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First Lady expresses concern over brutal murder of Hina Javed

First Lady Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari, MNA, Sunday, expressed deep concern and sorrow over the reported brutal murder of Hina Javed in Rawalpindi, and conveyed her solidarity and condolences to the bereaved family. "She called upon the Government of Punjab to ensure a thorough inquiry and proper investigation into the heinous crime."



Fazlur Rahman decries constitutional violations, law & order situation at Peshawar convention

Maulana Fazlur Rahman, Chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, delivered a wide-ranging address at a workers' convention in Peshawar on Saturday, criticizing the government over constitutional violations, military intervention in politics, and the deteriorating law and order situation in the country.

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Illumination

ISLAMABAD: A view of Parliament building illuminated with colorful lights ahead of Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi, which commemorates the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad SAW, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Field Marshal Asim Munir to visit Iran for key talks

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir is scheduled to visit Tehran on Monday, leading an official Pakistani delegation as Islamabad steps up diplomatic efforts to promote peace and stability in the region.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei confirmed the planned visit on Sunday, while two Pakistani government sources also confirmed it to Reuters. During his visit, Field Marshal Munir is expected to hold meetings with senior Iranian officials to discuss regional developments and efforts to reduce tensions between Iran and the United States.

The talks are expected to focus on advancing the peace framework outlined in a memorandum of understanding brokered by Pakistan, as well as Washington's latest sanctions threats against Tehran. Discussions may also cover recent agreements involving Pakistan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the situation involving the Houthis and broader security developments in the Middle East.

The visit follows a telephone conversation



sation on Saturday between Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Field Marshal Munir. According to Iranian media, the two discussed regional developments and ways to strengthen peace, stability and security.

Pakistan has played an important mediation role between Iran and the United States, including brokering a memorandum of understanding in June aimed at ending hostilities and creating space for further negotiations.

The visit comes amid heightened

tensions over Washington's planned sanctions, which US officials have described as potentially severe. Iran has warned of a possible response, while concerns have also grown over disruptions to shipping through the strategically important Strait of Hormuz.

Islamabad has consistently advocated dialogue and de-escalation, and the Tehran visit is expected to reinforce Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to prevent further regional instability and encourage peaceful negotiations.

DPM/FM to visit UK today



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar is scheduled to undertake an official visit to the United Kingdom from 24 to 28 August.

"The Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister will hold meetings with the UK Foreign Secretary, Ed Miliband, and the FCDO Minister of State for Pakistan, Stephen Doughty, as well as with other senior members of the UK Government," the Foreign Office Spokesperson, Sunday, said in a press release.

Dar will also meet with the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization to discuss the issue of Pakistani crew members held by Somali pirates aboard the MT Honour 25 oil tanker, in addition to a meeting with the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey.

The DPM/FM will also engage with British parliamentarians and representatives of the British-Pakistani community.

PM Shehbaz, Nawaz Sharif discuss Imran Khan's hospital transfer issue

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met with the PML-N President Nawaz Sharif at Jati Umra in Raiwind on Sunday and discussed with him the country's political situation as well as other important matters, including the transfer of former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan to a hospital.

Sources told that opposition parties' possible alliance also came under discussion at the meeting, which lasted for two hours.

They informed that two bigwigs of the PML-N also discussed the formation of the government in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and pondered over the names of Shah Ghulam Qadir and Tariq Farooq for the seat of the prime minister in AJK.



Contrary to the Supreme Court order to shift Imran Khan to Shifa International Hospital, the government shifted him to PIMS, which invited the wrath of the opposition parties.

The government, on the other hand, insisted it had implemented the apex court order by shifting the former PM to a hospital and getting his medical examination.

Tarar says severe weather halts effort to retrieve Dr Asma's body from Spantik

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said the rescue team tasked with retrieving the body of Dr. Asma from Spantik Mountain in the Karakoram range had to turn back due to severe weather conditions.

In a post on social media platform X, the minister said the team had reached almost near Camp-3, but heavy snowfall and strong winds forced it to return to Camp-2.

He said high-altitude porters were expected to reach Camp-3 and bring the body down to



Continued on Page 7

Balochistan CM names Duki road after acid attack survivor Dr Mahnoor

Bureau Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Sunday announced that a major road in Duki district has been named after Dr Mahnoor Nasir, a doctor who survived a brutal acid attack in June, in recognition of her bravery, resilience and service as a medical professional.

The 29-year-old doctor, who serves at Quetta's Civil Hospital, suffered severe burn injuries to her face, chest, legs and other parts of her body after a hospital employee allegedly threw acid on her.

The suspect, identified by police as Humayun Shah, was later killed in an encounter after law enforcement agencies traced him while he was allegedly attempting to flee on a bus.

MQM-P launches social media campaign for creation of new provinces in country

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) on Sunday launched a campaign on social media for the creation of new administrative units in the country. The party has also prepared a logo, which goes like this, 'Make new administrative units, Save Pakistan.'

The MQM-P's high command has directed the party workers to run the campaign on social media with full vigour.

In this connection, the party will also convene an All-Parties Conference.

It will invite the political parties in the favour of creation of new provinces to the conference.



There will be a declaration at the end of the conference.

The MQM-P has also started corner meetings at town level to enlist support for new administrative units in the country.

It was Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, who had first floated the idea of creation of new provinces in the country.

Soon others also started voicing their support for the idea.

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Lodhran lawmakers laud completion of Multan-Vehari Road, electrobus service

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Sunday directed lawmakers from Lodhran to remain focused on resolving public issues in their constituencies. She was speaking during a meeting with Punjab

Assembly members Muhammad Zubair Khan and Shazia Hayat, during which political matters, development projects and issues confronting the people of Lodhran came under discussion. The lawmakers apprised the chief minister of public

grievances in their constituencies. CM Punjab directed them to continue efforts for their resolution. The MPAs also lauded the completion of the Multan-Vehari Road and thanked the chief minister on behalf of the people for launching the electrobus



service in Lodhran. They said the electrobus service on Shahida Islam Hospital, Dunyapur, Kacheri Chowk, Milad Chowk and Kehror Pakka routes was setting new records of success and popularity. The lawmakers said the chief minister's health initiatives had won public appreciation. CM Punjab said people from other provinces were also benefiting from Punjab's

hospitals and educational institutions. She said the Jinnah Institute of Cardiology in Lahore and cath labs in various districts were fully operational, adding that Punjab had truly entered an era of development and technology. The chief minister said Punjab would take the lead in technology-enabled public services through the Punjab eBiz and Maryam Ki Dastak portals.

