

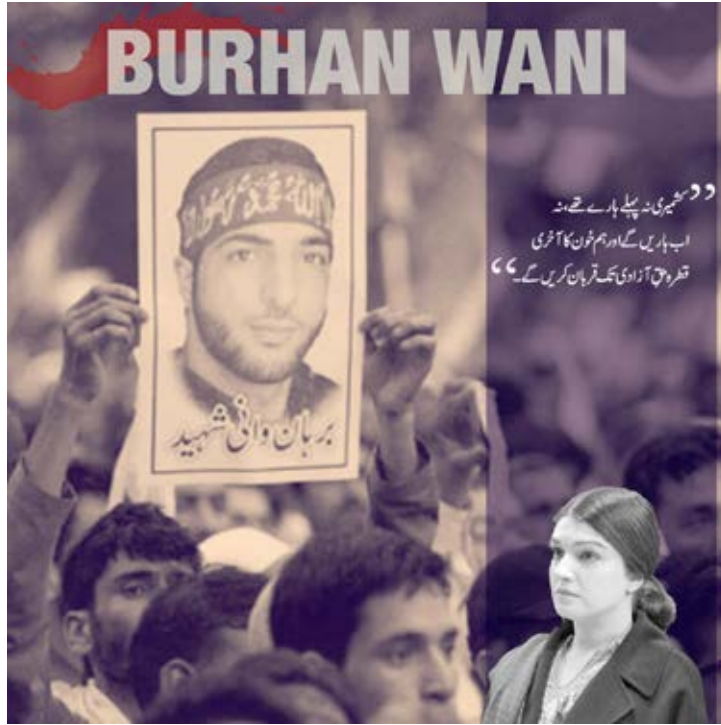
Mushaal Mullick pays tribute to Burhan Wani on 8th Martyrdom Anniversary

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organization and former Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, paid tribute to Burhan Muzaffar Wani on his eighth martyrdom anniversary, describing him as a lasting symbol of the Kashmiri people's struggle for freedom.

In a video message, Mushaal Mullick said Burhan Wani's courage and determination inspired a new generation of Kashmiris and transformed the resistance movement in Indian-administered Kashmir. She said his commitment to the cause of self-determination continues to motivate Kashmiri youth despite ongoing challenges.

She stated that Burhan Wani effectively used modern communication platforms to highlight the situation in Kashmir and bring international attention to alleged human



rights concerns. According to her, his efforts helped amplify the voices of young Kashmiris and strengthened the movement for their political aspirations.

Mushaal Mullick said that the legacy of Burhan Wani lives on through thousands of young Kashmiris who continue to advocate for their rights and seek international attention to developments in the region. She added that the sacrifices of those who lost their lives would remain an important part of the collective memory of the Kashmiri people.

Reaffirming support for the right to self-determination, she said the peaceful political struggle would continue in line with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. She also urged the international community and global human rights organizations to take notice of the humanitarian situation in Kashmir and called for attention to the detention of Kashmiri political leaders.

CM Maryam Nawaz Pays Tribute to Burhan Wani on Martyrdom Anniversary

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday paid tribute to Burhan Wani, a prominent leader of the freedom movement in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), on the anniversary of his martyrdom.

In a special message issued by the Directorate General Public Relations, Government of the Punjab, the Chief Minister described Wani as a true hero of the people of IIOJK. She said his sacrifice demonstrated that every Kashmiri is inspired by the spirit of freedom and self-determination.

CM Maryam Nawaz affirmed that Pakistan will continue to raise the voice of the Kashmiri people and advocate their just cause at all international forums.

She also urged the international community, including the United Nations, to fulfill its legal and moral responsibility by ensuring the implementation of relevant UN resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir.

Praying for the people of Kashmir, the Chief Minister expressed hope that the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir would soon achieve freedom.

Election Commission dismisses social media rumors of election delays in Azad Kashmir

City Desk

MUZAFFARABAD: Election Commission spokesperson denied reports circulating on social media that elections in some constituencies of Azad Kashmir and some constituencies of Poonch are being postponed. The spokesperson said that all measures regarding the upcoming elections in Azad Kashmir are underway. He said that all 33 constituencies of Azad Kashmir and all 12 constituencies of refugees Jammu and Kashmir-based Pakistan have been holding elections since July 27. Don't trust the fake news that is spreading spokesman clarified.



DIG Faisal Bashir Memon Chairs Meeting on Prevention of Motorcycle Snatching and Street Crime in SBA Range



Anwar Adil Khanzada

NAWABSHAH: An important meeting to address motorcycle snatching, theft, and street crime was held today at the Range Office Shaheed Benazirabad under the chairmanship of DIGP Shaheed Benazirabad Range Faisal Bashir Memon.

The meeting was attended by SSP Shaheed Benazirabad, SSP Sanghar, SP Naushahro Feroze, SDPOs of the three districts, representatives of CPLC, and other relevant officers.

Reviewing crime data and investigation progress for this year, DIGP Memon directed that intelligence-based operations against organized groups involved in motorcycle snatching and theft be made more effective. He stressed tightening surveillance of habitual and professional criminals and making inter-district coordination more active to crack down on criminal networks.

He instructed all district police officers to adopt a coordinated strategy for crime prevention, expedite operations, ensure the arrest of declared and absconding accused, and utilize all available resources to protect public life and property.

The meeting also reviewed progress on arrests, recoveries, mobile phone snatching, and other investigative matters.

Concluding the meeting, DIGP Faisal Bashir Memon said police operations will be made more effective and productive to establish law and order, eliminate crimes, and provide a safe environment for citizens in Shaheed Benazirabad Range.

Council Toba Tek Singh Intensifies Crackdown on Illegal Constructions

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: The District Council Toba Tek Singh has intensified its campaign against illegal constructions and buildings erected without approved building plans, reaffirming its commitment to enforcing building regulations and planned urban development across the district. Speaking to our correspondent, District Officer Planning (DOP) Hafiz Shoaib said that on the special directives of Deputy Commissioner Umar Abbas Mela and under the supervision of Chief Officer District Council Chaudhry Kashif Mahmood, indiscriminate operations are being carried out against illegal constructions throughout the District Council's jurisdiction. He stated that obtaining approval of building plans from the District Council before starting any residential, commercial, or other construction project is mandatory under the relevant rules. Legal action is being taken against violators, and notices have been served to owners of buildings found under construction without approved plans. Hafiz Shoaib noted that unauthorized constructions not only violate building regulations but also hinder planned urban development and create administrative and legal complications. He said the District Council is committed to strict enforcement of planning laws and building codes. Appealing to the public, he urged citizens to get their building plans approved and complete all legal formalities before starting construction to avoid penalties, legal proceedings, or suspension of work. He made it clear that the anti-encroachment and anti-illegal construction campaign will continue without discrimination and no violator will be granted any concession.



Calls on

LAHORE: Speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmad Khan calls on Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif.



Photo: Spokesman

Large Rally Held in Muzaffarabad to Mark Martyrdom Day of Burhan Wani

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: A big rally was held here on July 8 to observe the Martyrdom Day of Burhan Wani, organized by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell.

The rally began at Burhan Muzaffar Wani Chowk and concluded at Ulmadar Chowk. Participants carried Pakistani and Kashmiri flags and chanted slogans including 'Ham Pakistani Hain Pakistan Hamara Hai', 'Go India Go Back', and 'Burhan Muzaffar Wani Hamara Hero Hai'.

Key participants included Director Liberation Cell Raja Sajad Latif,



Chairman Development Authority Muzaffarabad Yasir Gilani, businessman leader Abdul Razzaq Khan, representative of Hurriyat leader

Ghulam Hassan Butt, Mushtaq-ul-Islam, Chairman Shabab-ul-Muslimeen representatives, government employees, refugees and a large number

of youth.

Addressing the rally, speakers said July 8 is observed as Resistance Day in Jammu and Kashmir. They urged youth to learn from Burhan Wani's life, calling him a symbol of defiance against India. Speakers noted that the struggle for independence continues, citing that 97,000 Kashmiris have been martyred in the last 35 years, 22,000 women have been widowed, and over 4,000 youth are imprisoned.

They called on the United Nations to grant Kashmiris their right to self-determination in accordance with its resolutions, and said India must withdraw from occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan's Supreme Court Leads Landmark Conference on Prison Reform and Human Rights



Spokesman Report.

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan held an important national conference on prison reforms under

the National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee. Raja Saeed Akram Khan, Federal Minister of Law and Justice, Chief Ministers of the four provinces,

high federal and provincial officials and other distinguished participants of the non-partisan system I agreed on a joint strategy for reform, rehabilitation of prisoners, protection of human rights and

modernization of prison management. At the conclusion of the conference, the Joint Declaration on Prison Reform was adopted, making a commitment to effective, integrated and sustainable reform.



