial Germany, Nazi Germany, imperial Japan, and the Soviet Union wanted to control Eurasia, whereas offshore powers like Britain and the US, with continental partners in many cases, resisted. This tendency, Brands posits, persists today with an "axis of autocracies" connecting China, Russia, Iran and North Korea. It is not an official alliance, but is linked by mutual opposition against the US and is being strengthened since the Russian invasion of Ukraine with sustained actions of Iranian asymmetric strengths such as drones, missiles, proxies, North Korean ammunition, and Chinese economic support. This is seen by Brands to be a structural change and not a tactical cooperation, posing a challenge to the order

established by the West. In the middle of the picture is China, whose economic power, assertiveness in the South China Sea, conflict with India, and claims to Taiwan indicate regional primacy and an aim to transform global governance in an authoritarian manner.

Lastly, the fourth theme of the book indicates that the lessons of history are critical to the present. Brands says that the plight of the twentieth century holds timeless lessons for the democracies of today. Autocracies that seek hegemony within Eurasia can eventually trigger strong anti-hegemonic alliances against them, though the outcomes remain uncertain. Thus, the response of democratic countries to emerging challenges will be determined by their capacity to learn the lessons of Eurasian power struggles of the last 120 years and apply them to the turbulent world of the future.

The book effectively links the past with the present-day challenges. Brands connects the world wars to the contemporary conflicts in Ukraine and the Western Pacific and makes them a part of the second Eurasian century. He balances this with geopolitical theorists like Mackinder, Mahan, and Spykman and considers their work as strategic frameworks, not as abstract theories. Brands is of the view that time and again

Eurasia has remained at the core of global rivalry, and to give his argument an effective narrative strength, he uses historical scenes, such as Germany in 1917, Japan in 1941, the Soviet Union in 1947, and Russia in 2022.

Simultaneously, the policy orientation of the book can be interpreted by the readers in a different way. Brands cautions against the dangers of authoritarian bids for Eurasian primacy and urges democracies to learn the lessons of past struggles. Whereas some people will find this argument convincing and timely, others may perceive it as overemphasizing the similarities between the past and the present. Through this, the book is both thorough in its historical synthesis and proactive in its policy-focused perspective that will both raise inquiry and contemplation. The book is not without its limitations. It is largely based on an American lens. The narrative is less inclusive of the agency of regional actors and gives no space to non-Western voices. There is an overemphasis on geopolitics as well as geographical determinism, at the cost of other factors like economic interdependence, cyber, and transnational issues like climate change and pandemics. Such dynamics might not fit well in Mackinderian reasoning, but they are becoming more and more central to modern politics. Likewise, the framing of the book on democracy versus autocracy may simplify history and obscure that democracies have sometimes practiced coercion or imperialism, and that the alliances in war are often deeply morally ambiguous. Moreover, by emphasizing the scale of Eurasia, the industrialization of the region, and its natural resources, the author supports an established fact about the centrality of the region in the global power distribution. Although well expressed, this statement repeats a well-known concept of strategic thinking instead of being a new interpretation.



EZBA WALAYAT KHAN

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Protests and Movements in Pakistan: Containers As A Political Signal-Part IV

The march by PTI was then postponed until October 4, 2026. But despite the postponement, containers were kept at a number of strategic points around the capital, such as Faizabad 26 number, and other key entry and connection points. Cost was a significant consideration in the arrangements. The rental of 1,550 containers alone cost Rs46.5 million a day, police sources estimated, adding that the cost of all the security measures is likely to rise after the postponement.

2023 Protest, Violence and Crackdown

On May 9th, 2023, former Prime Minister Imran Khan was arrested, which led to widespread protests by PTI supporters throughout the country.

The disturbances were far from ordinary political protests, as some elements of the disturbances included burning, confrontation with security forces, attacks on public property, and attacks on military and other sensitive installations such as the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi and the residence of the Lahore Corps Commander.

In response, the authorities mounted a sweeping crackdown, including thousands of arrests and criminal charges against protesters and PTI leaders and workers, including the sitting legislators. The government also began to prosecute civilians suspected of attacking military establishments, under the auspices of laws which would have led to their trial in military courts. Human-rights groups, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, condemned military courts for civilian trials and questioned the guarantees of due process and fair trials. The protests did not lead to the release of Imran Khan or to the withdrawal of legal and political actions against him. On the contrary, the episode was a significant escalation of the standoff between PTI and the state institutions.

Despite the large scale of the mobilization, its immediate objective was not achieved, as Imran Khan was not released from custody following the protests. Instead, the confrontation between PTI and the state intensified. The episode also had serious legal, political, and institutional consequences, including mass arrests, prosecutions, a prolonged confrontation between PTI and state institutions, and the trial of civilians in military courts.

Post-Election Protests 2024

The general Election in February 2024 ushered in another political protest wave, especially from PTI and its supporters. PTI accused the election of irregularities and manipulation of the election results and demanded investigations and remedial measures. As per the PTI, their candidates were barred from participating in and attend the electoral activities in their constituencies.

Protests were organized outside offices of the ECP Secretariat, provincial offices, and offices of Returning Officers (ROs) in different cities around the country. However, the ECP denied allegations of electoral irregularities, pointing to the fact that the election itself came with a host of irregularities, including delayed results, the internet going on and off during polling day, and allegations of rigging widespread throughout the country.

The protests failed to bring about a complete change in the general election and did not stop the formation of a new federal government. On March 3, 2024, the National Assembly elected Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif as the country's 24th elected prime minister on the back of a coalition based on a deal between PML-N, Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarian (PPPP), and other political parties and independent candidates who secured the general seats.

The electoral argument, however, kept it very much alive in the political debate of Pakistan, with the questions regarding electoral administration, results, transparency, and complaints redressal remaining political contestations.

The immediate objective of the protest was not achieved, and there was no wholesale reversal of the election results or change in the federal government. As a broad consequence, the election administration, results, transparency, and dealing with alleged irregularities came to be a permanent political and institutional point of contention.

November 2024 March

Another March on Islamabad, PTI again rallied its supporters to Islamabad, demanding the release of their leader Imran Khan and other jailed party leaders, as well as the resignation of the government.

The party also condemned the election in February 2024, highlighting the irregularities in the poll, and called for mobilization to address that issue. The government in Islamabad ordered the deployment of police and security personnel, including a number of paramilitary troops, and closed roads in Islamabad and surrounding areas, while also prohibiting public gatherings in these areas.

There were clashes between protesters and security forces as the protesters drew near the capital. The protest was later withdrawn, and the major demands (Imran Khan's release and resignation of the government) were not fulfilled.

The immediate objective was achieved principal demands not accepted. Broad ramifications: It followed a trend of mass political protests toward Islamabad, extensive security measures, clashes between protesters and security forces, and the continued political debate surrounding the GE-2024 and Imran Khan's position.

Islamabad is once again caught behind containers in September-October 2026. The government started preparing for another PTI mobilization towards Islamabad in September 2026, which was also done on a wide scale. The shipping containers were set up at strategic points, and on the way to the Red Zone, extra security forces were deployed in Islamabad and its nearby areas.

While the government claimed that measures were taken to ensure public order and security, PTI saw its mobilization as a political campaign calling for the release of Imran Khan.

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) also took up the proposed protest. In the September 18 order, the court had ruled that activities that culminated in infringement of citizens' fundamental rights would be a breach of the Constitution. The judgment highlighted the importance of a balance between the right to protest and citizens' rights to freedom of movement and access to essential services.

The march by PTI was then postponed until October 4, 2026. But despite the postponement, containers were kept at a number of strategic points around the capital, such as Faizabad 26 number, and other key entry and connection points. Cost was a significant consideration in the arrangements. The rental of 1,550 containers alone cost Rs46.5 million a day, police sources estimated, adding that the cost of all the security measures is likely to rise after the postponement. Some schools in the capital have also been completely closed because they have been temporarily occupied to accommodate police personnel brought in from other provinces.

The preparations also impacted the goods-transport industry. The All-Pakistan Goods Alliance (APGA) claimed that around 2,700 vehicles and their crews were taken into custody by the police in Islamabad and Punjab for use in blocking the roads. Some vehicles and crews were still detained; some drivers' documents, mobile phones and keys were confiscated, said the alliance. Such is the word of the

transporters, and these figures and allegations should not be taken as independent facts.

The 2026 episode thus reflects the nature of Islamabad's dharnas and its legacy going beyond opposition to the government. Consequences of the use of containers and wide-ranging security deployments may impact freedom of movement, transport, commerce and life in the capital and surrounding regions. It also reveals the increasing importance of the management of political protest not only as an issue of political mobilization and public order, but also one of constitutional rights and the broader City's operations.

From the Ancient Strike to the Islamabad Dharna

Whether it is collective labour withheld thousands of years ago by workers from Deir el-Medina or political caravans that have visited Islamabad over and over again, collective action has been the source of pressure on authorities to take action over grievances. While its manifestations, whether strikes or demonstrations, long marches, sit-ins or extended dharnas, have shifted, the rationale has not: When political or institutional arrangements are seen as inadequate, the political actors go onto the streets.

History of Pakistan, however, indicates that success and failure in protest depends on other factors. In some movements, immediate action was realised, such as the 1968-69 movement led to the resignation of Ayub Khan, the 1980-81 Shia protest became successful and the exemption from compulsory Zakat was granted, the Lawyers' Movement restored the deposed judges and the 2017 Faizabad sit-in resulted in significant concessions. Others, such as MRD, 2014 PTI sit-in, JUI-F Azadi March, 2022 PTI mobilisation failed to realise their main demand.

However, immediate effects can truly reflect the impact of a protest. The 1977 PNA movement is an example of how the political goal of achieving a desired outcome can have ramifications that extend beyond the protesters' demands, in this case, the removal of Bhutto and the establishment of military rule. On the other hand, impotent actions can have 'political legacies'. The MRD reinforced the democratic opposition tradition, and the practice of mass mobilization and prolonged sit-ins grew as an instrument of political pressure. There are, therefore, two consequences to be evaluated: the immediate goal and wider consequences. The first question concerns the extent to which protesters had their demands met, while the second question focuses on the impact of the mobilization on political behavior, on public discourse, on the institutions of the state and on the relationship between citizens and the state.



AZHAR ALI

Azhar Ali holds a master's degree in Development Studies and has over 15 years of experience in the development sector

NATIONAL

DTM

Pakistan's peace efforts shift global view of country: Ahsan Iqbal

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal said here on Wednesday that Pakistan's diplomatic role in promoting regional peace and upholding international law had earned unprecedented global appreciation, calling for major reforms in post-Second World War international institutions amid escalating regional conflicts.