Governor Punjab Visits Family of Martyred Soldier Malik Mubashir



Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan visited the family of Malik Mubashir, who was martyred while fighting terrorists in Noshki, Balochistan, and expressed solidarity with his bereaved family. The Governor met the martyr's father, Malik Muhammad Safarash, and other relatives, offering condolences and paying tribute to Malik Mubashir's sacrifice for the country. He joined the family in offering prayers for the martyr and for strength and patience for his loved ones. Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said the sacrifices of soldiers who defend Pakistan's security, sovereignty and peace are a matter of pride for the nation. He described terrorism as a national challenge and said the sacrifices of security personnel have strengthened the foundations of peace and security. The Governor assured the family that the Punjab government and relevant institutions would provide full support and directed authorities to facilitate them. The family expressed pride in Malik Mubashir's sacrifice and service to the country.

Six women candidates in the running for AJK Assembly reserved seats after withdrawal

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: A spokesperson for the Election Commission of Azad Jammu and Kashmir has stated that, in accordance with the schedule for elections to the reserved seats of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, today was the last day for withdrawal of nomination papers. Seven candidates had filed nomination papers for the five seats reserved for women. Following the withdrawal of nomination papers by Ms. Shaheen Kausar Dar, the following six candidates will now contest the election: Ms. Riffat Abid, Ms. Zobia Khurshid, Ms. Sehrish Qamar, Ms. Farzana Yaqub, Ms. Maryam Idrees and Ms. Maryam Zaman. For the one seat reserved for Ulema and Mashaikh, the contest will be between Hafiz Tariq Mahmood and Muhammad Mazhar Saeed. Similarly, the seat reserved for Technocrats and Professionals will be contested by Syed Iftikhar Gilani and Sahibzada Zulfiqar Ali. For the seat reserved for State Subjects residing abroad, only one candidate's nomination papers were found valid. Consequently, the candidate has been declared elected unopposed. According to the election schedule, polling for the reserved seats for women, Technocrats and Professionals, and Ulema and Mashaikh will be held tomorrow, August 24, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Assembly Hall, Muzaffarabad.

Appeal for International Access to Kashmiri Political Prisoners in Indian Jails

Spokesman Report

Srinager.: Dr. Ghulam Rasool, General Secretary of the Jammu Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP), has expressed grave concern over the extremely difficult conditions faced by Kashmiri political prisoners detained in various Indian jails, particularly Tihar Jail, Agra Jail and other prisons located far from their homes and families. He said that Kashmiri political leaders, activists and youth, including Shabir Ahmed Shah, Muhammad Yasin Malik, Aasiya Andrabi, Masrat Alam Butt, Naem Ahmad Khan, Fahmeeda Sofi and Nahida Nasreen, remain incarcerated under harsh conditions. The situation is particularly alarming amid the current extreme heat, with serious concerns regarding medical care, clean drinking water, ventilation, sanitation, food and other basic facilities. Dr. Ghulam Rasool urged Amnesty International, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations and other international human rights organisations to take immediate notice of the plight of Kashmiri prisoners and press the Government of India to provide independent and unhindered international access to its prisons. He specifically appealed to the ICRC to seek permission to visit prisons holding Kashmiri political prisoners, meet them privately and confidentially, and independently assess their detention and humanitarian conditions.

Kashmiris Observe Youm-e-Neela Butt, Reaffirm Freedom Struggle

Bureau Report

NEELA BUTT/DHIRKOT: Kashmiris observed Youm-e-Neela Butt on August 23 to commemorate the historic gathering held at Neela Butt on August 23, 1947, which is remembered as an important milestone in the Kashmir freedom movement. According to accounts cited at the gathering, Sardar Muhammad Abdul Qayyum Khan, then 23, raised the banner of resistance against Dogra rule, while clashes with Dogra forces resulted in casualties. Former Azad Kashmir prime minister and All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference President Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan said the Kashmir freedom movement began from Neela Butt, where participants demanded accession to Pakistan. He congratulated the Action Committee and stressed the need for democratic rights in Poonch and Sudhanoti. Attique Ahmed Khan criticized political opponents and alleged that various forces contributed to the Muslim Conference's electoral defeat. He said his party would not accept any government formed without elections in Poonch and Sudhanoti, calling for polls to ensure people could freely choose their representatives.



Waiting for customers

ISLAMABAD: People are busy in buying vegetables at Sunday weekly bazaar sector G-10, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

AJK Assembly session called for August 24, oath-taking and Speaker election on Agenda

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir has summoned a session of the newly elected Legislative Assembly on August 24, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. in Muzaffarabad. During the session, the newly elected members of the Legislative Assembly will take oath of office. The election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker is also expected to be conducted during the same sitting. According to sources, August 24 is expected to be a significant day in the parliamentary politics of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Elections to the Assembly's eight reserved seats will also be



held on the same day. These include five seats reserved for women and one seat each for Ulema and Mashaikh, overseas Kashmiris, and technocrats. Polling for the reserved seats will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Following completion of polling for the reserved seats, the Legislative Assembly session will commence at 2:00 p.m. The newly elected members will take their oath at the outset, after which the process for electing the new parliamentary leadership of the Assembly is expected to begin. The developments are expected to mark an important step towards the constitution of the new Legislative Assembly and the commencement of its parliamentary proceedings.

“The Art” Draws Audience Attention on Fourth Day of Wes-Dhaari Sindhi Theatre Festival 2026 at Arts Council Karachi

News Desk

KARACHI: The play “The Art” was presented on the fourth day of the ongoing “Wes-Dhaari Sindhi Theatre Festival 2026” at the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi, receiving an enthusiastic response from the audience. Written by Yasmina Reza, the play was adapted into the Sindhi language by Bedil Masroor, while Paras Masroor directed the production. Arshad Sheikh, Umair Bhutto and Nadir Hussain delivered impressive performances in the play. “The Art” revolves around the story of three close friends who develop ideological differences, which gradually create tension in their relationships. The story follows one of

the friends who purchases a piece of artwork that fails to meet his standards. His professor friend objects to the purchase, leading to a disagreement between the two. Their third friend attempts to mediate between them and resolve the conflict. At the conclusion, the three friends put aside their differences and choose friendship, conveying the message that while ideological disagreements may exist, preserving genuine friendship and mutual respect is more important. The audience present in the hall appreciated the performances of the artists and applauded them enthusiastically.