Islamabad
30° - 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:22 am
Zohr 12:13 pm
Asr 5:12 pm
Maghrib 7:21 pm
Isha 9:03 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad 1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 &
& Rescue Services 4451122
Motorway Police 9266044
Motorway Police 9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance 115
PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
Railway Inquiry 117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi 5555489
CAA 9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11
DHQ 5556311-4
RGH 9290301-7
Holy Family 9290322-7
PIMS 9261170-79
Polyclinic 9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA 9221334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864
TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan
Corporation 9209224
Potohar Town 9209224

Zahid Bakhtawari Meets New DC Rawalpindi, Pledges Cooperation for City Development



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Vice President of Rawalpindi Cantonment Board Zahid Bakhtawari, accompanied by former Vice President Inayat Ullah, met Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Captain (R) Nadeem Nasir to congratulate him on assuming office.

Bakhtawari expressed confidence that the DC's professional competence, integrity, and people-friendly approach will help improve governance, development, and resolution of public issues in Rawalpindi. During the meeting, they discussed city development, civic facilities, public welfare, and matters of mutual interest. Bakhtawari emphasized that close coordination between district administration and public representatives is essential for better civic services and effective project implementation.

DC Captain (R) Nadeem Nasir thanked them for their wishes and reaffirmed that the district administration will work with all institutions and representatives to ensure transparent governance and timely resolution of citizens' problems.

Punjab Launches 'Apna Ghar, Mehfooz Ghar' Programme to Improve Housing Safety

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved the launch of the 'Apna Ghar, Mehfooz Ghar' (My Home, Safe Home)

programme under the existing 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' and 'Apni Zameen, Apna Ghar' schemes. Officials informed the meeting that over 180,000 homeless families had been approved for interest-free housing loans, with 170,000 families already receiving funds.

During a special meeting, the chief minister approved two new categories



under the programme. Interest-free loans of Rs500,000 will be provided to repair and strengthen weak or dilapidated houses, while loans of Rs1 million will be offered in easy installments for constructing an additional floor.

The meeting reviewed progress on the 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' and 'Apni Zameen, Apna Ghar' schemes. Officials informed the meeting that over 180,000 homeless families had been approved for interest-free housing loans, with 170,000 families already receiving funds.

So far, Rs217.8 billion has been released under the programme, 134,343 houses have been completed, and another 27,500 homes are nearing completion. More than 1.27 million applications have been received from homeless families.

Maryam Nawaz directed authorities to release the second installment of housing loans within three days and simplify the loan application process. She also instructed that 2,000 families who received free residential plots under the 'Apni Zameen, Apna Ghar'

programme should also be provided construction loans.

The chief minister emphasized that the housing initiatives are flagship welfare projects of the Punjab government and directed officials to ensure transparency, maintain existing eligibility criteria, and avoid placing any additional financial burden on low-income families. She reaffirmed the government's commitment to helping citizens build safer and more secure homes across Punjab.

Inauguration

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) local hotel Aziz Boolani inaugurating the art exhibition of Ali Muzaffar "REENTRY" at Satrang Gallery, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

UMT and FBCCI Sign Historic MoU to Boost Pakistan-Bangladesh Cooperation

Bureau Report

DHAKA: Chairman of the University of Management and Technology (UMT), Ibrahim Hasan Murad, met with FBCCI Secretary General M. D. Alamgir at the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry headquarters in Dhaka.

During the meeting, UMT and FBCCI signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen institutional, academic, and economic cooperation. With this, UMT becomes the first Pakistani university to sign a MoU with FBCCI.

Both sides discussed collaboration in trade, education, technology, investment, agriculture, livestock, electric vehicles, food security, and advanced traceability systems. Ibrahim Murad announced scholarships, internships, and joint research opportunities for Bangladeshi students and faculty at UMT. He said UMT's academic standards and innovation ecosystem can support the professional development of Bangladeshi youth. Alamgir praised Murad's contribu-



tions to governance and education, and assured that UMT's proposals would be shared with relevant ministries and stakeholders in Bangladesh. FBCCI reaffirmed its commitment to facilitating practical

follow-up. The meeting concluded with Alamgir presenting a souvenir to Chairman Murad, marking the start of a new chapter of partnership between UMT and FBCCI.

Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan Addresses Large Gathering in Dhirkot, Pays Tribute to Burhan Wani

Bureau Report

DHIRKOT: All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference President and former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan addressed a large gathering here, reaffirming his party's commitment to the Kashmir freedom movement and Pakistan's ideology.

Speaking to thousands of workers who welcomed him in a procession from Kohala to Dhirkot, Sardar Attique said that by the grace of Allah, no one will be allowed to speak against Pakistan, the armed forces, the ideology of Pakistan, or the Tehreek-e-Azadi Kashmiri.



He stated that a clear message is being sent from the land of Kashmir against attacks on ideological, doctrinal, religious, moral, and territorial security.

He paid glowing tribute to the martyrs and Ghazis of Jammu and Kashmir, and particularly to Burhan Muzaffar Wani on his martyrdom

anniversary, saying Wani's mission continues and his sacrifice remains a source of inspiration.

Sardar Attique said the Muslim Conference has a history of success in Azad Kashmir elections with the support of people who follow Quaid-e-Millat Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas and Mujahid-e-Awwal. He expressed confidence that the party will achieve victory in the upcoming elections as well.

He concluded by saying he has no concerns about his security, adding that "the blood of Mujahid-e-Awwal runs in my veins."

District & Sessions Judge Kotli Chairs Meeting to Review Election Code of Conduct



Bureau Report

KOTLI: A coordination meeting of Returning Officers and administration was held under the chairmanship of District and Sessions Judge/District Returning Officer Muhammad Idris Bhati on Wednesday to review preparations for the upcoming elections.

The meeting was attended by Returning Officers of 6 constituencies, District Magistrate Raja Imran Shaheen, SP Adil Ahmad Langrial, DSP, SDM Headquarters, Assistant Election Commissioner, and District Information Officer.

Officers briefed the participants on the implementation of the Election Commission's Code of Conduct during the election campaign and put forward various recommendations.

Addressing the meeting, DRO Muhammad Idris Bhati said the law is equal for all during the ongoing election campaign. He stated that the general elections will provide a peaceful and free environment and equal opportunity to all candidates, and that voters will be able to cast votes for candidates of their free choice.

He emphasized that disrupting the electoral process is a serious illegal act and strict legal action will be taken against violators.

Khawaja Saad Rafique reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to Kashmir, calls for national unity and dialogue

Raaza Naqvi

ATTOCK: PML-N Leader Addresses Party Workers in Attock Ahead of AJK Elections. ATTOCK, 08 July: Former Federal Minister and senior PML-N leader Khawaja Saad Rafique addressed party office-bearers, PML-N Youth Wing members, AJK Assembly candidates, and workers at the residence of MNA Sheikh Aftab Ahmad in connection with the Azad Jammu and Kashmir general elections scheduled for July 27. Speaking at the gathering, Rafique expressed detailed views on Pakistan, Kashmir, Kashmiri refugees, national unity, and political reconciliation. Attendees included MNAs Sheikh Aftab Ahmad, Malik Sohail Khan Kamrial, Tahira Aurangzeb, former Federal Minister Anusha Rahman, AJK Assembly member Raja Muhammad Siddique, and other party leaders. Rafique reaffirmed his faith in the ideology of Pakistan and said allegations that Pakistan has wronged Kashmiris lack convincing evidence. Calling himself a Kashmiri refugee, he said no nation loves Pakistan more than the Kashmiri people, noting their sacrifices in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan's consistent political, diplomatic, and moral support. He highlighted that Pakistan's Armed Forces fought several wars for Kashmir with thousands of martyrs, and said these sacrifices cannot be erased by propaganda.



He emphasized that disrupting the electoral process is a serious illegal act and strict legal action will be taken against violators.

Rotary Club of Lyallpur holds seat change meeting, new cabinet takes charge

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: The Rotary Club of Lyallpur's seat change meeting was held at a local hotel with FCCI President Ferooz Yousuf Sheikh as chief guest. Guests and members were welcomed with flower bouquets. The ceremony began with Quran recitation and the national anthem.

Outgoing President Shabbir Ahmed asked Treasurer Mirza Zahid to present the annual performance report. Former Secretary Ali Murtaza highlighted membership growth and challenges faced during the year.

The newly elected cabinet was welcomed with garlands and bouquets: President Rotarian Junaid Mahmood Baig, Secretary Rotarian Syed Muhammad Sharjeel, and Treasurer Habibur Rehman Gul. President FCCI Ferooz Yousuf Sheikh expressed hope that the new team will work with dedication for the club's development.