Speaking at the Conclave titled 'Post US-Iran War: Peace & Economic Dividends for Pakistan', Iqbal described the institutional structure established after the Second World War as presenting a picture of "defeat and desolation", arguing that institutions created to serve specific purposes were no longer being used accordingly and had consequently become increasingly irrelevant to contemporary requirements.

The minister called for major reforms to bring these institutions in line with emerging global realities.

He said the region was passing through a period of crisis and conflict, with instability that had long affected parts of the Middle East, including Libya, Iraq and Syria, gradually moving closer to Pakistan. Developments involving Iran, the Gulf region and Saudi Arabia, he warned, were bringing the threat of war nearer, with potentially serious consequences for the region.

The minister also pointed to signs of political instability in

India, recalling that India had undertaken what he termed an adventure in 2025, apparently calculating that Pakistan's economic crisis would undermine its defence capabilities and weaken its national resolve, allowing New Delhi to exploit the situation.

However, he said, Pakistan's defence institutions, under the leadership of Field Marshal Asim Munir, had responded effectively to India's actions, securing what he described as a clear victory. Iqbal said that, in nearly 80 years of Pakistan's history, the country had not achieved a victory against India comparable to its success in the "Battle of Haq". Referring to the conflict between Iran and the United States, Iqbal said Pakistan's diplomatic engagement, particularly through its embassy, had brought the country to the centre of international attention. He said he could not recall another period in his lifetime when Pakistan had received such extensive global attention, stretching from the East to the West and from the United States to Australia.

He said the positive response had extended beyond political leaders to international media organisations and broadcasters. Al Jazeera, the BBC, CNN, British and European channels, and Japanese and Chinese media outlets had all highlighted Pakistan's role, he noted, adding that the country's diplomatic engagement had attracted attention across the world. **NEWS DESK**



Kundi sets elimination of terrorism, KP uplift top priorities

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faizal Karim Kundi on Wednesday said that elimination of terrorism and ensuring sustainable development were the provincial government's top priorities, directing commissioners and deputy commissioners to perform their duties with dedication and ensure visible improvements in governance and public service delivery.

Chairing a meeting of all commissioners and deputy commissioners of the province, the Governor said that although the change in government had brought new priorities, the administrative officers were fully aware of their responsibilities.

He said negligence in development projects would not be tolerated and stressed the need for timely completion of public welfare schemes to accelerate the province's progress and prosperity.

The Governor said operations against illegal encroachments had already been launched across the province and directed the district administrations to adopt a zero-tolerance policy against encroachments. He also instructed officials to pay special attention to cleanliness and take effective measures to transform Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into a clean and green province under the Clean and Green KP vision.

Kundi directed the district administrations to adopt an open-door policy for resolving public issues and ensure the regular holding of open courts (Khul Katcheries) to address citizens' grievances promptly.

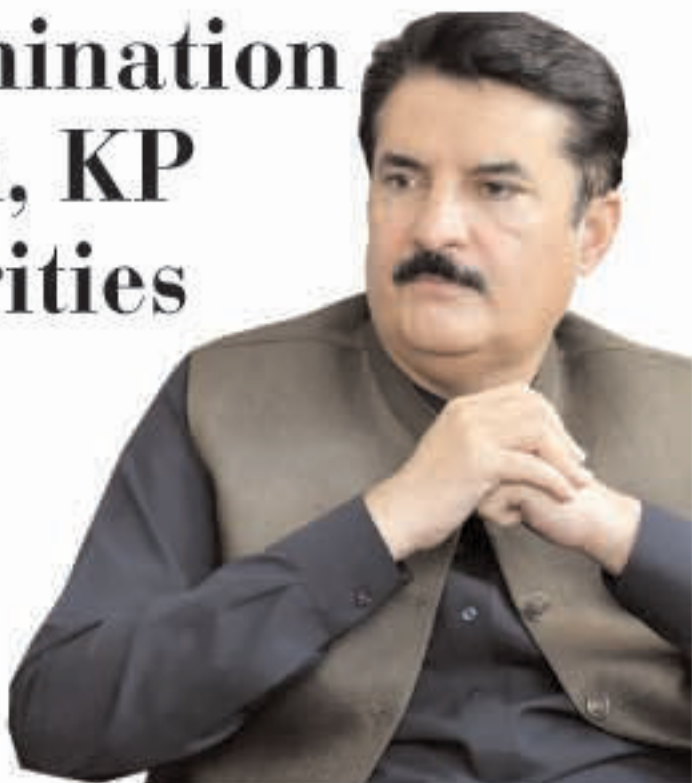
He said the performance of district administrations should be visible on the ground through effective coordination with all government departments.

The Governor announced that a cadet college would be established for the children of martyrs and urged deputy commissioners to discharge their responsibilities with commitment and efficiency.

He also directed district administrations to play an active role in ensuring the success of the upcoming anti-polio campaign through effective monitoring and emphasized strict implementation of the government's zero-tolerance policy against corruption.

The Governor asked the district administrations to submit practical proposals for improving governance and administrative affairs so that public problems could be addressed more effectively. During the meeting, commissioners presented suggestions for improving administrative affairs at the divisional level. The Governor said these recommendations were important for strengthening governance and resolving public issues and should be given serious consideration.

Free land for Pakistan Sweet Homes Cadet College: Meanwhile, Governor Kundi said that providing quality education and a bright future to the children was among the government's top priorities, adding that the welfare and patronage of the children of martyrs was a collective national



responsibility. Addressing students of Pakistan Sweet Homes during their visit to the Governor House, the Governor announced the provision of free government land in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the establishment of a Cadet College by Pakistan Sweet Homes and pledged full cooperation with the welfare organization.

Chairman of Pakistan Sweet Homes, Zammurd Khan (H), donors, teachers and students were also present on the occasion.

The Governor paid tribute to Zamrud Khan for dedicating his life to the education and welfare of orphaned and underprivileged children, saying that Pakistan Sweet Homes was rendering remarkable services by providing quality education, training and a better future to deserving children across the country.

He said the provincial government had directed in its first security

meeting that the children of police martyrs should never be neglected. He recalled that within 48 hours, a comprehensive welfare package had been announced for the children of police martyrs, while dedicated funds were also being established to support their education and well-being.

He said the sacrifices of martyrs were a priceless national asset and that caring for their families was a shared responsibility of the state and society. He also referred to the Rs1 million dowry fund announced for the daughters of martyrs as part of efforts to provide practical support to their families. The Governor said Pakistan had restored peace through the collective efforts of all stakeholders, the Pakistan Army and other security forces during 2008-2013, adding that the journey for lasting peace had been resumed through unity and cooperation among all institutions. **NEWS DESK**

Pakistan faces \$565bn climate funding gap: Shezra Kharal

State Minister for Climate Change Dr Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Kharal said on Wednesday that Pakistan will need an estimated \$565 billion in investment through 2035 to meet its climate commitments, while limited fiscal space and gaps in international climate finance pose major challenges to implementing its targets.

Addressing a roundtable "Pre-Cop31 Multistakeholder Consultation" ahead of Pakistan's participation in the 31st Conference of the Parties (COP31) in Antalya, Türkiye, the state minister said the country needed a well-defined negotiating position on adaptation finance, loss and damage, and the climate risks faced by its mountainous regions. Pakistan's third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), submitted in September last year, commits the country to reducing emissions by 50 per cent against projected levels by 2035, comprising a 17pc unconditional reduction and a further 33pc conditional on international support, she said.

The minister pointed out that these commitments came at a time when more than 60pc of the country's revenues were being spent on debt servicing, leaving limited fiscal space to finance climate action. "The gap between those two things is what our negotiators are set to close," she said, referring to Pakistan's climate commitments and its financial constraints.

With the negotiating brief for COP31 being finalised across several ministries, Dr Kharal acknowledged the absence of a formal mechanism through which provincial institutions, universities, youth organisations and affected communities could contribute evidence and recommendations to the process. She said the conference offered an opportunity to develop an evidence-based position before the negotiating brief was finalised, rather than issue recommendations after the delegation returned.

On adaptation finance, the minister highlighted the uncertainty surrounding a commitment made at a previous climate conference to triple adaptation finance by 2035, saying the final text did not specify the baseline against which the increase would be measured.

She cited adaptation finance of \$26 billion in 2023 against a commitment of \$40bn by the current year, while the assessed annual requirement stood at \$310bn. The baseline adopted for the proposed increase would determine the extent to which the commitment translated into meaningful financial support for vulnerable countries such as Pakistan, she said. The minister also drew attention to the disparity between the resources available through the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage and the financial requirements of countries seeking assistance.

According to her, the fund had received 176 eligible proposals from 119 countries seeking \$2.8bn, while \$342 million was available for its pilot phase. Pakistan had submitted three requests totalling \$58m for agricultural recovery, climate-resilient health systems in Balochistan and the rehabilitation of flood-damaged fisheries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, she said. No allocation had been made to the country's requests, while the fund's first allocation decisions were expected in December, after COP31. Dr Kharal said half of the fund's resources had been reserved for least developed countries and small island developing states, leaving Pakistan to compete for the remaining share with other developing countries outside those categories. **NEWS DESK**



Maldives First Lady seeks health aid from NIH

First Lady of the Republic of Maldives, Mrs. Sajidha Mohamed visited the National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad, on Wednesday and expressed interest in future collaboration with the institute in the field of public health.

She was warmly received by NIH Chief Executive Officer Dr. Muhammad Salman and senior officials, who briefed her on the institute's key divisions, including the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), Public Health Laboratory Division (PHLD), Nutrition Division, vaccine production facilities and Allergy Centre.

During the visit, the First Lady also toured the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC) at the CDC, where she was briefed on the real-time operational

ization of the National Public Health Surveillance System Dashboard. The briefing highlighted Pakistan's capabilities in disease sur-

veillance, monitoring emerging health threats and coordinating emergency public health responses. Mrs. Sajidha Mohamed appreciated NIH's commit-

ment to protecting public health and commended its advanced infrastructure and institutional capabilities. She also expressed interest in exploring avenues for future cooperation with NIH to strengthen public health collaboration between the Maldives and Pakistan. **NEWS DESK**



Honorary doctorate conferred on Maldives President

The International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) on Wednesday conferred an honorary doctorate in Politics and International Relations on President of Maldives Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, in recognition of his distinguished public service, leadership, and socio-economic advancement of his country, as well as his contributions to the Muslim Ummah.

The honorary doctorate was conferred on the Maldivian president at the 13th Special Convocation held at the Prime Minister's House, following the delegation-level talks and exchange of MoUs between the two sides to deepen bilateral ties across multiple sectors.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Muizzu is undertaking a three-day state visit to Pakistan accompanied by First Lady Sajidha Mohamed, and a high-level delegation comprising cabinet ministers and senior offi-

cials. This is the first visit by a Maldivian President to Pakistan in eleven years, coinciding with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1966. The ceremony was attended by

honorary degree to President Muizzu.