Monday, August 24, 2026

IS The Genetic Edge

How Pakistan's New Policy Could Reshape Its Agricultural Future



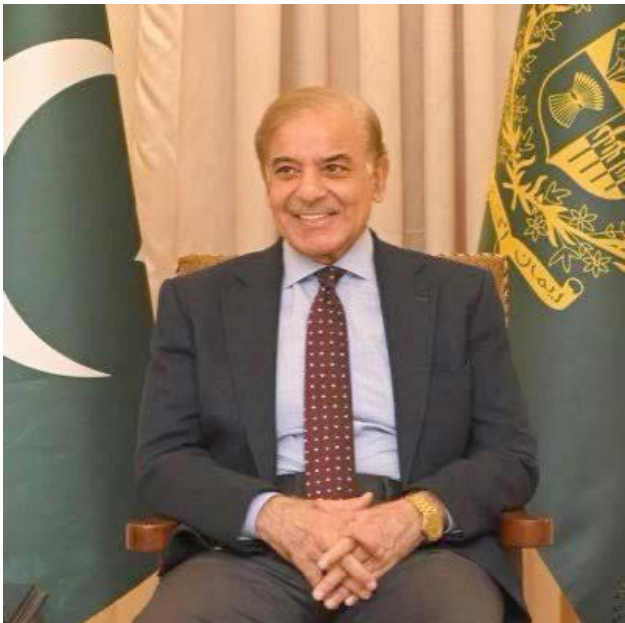
Seed is the smallest unit of agriculture, yet no other input carries a comparable weight in determining the fortunes of a harvest. Encoded within a single grain is the ceiling of every yield that will follow it: resistance to drought and disease, tolerance of a shifting climate, and ultimately the food security of nations. It is this deceptively modest input that has become the new frontier of geo-economic competition, as the world's leading agricultural powers race to secure genetic advantage over the crops that feed their populations. Certified, high-quality seed alone has been shown to lift crop productivity by twenty to thirty per cent — a margin no fertiliser or irrigation scheme can match on its own. Pakistan's recent, long-overdue approval of its first comprehensive National Seed Policy, alongside a companion National Agricultural Biotechnology Policy, therefore deserves to be read not as a routine regulatory update but as a strategic inflection point for a nation whose economy, exports and food security all still turn on the soil.

Sound science and credible regulation are the roots from which every superior seed grows. **A World Remade By Seed**

Agriculture's twenty-first-century transformation has been driven less by land and water than by what is planted in them. Across the globe, seed has quietly become the decisive variable in national competitiveness: a country's genetic library now shapes its export earnings, its resilience to climate shocks, and its standing in a global trading system increasingly organised around who controls the building blocks of the food chain. Gene-edited and precision-bred varieties, once laboratory curiosities, are now moving into commercial fields from the American Midwest to the Yangtze basin, compressing breeding cycles that once took a decade into a matter of seasons. Seed has, in effect, become biology's answer to the semiconductor: a small, technology-dense product whose control confers outsized strategic leverage. Nations that recognised this early — and built the science, capital and regulatory institutions to match — now sit at the centre of a global seed economy worth tens of billions of dollars annually. Nations that did not are left importing not just seed, but the yield ceilings, the climate resilience and the market access that came bundled with it.

Lessons From The World's Seed Powers

The last quarter-century has seen the great agricultural economies converge on a shared insight: no country can out-produce its own seed base. In the United States, robust intellectual property protection, aggressive private investment, and close coordination between land-grant universities and seed corporations have built the world's most innovation-dense seed sector. China, for its part, has designated seed a matter of national self-reliance, openly describing it as the country's 'agricultural chip' — a term deliberately borrowed from the semiconductor race — and has backed that framing with sustained state investment in genomics and biotechnology. Australia, constrained by limited water and a punishing climate, has built its seed policy around biosecurity and drought-tolerance research, turning adversity into a source of resilience engineering. India offers perhaps the most instructive parallel



for Pakistan: progressive seed legislation, a dedicated public research network, and a thriving private seed sector combined to deliver the productivity gains of the Green Revolution and continue to reshape its agricultural landscape today. Brazil, too, deserves mention: three decades of investment in tropical soybean and maize breeding through its public research corporation Embrapa turned a food importer into one of the world's largest agricultural exporters, proof that seed sovereignty can be built from a standing start within a single generation.

What unites these very different systems is not any single policy instrument but a common architecture: sustained research investment, effective seed regulation, credentialed certification, and enforceable plant-breeders' rights, unwritten by durable political commitment rather than one-off legislative gestures. No country's seed sector became internationally competitive on the strength of its natural endowments alone; each built the institutional and regulatory scaffolding that modern seed science and biotechnology require. This is the central lesson available to Pakistan: policy intent is only the opening move, and the countries that succeeded were those that treated seed reform as a multi-decade national project rather than a single legislative achievement.

Pakistan's Seed Sector: The Cost Of Delay

Pakistan's seed sector has for decades struggled under the weight of fragmented regulation, limited certified-seed documentation, and a weak varietal-registration regime that left the door open to counterfeit seed flooding informal markets. By some estimates, more than sixty per cent of the country's total seed requirement is still met through farmer-saved or uncertified seed — a statistic that, on its own, explains much about the persistent gap between Pakistan's agricultural potential and its actual yields. Reliance on imported hybrid seed for several major crops has further entrenched a costly and strategically uncomfortable dependence, one that a genuine national seed policy is designed to begin unwinding. The cost of this delay is not abstract: it is measured in yield gaps against comparable economies, in foreign exchange spent on hybrid imports that could instead be

earned through exports, and in the erosion of farmer trust each time counterfeit seed fails in the field.

A Policy Framework Takes Shape

It is against this backdrop that Pakistan's National Seed Policy, prepared under the leadership of Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain, was framed as a comprehensive roadmap rather than a narrow regulatory document. The policy's architecture rests on scientific research, effective seed regulation, biotechnology, certified seed documentation, and a wide network of tested varieties designed to safeguard farmers' interests. Complementing it, the National Agricultural Biotechnology Policy sets out a parallel course for modernising the genetic and technological base of the country's crop varieties, with a phased roadmap running to 2031 that pairs biosafety stewardship with a deliberate push toward commercial-scale biotechnology adoption.

Leadership of this reform has been closely associated with Dr Asif Ali, Chairman of the National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority (NSDRA), whose agenda centres on modernising the country's seed value chain by simplifying regulatory approval for research-driven 'fast-track' lines, easing the import of hygienic breeding plant material through a dedicated Research Germplasm Fast Lane, tightening oversight of biosafety protocols, encouraging private-sector research and investment, ranking seed companies by performance, and digitising the regulatory process end to end. Pakistan's first National Seed Investor Forum, planned for 2026, is intended to bring private capital and this roadmap onto a single, coordinated platform, reorganising the country's seed governance around science and regulation rather than habit and inertia.