In his address, President Junaid Mahmood Baig said it was a great honor to lead the club. He thanked members for their trust and shared his vision to "build a founder Rotary Club." He added that if even one child feels more confident about their future due to Rotary's work, the year would be successful.

Special guest Ferooz Yousuf Sheikh praised the club's founding vision of uniting Faisalabad's top leaders and hoped for impactful projects this year.

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almass Ayoub Sabir**
 Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**
 Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**
 Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**
 Bureau Chief Karachi: **Khurram Jaffrani**
 (jaffrani@adpluse.pk)
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)
Head Office: AIMS Building, Street No. 4, H-8/1, Islamabad.
 spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com
 Phone: +92 51 2227123,
 WhatsApp +92 346 5008408
Karachi office: A111, Block C, Gulsha-e-Jamal, PRECHS,
 Karachi Phone: 021-33399390
 Email: spokesmankarachi@gmail.com
Lahore Office: 7-E, Samanberg, Johar Town.
 spokesmanlahore@gmail.com
 Daily The Spokesman available only on annual subscription

NATO Confronts Trump's Bullying

The Ankara Summit exposes an alliance increasingly forced to manage the temperament of the American presidency while struggling to manage the security of the Western world.

The very architecture of the Ankara Summit reveals NATO's political discomfort. The alliance has already established the precedent of tailoring its highest-level meetings to President Donald Trump's well-reported aversion to prolonged diplomatic sessions. At The Hague, diplomats deliberately designed a single two-and-a-half-hour working session around his limited attention span and the fear of disruptive outbursts or an early departure. Ankara has retained the same philosophy of compression: although the summit formally stretches across July 7 and 8, the principal leaders' working session is expected to last only about three hours.

This is extraordinary for an alliance confronting simultaneous crises in Ukraine, Iran, the Strait of Hormuz, Greenland, the American military drawdown from Europe and growing uncertainty over the future of Article 5. NATO is not short of issues to discuss; it is short of political confidence that its most powerful leader will tolerate a prolonged and potentially confrontational discussion. The compressed format is therefore not an administrative convenience. It is a symptom of an alliance increasingly managing the temperament of the American presidency while struggling to manage the security of the Western world.

The official agenda sounds conventional: defence investment, increased

military production and continued support for Ukraine. NATO's own summit programme emphasises progress towards the historic 5 percent defence investment plan and the conversion of increased spending into production, cooperation and joint procurement. Leaders are expected to reaffirm collective defence while demonstrating that Europe is finally responding to Washington's demand for greater burden-sharing.

But the real Ankara agenda is much larger than the official document. President Trump arrived with open grievances against European allies over their refusal to materially support the American-led war against Iran. He has publicly questioned the value of America's existing NATO commitment and argued that Washington gives far more to Europe than it receives in return. The Iran war has transformed an old argument over defence spending into a deeper dispute over political loyalty.

Europe's answer is equally significant. NATO's Article 5 is not a blank cheque obligating every ally to participate in every war initiated by one member outside the alliance's treaty area. Washington did not seek collective NATO authorisation before the Iran conflict. Several European governments therefore refused to convert an American-Israeli military campaign into a NATO war. Trump interpreted their refusal as abandonment. Europeans viewed their decision as an exercise of sovereign judgement.

This difference goes to the heart of NATO's emerging crisis. The United States increasingly appears to define alliance solidarity as support for its global military priorities. Europe still sees NATO primarily as the shield of the Euro-Atlantic area against Russia. Washington wants burden-sharing, military access and political loyalty. Europe wants American deterrence but greater freedom to decide when and where it fights. These are no longer minor diplomatic differences. They are competing interpretations of the alliance itself.

The Strait of Hormuz has now forced the Middle East directly onto the Ankara table. NATO foreign ministers are meeting Gulf counterparts from Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates amid continuing tensions over the strategic waterway. France and Britain have proposed a multinational maritime mission to facilitate safe navigation.

The emerging U.S.-Iran peace framework has further complicated the strategic picture. Iran is no longer being treated merely as an isolated regional state. The war and the struggle over Hormuz have demonstrated its capacity to disrupt maritime trade, absorb enormous military punishment and impose costs on adversaries. Whether one supports Tehran or opposes it, this strategic reality cannot be ignored. The question confronting NATO is whether the West continues attempting to militarily break Iran or accepts that any durable

Middle Eastern security architecture will eventually require negotiations with it.

Türkiye's position is equally important. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has directly opposed the provision of F-35 fighter aircraft and advanced fighter engines to Türkiye, warning that such transfers could disturb the Middle Eastern balance of power and weaken Israel's air superiority. Yet Trump arrived in Ankara signalling openness to restoring Türkiye's access to advanced American combat aircraft. On July 7, he announced the lifting of U.S. defence sanctions on Türkiye and said Washington would consider the F-35 sale.

The political language between Ankara and Israel has become exceptionally harsh. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan described Israel as a burden on humanity, prompting Israeli accusations of genocidal incitement. Netanyahu has simultaneously intensified his campaign against advanced weapons transfers to Türkiye. Behind these verbal exchanges lies a much larger strategic struggle: who will shape the post-Iran-war Middle East?

The Gaza peace process adds another layer to this confrontation. Hamas, despite all the controversy surrounding it, has now taken a visible administrative step required by the peace framework. Israel, meanwhile, continues military operations in Gaza, and Netanyahu has previously directed Israeli forces to expand their territorial control. If a peace plan guaranteed and promoted by Washington is continuously eroded on the ground, the credibility of American diplomacy itself comes into question.

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

10th Death Anniversary of Abdul Sattar Edhi

President Asif Ali Zardari has paid rich tribute to renowned humanitarian Abdul Sattar Edhi on his 10th death anniversary, describing him as an enduring symbol of compassion, humanity, and selfless service whose remarkable legacy continues to inspire generations in Pakistan and around the world.

In a message issued to mark the occasion, the President said the nation remembers Abdul Sattar Edhi with profound respect and gratitude for dedicating his entire life to serving humanity without any distinction of religion, caste, ethnicity, or social status. He said Edhi devoted every moment of his life to easing the suffering of the poor, abandoned, sick, and vulnerable, setting an unparalleled example of generosity and public service.

President Zardari said Abdul Sattar Edhi proved that true greatness lies not in wealth or power but in serving fellow human beings with sincerity, humility, and unwavering dedication. He added that Edhi's life reflected the highest ideals of compassion and kindness, making him one of Pakistan's most respected and admired personalities.

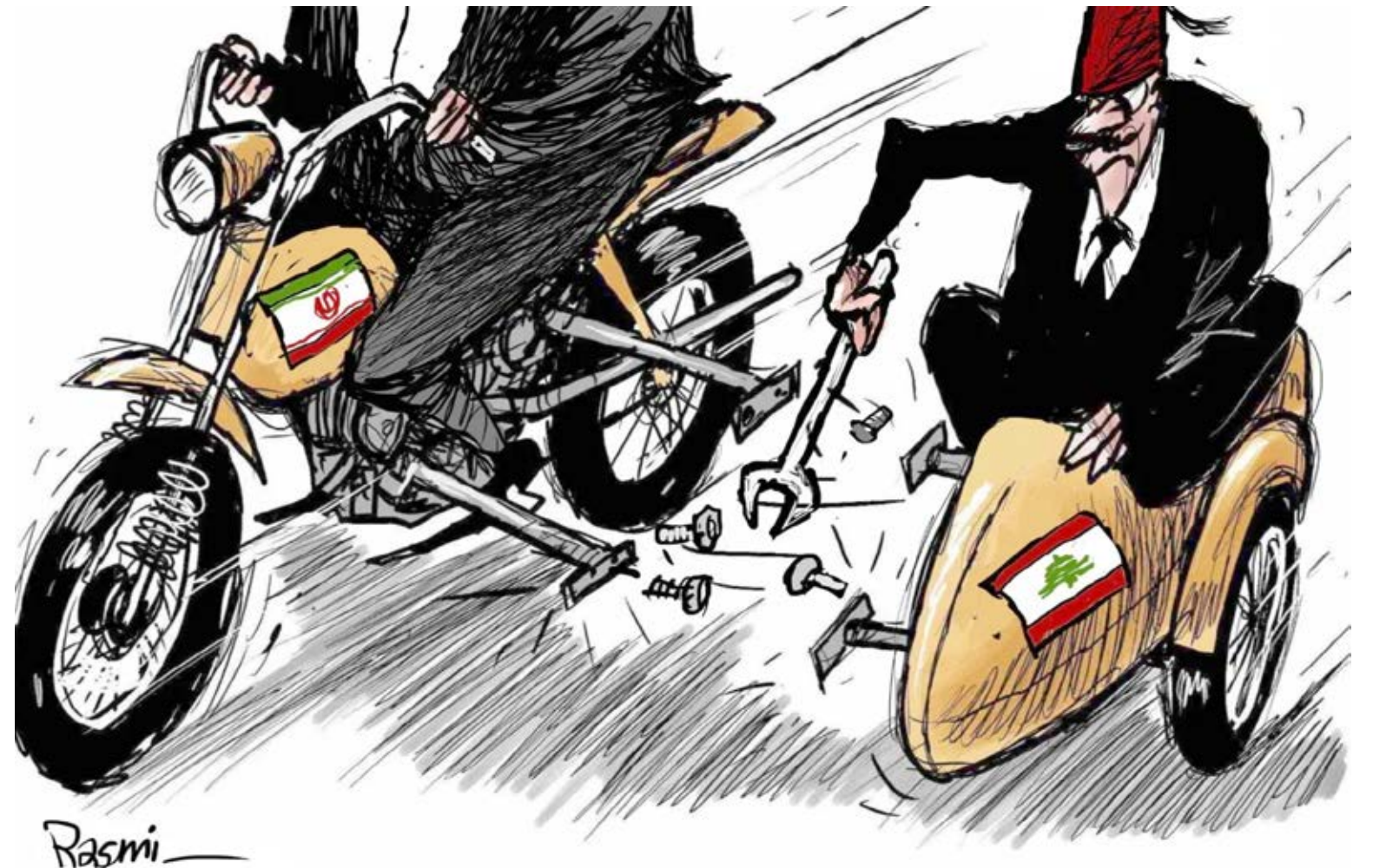
Highlighting the achievements of the Edhi Foundation, the President noted that the organization established the world's largest volunteer ambulance network, providing emergency medical assistance and humanitarian relief to millions of people across the country. He said the foundation's extensive network of orphanages, shelters, rehabilitation centres, maternity homes, and free kitchens has offered hope, protection, and dignity to countless vulnerable citizens for decades.