Reading the citation for the conferment, Vice President Academics Dr. Nadeem Ahmed Sheikh said that the degree was conferred in recognition of President Muizzu's distinguished



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, members of the federal cabinet, delegation members of the Maldivian President, Rector of IIUI Professor Dr. Ahmed Saad Alahmed, and senior government officials. The degree was awarded on behalf of President Asif Ali Zardari, in his capacity as Chancellor and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the IIUI.

Prime Minister Shehbaz, accompanied by the IIUI Rector, presented the

public service, leadership, governance reforms, institutional development of his country, and his dedication to upholding Islamic values, promoting justice and equality, and his contributions to the Muslim Ummah.

In his remarks, President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu recalled receiving his doctorate 17 years ago, stating that receiving this recognition from IIUI was beyond anything he could have envisioned at the time. **NEWS DESK**

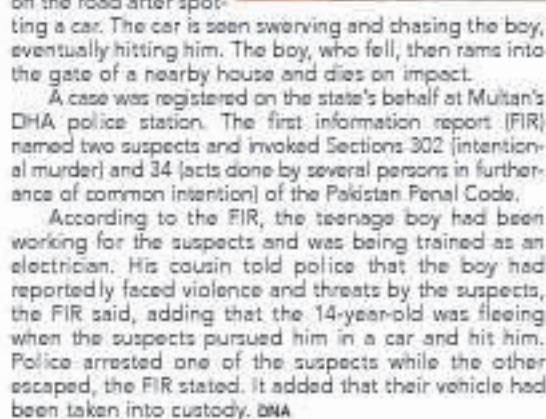
Accused in Multan boy's death killed in encounter

The suspect accused of running over and fatally injuring a 14-year-old boy in Multan was killed in an alleged encounter with the Crime Control Department (CCD) in Bahawalpur early on Wednesday, police said.

The suspect, identified as Tauqeer, had allegedly escaped from police custody while on remand, a CCD spokesperson said. A Multan court on Tuesday granted police three-day physical remand of the suspect. The suspect was accused of hitting the victim, who used to work for him, with his car in a private housing society.

He was arrested on Monday and presented before Judicial Magistrate Saadia Aslam on Tuesday. According to the spokesperson, the CCD personnel attempted to stop two individuals riding a motorcycle on Bahawalpur's Northern Bypass when an exchange of fire ensued, leaving the suspect dead. On Tuesday, police requested a 14-day physical remand of the suspect for investigation. However, the judicial magistrate granted the police a three-day remand. At the time, Multan City Police Officer (CPO) Akhtar Farooq said while speaking to the media that raids were being conducted for the arrest of a second suspect. "We all are in deep pain," the CPO said, adding that the orphan boy had been "subjected to barbarity". The CCTV footage of the incident shows a boy running on the road after spotting a car. The car is seen swerving and chasing the boy, eventually hitting him. The boy, who fell, then runs into the gate of a nearby house and dies on impact.

A case was registered on the state's behalf at Multan's DHA police station. The first information report (FIR) named two suspects and invoked Sections 302 (intentional murder) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code. According to the FIR, the teenage boy had been working for the suspects and was being trained as an electrician. His cousin told police that the boy had reportedly faced violence and threats by the suspects, the FIR said, adding that the 14-year-old was fleeing when the suspects pursued him in a car and hit him. Police arrested one of the suspects while the other escaped, the FIR stated. It added that their vehicle had been taken into custody. **DNA**



PM extends felicitations to Luca Niculescu

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Wednesday, extended his sincere felicitations to Luca Niculescu on his assumption of the office of the Prime Minister of Romania.

The prime minister, on X account, also expressed his best wishes for the new Romanian prime minister. "Pakistan highly values its longstanding friendship with Romania. It is my earnest hope that our bilateral relations will further strengthen during the days to come," he further added in his post. **NEWS DESK**

NATIONAL

DTM

Pakistan, Malaysia first ladies stress women empowerment

First Lady of Pakistan, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari MNA, met with First Lady of the Republic of Maldives Sajidha Mohamed at Aiwan-e-Sadr today.

The two First Ladies underscored the importance of women's empowerment, youth development and greater people-to-people engagement as key pillars of Pakistan-Maldives bilateral relations.

Welcoming her Maldivian counterpart, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari expressed the hope that Pakistan's warmth and hospital-ity would make her visit memorable and further strengthen the longstanding bonds of friendship, mutual respect, shared values and Islamic brotherhood between the two countries.

her initiatives to empower women and youth, significantly reduce school dropouts and support vulnerable communities through innovative initiatives.

The First Ladies agreed to strengthen mutual cooperation in women's leader-ship, education, skills development, tourism and hospitality, modern and cost-effective agriculture, entrepreneurship, public health, social development and youth empowerment.

Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari reaffirmed that women's empowerment, poverty alleviation and maternal and child health remain among her foremost priorities. She highlighted the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), launched in 2008 to carry forward the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, as Pakistan's flagship social protection initiative, provid-ing financial assistance to millions of vul-nerable families, particularly women.

She also outlined the transformative impact of the Benazir Nashonuma Programme in addressing malnutrition and childhood stunting during the critical first 1,000 days of life. "Our objective is to ensure that every woman lives with dignity and economic security, and every child receives a healthy start in life," Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari stated. She observed that greater exchanges among students, experts, educational institutions and young professionals would help forge enduring ties between future generations. NEWS DESK



The First Lady expressed satisfaction over expanding bilateral cooperation in education, healthcare, culture, youth development and people-to-people exchanges. She emphasised that both countries share a commitment to advancing women's participation in public life and creating greater opportunities for their education, particularly through vocational training, leadership development and economic empowerment.

Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari commended First Lady Sajidha Mohamed's distinguished professional journey, particularly her leadership role at the Maldives Food and Drug Authority and her contributions to the public health response during the COVID-19 pandemic. She also appreciated

Shaza unveils plan for AI-powered public services

Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja has said Pakistan is building digital public infrastructure to ensure that artificial intelligence (AI) services are scalable, inclusive and trusted.

Addressing a panel discussion titled "Enabling Digital Government Service Delivery through DPI and AI" at the Global AI & Digital Summit 2026 in Seoul, South Korea, organised under the auspices of the World Bank, she thanked the World Bank and shared a key lesson from Pakistan's experience, saying that AI was the final layer, not the first, and that an AI model was only as good, fair and trustworthy as the infrastructure supporting it.

"When governments skip the foundations, they do not get AI in public services; they get pilots that never scale and systems that citizens do not trust," she said.

The minister said the real question was not which AI system to deploy, but what needed to be in place before AI could safely serve every citizen.

Highlighting Pakistan's experience, she outlined four key foundations for effective AI-based public service delivery.

The first is digital identity,

which enables an AI service to identify the person it is serving while ensuring that citizens retain control over who can access their data.

She said the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) already provided verified identities to more than 100 million Pakistanis. The system was now being extended into a digital identity framework capable of authenticating citizens online and recording and enforcing their consent.

Identity, she said, enabled AI services to be personalised without becoming invasive.

The second foundation is digital payments. The minister said many public services involved financial transactions, including social protection transfers, subsidies and fee payments.

Pakistan's Raast instant payment system, operated by the State Bank of Pakistan, provided the public payment infrastructure needed to deliver such services.

She explained that when an AI model identified a household eligible for assistance, the payment system could turn that insight into actual delivery.

The third foundation is secure data exchange. The minister said AI-based government services could fail when data remained isolated within individual ministries and institutions.

Under the World Bank-supported Digital Economy Enhancement Project (DEEP), Pakistan is building its first national Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) stack, with WASL serving as its core national



data exchange layer.

Through WASL, institutions will be able to share data securely under clearly defined rules. Every transaction will be authenticated, encrypted and logged, while citizen consent will be incorporated into the data exchange process.

On top of WASL, the government is also establishing a citizen "Super App" and the National Open Data Ecosystem (NODE), which will provide researchers, startups and AI developers with lawful access to public data.

The fourth foundation is data governance. The minister said the National Data Governance Policy, issued by the Pakistan Digital Authority, had been designed from the outset to establish a single national framework for classifying, sharing, protecting and publishing public data.

The framework also provides for visible and withdrawable citizen consent, audit trails to hold institutions accountable, and a clear principle that AI should support human decision-making rather than independently determine anyone's rights or entitlements.

The minister said these four

foundations would collectively make AI services scalable, inclusive and trustworthy.

Outlining the government's future roadmap, she said Pakistan was building its AI layer on these foundations through the National Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Development Programme (NAIEDP), which included two key components.

The first involves procuring and providing public computing capacity to ensure that Pakistani data is processed within the country and that the resulting economic value remains in the domestic economy. The second is the development of Burqa, Pakistan's own large language model built on Urdu and regional languages, to make AI inclusive for every citizen.

Concluding her address, the minister said building digital public infrastructure first might appear to be a slow process, but once established, it would make every subsequent AI service faster, cheaper and safer to launch.

"Pakistan has chosen this path, and we are grateful to the World Bank for walking it with us," she said. NEWS DESK

Jl announces third wave of anti-levy protests

The Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan (JI) announced on Wednesday that it will launch the third phase of its nationwide protest movement against the petroleum levy on Friday, with sit-ins planned in all districts across the country, according to a press release by the party.

The government currently levies Rs114 per litre in taxes and duties on petrol and Rs100 per litre on diesel. The Centre and JI had agreed to form committees in early September - when the latter had planned a nationwide strike - to recommend measures to reduce the levy. Wednesday's press release by JI said the new phase of demonstrations would begin on the instructions of party chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, and that the party's clear and firm demand remained the complete abolition of the petroleum levy.

Jl claimed that the government had made no further contact regarding a planned meeting between Rehman and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, which the latter had offered to hold.

The press release recalled that Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal and the PM's adviser on political affairs, Rana Sanaullah, had contacted JI Vice Emir Liaqat Baloch to convey the premier's

message seeking a meeting.

"Both sides had agreed that their respective committees would meet to work out a schedule for the proposed meeting," it read, noting, however, that the government had made no further contact after that.

The party stressed that Rehman had already clarified that the agenda of any meeting with the prime minister would be the abolition of the petroleum levy.

"The JI emir has warned that if the government continues to delay action and refuses to provide relief to the public, the matter will be decided through street protests." It added that the JI's campaign against the petroleum levy would continue nationwide until its demand was met. On Aug 16, the JI announced sit-ins in all the provincial capitals of Pakistan against the petroleum levy and had called for a nationwide strike on Sept 3.