Faisalabad's National Seed Dialogue 2026

The reform's most substantive recent airing took place in Faisalabad, where the National Seed Research and Training Centre and the University of Agriculture Faisalabad jointly convened the National Seed Dialogue 2026, bringing policymakers, scientists, regulators, seed companies and farmer representatives under one roof. Major General Shahid Nazir, Director General of



Strategic Projects and the Green Corporate Initiative, told participants that the newly approved policy provides a framework spanning seed research, quality assurance, private-sector participation, biotechnology, plant-breeders' rights, climate-resilient varieties, and seed exports. Professor Dr Zulfiqar Ali, Vice Chancellor of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad, described certified-quality seed as a historic opportunity to resolve one of Pakistan's most complex agricultural problems, crediting the reforms with reducing dependence on imported hybrid seed, strengthening local production programmes, and expanding certified-seed documentation and traceability. He further urged that policy be matched with realistic, field-tested outcomes, and proposed the establishment of a National Seed Academy dedicated to seed certification, regulatory science, and biotechnology training.

Dr Tariq Hussain, Director of the National Seed Research and Training Centre, spoke of the university's role in bridging scientists, regulators and industry to accelerate reform on the ground, while Dr Muhammad Azeem Iqbal, Chairperson of the Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics, highlighted the department's long-standing role in training specialised personnel for the sector. Renowned agricultural scientist and former Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Professor Dr Kausar Abdullah Malik, drawing on decades of field experience, argued that the policy's successful implementation would depend on strict legal compliance, biosafety regulation, enforceable plant-breeders' rights, internationally recognised seed-testing laboratories, and sustained investment in human and material resources. Dr Asif Kamran, a noted agricultural economist and policy analyst, called the National Seed Policy a vital and timely step, stressing that its real success would depend on effective public-private partnership and on rebuilding the trust of all stakeholders in the seed system. Dr Abid Mehmood, Director General of the Punjab Agricultural Research Board, called



for investment that responds seasonally to the needs of farmers seeking higher-yielding and more climate-resilient varieties, while Dr Qamar Shakeel argued that continuous research and development, through rigorous testing and transparent registration, remains the only real safeguard against counterfeit seed. The successful organisation of the Seed Dialogue was significantly supported by Dr Tehsin Azhar, Director, Seed Institute, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, whose dedicated efforts played an important role in bringing this important academic and policy dialogue together. Dr Qamar Shakeel, Member (R&D), National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority; Dr Asif Kamran, Registrar and policy analyst, University of Agriculture Faisalabad; and representatives of the private-sector seed industry, including Dr Khalid Hamid, Javed Saleem Qureshi, Saad Akbar, and Jamshed Iqbal Cheema, also contributed valuable insights and practical recommendations to the dialogue.

Beyond the Seed Dialogue, there is a broader public perception that the presence of fake, substandard, and unregulated seed businesses over the past several decades has caused significant harm to Pakistan's agriculture sector and farming communities, while also resulting in economic losses to the country. There has also been public concern that some such elements have, at different times, received the backing or patronage of influential quarters. With the launch of the new National Seed Policy, there is renewed hope that these longstanding concerns will be addressed through stronger regulation, effective enforcement, quality assurance, and greater accountability. A transparent and farmer-focused seed regulatory system can help restore public confidence, protect farming communities, and strengthen Pakistan's agricultural economy.

Government intent must translate into capital investment and market trust.

Exploiting Global Experience: A Pathway For Pakistan

If Pakistan is to convert policy architecture into agricultural



transformation, it must deliberately borrow — and adapt — from the seed powers that have already made this journey. From the United States, the lesson is intellectual property: enforceable plant-breeders' rights are not a bureaucratic afterthought but the incentive structure that persuades private companies to invest in multi-year breeding programmes rather than simply reselling saved seed. From China's framing of seed as a strategic asset, Pakistan can draw the discipline of treating germplasm access, genomic capacity, and biosafety regulation as matters of national interest deserving sustained budgetary protection, insulated from the churn of short political cycles. From Australia, the imperative is to convert climatic adversity — Pakistan's own exposure to drought, heat stress, and increasingly erratic monsoon flooding — into a deliberate research agenda on stress-tolerant varieties, rather than treating climate volatility as an excuse for underperformance. From India, the clearest lesson is sequencing: legislation, public research infrastructure, and private-sector participation must be built together, not staggered, or the private capital that certification regimes are meant to attract will simply wait on the sidelines. And from Brazil, Pakistan can take perhaps the most hopeful lesson of all — that a public research institution, properly funded and insulated from short-term politics, can turn a seed-import economy into a seed-export one within a single generation.

Exploiting this global experience does not mean imitation; each of these systems grew from different endowments, different political economies, and different crop portfolios. What Pakistan can responsibly import is the underlying architecture — certification credibility, enforceable rights, research funding discipline, and private-sector confidence — while building varieties suited to its own wheat, cotton, rice, and pulse economies, and to the specific stresses of the Indus basin. The National Seed Policy's early emphasis on a Research Germplasm Fast Lane and an investor-facing forum suggests the right instinct: Pakistan does not need to reinvent seed science, but it does need to import global

best practice quickly enough to close a gap that international competitors will not wait for it to close on its own timetable.

What Implementation Will Demand

A national seed policy is, by itself, no more than a regulatory framework unless it is matched by a genuinely national commitment to agricultural innovation — a lesson that the seed histories of the United States, China, Australia, India and Brazil all confirm in their own distinct ways. Comparative experience across those countries offers a useful reminder that no single piece of legislation produces lasting change; what matters is the sustained, decades-long pursuit of one seed-sector vision, the willingness of institutions to be rebuilt, laboratories modernised, breeders' rights genuinely recognised, and certified seed restored to the confidence of farmers who have too often been let down by it before.

Pakistan's policy architecture now compares favourably with international standards. What remains is the harder task: research of every kind, effective regulatory coordination between institutions, greater farmer income through higher yields and expanded exports, and the development of climate-resilient varieties capable of withstanding both drought and flood. Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain, NSDRA Chairman Dr Asif Ali, and a broad coalition of leadership — including the University of Agriculture Faisalabad and its scientists — now have an unusual opportunity to redirect the country's agricultural economy from a fresh starting point. If this opportunity is pursued with the seriousness it deserves, it will bring more than incremental change; it will transform the seed sector's trajectory altogether, restore farmers' confidence in the seed they sow, and position Pakistan to compete as a genuine participant in the global seed industry rather than a bystander to it. The reforms are already under way; what remains to be decided is the harvest they will ultimately yield.

The writer is Former Professor and Head, Department of Entomology, University of Agriculture Faisalabad
Email: jalalarif807@yahoo.com

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almass Ayoub Sabir**
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(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
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Pakistan's Economy Entering Phase of Stability

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan's economy has entered a phase of greater stability, but cautioned that stability alone was not the end goal. Presenting the Monthly Development Update for August, he said the government's next priority was translating macroeconomic stability into sustainable economic transformation under the URAAN Pakistan framework, with exports as the key driver of jobs, incomes and improved living standards.