The President described Abdul Sattar Edhi as not only one of Pakistan's greatest philanthropists but also a source of immense national pride whose vision transformed humanitarian service into a lasting institution. He said the welfare network established by Edhi continues to serve millions of people, reflecting his lifelong commitment to humanity and social welfare.

President Zardari urged the nation to honour Edhi's memory by embracing the values he championed throughout his life, including compassion, charity, tolerance, and social responsibility. He stressed that the spirit of selfless service should continue to guide future generations in building a more caring and inclusive society.

The President also reaffirmed the nation's commitment to carrying forward Abdul Sattar Edhi's humanitarian mission, saying that his extraordinary legacy serves as a beacon of hope and a reminder that individuals can bring meaningful change through dedication and kindness.

Concluding his message, President Asif Ali Zardari prayed that Allah Almighty grants Abdul Sattar Edhi the highest place in Jannah and blesses Pakistan with the strength to uphold his noble mission of serving humanity with compassion, dignity, and unwavering commitment.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Ashraf Al-Awsat)

The Silent Mental Health Crisis Among Pakistani Youth

Eushaib Ahmed

Pakistan is home to one of the largest youth populations in the world. Young people are often called the future of the country because they have the potential to bring innovation, economic growth, and positive social change. However, behind this potential lies a growing problem that is often ignored, the mental health crisis among Pakistani youth.

I see many of my peers struggling with stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion. The pressure to perform well academically, meet family expectations, build a successful career, and keep up with the fast-paced digital world has become overwhelming for many young people. While these challenges are real, conversations about mental health are still surrounded by stigma, making it difficult for students to seek help.

Research shows that this issue is more serious than many people realize. A study published in the Journal of Mental Health involving 1,124 adolescents in Rawalpindi found that 17.2% experienced symptoms of depression, while 21.4% suffered from anxiety. The study also found that financial difficulties and stressful life events significantly affected young people's mental well-being (Khalid et al., 2019).

Another recent study published in the Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association reported that more than half of the adolescents surveyed showed

mild to severe symptoms of depression. Factors such as family income, age, and gender were found to influence mental health (Mahmood et al., 2026). These findings remind us that mental health is not just a personal issue, it is a social challenge that deserves serious attention.

One of the biggest contributors to this crisis is academic pressure. Many students believe that their entire future depends on grades and examinations. The fear of failure often creates constant stress and anxiety. Instead of encouraging learning and personal growth, our education system sometimes makes students feel that one poor result defines their worth.

Economic uncertainty also adds to this burden. Many graduates worry about unemployment, rising inflation, and limited career opportunities. After years of hard work, the fear of not finding a stable job leaves many young people feeling discouraged and uncertain about their future.

Social media has become another important factor. Although it helps people stay connected, it also encourages constant comparison. Every day, young people are exposed to carefully edited images of success, wealth, and happiness. This creates unrealistic expectations and often leads to low self-esteem, loneliness, and the feeling that everyone else is doing better.

Unfortunately, many young Pakistanis remain silent because mental health is still considered a taboo topic. Some fear being judged, while others worry that they will not be taken seriously. As a result, many continue to

struggle without seeking professional support. The World Health Organization has emphasized the importance of raising awareness and encouraging open conversations about mental health, especially among young people.

Another challenge is the limited availability of mental health services. Pakistan has a shortage of trained psychologists and psychiatrists, particularly in rural areas, making professional support inaccessible for many people who need it the most.

Despite these challenges, there is hope. Schools and universities should provide counselling services and organize awareness programs to educate students about mental health. Families should create supportive environments where young people feel comfortable discussing their emotions without fear of criticism. Society must understand that seeking help is a sign of courage, not weakness.

Mental health should receive the same attention as physical health. A healthy mind enables students to learn, work, build relationships, and contribute positively to society. If we continue to ignore this issue, we risk losing the full potential of an entire generation.

Pakistan's youth are one of its greatest strengths. Investing in their mental well-being is not only an investment in individuals but also in the country's future. It is time to replace silence with understanding, stigma with compassion, and indifference with action.

The writer is a student at National Defense University, Islamabad

Pakistan's Youth: From Unemployment to Digital Opportunity

M Rashid Tabassum

Pakistan's greatest strength is its young population. More than a quarter of its population is between the ages of 15 and 29, giving the country one of the largest youth populations in the region. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the country's population reached 252.09 million in 2025, with young people making up around 26.56 percent of the total. If equipped with the right skills and opportunities, this generation can become a driving force behind economic growth. Yet unemployment, inflation, and limited job opportunities continue to leave many young Pakistanis uncertain about their future.

The employment picture reflects this growing challenge. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics' Labour Force Survey 2024-25, nearly 5.9 million Pakistanis are unemployed, while the overall unemployment rate has reached 7.1 percent. The situation is even more difficult for young people. Among those aged 15 to 24, unemployment stands at 12.8 percent, highlighting the widening gap between education and employment. Meanwhile, traditional sectors such as manufacturing have struggled to generate enough jobs for the millions entering the labour market each year.

Despite these challenges, the digital economy is creating new opportunities. Freelancing and online work have become viable alternatives, allowing thousands of young Pakistanis to earn through digital marketing, graphic design, web development, content writing, software development, and mobile app development. Rather than waiting for conventional jobs, many are building careers by serving clients worldwide.

Recent data from the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), Payoneer, and the World Bank (2022-2024) indicate that Pakistan's freelance economy is steadily moving toward higher-value digital services. Software and app development generated approximately US\$180 million, while SEO and digital marketing contributed around US\$100 million. Overall, Pakistan's IT freelancing industry has grown by nearly 50 percent, with annual earn-

ings exceeding US\$1 billion. These figures demonstrate that Pakistani freelancers are increasingly moving into high-value digital services and strengthening the country's digital economy.

However, digital opportunities also bring new risks. The rapid growth of online work has been accompanied by fraudulent investment schemes, fake job advertisements, and financial scams promoted through social media. According to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), 142,272 cybercrime complaints were received during 2025, many involving financial fraud and data theft. This highlights the importance of strengthening digital literacy, cybersecurity awareness, and online safety alongside technical skills.

Encouragingly, government and private initiatives are expanding training in freelancing, e-commerce, digital marketing, and information technology. Programmes such as DigiSkills, the Prime Minister's Youth Skills Development Program, Bano Qabil by Alkhidmat Foundation, and Apna Kamao by Markazi Muslim League are helping thousands of young Pakistanis develop market-relevant skills and improve their employment prospects.

As Pakistan expands digital skills training, the nature of work itself is rapidly changing. Artificial intelligence, remote work, e-commerce, and the broader digital economy are reshaping employment worldwide. AI is creating new opportunities while transforming the way professionals write, code, conduct research, design products, and deliver digital services. For a young country like Pakistan, adapting to these changes is no longer optional—it is essential.