On Sept 20, the party launched a protest march towards Islamabad, warning that if the government failed to abolish the petroleum levy, the protest could turn into one to oust the government.

However, on Sept 22, the JI emir said his party, whose convoy had reached Multan, was postponing its long march at the request of PM Shehbaz, pending a meeting with him. NEWS DESK

Ulema reaffirm support for Haramain, Saudi Arabia's security

The Tazeem-e-Haramain Sharifain Conference has reaffirmed its commitment to protecting the sanctity of Makkah al Mukarramah, Madinah al Munawwarah and the two holy mosques, while expressing solidarity with Saudi Arabia in safeguarding its security, sovereignty and stability.

The conference, jointly organised by the Pakistan Ulema Council and the International Tazeem-e-Haramain Sharifain Council under the leadership of Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, brought together religious scholars, political leaders, diplomats and representatives from various walks of life in Islamabad.

In its joint declaration, the conference described the protection of Haramain Sharifain, Saudi Arabia's security, unity among Muslim countries and the protection of oppressed people as shared religious, national and humanitarian responsibilities.

The participants paid tribute to Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for his efforts to promote peace and unity among Muslim countries. They also supported the Pakistani government's diplomatic and defence initiatives aimed at safeguarding Saudi Arabia's sovereignty and promoting regional stability.

The declaration strongly condemned attacks by the Houthi armed group targeting Saudi Arabia, civilian populations, airports, critical infrastructure and visitors. It called for an immediate end to such attacks and effective measures to protect civilians and sacred places.

The participants said the security of the two holy mosques and the protection of pilgrims performing Hajj and Umrah were collective responsibilities of the Muslim Ummah, adding that no compromise could be made on their safety. The conference expressed full solidarity with Saudi Arabia under the leadership of King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, reaffirming support for its sovereignty, territorial integrity and legitimate defensive measures in accordance with international law.

On Yemen, the religious leaders stressed that the Houthi armed group should not be equated with the Yemeni people. They rejected attempts to portray the conflict as a Shia-Sunni dispute, describing the Yemeni population as brothers and sisters deserving peace, dignity and humanitarian support. The declaration called for unimpeded delivery of food, medicines, clean water, healthcare and education to people affected by the prolonged conflict. It also reaffirmed support for Yemen's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, urging international institutions to help ease the humanitarian crisis and advance a lasting political settlement.

The conference endorsed defence cooperation and mutual security arrangements among Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, saying such

partnerships should focus on deterring aggression, protecting sacred places and strengthening regional peace rather than threatening other countries. The participants also maintained that negotiations with armed groups must lead to genuine and sustainable peace. They said dialogue should be linked to an end to attacks against civilians, respect for the law, accountability and credible commitments to stop violence.

They opposed any use of negotiations to legitimise attacks or allow armed groups to continue violence, stressing that the same principles should apply to all such groups regardless of their identity or location.

The declaration urged Muslim leaders, governments, religious scholars and institutions to strengthen unity and mutual understanding. It called on the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the Muslim World League, the United Nations and other international bodies to take practical steps to protect civilians, facilitate humanitarian assistance and reduce regional tensions. The participants also condemned sectarian incitement, hate campaigns and the spread of misleading information on social media, urging religious leaders to promote moderation, mutual respect and harmony.

The conference concluded by reaffirming its commitment to strengthening Pakistan-Saudi Arabia ties, protecting Haramain Sharifain, supporting the people of Yemen and promoting peace across the Muslim world. Prayers were offered for the security of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, an end to suffering in Yemen and unity among Muslim countries. NEWS DESK

Pak-Maldives agree \$200m trade

Continued from Page 1

Signed in 1960, the treaty was brokered by the World Bank and governs the distribution of waters from the Indus river system, allocating the western rivers - Indus, Jhelum and Chenab - primarily to Pakistan, which relies on them for most of its agriculture. The three eastern rivers - Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej - were allocated primarily to India for unrestricted use.

India announced in April 2025 that it was placing the agreement "in abeyance" following a deadly militant attack in Indian-administered Kashmir that New Delhi blamed on Pakistan. Islamabad denied the allegation and maintains that the treaty cannot be suspended unilaterally. Pakistan accuses India of pursuing reservoir, expansion and diversion projects on rivers covered by the IWT in violation of the agreement. Addressing a joint press stakeout with Maldivian president following delegation-level talks in Islamabad, PM Sharif said that Pakistan had conveyed its position on the treaty at international forums, including the United Nations General Assembly.

"Our position is clear. Water is a lifeline for humanity, particularly for lower riparian countries," the prime minister said. "Let it be known to all and sundry that any violation in this regard will be regarded by Pakistan as an act of war." The prime minister said Pakistan

had "serious concerns" over India's decision to place the treaty in abeyance and strongly objected to what he described as the unilateral violation of an internationally binding agreement. "Pakistan's position is loud and clear, beyond any doubt, that legally binding treaties must never be weaponized or used as an instrument of political pressure or blackmailing," he said.

Pakistani officials have said in recent months that they have witnessed unusual fluctuations in river flows, while Islamabad has previously said that it would not let New Delhi restrict the flow of Indus waters. "Water flows in every canal, river, ocean and sea, carrying a message of prosperity and progress, not threats, confrontations and conflicts," Sharif added. For his part, President Muizzu thanked the Pakistani leadership and people for their warm hospitality, saying the visit offered an opportunity to build a new era of partnership on the foundations of six decades of friendship. He endorsed the target of increasing bilateral trade to \$200 million within two years and said both countries would work to expand trade and investment, strengthen connectivity and promote tourism cooperation.

The Maldivian president said the agreements would open new avenues for cooperation in health, education, fisheries, agriculture, youth, tourism, information technology, polic-

ing and defence, stressing that their success would depend on translating commitments into tangible benefits for the people. He also highlighted plans to expand scholarships, training and professional opportunities for Maldivian youth, including cooperation in artificial intelligence, digitalisation, skills development and emerging technologies.

Welcoming Pakistan's support for the Maldives' tree-planting initiative, President Muizzu said climate change posed a direct challenge to his country's security, development and future, and called for stronger cooperation in environmental conservation, renewable energy and climate resilience.

He reaffirmed the Maldives' solidarity with the Palestinian people and their right to an independent and sovereign state based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. He expressed confidence that the agreements reached would further strengthen bilateral relations and create greater opportunities, prosperity and mutual benefits for the peoples of Pakistan and the Maldives.

In a separate regional appeal, Muizzu called for reviving the long-stalled summit process of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which has not held a leaders' meeting since 2014.

"The Maldives stands ready to work closely with all SAARC member states toward creating the necessary conditions for conven-

ing the next SAARC summit at the earliest possible opportunity," he said.

Earlier, Pakistan and the Maldives on Wednesday signed a series of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) aimed at deepening bilateral relations in multiple sectors, including defence, IT, cybersecurity, health, education, social protection, agriculture and tourism, among others.

The pacts were signed during the three-day state visit of President of the Maldives Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, which is the first visit by the country's president in 11 years, coinciding with the 60th anniversary of the bilateral diplomatic relations.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Dr Muizzu witnessed the ceremony as the representatives from both sides exchanged the pre-signed documents.

The two countries signed an MoU on cooperation in the fields of information technology, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, digital skills, and technology and innovation. An MoU was inked to strengthen cooperation in combating illicit trafficking and abuse of narcotic drugs. The two sides also signed an MoU on social protection as well as on health cooperation and between Maldives Food and Drug Authority and the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan.

Both nations signed MoUs focused on the recruitment of health professionals, strength-

ening defence ties and maritime security cooperation.

With a view to boosting agricultural cooperation, an MoU was signed on the subject between the two countries, besides another one on promoting fisheries cooperation.

To promote ties in technical and vocational education, an MoU on collaboration to promote technical and vocational education and training was signed, while another MoU was inked to promote educational cooperation.

The representatives of Pakistan and Maldives also exchanged documents on MoUs on cooperation in the field of youth and sports development, air connectivity, tourism and in the field of arts, culture and heritage.

The MoUs were signed between the National College of Policy and Law Enforcement of the Maldives Police Service and National Police Academy, Islamabad; Civil Service Commission of Maldives and the Federal Public Service Commission of Pakistan; and Civil Service Commission of Maldives and Civil Service Academy (CSA) of Pakistan.

In order to boost commercial engagement, an MoU was signed between the Maldives State Trading Organisation (STO) and Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) for cooperation in trade of agriculture commodities, food and other products, besides signing another pact aimed at boosting cooperation in the field of environment. NEWS DESK

BACKPAGE

DTM

ICT local polls scheduled for December 20

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has ordered local government elections in Islamabad to be held under the existing 2015 law and directed officials to issue the election schedule without further delay. The commission has subsequently announced that polling will take place on December 20, 2026.

The decision was announced after a five-member commission, headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja, heard a case concerning the long-delayed local government elections in the federal capital.

During the hearing, Special Secretary ECP Zafar Iqbal Malik informed the commission that delimitation had been carried out six times in Islamabad, while election schedules had been issued on four occasions. The most recent schedule was announced on October 9, 2026, under which polling had been planned for February.

He told the commission that the presidential ordinance issued by the government had expired on September 6, while the final delimitation of constituencies was published on October 14. Despite two reminder letters to the Ministry of Interior, the relevant Islamabad local government rules had not been provided. The Ministry of Law had also declined to approve the rules, he added.

The ECP was informed that the federal government had yet to introduce a new local government law, leaving the 2015 legislation in force. The commission was therefore urged to proceed with the elections under the existing law.

Interior Secretary, who appeared before the commission, acknowledged the facts presented during the hearing but maintained that proceeding under the 2015 law would require the cancellation of the steps already taken in the electoral process.

Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja observed that holding elections under the 2015 law would not affect the existing delimitation of constituencies.

He expressed concern over repeated

assurances from the interior minister, interior secretary, chief commissioner and a ministerial committee, remarking that the government's actions gave the impression that it did not want local government elections to take place in Islamabad.

The chief election commissioner stressed that the Constitution required local government elections to be held in accordance with the law, adding that the commission had been compelled to issue the order.

Following the hearing, the ECP directed that the elections be conducted under the 2015 law and instructed officials to issue the schedule the same day.

Under the schedule subsequently issued by the ECP, polling in Islamabad will be held on December 20, 2026, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., without interruption.

The key dates are as follows: November 2-6: Submission of nomination papers; November 9-13: Scrutiny of nomination papers; November 14-18: Filing of appeals against decisions of returning officers.

December 20: Polling day. Restrictions on transfers and postings, as well as public speeches, have also been imposed in Islamabad following the announcement of the election schedule.