The minister said the beginning of FY2026-27 had brought encouraging signals. Consumer Price Index inflation eased to 9.2 percent in July 2026, down from 11.7 percent in May, with the government monitoring markets through the National Price Monitoring Committee to keep essential commodities affordable.

Workers' remittances reached \$3.6 billion in July 2026, up 13 percent year-on-year, building on a record \$41.6 billion in the previous fiscal year. Large-Scale Manufacturing recorded average growth of 5.0 percent in FY2025-26, a sharp turnaround from a 0.7 percent contraction the year before, with 16 of 22 sectors posting positive growth led by automobiles and transport equipment.

On the external front, goods exports rose 9.4 percent to \$3.0 billion in July, while total exports of goods and services climbed 13 percent to \$3.9 billion. ICT exports strengthened to \$417 million. Despite a 13 percent rise in imports to \$7.3 billion, the current account deficit narrowed to \$328 million from \$529 million a year earlier.

Fiscal consolidation also showed progress, with FBR tax collection up 8.4 percent to Rs820.9 billion in July, and the fiscal deficit narrowing to 2.6 percent of GDP in FY2025-26—the lowest in two decades.

On development spending, the Ministry of Planning authorized Rs211.327 billion in July, in line with a phased release strategy. The Central Development Working Party approved nine projects and cleared several position papers during the month, with projects expected to generate nearly 7,851 direct and 14,053 indirect jobs. A review of CDWP projects also yielded Rs1.02 billion in savings by streamlining non-essential components.

Iqbal highlighted human capital initiatives, including commitments made on World Population Day given Pakistan's population of 254.6 million, and the launch of Development Advocate Pakistan's 50th issue focusing on youth, who make up 67 percent of the population.

He concluded that while early indicators for FY2026-27 were encouraging, sustained progress would depend on continued fiscal discipline, stronger exports, productive investment and institutional reforms to build a durable foundation for inclusive growth.

The Most Important AI Revolution Isn't Happening Inside Silicon Valley

Every few weeks, Artificial Intelligence seems to produce another headline. A new model. A larger investment. A faster processor. A company valued in the hundreds of billions.

The conversation has become almost entirely centered on the race to build more powerful machines.

I follow these developments with genuine interest. But I often find myself wondering whether we are all looking in the wrong direction.

History has a curious habit of reminding us that the inventors of transformative technologies are not always the ones who transform society.

James Watt improved the steam engine. It was factories that transformed economies.

The internet was built by engineers. It was entrepreneurs, educators, governments and ordinary citizens who changed the way we lived because of it.

Technology begins the story.

Institutions decide how the story ends.

That distinction has occupied my thoughts for some time.

Perhaps because I spend more time thinking about government than algorithms.

Perhaps because the questions that matter most are no longer technological. **They are institutional.**

People often speak about bureaucracy as though it were an outdated mistake waiting to be dismantled.

I see it differently.

Modern government was designed for

the world in which it existed. Information travelled slowly. Documents moved from one office to another because there was no practical alternative. Decisions climbed through layers of administration because knowledge itself moved through those same layers. Those systems were not inefficient by accident. They were remarkably effective for their time. They created order, consistency and accountability.

They allowed governments to function at a scale that had previously been impossible.

The challenge today is not that bureaucracy failed. The challenge is that the world around it has changed more quickly than bureaucracy itself.

For the first time in history, governments are not struggling because they lack information. They are struggling because they have too much of it.

A district administration receives more information in a single week than previous generations of public servants might have encountered in an entire year.

Hospitals generate enormous volumes of clinical data.

Schools continuously measure educational outcomes.

Agriculture increasingly depends upon satellite imagery, weather intelligence and real-time market information.

The constraint is no longer access. It is interpretation.

That, I believe, changes everything.

Artificial Intelligence is often described

as a technological revolution.

I am beginning to think it is something else.

It is an institutional revolution.

Its greatest contribution may not be writing reports or generating images.

Its greatest contribution may be helping institutions distinguish what is important from what is merely available.

That is a subtle difference. It is also an enormously important one.

Governments have spent the past

two decades becoming

digital.

That was necessary. Files became electronic. Services moved online. Citizens could access information without standing in long queues.

These were meaningful achievements.

Yet digitisation should never be confused with transformation.

Replacing paper with screens does not automatically produce better judgement.

A digital government stores information more efficiently. An intelligent government learns from it.

There is a profound difference between the two. One preserves knowledge. The other improves decisions.

This is why I believe the next chapter of public administration will not be defined by technology alone. It will be defined by institutional learning.

Can governments recognise emerging problems before they become crises?

Can public services adapt more quickly to changing circumstances? Can poli-

cymakers spend less time searching for information and more time exercising judgement?

These are leadership questions.

Technology merely provides new tools with which to answer them.

Around the world, different countries are beginning to explore these possibilities in different ways.

Estonia has shown what becomes possible when digital infrastructure is treated as a public utility rather than a technical project.

Singapore continues to demonstrate that institutional discipline remains one of the greatest competitive advantages any nation can possess.

Neither model should be copied uncritically.

Every society carries its own history, institutions and public expectations.

Punjab will do the same.

Our objective should never be to imitate another government's technology. It should be to strengthen our own capacity to govern.

That is the thinking behind The Office of AI.