Addressing unemployment requires more than creating traditional jobs. Closer collaboration among government, educational institutions, and the private sector is essential to promote modern skills, quality education, reliable internet access, financial services for freelancers, and effective cybersecurity. By investing in digital skills, innovation, and equal opportunities, Pakistan can transform its young population from job seekers into entrepreneurs, innovators, and the driving force behind tomorrow's economic growth. *The writer is a freelance journalist, based in Lahore, can be reached at rashid.yapk@gmail.com*

President Zardari's Kyrgyzstan Visit Opens a New Chapter in Pakistan-Central Asia Relations



Analysis

Naveed Ahmad Khan

President Asif Ali Zardari's official visit to the Kyrgyz Republic marks another significant step in Pakistan's efforts to strengthen its engagement with Central Asia. More than a ceremonial diplomatic exchange, the visit reflected a shared commitment to transforming decades of goodwill into meaningful cooperation in trade, connectivity, education, healthcare, parliamentary diplomacy, and regional development.

The visit came at a time when Pakistan is actively pursuing its "Vision Central Asia" policy, aimed at expanding economic, political, and cultural ties with the region. Kyrgyzstan, with its strategic location and friendly relations with Pakistan, has emerged as an important partner in this vision. The warm welcome extended to President Zardari by Kyrgyz President Sadyr Zhaparov and senior government leaders highlighted the close and long-standing friendship between the two countries.

One of the major achievements of the visit was the high-level meeting between President Zardari and President Zhaparov. The two leaders reviewed the full spectrum of bilateral relations and agreed to enhance cooper-

ation in trade, energy, connectivity, investment, education, culture, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges. They also reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the CASA-1000 energy project, which has the potential to improve regional energy cooperation and economic integration.

President Zardari emphasized that Kyrgyzstan occupies an important place in Pakistan's regional foreign policy. He recalled President Zharov's landmark visit to Pakistan in December 2025—the first by a Kyrgyz President in two decades—which resulted in the signing of 16 agreements and memorandums of understanding. His own visit built upon that momentum and demonstrated both countries' determination to translate diplomatic goodwill into practical outcomes.

An important feature of the visit was the focus on parliamentary diplomacy. President Zardari met Speaker of the Kyrgyz Parliament Mamataliev Marlen Abdyrakhmanovich, where both sides discussed expanding inter-parliamentary cooperation and strengthening institutional links. The President stressed that parliamentary exchanges play a vital role in ensuring continuity in bilateral relations and promoting mutual understanding between the peoples of both countries.

Healthcare cooperation also received a boost with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Health and Pakistan's Drug Regulatory Authority (DRAP). The agreement is expected to promote collaboration in pharmaceutical regulation, healthcare standards, and



medical cooperation, opening new opportunities for both countries.

Beyond official meetings, the visit showcased the cultural affinity shared by Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan. President Zardari visited the historic Ata Beit

Memorial Complex, where he paid tribute to Kyrgyz national heroes and reflected on the country's struggle for independence. His visit to the Rukh Ordo Cultural Centre further highlighted the importance of cultural diplomacy in strengthening bilat-



eral ties. Traditional Kyrgyz music and dance performances, along with a state banquet hosted in his honour, reflected the warmth and sincerity of the host nation.

The two leaders also exchanged views on regional and international developments, reaffirming their commitment to peace, stability, and cooperation through dialogue. President Zardari congratulated Kyrgyzstan on its election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2027-2028 term and reiterated Pakistan's desire for close coordination at the United Nations, the OIC, ECO, and SCO.

The visit sends a positive message about Pakistan's growing diplomatic engagement beyond South Asia. As global economic



priorities increasingly focus on regional connectivity, stronger relations with Central Asian countries can provide Pakistan with new opportunities in trade, investment, energy, tourism, and transport. Improved air

and land connectivity, educational exchanges, and business partnerships can create long-term economic benefits for both nations.

President Asif Ali Zardari's visit to Kyrgyzstan therefore represents more than a diplomatic engagement—it symbolizes a shared vision for regional cooperation, mutual prosperity, and lasting friendship. With political trust firmly established and new agreements taking shape, Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan appear well-positioned to elevate their relationship into a comprehensive strategic partnership that benefits both countries and contributes to greater stability and economic integration across Central Asia.



IRS Seminar Highlights China's People-Centred Development Model on CPC's 105th Anniversary

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) hosted a seminar marking the 105th anniversary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), where speakers highlighted China's remarkable socioeconomic transformation and its growing contributions to global development, describing people-centred governance as the foundation of its success.

IRS President Ambassador Jauhar Saleem said China's rise from widespread poverty to becoming the world's second-largest economy was one of the greatest development success stories in modern history. He noted that nearly 800 million people had been lifted out of poverty, emphasizing meritocracy, effective governance



and long-term planning as key factors behind China's progress.

Experts, including Professor Gao Jian of Shanghai International Studies University, said China's modernization reflected a governance model tailored to its own national conditions rather

than Western political systems. Former ambassadors Masood Khalid and Moin ul Haque highlighted the role of China's Five-Year Plans, peaceful development strategy, and expanding support for the Global South through initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

(CPEC).

Chinese Deputy Head of Mission Shi Yuangqiang said China's achievements stemmed from a people-centred approach, sound governance and continuous innovation. He noted that CPEC has generated over US\$25.5 billion in investment and created more than 260,000 jobs in Pakistan, while reaffirming China's commitment to advancing CPEC 2.0.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Rana Ihsaan Afzal urged Pakistan to adopt long-term, people-focused policies and strengthen local governance. Concluding the seminar, Ambassador Saleem said China's experience offers valuable lessons for developing countries, stressing that "politics is for people, not people for politics."

Muslim World League Secretary-General Arrives in Islamabad for Official Visit

Kiran Asim

ISLAMABAD: At the special invitation of the Acting President of Pakistan / Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, the Secretary-General of the Muslim World League, H. E. Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, arrived in Islamabad on an official visit.

The distinguished guest was warmly received upon arrival by Senator Hafiz Abdul Karim, Senator Muhammad Talha Mehmood along with Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, H. E. Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan and senior officials of the Senate Secretariat.

The visit reflects the strong and enduring ties between Pakistan and the Muslim World League and underscores their shared commitment to promoting peace, interfaith harmony, moderation, and unity across the Muslim world.

During his visit, H. E. Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa is expected to hold high-level meetings with the Acting President/Chairman



Senate and other national leaders to discuss matters of mutual interest, including the promotion of religious harmony, tolerance, and enhanced cooperation in areas of common concern.

SBP's "InvestPak" a Landmark Scheme for Financial Inclusion and Economic Growth: Mian Zahid Hussain

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Mian Zahid Hussain, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum (PBIF) & All Karachi Industrial Alliance (AKIA), Chairman National Business Group Pakistan (NBG), Chairman FPCCI Policy Advisory Board and Former Provincial Minister of Information Technology, has stated that the State Bank of Pakistan's launch of "InvestPak" is a welcoming and positive step toward finan-

cial inclusion and digital access to government securities. He noted that instead of viewing it as a mere savings scheme, it should be considered a comprehensive financial reform. If utilized correctly, its far-reaching benefits will directly impact national trade, industry, and the productive economy.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that currently, a significant portion of banks' financial resources is being consumed by government financing, crowding out the private sector. During the

first eleven months of fiscal year 2026, the government borrowed approximately Rs. 3.5 trillion from banks, while the private sector received a meager Rs. 986 billion. This trend is highly detrimental to commercial and industrial growth. If 'InvestPak' successfully mobilizes funds from common citizens, companies, insurance institutions, and the non-banking sector, the government's reliance on commercial banks will be significantly reduced. Consequently, this will create ample lending space for