In a separate development, the ECP has scheduled hearings on cases concerning local government elections in Punjab and cantonment boards for October 28.

The commission has issued notices to the Punjab chief secretary and secretary of local government regarding the holding of local government elections in the province.

In the cantonment board election cases, notices have been issued to the secretary of the Ministry of Defence and the director general of Military Lands and Cantonments.

The move is part of the commission's efforts to ensure that local government elections are held in Punjab and cantonment board areas.

The cases will be heard by the Election Commission on October 28. **NEWS DESK**

Zardari pushes for enhanced trade with Maldives

DPM calls on Maldives president, eyes stronger ties

President Asif Ali Zardari has emphasised the need to translate the strong political goodwill between Pakistan and Maldives into greater trade, investment, connectivity and people-to-people exchanges. He also reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to supporting Maldives in education, healthcare, human resource development, social protection and sustainable development.

He was talking to the President of the Republic of Maldives, Dr Mohamed Muizzu, during a meeting at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad. The two leaders reviewed bilateral relations and discussed ways to strengthen cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

Welcoming President Muizzu, President Zardari reaffirmed the importance Pakistan attaches to its longstanding fraternal relations with Maldives, rooted in shared faith, mutual trust, respect for sovereignty and enduring goodwill. He noted that the State Visit, coinciding with sixty years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, has provided fresh momentum to their bilateral partnership.

Both leaders expressed satisfaction over the positive trajectory of bilateral relations and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

President Zardari recalled Pakistan's longstanding contribution to the development of Maldives, including the Parliament building and the School of Medicine in Male, which stand as enduring symbols of friendship between the two countries.

The two leaders recognised the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable countries, particularly small island developing states and climate-vulnerable developing economies. President Zardari expressed Pakistan's readiness to deepen cooperation with Maldives in climate



the importance of dialogue, diplomacy, sovereign equality, mutual respect and peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law and the United Nations Charter.

They reaffirmed their support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

Separately, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday called on the President of Maldives Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, wherein he reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to its longstanding fraternal relations with Maldives.

Warmly welcoming the Maldivian president and his delegation to Pakistan, the deputy



Muizzu. He underscored the importance of expanding bilateral cooperation, particularly in trade, investment, education, climate change and tourism.

Deputy Prime Minister Dar welcomed the participation of the Maldivian business delegation in the Maldives-Pakistan Business Forum and expressed hope that B2B engagements would yield concrete trade and investment opportunities.

President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu appreciated the warm welcome and hospitality extended to him and his delegation.

He expressed Maldives' desire to deepen its close relations with Pakistan and explore new avenues of mutually beneficial cooperation. **NEWS DESK**

Punjab targets \$1.8bn in food exports to KSA

Pakistan's Punjab province is targeting more than \$1.8 billion in food exports to Saudi Arabia, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said on Wednesday, seeking an increase in rice, fruit, vegetables and other farm shipments to the Kingdom.

The remarks came during CM Sharif's meeting with Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Rajeh Albugemy, which was focused on bilateral relations and expanding cooperation between the two brotherly nations.

Saudi Arabia is one of Pakistan's key trading partners in the Gulf, with food and agricultural exports forming a major component of bilateral trade, while Punjab accounts for a significant share of Pakistan's production of wheat, rice, citrus fruits, vegetables and livestock products.

During their meeting, the Punjab chief minister called Saudi Arabia the largest source of remittances to Pakistan that contributed around \$9.8 billion annually, expressing gratitude to the Saudi leadership for their economic and financial support to Pakistan.

"Punjab can become a reliable supplier of Halal-certified food products to

the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," CM Sharif's office quoted her as saying at the meeting.

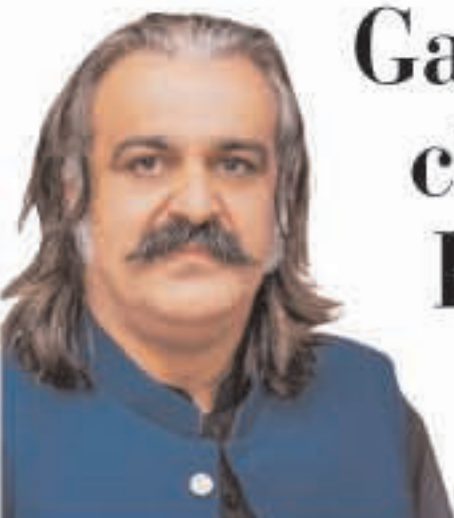
"Discussions were held on leveraging Punjab's resources and potential to increase exports of livestock, beef, poultry, fruits, and vegetables," it added.

In Oct. last year, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan agreed to launch an economic cooperation framework to strengthen trade and investment ties during Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's visit to Riyadh.

Both countries have enjoyed close relations for decades and have moved to broaden their cooperation in recent years. In 2024, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed 34 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) worth \$2.8 billion across multiple sectors.

During the meeting, CM Sharif strongly condemned Houthi attacks on the Kingdom and expressed regret over the loss of human lives in these assaults.

"The people of Pakistan and Punjab stand shoulder to shoulder with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," she said. "Shared economic strength surely guarantees shared security." **NEWS DESK**



PTI leader and former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur has hit back at party Secretary General Salman Akram Raja, saying KP lawmakers need no 'loyalty certificates' from anyone and demanding that he substantiate his allegations.

In a strongly worded statement, Gandapur termed Raja's recent remarks "regrettable, irresponsible and damaging" to PTI's internal unity, particularly at a time when the party was facing extraordinary political difficulties.

"This party belongs to Imran Khan. We do not need loyalty certificates from anyone, nor does anyone have the authority to pass judgements on our political loyalty or hand us

Gandapur, Raja clash exposes PTI divisions

certificates of treason," Gandapur said.

He said loyalty to the party should be judged by years of struggle, sacrifices and practical contribution rather than the preferences of a few individuals.

Referring to Raja's mention of "undemocratic decision-makers" and an alleged conspiracy by a group, Gandapur challenged him to identify those he was referring to.

"First, make it clear who these people are," he said, asking which lawmakers were being accused of seeking to decide the provincial president or next chief minister without the approval of Imran or the political committee.

"If you have evidence, name them," Gandapur said.

He also questioned the basis for what he described as a serious allegation that a group had severed contact with now-dysfunctional chief minister Sohail Afridi and his team, paving the way for emergency and governor's rule.

Gandapur also questioned Raja's reference to an investigation, asking who had ordered it and under which authorised forum it was being conducted.

"If an investigation is under way, why does the party not know about it?" he asked.

Referring to PTI KP President Junaid Akbar as "our brother", Gandapur said the party was praying for his early recovery.



He also questioned the reported appointment of Ali Asghar Khan as acting provincial president in Akbar's absence, asking where the formal notification was and who had exercised the authority to make the appointment.

Gandapur said KP had always stood with Imran, adding that the province's workers and elected representatives had endured arrests, violence and severe difficulties following May 9 without abandoning their leader or political ideology.

He said the same workers and representatives had won the 2024 elections, defended their mandate and continued to raise the party flag despite difficult circumstances.

The former chief minister also questioned the role of some central party office-bearers during repeated marches towards Islamabad, saying their presence and practical contribution on difficult occasions had not met workers' expectations.

"That too should be accounted for before the party," he said. **NEWS DESK**



Petrol price cut by Rs 2.71, diesel's up by Rs 0.31 per litre

The government on Wednesday reduced the price of petrol by Rs 2.71 to Rs 379.31 per litre, while increasing the price of high-speed diesel (HSD) by Rs 0.31 to Rs 390.11 per litre. The new prices will remain effective for Thursday, October 22, 2026.

According to a press release issued by the Petroleum Division, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) revised the ex-depot prices of petroleum products in line with the petroleum

pricing mechanism set by the federal government.

The Petroleum Division said the revision was driven by global developments, including changes in Platts rates, premiums and incidentals.

The revised prices will remain effective for October 22.

The government on Tuesday increased the price of petrol by Rs 0.88 to Rs 382.02 per litre and HSD by Rs 0.53 to Rs 389.80 per litre. **NEWS DESK**

Websites go dark worldwide as AI exposes critical security flaws

Government agencies and companies around the world shut down websites Wednesday after two critical flaws came to light involving PHP, a programming language that is the basis for a large share of the internet.

The US National Security Agency told organizations to patch immediately or pull vulnerable systems offline.

The flaws "often provide a direct path to the server's file system or database," the NSA said in a statement on X.

Attackers could use them to take over web servers without needing a password.

PHP sits underneath popular web design platforms so the weaknesses potentially affect a vast range of websites, from online stores and news outlets to government services.

The discovery came amid a surge in software security disclosures driven by increasingly powerful AI models, with the number of vulnerabilities found in 2026 on track to roughly double last year's record total.



PHP volunteers released a fix on Wednesday.

"If you run PHP, it is imperative that you update now," the PHP Foundation, which funds developers working on the language, said in a blog post.

The flaws were reported in August by security firm Calif and by ChatGPT maker OpenAI, which flagged them independently on the same day. Google-owned cloud security company Wiz later reported further ways to exploit them. The flaws had been reported privately to PHP's developers at the time and kept confidential while a fix was prepared.

Details leaked online Tuesday, a day before the planned release, prompting the rush to take sites offline.

In France, local government websites, including the Paris Police Prefecture, have been inaccessible since Wednesday afternoon at the request of the French National Cybersecurity Agency, following "detection of a critical security vulnerability," the Ministry of the Interior said.

In the Netherlands, the national digital identity service DigiD, the website of the House of Representatives and the site of the national cybersecurity center went offline as a precaution, according to Dutch public broadcaster NOS.

Belgium's foreign ministry temporarily took its websites offline as a precaution, it said on X, although the Centre for Cybersecurity Belgium had recorded no attacks on Belgian sites. **AP**

GLAMOURDTMUR



Victoria On Harper's School Makeup Ban

Victoria Beckham has revealed her horrified daughter Harper begged her to call her school after she was banned from wearing make-up. The fashion designer, 52, who said her daughter was 'really good at applying natural make-up', told the story during a Today Show segment with Zenna Roberts Rassi.

Harper, 15, is currently in the process of launching her own make-up brand, which has been reported to be called Harlo by Harper.

However, despite her love of make-up, Victoria said that her youngest child isn't allowed to wear cosmetic products while she is at school.

Victoria said: 'Quite recently she said they've told me that I'm not allowed to wear make-up for school. She said "Why don't they want me to look my best?"

'She's like "Mummy can't you call the school?..." But the former Spice Girl said she has refused to ring and request for Harper to be allowed to wear make-up, telling her: 'I'm like "I can't Harper".

It was reported last week that Harper is facing a setback in her bid to crack the US market with her beauty brand.