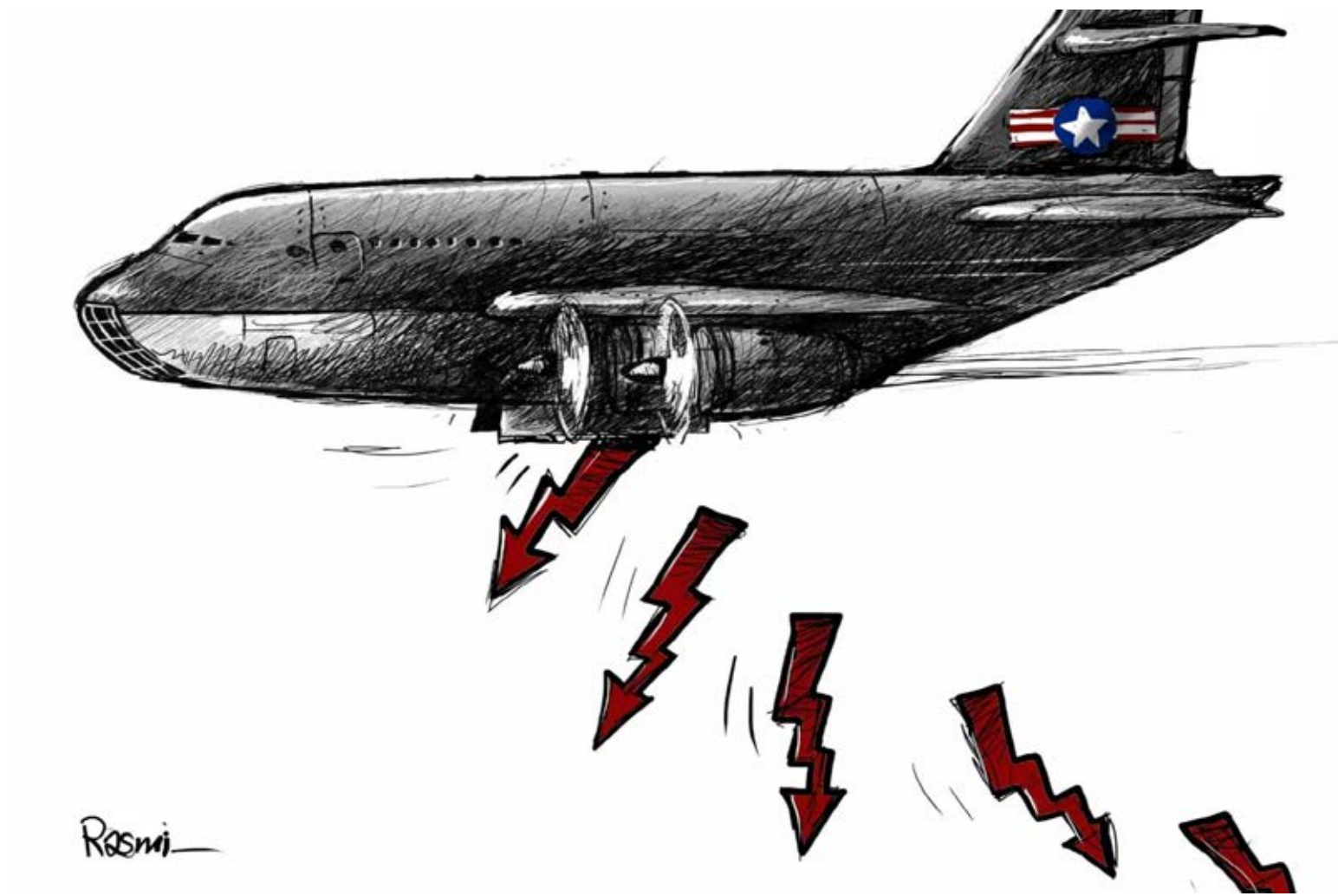
Contrary to popular perception, its purpose is not simply to introduce Artificial Intelligence into government.

Technology, on its own, has never transformed institutions.

People do. Leadership does. Culture does.

The real ambition is more demanding than digital transformation. It is to cultivate public institutions that learn continuously, coordinate more effectively and ultimately deliver better outcomes for

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

Trump: Destroying the Alliances America Built

Two World Wars and centuries of conflict taught Europe one of history's bitterest lessons: divided nations repeatedly went to war, while interconnected nations had much more to lose by fighting each other. From the ruins of World War II therefore emerged an extraordinary experiment—not merely to prevent another war through military deterrence, but to make war economically irrational.

France and Germany, once bitter rivals, placed coal and steel—the very industries essential for warfare—within a common institutional framework. Economic cooperation gradually expanded into a common market and ultimately the European Union. Today that Single Market connects about 450 million people and 26 million businesses in an economy worth roughly €18 trillion. The European Commission estimates that the Single Market itself has increased EU GDP by 3–4 percent and created about 3.6 million jobs.

That is the measurable dividend of interdependence. Europe did not eliminate national interests; it created a system in which pursuing those interests through cooperation became more profitable than pursuing them through confrontation. Around 60 percent of EU exports still go to other EU members, demonstrating how deeply these economies have become intertwined.

North America developed its own version of this philosophy. When NAFTA began in 1994, trade among the United States, Canada and Mexico stood at roughly \$300 billion annually. Within less than two decades it had exceeded \$1 trillion. Today, under its successor USMCA,

U. S. goods and services trade with Canada alone was about \$872 billion in 2025, while trade with Mexico approached \$964 billion. Together, the North American relationship supports nearly \$2 trillion in annual U. S. trade.

These are not merely numbers. They represent factories designed around continental supply chains, Canadian energy powering American businesses, Mexican manufacturing feeding American assembly lines, American services flowing north and south, and millions of consumers benefiting from specialization and economies of scale.

Security followed much the same logic.

NATO created collective deterrence through Article 5: an armed attack against one member would be treated as an attack against all. The alliance helped create a security umbrella under which Western Europe could rebuild and prosper. Today European NATO members and Canada alone spend more than \$570 billion annually on defense in constant 2021 dollars, demonstrating that NATO has evolved into far more than an American security subsidy. In 2025 alone, their defense expenditure increased by nearly 20 percent in real terms.

Yet NATO was created for collective defense—not to compel every member to participate automatically whenever another member independently enters a war.

This distinction became critical during America's confrontation with Iran. President Donald Trump criticized NATO allies for refusing to provide the military assistance Washington expected. He complained that NATO "just wasn't there" and suggested that

if European allies were absent when America needed them, Washington might reconsider being there when they needed America.

That interpretation fundamentally changes NATO's logic. If American protection becomes conditional upon whether allies participate in unrelated U. S.-initiated wars, collective security becomes transactional security. The immediate casualty is not necessarily NATO's military capability; it is confidence in the guarantee underpinning that capability.

The same transformation is now occurring economically.

The United States and Canada spent generations constructing one of the deepest economic relationships anywhere in the world. Yet following the collapse of their latest negotiations, Washington has imposed 50 percent tariffs on roughly \$20 billion of Canadian goods. Canada has announced retaliatory tariffs, while Prime Minister Mark Carney says Washington's final demands were economically unacceptable and included restrictions affecting Canada's freedom to pursue trade agreements elsewhere.

That is where trade policy begins crossing into sovereignty.

America has every right to negotiate aggressively, protect strategic industries and demand reciprocal market access. But attempting to influence whom another sovereign country may trade with transforms economic interdependence from a source of shared prosperity into an instrument of political leverage.

Canada refused, with Carney reducing the disagreement to a memorable conclusion: Washington asked too much and offered too little.