SMEs, exporters, agriculture, logistics, and other key sectors. Mian Zahid Hussain pointed

out that by May 2026, the country's total public debt had reached an alarming level of Rs. 81.95 trillion, comprising Rs. 58.11 trillion in domestic debt and Rs. 23.84 trillion in external debt. Under these circumstances, breaking the monopoly of commercial banks and broadening the investor base by providing the public with direct access to Market Treasury Bills (MTBs), Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIBs), and Government Ijarah Sukuk was inevitable. This platform will not only expand the

scope of the debt market but also promote long-term financial avenues like corporate bonds and leasing. He warned that Pakistan cannot achieve industrial expansion and export competitiveness solely by relying on bank loans. However, the government must ensure that "InvestPak" does not merely become a new and convenient avenue to fulfill the borrowing needs. The true efficacy of this system will only be realized if it is accompanied by strict fiscal discipline, a reduction in government expenditures,

and the promotion of investment. Mian Zahid Hussain emphasized that no country can achieve sustainable economic growth by merely channeling public savings into unproductive government debt. To turn "InvestPak" into a successful and balanced model, it is imperative that the financial resources generated through it are diverted away from non-productive government expenditures and directed toward employment-generating industrial activities and the augmentation of national exports.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
181,629.36	186,255.55
Day's High	Day's Low
185,215.56	179,504.34
Index Value	Change
45,802,442,304	-4626.19
Percentage	Time
-2.48%	8 Jul, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,489.04	-176.84
Percentage	Time
-1.66%	8 Jul, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
52,283.22	-641.93
Percentage	Time
-1.21%	8 Jul, 1:11 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
66,819.05	-1,437.91
Percentage	Time
-2.11%	8 Jul, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	193.75	196.95
Bahrain Dinar	739.59	749.85
Canadian Dollar	196.94	199.95
China Yuan	38.10	38.85
Danish Krone	42.56	43.25
Euro	318.86	322.40
Hong Kong Dollar	35.07	36.06
Indian Rupee	2.80	3.15
Japanese Yen	1.7033	1.8012
Kuwaiti Dinar	888.26	898.90
Malaysian Ringgit	67	67.85
New Zealand \$	157.47	160.25
Norwegians Krone	27.99	28.29
Omani Riyal	724.38	734.58
Qatari Riyal	75.29	76.25
Saudi Riyal	74.50	75.05
Singapore Dollar	214.13	217.45
Swedish Korona	28.25	28.90
Swiss Franc	344.06	348.25
Thai Bhat	8.55	8.80
U.A.E Dirham	76.10	76.80
UK Pound Sterling	373.38	376.92
US Dollar	278.95	279.15

*Do Energy-Efficient
Air Conditioners
Really Save Money?
TCL Tests Claims
with Certified
Cooling*

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: With rising temperatures and electricity costs in Pakistan, consumers are questioning if "energy-saving" ACs actually deliver. The lack of clear standards makes it hard to separate marketing from real performance.

TCL has launched the VoxIN T4 AC to address this, offering certified, measurable efficiency. Backed by SGS certification and TCL's T-AI Energy Saving Technology, the VoxIN T4 claims up to 37% more savings vs conventional inverters and up to 75% vs non-inverters.

Built for Pakistan's extremes, it cools from -20°C to 65°C. Smart features include Offline Voice Control, Wi-Fi via TCL Home App, and real-time energy monitoring.

The message: choose ACs based on tested, certified results, not just claims. The VoxIN T4 is available at TCL flagship stores and leading electronics markets nationwide.

*Gold prices fall by
Rs 4,700 per tola*

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold witnessed a significant decline in the local market on Wednesday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola decreasing by Rs4,700 to settle at Rs430,236, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold fell by Rs4,029 to Rs368,858, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold declined by Rs3,693 to Rs338,132.

In the international market, the price of gold dropped by \$47 to settle at \$4,078 per ounce.

Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola decreased by Rs138 to Rs6,421, while the price of 10 grams of silver went down by Rs119 to Rs5,504.

Finance Minister reviews SECP reforms, stresses ease of doing business

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chaired a high-level review meeting at the headquarters of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) to assess the regulator's performance and reform initiatives undertaken between January and June 2026.

SECP Chairman Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu and senior officials briefed the minister on efforts to promote investment, strengthen capital markets, improve corporate governance, and modernize the regulatory framework through digital transformation and process improvements. The meeting also reviewed legislative reforms, investor facilitation measures, and enforcement actions.

The finance minister appreciated the progress made by the SECP and emphasized the need to maintain a balance between faci-



ilitating businesses and ensuring effective regulation. He stressed that technological innovation should be accompanied by process simplification to reduce compliance costs, improve

service delivery, and enhance the overall ease of doing business.

Officials informed the meeting that more than 18,000 new companies had been regis-

tered during the review period, while significant progress had been achieved in post-incorporation services, licensing, and digital regulatory processes. Ongoing projects include an AI-based company registration system, the conversion of regional offices into Business Facilitation Centres, a Central UBO Registry Portal, and the digitization of shareholding records of unlisted companies.

The meeting also reviewed measures to deepen capital markets and broaden investor participation. SECP reported that 10 Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) had been approved, with several more in the pipeline.

Reaffirming the government's support for regulatory reforms, Senator Aurangzeb said the administration remains committed to promoting investment, strengthening capital markets, improving financial inclusion, and supporting the sustainable development of Pakistan's corporate and financial sectors.

Meeting

Rabat, Morocco | 7 July 2026 Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain holds a meeting With H.E. Mr. Ahmed El Bouari, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco, to discuss enhancing bilateral cooperation in agriculture, food security, agricultural trade, livestock development, and capacity building.



Photo: PID

End of PRI scheme sparks concerns over remittances, says ECAP's Malik Bostan

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: ECAP Chairman Malik Muhammad Bostan said the crackdown on Hawala/Hundi has strengthened the rupee, with the dollar dropping from Rs340 to around Rs279. If sustained, it could fall below Rs250.

Bostan revealed the State Bank of Pakistan, under IMF pressure, has decided to discontinue the Pakistan Remittance Initiative (PRI) launched in 2009. The scheme helped raise remittances from \$9 billion to nearly \$41 billion annually.

He urged reforms instead of abolition to keep incentives for overseas Pakistanis. With 15 million Pakistanis abroad and 500,000-700,000 leaving yearly, remittances



add \$2 billion annually. Despite PRI's end, he expressed confidence that SBP and exchange companies will maintain low-cost, legal remittance services. Forex reserves have risen from \$3 billion to \$22 billion, largely due to formal remittances.

MG Pakistan Marks CKD Line-Off for All New MG HS Hybrid+ and Super Hybrid

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: MG Pakistan held the CKD line-off ceremony for the All New MG HS Hybrid+ (HEV) and Super Hybrid (PHEV), marking a key milestone in bringing advanced hybrid mobility to Pakistani consumers.

The line-off reflects MG Pakistan's commitment to locally assembling globally relevant vehicles that combine intelligent technology, modern design, efficiency, safety, and practicality. With these models, MG strengthens its position in Pakistan's growing hybrid SUV segment.

Company officials said the MG HS Hybrid+ and Super Hybrid offer a refined driving experience with smart features, contemporary styling, and efficient hybrid performance aimed at modern drivers.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr. Amir Nazir, Chief Operating Officer at MG Pakistan, said: "The CKD line-off of the All New MG HS Hybrid+ and Super Hybrid is a proud moment for MG



Pakistan. It reflects our commitment to bringing world-class hybrid technology, advanced features, and the MG experience closer to customers across Pakistan."

With this milestone, MG Pakistan

continues to support the country's shift toward smarter, more efficient mobility. Pakistani consumers will soon begin seeing the MG HS Hybrid+ and Super Hybrid on local roads.

U. S. FDA Authorizes 20 ZYN Nicotine Pouches with Modified Risk Claim



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: On June 30, 2026, the U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued Modified Risk Tobacco Product (MRTP) orders for 20 ZYN nicotine pouch products, allowing Philip Morris International U. S. to market them with a specific modified risk claim in the USA.

Following extensive scientific review, the FDA concluded the claim is accurate and that marketing these pouches would benefit the

population. The authorized claim states: "Using ZYN instead of cigarettes puts you at a lower risk of mouth cancer, heart disease, lung cancer, stroke, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis."

The products were already approved for sale via PMTA in January 2025. This marks the first time FDA has granted MRTP orders for nicotine pouches. The authorization applies only to the 20 reviewed ZYN products and includes post-market surveillance requirements.

PM Reviews MSME Progress; SMEDA Raises Concerns Over SME Financing and Tariff Policy

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chaired a meeting to review the progress of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), during which key challenges facing the sector, including access to finance and the impact of recent tariff reforms, were discussed.

According to SMEDA Director Mashood Khan, he briefed the Prime Minister on issues affecting the growth and sustainability of MSMEs in Pakistan.

He pointed out that although the State Bank of Pakistan has encouraged commercial banks to increase lending to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), businesses continue to face significant difficulties in obtaining financing. He said the loan approval process remains lengthy, complex, and burdensome, discouraging many entrepreneurs from seeking financial support.

Mashood Khan further stated that some commercial banks appear reluctant to extend SME financing and, in certain cases, reportedly



prefer paying regulatory penalties rather than increasing their SME

lending portfolios.

He also highlighted concerns over the future of existing SME industries, particularly Pakistan's auto parts manufacturing sector. According to him, recent tariff reductions and import facilitation measures announced in the federal budget, along with proposed policy changes, have created uncertainty for local manufacturers.

He stressed that while the government aims to expand the MSME sector and promote industrial growth, policy measures should

also safeguard existing industries to ensure sustainable economic development.

Mashood Khan expressed the view that supporting local manufacturers and improving access to affordable financing are essential for strengthening Pakistan's MSME sector. He added that these issues were brought to the Prime Minister's attention to help align future policies with the government's broader vision of promoting domestic industry, employment generation, and long-term economic growth.