NEWS DESK

Kendall On Kylie's Victoria's Secret Debut

Kendall Jenner has broken her silence on sister Kylie Jenner's viral Victoria's Secret Fashion Show debut. On Sunday, the 29-year-old cosmetics billionaire shocked viewers as she stormed the legacy lingerie brand's runway in the coveted \$50 million Fantasy Bra. And 30-year-old Kendall, a bona fide supermodel, was not at this year's show and last strutted its catwalk in 2018.

However, she proved there is no sibling rivalry on Monday when she commented on Kylie's Instagram recap video, calling her 'a gorgeous woman!!!' Kylie shared a clip of the exciting moment with her 380 million followers and captioned, 'pinch me!!!!' alongside a diamond emoji.

NEWS DESK



Rita Wilson Teases Girls Revival Return

Rita Wilson tells PEOPLE she's "so excited" for the five-episode return of Girls. Wilson played Evie Michaels, the mother of Allison Williams' character, in the series.

"I know Lena's gotta be cooking up something very good," she says of Lena Dunham.

Rita Wilson is eyeing the return of Evie Michaels. The Girls alum, 69, caught up with PEOPLE at the Forbes 30/50 5-Year Anniversary Summit in New York City on Friday, Oct. 16, when she teased her involvement in the forthcoming Girls revival. On Oct. 13, HBO announced that Lena Dunham's hit series would be back for five episodes with production kicking off in 2027, a decade after the series' conclusion. When asked if she'll be returning, Wilson replied with a laugh, "That is what I'm hearing, so I don't think Lena would be lying about that."

As she looks ahead to potentially reuniting with her costars, Wilson says she's "so excited" for the five-episode return of the series. "Oh my gosh, yes. I mean, Lena is one of the most talented people I've ever worked with. I would do anything for her," she says. "I would bend over backwards. And then I love Allison Williams who, you know, I was lucky enough to play her mom." She adds, "I know Lena's gotta be cooking up something very good."

Alongside Dunham as Hannah and Williams as Marnie, other returnees will include Jemima Kirke as Jessa, Zosia Mamet as Shoshanna and Andrew Rannells as Elijah. In a press release shared on Oct. 13, Dunham, 40, said she "always said we would only return to Girls if there was a specific story we were burning to tell."

NEWS DESK

London Film Festival Closes With The Debut

Actor-filmmaker Jesse Eisenberg said he wrote the lead role in his musical comedy "The Debut" with Julianne Moore in mind, praising the Oscar-winning star as "the greatest actress in the world" as the film closed the London Film Festival on Sunday.

"I just thought, this is Julianne Moore, and I will write every scene with her in mind and what she likes to do and what she's great at," Eisenberg, who wrote the screenplay and directed the film, told Reuters on the red carpet. Moore stars as Mona, a shy New Jersey housewife who is thrilled to land a role in a community theatre musical.

Drawn to the experience by a longing for something missing in her life, Mona finds purpose and community through the show.

"She's moving towards something, knowing that there's something that she needs in her life," Moore said. "Then that thing leads you towards yourself and towards community, which is really the most valuable thing of all."

REUTERS



Miley Cyrus Says Dolly Sent Her A Sign

Miley Cyrus has claimed that her late godmother Dolly Parton has communicated with her from beyond the grave.

At the second show of her two Hollywood Bowl concerts, an emotional Cyrus, 33, told the audience how she contacted Parton by using a mannequin fashioned after the singer, who died of cancer in August.

"I actually have a Dolly mannequin in my bedroom. She gave it to me for Christmas. It's dressed like her, it's built like her," Cyrus said.

"When I was by myself, I actually took my phone and I played Jelena for her on video, holding it up to the mannequin, and lit a candle. I put a flower down for her," she continued. "I said, 'Dolly, if you're here right now, flicker the lights.'"

At this point, Cyrus said that 'the entire hallway started flickering', before insisting that her fiancé Maxx Morando witnessed it too.

NEWS DESK



Mariah Carey Scores Legal Win Over Brother

Mariah Carey scored a legal victory Monday, as a judge dismissed a \$20 million lawsuit filed against her by her brother Morgan Carey, who claimed that she had defamed him in her 2020 book The Meaning of Mariah Carey. A ruling from New York State Supreme Court Judge Leslie A. Stroth reviewed by The Daily Mail stated that Morgan had fallen short in proving that Mariah had acted with 'actual malice,' in knowingly telling falsehoods. Among the claims Morgan cited in his lawsuit over Mariah's book included allegations her sibling had in the past served prison time and sold cocaine.

NEWS DESK



MONEY

DTM



Exporters seek trade deals to counter India, Bangladesh

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry joined virtually, while Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Bilal Azhar Kayani, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Industries Rana Insaan Afzal Khan, secretaries of concerned ministries and senior officials from relevant departments participated. Most business representatives joined virtually, while others attended in person.

Pakistan's exporters have urged the government to explore improved bilateral trade arrangements and study markets where regional competitors India and Bangladesh enjoy preferential access, as shifting global trade rules intensify pressure on the country's export competitiveness.

The development came during a high-level meeting held between Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and leading exporters, industrialists and representatives of the business community at the Ministry of Commerce, read an official statement on Wednesday.

During the meeting, exporters discussed international shipping delays, port facilitation, tax refunds and banking regulations, proposing greater flexibility in payment settlement periods due to disruptions in global logistics.

Participants recommended studying markets where Bangladesh and India enjoy preferential trade advantages and exploring improved bilateral trade arrangements to strengthen Pakistan's export competitiveness.

Business representatives appreciated the EXIM Bank scheme for exporters, describing it as a positive initiative to improve access to export financing and support businesses seeking to expand internationally.

Industry representatives also highlighted concerns regarding energy costs, the captive power gas levy, provincial infrastructure levies and rising production expenses. Petroleum Division officials provided clarifications on the gas levy

mechanism.

Representatives of the meat and livestock sector highlighted challenges relating to foot-and-mouth disease, international sanitary requirements, border restrictions and access to Gulf markets.

Responding, Jam Kamal Khan informed participants that the prime minister was personally taking a keen interest in livestock development, including disease control, investment, improved breeding and value-added exports. The meeting was also informed of plans for a dedicated, private-sector-led livestock board.

Mineral exporters raised concerns regarding restrictions on mining explosives and withholding taxes, while Qaiser Saleem Shabbir, representing the surgical instruments sector, emphasized the need for technological advancement, skilled human resources, industrial investment and modernisation to enhance Pakistan's export competitiveness.

FBR officials briefed participants on measures to improve tax refund processing and digital invoicing, while exporters highlighted difficulties relating to outstanding refunds, business visas and international compliance requirements.

Concluding the meeting, Jam Kamal said that the Ministry of Commerce would consolidate sector-specific and cross-cutting issues and seek responses from concerned ministries to develop practical recommendations for the prime minister's consideration. **NEWS DESK**

UK, Pakistan vow cooperation on development



Pakistan and the United Kingdom here on Wednesday reaffirmed their commitment to deepen bilateral ties, focusing on economic reforms and key development priorities to drive sustainable growth.

According to press release issued by Economic Affairs Ministry, British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott called on Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahmad Cheema to discuss areas of mutual interest and cooperation between the two countries.

The High Commissioner congratulated the Minister on his appointment as Chair of the Board

of Governors of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for 2027.

On the occasion, the minister highlighted the Prime Minister's priorities for strengthening agriculture, information technology and other key sectors. He said the government was pursuing sector-oriented reforms and policies to support economic growth.

Ahad Cheema said the government was providing full support to development partners and multilateral investments, while working to further facilitate cooperation and investment.

The minister appreciated the support of the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) for capacity building and reforms in Pakistan. He noted that the FCDO was working closely with the Prime Minister's Office on the government's ongoing reform efforts and appreciated its engagement in this process.

Jane Marriott said the FCDO will continue supporting the Pakistan. She appreciated the government's efforts to improve the economy and acknowledged the ongoing reforms across different sectors. **NEWS DESK**

Food group exports post 25.32% increase

Food group exports from the country during the first quarter of the current financial year grew by 25.32 percent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year, according to data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

During the period from July to September 2026, different food commodities worth \$1.388 billion were exported as compared to the exports of \$1.108 billion in the same period of the last year.

During the period under review, the rice exports from the country grew by 55.89 percent as about 1.074 million metric tons of rice valued at \$652.396 million were exported as compared to the exports of 713,794 metric tons worth \$418.509 million in the same period of the last year.

Meanwhile, the fish and fish preparations exports also recorded about 14.61 percent growth in the first 03 months of the current financial year as over 49,884 metric tons of fish and fish products worth \$102.686 million were exported, as compared the exports of 40,592 metric tons valued at \$89.600 million in the same period of the last year.

The other food commodities which recorded positive growth during the period under review included spices, which grew by 18.94 percent as about 8,464 metric tons of spices worth \$23.801 million were exported, whereas the exports of oil seeds and nuts grew by 240.85 percent and were recorded at 110,930 metric tons valued at \$124.623 million.

On the other hand, the imports of food goods into the country during the first quarter of the current financial year witnessed about 3.44 percent increase, as different food products worth \$2.330 billion were imported into the country as against the imports of \$2.252 billion of the same period of the last year.

On year on year basis, the food group exports from the country registered about 65.51 increase during the month of September, 2026 and was recorded at \$553.648 million as compared to the exports \$334.517 million of the same month of the last year. **NEWS DESK**

PTC pledges support for government on GSP+ process

The Pakistan Textile Council (PTC) has pledged to support the government's GSP+ process through policy engagement, technical input and industry coordination to safeguard Pakistan's preferential access to the European Union market.

The commitment was reaffirmed during a meeting between EU Ambassador to Pakistan Raimundas Karoblis and PTC leadership in Karachi the other day to discuss Pakistan's position under the Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+), the process ahead for the next phase of the arrangement and the importance of textile and apparel exports in Pakistan's trade with the European Union, a news release said here on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the ambassador discussed implementing Pakistan's commitments under relevant United Nations conventions in the context of the GSP+ scheme. He said the European Commission would enhance engagement with the Government of Pakistan, focusing on areas requiring further progress and developing an action plan outlining measures, timelines, and performance indicators.

He also emphasized the importance of continued coordination between the EU and Pakistan at ministerial and working levels.

PTC Chairman Fawad Anwar said the continuation of GSP+ was critical for Pakistan's value-added textile and apparel exports, employment, tax contributions and the wider economic ecosystem associated with the sector.

He also observed that the EU-India Free Trade Agreement could create additional competitive pressures for Pakistani exporters, even if Pakistan retained its GSP+ status. **NEWS DESK**

PSX rebounds, gains over 779 points

The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) reversed its bearish momentum on Wednesday, gaining 779.34 points, a positive change of 0.47 percent, to close at 165,930.99 points against 165,151.64 points recorded in the previous trading session.