The economic consequences will travel in both directions. The latest tariffs directly cover only around 5 percent of Canadian exports to

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New Provinces

Pakistan's more than 240 million people are spread across a vast and geographically diverse territory, yet governance remains concentrated in only four provinces, each responsible for more than 60 million people. This makes provincial administration distant and overburdened, particularly in Punjab, where more than half the population is governed from Lahore despite the distance from Dera Ghazi Khan, Bahawalpur, Sialkot, and other peripheral areas. Citizens in remote regions often face long, costly journeys to provincial capitals for documentation, land disputes, specialized healthcare, and other services; people in Chitral may struggle to reach Peshawar, while coastal communities in Balochistan may travel hundreds of miles to Quetta and face linguistic and cultural barriers. Such administrative distance can create perceptions of neglect and unequal resource distribution, leaving peripheral communities without adequate water, schools, healthcare, and other services and potentially contributing to separatism and instability. India demonstrates the potential of greater administrative decentralization through its 36 states, provinces, and union territories despite its much larger population and territory, while Pakistan's One Unit experiment of 1955–1970 illustrates the dangers of excessive centralization and ignoring regional identities. The proposed solution is therefore to evolve Pakistan's provincial structure by creating smaller, more accessible administrative units rather than treating the existing four provinces as permanent.

The most practical approach is to upgrade existing administrative divisions into provinces, using their established headquarters, government offices, police, courts, and development institutions as the foundations of new

provincial governments. Multan, for example, already has a civil secretariat, high court bench, police headquarters, and other departments, so it could be developed into a provincial capital without the enormous cost of building entirely new secretariats, universities, hospitals, housing, and other infrastructure. This would reduce financial pressure, minimize disruption, and allow authority to move closer to citizens. New provinces could create provincial governments, assemblies, ministries, courts, police institutions, and thousands of jobs, attract professionals, reduce migration to overcrowded

cities, improve law enforcement through locally familiar police forces, and stimulate construction, transportation, hospitality, supply businesses, and other small and medium enterprises. However, restructuring must be accompanied by comprehensive governance reform because corruption and financial leakages—including embezzlement, favoritism, bribery, ghost employees, inflated contracts, fraudulent welfare payments, and electricity and water theft—can undermine the entire project. The cited audit findings of more than Rs40 billion allegedly embezzled from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government accounts and Rs25 billion allegedly siphoned from the Benazir Income Support Programme demonstrate the seriousness of the problem. Weak taxation and electricity-sector losses further reduce state revenue, increase borrowing, and limit development capacity, so new provinces must be supported by independent anti-corruption bodies, digitized government finances and verifiable audit trails, transparent merit-based recruitment, stronger accountability, and a comprehensive overhaul of tax collection so citizens and businesses contribute their fair share.

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Chairman Senate Gillani meets Qatari Royal Delegation, calls for stronger trade and investment ties with Pakistan

 **Kiran Asim**

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani met a high-level Qatari delegation in Islamabad, led by H. E. Sheikh Nayef Bin Eid Al Thani, a prominent businessman and senior member of Qatar's Royal Family. Gillani welcomed the delegation, emphasizing the deep-rooted, historic and brotherly ties between Pakistan and Qatar, and called for stronger cooperation in trade, investment, and socio-political affairs.

He briefed the delegation on his Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference (ISC) initiative, themed "Peace, Security and Development," and welcomed Qatar's Speaker's participation in it. Gillani also highlighted Pakistan's role in fostering



regional peace and praised the Makkah Accord for promoting

unity among Muslim nations. He commended Sheikh Nayef's entrepreneurial contributions to Pakistan-Qatar economic ties and invited Qatari investors to explore opportunities in tourism, agriculture, energy, and other sectors.

In response, Sheikh Nayef thanked Gillani for the hospitality, praised Pakistan's diplomatic role, and voiced support for the Makkah Accord's contribution to regional stability. The Qatari delegation expressed strong interest in investing in Pakistan and stressed the need to deepen bilateral trade and cooperation, while also highlighting the importance of supporting the Pakistani diaspora in Qatar.

Advisor to the Chairman Senate and ISC Ambassador Ms. Misbah Khar also attended the meeting.

Teachings of Hazrat Pir Makki Sharif (RA) Promote Divine Love and Social Harmony

 **Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Housing Punjab Bilal Yasin and Secretary/Chief Administrator Auqaf Punjab Dr. Ehsan Bhutta have highlighted the spiritual and moral teachings of Hazrat Pir Makki Sharif (RA), describing them as a source of guidance for divine love, devotion to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), humility, compassion, brotherhood and service to humanity.

Bilal Yasin expressed these views while inaugurating the Urs Mubarak of Hazrat Pir Makki Sharif (RA) and participating in the traditional chadar poshi ceremony. Dr. Ehsan Bhutta said Hazrat Pir Makki Sharif (RA), also known as Hazrat Sheikh Syed Ali Qadri (RA), was among Lahore's prominent early Sufi saints and devoted his life to Islamic teachings, spiritual purification, social reform and humanitarian service.

He emphasized that shrines and Khanqahs are important parts of Pakistan's spiritual heritage and promote peace, tolerance and brotherhood. The ceremony also featured



Langar distribution and prayers for Pakistan's peace, prosperity and stability.

RCCI Calls for Economic and Administrative Approach to New Provinces Debate

 **Commerce Desk**

RAWALPINDI: President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Usman Shaukat has called for a broader economic, administrative and development-based discussion on the creation of new provinces and administrative units in Pakistan.

He said the key issue should be addressing regional deprivation, ensuring equitable resource distribution, improving governance and creating economic opportunities. He noted that disparities in infrastructure, employment, education, healthcare and public services remain significant despite the country's growing population.



Usman Shaukat urged policymakers to examine the economic cost of deprivation versus the cost of administrative restructuring, particularly in underserved regions. He said new provinces alone may not resolve governance problems and stressed that empowered, adequately resourced local governments could also improve service delivery.

He called for the debate to be taken to Parliament, provincial assemblies and stakeholder forums, supported by economic studies, fiscal analysis, demographic data and public consultation.

The RCCI president said businesses require policy certainty, efficient administration, reliable infrastructure, energy and connectivity to promote investment, exports and employment.

Jhang Cestoball Body Inaugurated as Independence Day Sports Thrill

 **News Desk**

LAHORE: Basketball and cestoball matches were held in Jhang as part of Independence Day celebrations on Friday, drawing participation from players and sports enthusiasts.

In the basketball Independence Day match, Jhang defeated Gojra by a narrow margin of 34-30 while in cestoball match Pak Green edged out Pak White by a score of 18-14.

On this occasion, President Pakistan Cestoball Federation (PCF) M Akram inaugurated the first-ever cestoball competition in Jhang by cutting a ribbon. He also announced the formation of the Jhang Cestoball body. Malik Mukhtar was appointed



as its Patron-in-Chief, while Haji Zafar, Ch Aslam, Tariq Mahmood, Qudratullah and

Nabeel Haider were among those announced as members of the newly formed body.

Deputy Audit Officer Shahid Manzoor, Tehsil Sports Officer, Pakistan Cestoball Federation General Secretary Arshad Gul, Usman Subedar and Shahid of Wapda were also present at the event.