Hamdard Shura Highlights Population Growth, Resource Challenges and Family Planning Awareness

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Hamdard Foundation Pakistan organized a meeting of the Hamdard Shura Karachi Chapter at its Corporate Head Office on the theme "Growing Population and Declining Resources: A Matter for Reflection." The session was presided over by former Interior Minister Gen (R) Moinuddin Haider, while Hamdard Foundation President Sadia Rashid also attended.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr. Mehwish Mubarak, Deputy Director of the Population Welfare Department, Government of Sindh, said Pakistan's rapidly growing population presents both opportunities and challenges. She noted that if the country's young population receives quality educa-

tion, healthcare, skills, and employment, it can become a major national asset. However, without adequate investment, it could place increasing pressure on the economy and public services.

Dr. Mubarak said nearly 1.4 million children are born annually in Pakistan, increasing demand for schools, hospitals, housing, food, clean water, and jobs. She emphasized the need for population balance, explaining that the government now promotes family planning based on a family's financial capacity and ability to provide quality care and education.

She highlighted Sindh's efforts to increase male participation in family planning through dedicated awareness centers and the appointment of male doctors in every district. The depart-

ment has also introduced an AI-powered voice assistant to provide confidential information on reproductive health and family planning.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Rizwana Ansari stressed that sustainable development requires balancing population growth with available resources. She underscored the importance of women's empowerment, quality child upbringing, and ensuring a safe working environment for family planning workers.

Members of the Hamdard Shura, including Justice Zia Pervez, Senator Abdul Haseeb Khan, Sultan Chawla, Prof. Dr. Tanveer Khalid, and other distinguished participants, also shared their views on addressing population challenges through education, awareness, and coordinated national efforts.



Pakistan, Bangladesh Agree to Enhance Cooperation in Education and Research

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chairman of the University of Management and Technology (UMT), Ibrahim Hasan Murad, met Bangladesh's Education Minister, ANM Ehsanul Hoque, in Dhaka to discuss expanding bilateral cooperation in education, research, academic exchange, and human capital development.

During the meeting, both sides agreed to strengthen the Pakistan-Bangladesh Knowledge Corridor by promoting collaboration in higher education, scientific research, innovation, faculty and student exchange programmes, joint research projects, and institutional partnerships.

Minister Ehsanul Hoque praised Ibrahim Hasan Murad for his contributions to education, social development, and youth empowerment, describing his efforts to promote quality education and



create opportunities for young people as exemplary.

Speaking on the occasion, Ibrahim Hasan Murad said stronger educational

partnerships between Pakistan and Bangladesh would create new academic, research, and professional opportunities for the youth of both countries. He emphasized that investment in education, innovation, and skills development is essential for building knowledge-based societies and achieving sustainable economic growth.

Murad also highlighted the importance of enhancing access to world-class education and research opportunities to improve the capabilities of young people and contribute to long-term regional prosperity.

The meeting concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to strengthening educational ties and expanding institutional cooperation. On the occasion, Ibrahim Hasan Murad presented a commemorative souvenir to Bangladesh's Education Minister, ANM Ehsanul Hoque, as a gesture of goodwill and friendship.

Smoking is a dangerous and silent killer for human body

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Sun Consult Director Sultan Mehmood has urged adult smokers to quit the habit, saying it is never too late to start protecting health and loved ones.

Speaking to *Asim Tanveer*, Mehmood acknowledged that quitting is difficult due to addiction and peer pressure. However, he said the benefits begin within hours. Blood pressure and heart rate drop, and over time the risk of lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, COPD, and reproductive health issues declines. Even heavy smokers gain years of life expectancy.

He added that quitting improves lung function, breathing, energy, immunity, skin, and teeth, while preventing gum disease and premature wrinkles.

Secondhand smoke also harms families. Children face more chest infections, asthma, and risk of low birth weight and SIDS. Quitting ensures cleaner homes and air.

With rising cigarette costs, Mehmood noted smokers spend on tobacco instead of food, health, and education, plus higher medical and cleaning bills. Quitting saves money and lives.



FPCCI Commemorates 75th Anniversary of Pakistan-China Diplomatic Relations

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) celebrated the 75th Anniversary of Pakistan-China diplomatic ties at its Lahore Regional Office.

FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh called the partnership one of the world's strongest, built on mutual trust and shared goals of peace and prosperity.

Attendees included Chinese Consul General H. E. Sun Yan, FPCCI Regional Chairman Zaki Aijaz, Punjab Ministers Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rehman and Chaudhry Shafay



Hussain, and members of the business community.

Zaki Aijaz said under PM Shehbaz Sharif and President Xi Jinping, relations have entered a new phase through CPEC 2.0, with priorities in SEZs, advanced manufacturing, IT, AI, renewable energy, agriculture, and youth entrepreneurship.

Consul General Sun Yan noted CPEC has brought billions in investment and thousands of jobs. Future focus will be on industry, agriculture, mining, textiles, education and innovation, plus training Pakistani astronauts. He stressed building a Chinese-proficient workforce.

PIDE Launches Internship Cohort 2026, Welcomes 140 Young Researchers from 62 Universities

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) launched its Internship Cohort 2026, welcoming 140 selected interns from 62 universities across Pakistan and abroad for a five-day orientation and training programme focused on economics, public policy, data science, management sciences, and information technology.

Addressing the opening session, PIDE Vice Chancellor and Planning Commission Member Dr. Nadeem Javaid linked the internship programme with the government's URAAN Pakistan vision, calling on young researchers to contribute towards achieving a trillion-dollar economy by 2035. He emphasized the need for evidence-based policymaking to address key national challenges, including youth unemployment, low exports, climate change, energy constraints, weak human capital, and fiscal pressures.

Dr. Javaid urged participants

to develop innovative ideas that could strengthen governance and support sustainable economic development.

PIDE Dean (Policy Advocacy) Dr. Faheem Jehangir said the programme received 4,883 applications, with 278 candidates shortlisted after a rigorous selection process. A total of 140 interns were selected for placement across 14 research centres, technical sections, and PSDP projects.

The orientation was also addressed by senior PIDE officials, who introduced interns to the institute's research, academic programmes, policy advocacy initiatives, CPEC-related work, and professional development opportunities.

PIDE management said the internship aims to connect talented young people with real policy challenges while equipping them with research, analytical, communication, and professional skills to contribute effectively to Pakistan's development and policymaking process.

Shine Humanity Expands with Six new Essential Healthcare Programs

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Reinforcing its commitment to improving access to quality healthcare, SHINE Humanity has expanded six new disease-specific health programmes across three of its clinics in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, bringing critical screening, diagnosis, treatment, counselling and follow-up care closer to underserved communities.

The newly expanded programmes include Asthma and Hepatitis C services at the clinic in Moro District; Asthma, Diabetes and Rabies programmes at the Sujawal clinic; and Asthma and Tuberculosis (TB) services at the Manshehra clinic.

The expansion builds on the success of SHINE Humanity's existing programmes, extending proven healthcare models to communities with limited access to specialised services.

The Moro district clinic, inaugurated earlier this year as SHINE Humanity's 16th clinic, now serves as a key healthcare hub for the surrounding population, while the Manshehra clinic marks the organisation's growing presence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The addition of these programmes reflects SHINE Humanity's continued efforts to strengthen primary healthcare by promoting early disease detec-

tion, timely intervention and sustained patient support.

"Access to quality healthcare should never depend on where someone lives," said Faheem Khan, CEO of SHINE Humanity. "By expanding these essential programmes across all our clinics, we are bringing life-saving screening, treatment and follow-up services closer to the communities that need them most. Our goal is not only to treat disease but also to empower individuals and families through early diagnosis, education and continuous care. This expansion represents another important step towards building healthier, more aware communities across Pakistan."

Through these new initiatives, patients will have greater access to preventive healthcare, disease management and long-term support under one roof. The programmes are designed to improve health outcomes by ensuring continuity of care while reducing the burden of preventable and treatable illnesses.

SHINE Humanity continues to expand its network of community-based healthcare services, delivering affordable, accessible and patient-centred care to vulnerable populations across Pakistan, with a focus on strengthening healthcare systems and improving the quality of life for thousands of individuals and families.



NATO Confronts Trump's Bullying

Continued from Page 4

The widening differences between Trump and Netanyahu therefore deserve closer attention. Their relationship remains strategically important, but disagreement over Iran and Türkiye is becoming increasingly visible. Netanyahu has acknowledged occasional differences with Trump over Iran and has strongly opposed Washington's possible F-35 sale to Ankara. Trump's willingness to lift sanctions on Türkiye despite Israeli objections is an unmistakable demonstration that the American President is prepared, at least on certain issues, to pursue interests that do not fully correspond with Netanyahu's preferences.