The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 379.905 million shares, compared to 446.842 million shares traded in the previous session, while the traded value increased to Rs21.281 billion from Rs19.426 billion.

Market capitalisation rose to Rs18.384 trillion from Rs18.308 trillion recorded a day earlier.

Out of 497 companies that traded in the ready market, 225 posted gains, 230 suffered losses, while 42 remained unchanged.

Pak Refinery led the volume chart with 49,411 million

shares, followed by Cnergyco PK with 40,074 million shares and Pervez Ahmed Co with 21,682 million shares.

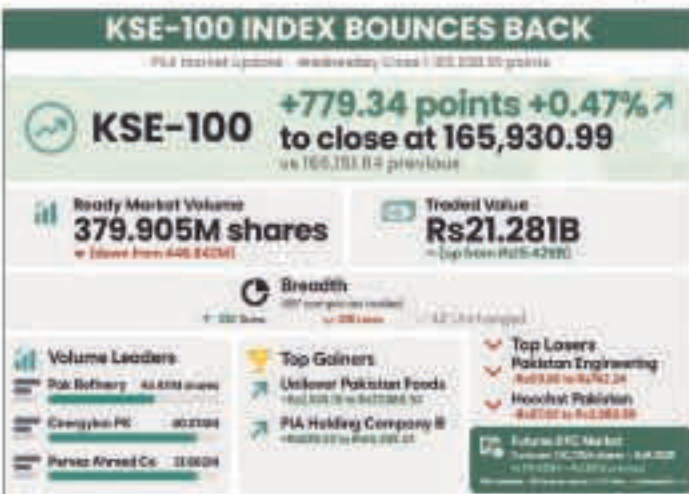
Among the top gainers, Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited surged by Rs2,535.18 to close at Rs27,886.93, while PIA Holding Company Limited B advanced by

Rs620.82 to settle at Rs14,265.33.

On the losing side, Pakistan Engineering Company Limited declined by Rs69.66 to close at Rs742.24, while Hoechst Pakistan Limited fell by Rs67.02 to Rs3,989.89.

In the futures (DFC) market, turnover stood at 120,731 million shares with a traded value of Rs9.783 billion, compared with 114,925 million shares worth Rs7.801 billion in the previous session.

Of 296 companies traded in the DFC market, 150 advanced, 137 declined and 09 remained unchanged. **NEWS DESK**



TDAP, BBoIT to host Women Expo in Quetta after 19 years

The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Quetta, in collaboration with the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBoIT), has finalised arrangements for a two-day women entrepreneurs expo titled WEXNET, scheduled to be held from October 31 to November 1 at the Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIEMS), Quetta.

Talking to APP, TDAP Director Noor Ali Achaizi said that more than 100 women entrepreneurs from across Balochistan and other parts of the country would participate in the event by setting up stalls to showcase their handicrafts, products and business ventures.

He said the exhibition would provide a unique platform for women-led enterprises and local artisans to display their talent, promote their products and establish valuable business connections.

Noor Ali Achaizi said the expo was being organised after a gap of 19 years and was aimed at promoting women entrepreneurship, increasing women's participation in economic activities and supporting the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the province.

He added that the event would serve as an important

networking platform, bringing together entrepreneurs, investors, development partners and business organisations to foster trade and investment opportunities.

Highlighting the vision behind WEXNET, he said the initiative recognises the importance of the regional trade ecosystem and seeks to empower women-led SMEs by enhancing their export readiness and integrating rural women entrepreneurs into mainstream trade activities.

He said the programme was designed to create a dedicated women-focused business ecosystem capable of supporting sustainable economic growth and market access.

The two-day expo will feature a 100-stall exhibition, business-to-business (B2B) networking sessions, seminars, e-commerce facilitation and business development activities. The exhibition will showcase enterprises operating in diverse sectors, including textiles, agribusiness, handicrafts, e-commerce and general trade.

The TDAP director said a series of seminars and training workshops would also be organised during the event to strengthen the entrepreneurial capabilities of participants. **NEWS DESK**

LPG market rate soars to double of Govt fixed price

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) price has soared to Rs. 550 per KG, almost double of the Rs. 279.34 per kilo rate fixed by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA).

The mafia in the LPG sector fleecing consumers with inflated rates by jacking price of the fuel. A difference between the government fixed rate and the artificially engineered the market price of the LPG.

LPG Distributors Association Chairman Irfan Khokhar has said that the LPG companies charging inflated rates adding that the increased demand of the fuel being used for illegal profiteering. "There are countrywide reports of selling LPG between Rs 500 to 600 per kilogram," he said. The prices are apprehended to soar further with disruption in the supply, he said.

"How could the market will stabilize if the government rates of the fuel not implemented," he said. He demanded curbing the alleged black-marketing of LPG and holding the people behind it, accountable. It is pertinent to mention here that after the gas loadshedding, skyrocketing LPG prices have added further burden over the consumers as the fuel prices have hit hard to the low-income households with soaring cost of living. **WP**

National savings increases profit rates across multiple schemes



The profit rates on National Savings Schemes have been increased by 36 to 110 basis points.

The profit rate on Special Savings Certificates jumped to 12 percent following an uptick of 110 basis points. Similarly, the rate on Regular Income Certificates climbed to 12.12 percent after an increase of 96 basis points.

Additionally, the profit rate on Behood Savings Certificates reached 12.96 percent after a 36-basis-point raise. Furthermore, the rate on the Sarwa Islamic Savings Account increased by 59 basis points to 11.84 percent.

Meanwhile, short-term investment rates also saw an upward revision: the return on three-month certificates rose to 11.12 percent (up by 26 basis points), six-month certificates increased to 11.50 percent (up by 64 basis points), and one-year certificates reached 11.72 percent following an increase of 44 basis points. **WP**

WORLD

DTM

Macron Rejects Claims Muslims Behind French Riots

French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday blamed "foreign leaders," including those "on the other side of the Atlantic," for trying to exploit France's tense social climate for their own political agenda.

Protests over soaring living costs have led to widespread rioting and looting. U.S. President Donald Trump has used the violence to rally his political supporters, making unsubstantiated claims that Muslim migrants are responsible for the unrest.

Trump has urged Macron to "close your borders and take control before it is too late!"

Macron responded by saying there "has been foreign manipulation of information in the aftermath" of the looting in Paris and other French cities last weekend.

"And that has



led to comments that are as unacceptable as they are stupid, from many people, including foreign leaders," he said. Asked by a reporter if he was referring to Trump, Macron replied: "Among others." Macron added: "We've seen AI-generated images depicting scenes that never actually happened in France. We've had people claiming that we were invaded by hordes of migrants and Islamists, which is completely false." Macron did not specify which AI-generated images he was referring to, nor how he knew the content was false.

Macron and Trump once enjoyed a good relationship but Trump regularly mocks the French president in his public speeches. "The fact is, all the people who are speaking ill of our country right now are people who don't love our country," Macron said. "So those people really bother me." AP

Australian MP Loses Legs After Being Hit By Car

Doctors have amputated both of Australian federal lawmaker Helen Haines' legs as she remains in critical condition after being repeatedly hit by a car in an apparent act of political violence, her husband said Wednesday.

The 65-year-old independent politician is receiving treatment in a Melbourne hospital where she was flown by helicopter.

Phil Haines, her husband, gave the family's first public comments on her condition since she was hit by a Toyota Land Cruiser SUV in her hometown of Wangaratta on Monday, speaking hours after a man accused of running her over made an initial appearance in court.

Haines' husband said her left leg was amputated on Monday and her right leg was amputated on Wednesday after doctors abandoned hope of saving it.

"The good news in all this is that Helen is alive and she's stable. That is the most important thing for our family," the husband told reporters in Melbourne.

"We are grateful and thankful that at this stage, both her heart and her mind are in good shape," he said.

He added that their 40th wedding anniversary will be

in November. Earlier Wednesday, Brendan Nugent, a 43-year-old man from nearby Tarravongee, appeared in the Wangaratta Magistrates' Court on Wednesday charged with intentionally causing serious injury, dangerous driving causing serious injury and causing harm to a federal official.

Nugent didn't apply for bail or enter a plea. He will remain in custody until his next court appearance in February. Police have yet to determine a motive.

Nugent's lawyer Chirag Patel told Magistrate Allison Vaughan that his client was suffering from potential mental health issues and a concussion. The lawyer did not explain how Nugent had been concussed.

Patel said Nugent suffered from a neurological condition, idiopathic transverse myelitis, but had not been diagnosed with any mental health problems.

The rare condition damages the spinal cord's protective myelin sheath and disrupts nerve signals between the brain and body. This leads to rapid muscle weakness, sensory loss, pain, and bladder and bowel dysfunction, according to the Cleveland Clinic medical center.

Witnesses say the driver rammed his victim, pinning her against her own car before reversing and ramming her a second time. AP



Climate Action 'Dangerously Short': UN Chief

Guterres said deep and immediate cuts were needed to protect humanity from worsening impacts but instead "emissions remain at record levels. And national climate plans and current policies fall dangerously short".

Global commitments to cut planet-heating emissions are falling far short of the Paris climate goals and put the world on course for 2.6C warming this century, the UN warned Wednesday.

The report by the United Nations

Environment Programme (UNEP) lays bare the chasm between rhetoric and action when it comes to tackling global warming, and the challenge before political leaders at November's COP31 climate summit.

Even if countries deliver their latest climate pledges in full, global temperatures could still rise 2.6C above pre-industrial levels by 2100, said the annual Emissions Gap Report.

That would blow past the historic goal agreed in Paris: keeping warming well below 2C while striving for a safer 1.5C. Any chance of keeping to 1.5C had been "lost" due to decades of insufficient climate action, the report said.

"The world can no longer avoid overshooting the 1.5 degree limit, and the consequences are already devastating," said UN chief Antonio Guterres in a statement to launch the closely-watched report.

"Deadly floods, brutal heatwaves, raging wildfires, lost lives, crippled economies, deepening inequalities, and those least responsible are suffering first and worst."

Overall, global greenhouse gas emissions in 2025 were broadly on a par with record levels in 2024, with the difference between the two years too small to call, the report said.

Carbon emissions just from burning coal, oil and gas -- the main driver of climate change -- rose slightly in 2025 compared to the previous year.

Guterres said deep and immediate cuts were needed to protect humanity from worsening impacts but instead "emissions remain at record levels. And national climate plans and current policies fall dangerously short".

Sticking just with current policies would see warming hit 2.8C, the report said. AP



153 Killed In Drone Strike On Abyei Market

A drone strike on a market in Abyei, a border region disputed by Sudan and South Sudan, hit a nearby fuel depot, killing at least 153 people and igniting a fire that was still burning Tuesday, a local official said.

Yohanna Akol Ngor, the Abyei administration's caretaker information minister, blamed Sudan's military for Monday's attack on Amiet Market, north of Abyei town.

Ngor told The Associated Press by phone Tuesday that the death toll was continuing to rise as the fire burned. A senior Sudanese military officer said the army carried out a drone strike Monday targeting fuel tankers arriving from South Sudan that he said were bound for the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

The officer said those killed were RSF members and people involved in fuel smuggling. "We do not target civilians," he said. The AP could not independently verify his account of the targets or the identities of those killed. The officer said the strike took place outside the demilitarized zone along the border with South Sudan. In a statement Tuesday, the U.N. secretary-general condemned drone attacks near Amiet Market and Todachi, saying dozens of civilians, including women and children, had been killed and many others injured. The statement did not identify who carried out the attacks. AP



US Envoy Secures Release Of American In Russia

Russia on Wednesday released a retired American teacher who had been imprisoned on charges of fighting as a mercenary in Ukraine, U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff said Wednesday at a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg.

The release of Stephen Hubbard had been foreshadowed a day earlier in Washington, when President Donald Trump told reporters at the White House that he had talked with Putin "at length" about the issue and had asked him to free the Michigan man.

Hubbard is the second American detainee in just over two months to be freed by Russia, and his exit from custody occurred not only during a visit by Witkoff but also at a time when Trump has taken a series of actions meant to benefit Russia as Washington's alliance with Ukraine shows signs of fraying. Hubbard was sentenced after a closed trial in 2024 to nearly seven years in prison. Prosecutors said he had signed a contract with the Ukrainian military after Russia sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, and that he fought alongside them until being captured two months later. The U.S. government under the Biden administration designated Hubbard as wrongfully detained. Witkoff, a key Trump administration envoy who has tried without success to steer Russia and Ukraine toward a settlement to end a war that will hit the five-year mark in February, thanked Putin for releasing Hubbard, telling him, "Because of you, he's going home to his family." AP

Malaysia Blocks Waze Use Citing Israeli Links

Malaysia on Wednesday banned civil servants from using the navigation application Waze, citing data security concerns due to its Israeli links.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's office said in a statement that the decision took into account the status of Waze Mobile Limited as a data controller incorporated in Israel and operating under Israeli law.

"Sensitive government information and the personal data of citizens must be protected from being exploited by the Israeli regime in a manner that could compromise national security and sovereignty," the statement said.

It said Anwar urged all Malaysians to also cease using Waze and switch to local alternatives such as the Tuju application, which offers robust security guarantees and personal data protection.

The "government maintains a firm stance; we will close any avenues that the Israeli regime could exploit to threaten the security of the nation and its people," the statement added.

Predominantly Muslim Malaysia is a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause and has no diplomatic or direct economic ties with Israel. The government has consistently backed Palestinian statehood and condemned Israeli actions in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Waze restriction adds a digital security dimension to that policy. Waze was developed in Israel before it was bought by U.S. tech company Google in 2013. AP



SPORTS



Nawaz Praises Minhas, Vows Fitness Push

Pakistan batter Hasan Nawaz has praised young all-rounder Arafat Minhas for his impressive bowling performance against England, while acknowledging the need to improve his own fitness after scoring a valuable 79 in the second match of the ODI tri-series on Tuesday.

Pakistan defeated England by 87 runs at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, defending a total of 302 for nine to take control of the contest. Hasan played a significant role with the bat, scoring 79 off 74 deliveries. Speaking during the post-match press conference, Hasan lauded Arafat for his ability to bowl with control under challenging conditions, describing the young spinner as a talented prospect for Pakistan cricket. "The way Arafat came in later and took two or three wickets, it is not easy to bowl like that in these conditions," Hasan said, praising the spinner's accuracy and composure. **APP**



Pakistan Overtake Australia In ICC ODI Rankings

Pakistan have moved up to fourth place in the ICC Men's ODI team rankings, overtaking Australia after securing consecutive victories against Sri Lanka and England in the ongoing ODI tri-series at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Pakistan have climbed to fourth with 103 rating points, while South Africa occupy third place with 104 points. India remain at the top of the rankings with 115 points, followed by New Zealand in second place with 109.

The latest improvement comes after Pakistan registered an emphatic 87-run victory over England on Tuesday, extending their winning run in the tournament. All-rounder Arafat Minhas was the standout performer, scoring 59 off 58 deliveries before claiming career-best figures of 6/40

MEN'S ODI TEAMS ICC RANKING		
RANK	TEAMS	RATING
1.	INDIA	115
2.	NEW ZEALAND	109
3.	SOUTH AFRICA	104
4. ▲ [+1]	PAKISTAN	103
5. ▼ [-1]	AUSTRALIA	102
6.	ENGLAND	94
7.	SRI LANKA	94
8.	AFGHANISTAN	92
9.	BANGLADESH	82
10.	WEST INDIES	79



to dismantle England's batting line-up. Hasan Nawaz top-scored for Pakistan with 79 off 74 balls, while Faheem Ashraf provided a late flourish with a quickfire 39 off 26 deliveries. Saad Baig also made a valuable contribution, scoring 35 as Pakistan recovered from 81-4 to post a competitive total of 302-9.

In response, England were bowled out for 215, falling well short of their 303-run target despite contributions from Tom Banton, who scored 57, and Ben Duckett, who added 45. Minhas played a decisive role in England's collapse, claiming crucial wickets, including those of Will Jacks and Adil Rashid in successive deliveries. He subsequently ran out Gus Atkinson to complete a remarkable all-round display and seal Pakistan's convincing victory. **APP**

After Two Wins, Minhas Looks To Lahore

Pakistan all-rounder Arafat Minhas has expressed confidence in carrying the momentum of two consecutive victories into the Lahore leg of the ODI tri-series, following his outstanding all-round performance against England in the second match at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Pakistan defeated England by 87 runs on Tuesday, with Minhas playing a pivotal role by scoring 59 runs and claiming six wickets for 40 runs.

Reflecting on the team's progress, the all-rounder said Pakistan would assess the playing conditions before finalising their combination for the upcoming matches. "It depends on the conditions, and we will go with the combination that suits the best. We have won two matches here, and we will take the momentum gained in Rawalpindi into the Lahore leg and try to give our best," he said in a post-match interview shared by the Pakistan Cricket Board. **APP**



Spain Extends World No.1 Reign

Spain extended their lead over the United States atop the FIFA/Coca-Cola Women's World Rankings in the latest update on Tuesday after the recent international window concluded.

La Roja, which have been No. 1 in the rankings since August 2025, played the US twice during the recent window on American soil, pulling out a 2-0 win in Washington, DC on Oct. 10 and playing to a 2-2 draw in Chester, Pa., on Oct. 13.

The rest of the top nine was unchanged, with Germany, England and Japan completing the top five, followed by France, Brazil, Sweden and Canada.

The only new addition to the top 10 in these updated rankings is Denmark, which climbed two spots to 10th, marking the first time it has been in the top 10 since August 2010. Netherlands and North Korea fell one spot each to 11th and 12th, respectively. Malawi, which reached the final of the Women's Africa Cup of Nations over the summer to qualify for its first Women's World Cup next year in Brazil, was the biggest riser, jumping 49 spots to 104th. Egypt, who have lost their last three matches by a combined margin of 15-3, fell the most, dropping 14 spots to No. 113. The FIFA/Coca-Cola Women's World Rankings will next be updated on Dec. 7. **REUTERS**



LeBron Stuns Knicks On Sixers Debut

All eyes were on LeBron James as the 2026-27 NBA season tipped off, with the league's all-time leading scorer making a winning debut for the Philadelphia 76ers in his record 24th season. The 41-year-old finished with 14 points, nine rebounds and seven assists as the new-look Sixers defeated defending champions the New York Knicks 106-100 at Madison Square Garden, Elsewhere on opening night.



Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Oklahoma City Thunder past the San Antonio Spurs, while the Detroit Pistons overturned a 22-point deficit to beat the Boston Celtics. James, who joined Philadelphia after seven seasons with the Los Angeles Lakers, became the first player in NBA history to reach 24 seasons in the league. He marked the milestone by wearing a special-edition 24th-season jersey patch, which he will wear throughout the 2026-27 season.

Tyrese Maxey led Philadelphia with 28 points, while fellow new arrival Jaylen Brown added 19 and Joel Embiid scored 13 as the Sixers spoiled a night that began with the Knicks raising their championship banner and receiving their rings. Philadelphia's defense proved crucial, with the Sixers limiting New York to 42 points in the second half following an adjustment that saw James defend Karl-Anthony Towns while Embiid, who was in foul trouble, was given more freedom away from the Knicks center. **NEWS DESK**

PSG Beat Barca, Liverpool, Man City Win

Paris St Germain underlined their status as European champions by beating Barcelona 4-2 in a blockbuster Champions League clash on Tuesday, while Liverpool and Manchester City also claimed victories.

Desire Doue, Lucas Hernandez, Vitinha and Fabian Ruiz scored for PSG, with Xavi Espart and Lamine Yamal twice pulling Barcelona level in the second half.

Alexis Mac Allister scored twice as Liverpool fought back from two goals down to beat Villarreal 4-3 in a thrilling encounter at Anfield.

Phil Foden scored a hat-trick to lead Manchester City to



1 win over AEK Athens at the Etihad Stadium, with Elliot Anderson and Rayan Cherki also on the scoresheet as Erling Haaland was rested.

PSG outlast Barcelona. Barcelona arrived at the Parc des Princes with a perfect record across all competitions this season, but PSG proved more clinical in a breathless contest to hand the Catalans their first defeat of the campaign.

The relentless tempo took its toll, with PSG's Ousmane Dembele, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Marquinhos, along with Barcelona's Dani Olmo, all forced off through injury.

PSG peppered the Barcelona goal in the opening five minutes, with Kvaratskhelia hitting the post, before the game settled into a rhythm. The hosts gradually took control of midfield and went ahead after Yamal surrendered possession in his own half, allowing Doue to drive a fierce low shot into the corner. Goalkeeper Joan Garcia produced several saves to keep Barcelona in the contest before Espart, making his first Champions League start, created and finished a superb move to equalise in the 55th minute.

Ferran Torres hit the post against his former club before Hernandez headed PSG in front from a corner in the 72nd minute, starting a burst of four goals in 14 minutes. Lamine equalised again for Barcelona with a brilliant individual effort in the 79th minute, before Vitinha responded for PSG with a fine strike 109 seconds later. **REUTERS**