While the Middle East consumes NATO's alliance's most immediate European security crisis, Russian missile and drone attacks have intensified, with deadly strikes around Kyiv immediately before the summit. Ukraine urgently needs advanced interceptors, particularly against ballistic missiles. Yet the Iran war has exposed Western shortages of sophisticated air-defence systems and precision munitions. The same limited stocks are required to protect Israel, defend American forces and sustain Ukraine.

The summit may approve billions in arms contracts. NATO has already showcased at least \$50 billion in defence deals. Leaders may reaffirm their "ironclad commitment" to collective defence. They will speak of Ukraine, industrial production and the 5 percent spending target. The photographs will display unity.

But photographs cannot conceal strategic drift. The most revealing features of Ankara may be its compressed working session, the carefully managed encounters with Trump, the anxiety over American troop reductions, the disagreement over Iran, the contest between Türkiye and Israel, the struggle over Hormuz, the shortage of weapons for Ukraine and the extraordinary unresolved dispute over Greenland.

History may therefore remember Ankara not as the summit where NATO collapsed, but as the moment when Europe quietly began imagining NATO—and its own security—without unquestioned American leadership.

The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former Press Attaché to Malaysia and Former MD, SRBC. He is living in Michigan, USA.

2nd orientation session

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar and Chairman NAB Lt Gen (R) Nazir Ahmed in a group photo with the learned judges of the District Judiciary following the successful conclusion of the 2nd orientation session on the Anti-Money Laundering Framework on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

NAB Holds Second Orientation Session for District Judiciary on Anti-Money Laundering

By Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) organized the second orientation session for judges of the District Judiciary, Islamabad, focusing on anti-money laundering (AML) investigations and the global framework for tackling financial crimes.

Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar attended the

event as the chief guest, while NAB Chairman Lt Gen (R) Nazir Ahmed inaugurated the session. Senior NAB officials and experts from the Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) delivered technical presentations on money laundering investigations, the Anti-Money Laundering Act 2010, Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards, and intelligence-led investigations. Addressing the partici-

pants, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar emphasized the importance of strengthening coordination between investigative agencies and the judiciary, saying such initiatives enhance the legal system and ensure the protection of due process. He stressed the need for specialized judicial training to address evolving financial crimes and praised NAB for organizing the programme.

Chairman NAB Lt Gen (R) Nazir Ahmed said the growing sophistication of financial crimes, including digital and cross-border networks, requires close coordination between investigators and the judiciary. He emphasized that evidence-based investigations and continuous professional dialogue are essential for ensuring accountability and safeguarding Pakistan's

economic integrity.

The orientation session concluded with the distribution of certificates among participating judges, reaffirming NAB's commitment to strengthening institutional capacity and enhancing Pakistan's ability to combat corruption and financial crimes through effective collaboration between investigative bodies and the judiciary.

Religious, political and literary figures called on acting President Gillani separately



By Kiran Asim

ISLAMABAD: Religious, political and literary figures called on Acting President Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani separately at the Presidential Palace here on Tuesday. According to the Presidential Palace those who called on the Acting President included Prince Murad Nazir of Darbar Mohra Sharif Murree, former Member Provincial Assembly Mian Jahangir Pirzada Bhutta, Faisal Sakhi Butt and Rao Waqas.

Renowned poet Rehman Faris also called on the Acting President who presented him with copies of his works.

The Acting President appreciated his literary services and wished him further success. Matters of mutual interest, the overall situation of the country and issues related to public welfare were discussed during the meetings.

The Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani also mentioned the expected visit of Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Islamic World League, to Pakistan later this week. He expressed the hope that the visit would further strengthen efforts to promote interfaith harmony, tolerance and mutual respect in the country.

Pakistan Navy recovers wreckage of missing K2 Airways cargo plane



By Spokesman Report

The Pakistan Navy (PN) and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) on Wednesday located the wreckage of the missing K2 Airways Boeing 737 cargo aircraft in the Arabian Sea after a 12-hour search-and-rescue operation, while efforts continued to trace the five crew members on board.

The wreckage was recovered 53 nautical miles south of Ormara, following an extensive search involving naval vessels, aircraft and other maritime assets.

The Pakistan Navy said search-and-rescue operations remain underway to recover further evidence and locate the missing crew members.

According to the Pakistan Airports Authority, the Boeing 737 cargo

aircraft, operating from Sharjah to Karachi, reported a navigational system issue at 9:18pm PST on Tuesday.

Karachi Air Traffic Control immediately provided navigational assistance, but communication was lost shortly afterwards as radar showed the aircraft descending rapidly.

The aircraft had been returning to Karachi after undergoing repairs in Sharjah following an earlier technical fault.

An 11-member team from the Bureau of Safety Investigation has arrived in Karachi and launched a formal probe into the incident.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed authorities to intensify rescue efforts and ensure a thorough investigation into the crash.

Saudi envoy calls on DPM/FM Dar, discusses latest regional developments

By City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy on Wednesday called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on the latest regional developments following the signing of the Islamabad MoU and emphasized advancing collective efforts aimed at facilitating dialogue and diplomacy.

The ambassador conveyed appreciation for Pakistan's continued efforts for regional peace and security, including through R-4 and Pakistan's leading role in mediating the Islamabad MoU.

They reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations in all areas of mutual interest.



Mustafa Kamal Reviews Progress of PM's Hepatitis C Elimination Programme

By City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services Mustafa Kamal chaired a high-level meeting to review the Prime Minister's Hepatitis C Elimination Programme pilot phase in Islamabad. The Project Director briefed that the pilot aims to identify operational challenges before nationwide rollout. Kamal directed authorities to resolve all issues and streamline the system within 15 days. He said over 10 million people in Pakistan are estimated to have Hepatitis C, calling its elimination a national priority. "This is not merely a healthcare programme; it is a mission to safeguard the future of our nation," he stated. Kamal stressed the role of PIMS and Polyclinic Hospital, urged intensified public awareness, and appealed to Islamabad residents to get free screening. He assured free testing and treatment for all diagnosed patients, noting Hepatitis C is curable with early diagnosis

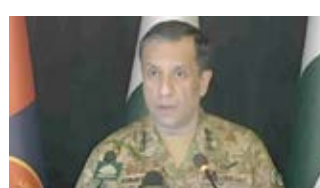
54 Terrorists killed in Balochistan operations, 42 civilians and security personnel martyred: DG ISPR

By Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Director General Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Wednesday said security forces killed 54 terrorists in three major counterterrorism operations across Balochistan over the past four days, while 42 civilians and security personnel were martyred in separate terrorist attacks.

Addressing a press conference, the military spokesperson said the recent violence reflected a coordinated campaign by terrorist groups allegedly backed by hostile forces. He claimed India was supporting the attacks through proxy groups to undermine Pakistan's peace, stability and development.

Providing details, Lt Gen Chaudhry said the first incident



occurred in Hanna Urak on the night of July 4-5, where terrorists attacked local residents. The civilians resisted the assault, forcing the attackers to retreat, but four people were martyred and six others injured. The second attack targeted a police checkpost guarding Pumping Station No. 3 of Mangi Dam in Ziarat district. Nine policemen embraced martyrdom after killing 15 terrorists. Security forces later launched a clearance operation in the surrounding mountains, where an additional 11 terrorists were eliminated. During the ongoing operation, another 18

policemen were martyred, bringing the total number of terrorists killed in the Ziarat operation to 26.

In the third incident, an Army convoy was attacked near Bela-Winder on the N-25 highway by militants belonging to the banned Baloch Liberation Army (BLA). Eleven soldiers, including a junior commissioned officer (JCO), were martyred, while 14 attackers were killed in the exchange of fire.

Summing up the operations, the DG ISPR said security forces had eliminated 54 terrorists in total while paying a heavy price, with 42 civilians and members of the security forces sacrificing their lives in the recent wave of terrorist attacks and counterterrorism operations. He reaffirmed the armed forces' resolve to continue operations until terrorism is completely eradicated.

Talal Chaudhry accuses KP Assembly of Promoting "VIP Culture" through new privileges

By City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry accused the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly of enacting "political bribery" by approving unprecedented privileges for lawmakers, calling it a contradiction of the party's pledge to end VIP culture.

Speaking to PTV News, he said the KP legislation grants toll tax exemptions, free government rest house accommodation, lifetime official blue passports for lawmakers and families, and free firearms licences.

Chaudhry clarified these measures are not binding on the federal government. He said blue passports

and prohibited-bore weapon licences are federal subjects, and issuance has been cut by nearly 50% and 95% respectively under PM directives.



He called the KP package "ridiculous," alleging it rewards legislators while ordinary citizens get no such benefits, and reaffirmed the federal government will not implement the provincial privileges.