Later, PCF President M Akram distributed prizes, medals and certificates among the participating players, appreciating their enthusiasm and performance.

The organisers said such sporting activities were aimed at promoting sports among young people and providing them with opportunities to showcase their talent while celebrating Independence Day in a healthy and positive manner.

Spotify Celebrates Atif Aslam's Subah Aye Na with Fans in Karachi



 **News Desk**

KARACHI: Spotify organized a special celebration in Karachi to mark the release of Atif Aslam's new album Subah Aye Na, bringing together Spotify Premium fans, artists, creators and influencers.

Atif Aslam performed live during the event, with Fahad Mustafa, Talha Anjum and Asim Azhar joining him onstage for a performance of his classic Hum Kis Gali Ja Rahe Hain. Two of Atif's most dedicated Spotify listeners in Pakistan, who ranked among his top 10% of listeners, were also invited onstage to present him with a special guitar.

Reflecting on the album, Atif said it marked his first full album in 18 years and credited the continued support of his fans for motivating him to return to the album format.

Spotify also introduced its personalized Discover Your Inner Aadeez experience, offering fans four personas based on how they connect with Atif's music. The celebration highlighted the artist's enduring appeal across generations and showcased new ways for fans to engage with his music.

Hyderabad Chamber Congratulates New Bar Leadership, Calls for Stronger Liaison

 **Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi**

HYDERABAD: President of the Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industry Muhammad Saleem Memon, Senior Vice President Ahmed Idrees Chohan and Vice President Shan Sehgal have congratulated the newly elected office-bearers and Managing Committee members of the District Bar Association Hyderabad for 2026.

The chamber leaders congratulated President Shakir Nawaz Shar, Vice President Muhammad Amir Qureshi, General Secretary Abdul Razzaq Dhars and other elected office-bearers and members, expressing hope that the new leadership would promote the welfare of the legal community, rule of law, justice and institutional development.

They emphasized that the business and legal communities are important pillars of society and called for stronger coordination between the Hyderabad Chamber and District Bar Association to address legal and administrative issues faced by businesses.

The chamber leadership expressed confidence that enhanced cooperation would support business activities, transparency, justice and better public services. They assured the new bar leadership of full cooperation in positive and constructive initiatives for the wider interest of Hyderabad.



Debt, Financial Stability and Economic Growth: Where Will Pakistan Find the Way Forward?

 **News Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's recent fiscal improvements, including a primary fiscal surplus, lower interest rates and a declining debt-to-GDP ratio, are encouraging, but they should not be treated as the final measure of economic success. The real challenge is ensuring that fiscal stability translates into greater investment, employment, business activity and improved living standards.

The central issue is not simply the size of Pakistan's debt but how borrowed resources are utilized. Productive borrowing that increases exports, employment and national income can support economic growth, while borrowing for non-productive expenditure can become a burden on future generations.

The article calls for broadening and reforming the tax system, reducing the burden on existing taxpayers, and bringing untapped segments of the economy into the tax net. It also emphasizes greater investment in education, healthcare and technical skills, particularly for Pakistan's young population.

Other priorities include reducing unnecessary regulation, encouraging private-sector investment, increasing national savings and expanding exports. Fiscal stability, the article concludes, should be used as an opportunity for fundamental structural reforms rather than celebration of short-term indicators.



Overseas Kashmiris urged to unite for Kashmir Freedom Movement

 **Bureau Report**

ISLAMABAD: Jammu & Kashmir Community International has urged overseas Kashmiris worldwide to set aside internal differences and devote their efforts to the Kashmir freedom movement. At a meeting of its central executive committee, participants called for a stronger global voice against what they described as human rights violations in occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

The meeting rejected a statement by the U.S. ambassador on Kashmir, asserting that diplomatic statements cannot alter the disputed status of the region.

Participants maintained that the future of Kashmir should be determined according to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people and cited UN Security Council resolutions as the legal basis for resolving the dispute.

The organization called on overseas Kashmiris to raise the issue at the United Nations, international human rights bodies, the European Parliament and the OIC. Chaired by Ghulam Nabi Butt, the meeting also appreciated Pakistan's stated position on Kashmir and reaffirmed its commitment to international advocacy and Kashmiri unity.





Monday, August 24, 2026

IS Crime on the Rise in Punjab

Inside Punjab's Alarming Surge in Domestic Abuse and Gender Violence



Analysis
Naveed Ahmad Khan

Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province and its economic heartland, is facing a complex and increasingly worrying law-and-order challenge. While official police figures show significant reductions in several categories of conventional crime, recent data on violence against women, gender-based violence and reports of serious offences indicate that public safety remains a major concern.

The situation has prompted renewed questions about policing, criminal investigations, prosecution, community protection and the effectiveness of measures introduced to control organised and violent crime.

In April 2026, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz expressed concern over what she described as a sharp increase in organised and violent crime, including murder, robbery and dacoity, despite substantial government spending on the police department. She directed senior police officers to address the situation and improve crime-control measures.

At the same time, Punjab Police has reported substantial declines in several major crime categories. According to police figures, registered crime fell considerably in 2025, including a 71 percent decline in dacoity and robbery, a 69 percent decline in vehicle snatching and a 23 percent reduction in murder cases compared with 2024.

This contrast highlights an important reality: Punjab's crime problem cannot be measured through a single indicator. Although some street and property crimes have declined, violence against women and other forms of serious crime continue to require urgent attention.

Violence Against Women: The Most Troubling Trend

Official statistics provided by Punjab Police for the first six months of 2026 show that 20,114 cases involving crimes against women were registered between January and June. These represented 4.8 percent of all criminal cases registered in the province during the period, compared with 3.7 percent of all cases during the whole of 2025.

The figures include thousands of rape cases, cases involving sexual violence, kidnapping and other offences against women. Punjab recorded 4,446 rape cases during the first six months of 2026, compared with 8,553 throughout 2025. If the pace continued, the annual figure could potentially exceed the previous year's total.

The Punjab Gender Parity Report provides another warning sign. Reported gender-based

violence increased from 28,721 cases in 2023 to 34,702 in 2024 — an increase of 20.82 percent. Reported domestic-violence cases also rose from 605 to 893, an increase of 47.6 percent.

These numbers demonstrate that the challenge extends beyond street crime. Violence inside homes, particularly against women, remains a serious social and criminal-justice issue.

Rawalpindi Woman's Murder Raises Fresh Questions

A recent alleged murder in Rawalpindi has once again drawn attention to the vulnerability of women within domestic environments.

According to a report published by Aaj English, a case was registered at Civil Lines Police Station following the alleged murder of 45-year-old Hina Javed in the Lal Kurti area of Rawalpindi. Police arrested her husband, Faisal Asghar, and a domestic worker, Zeeshan, after the woman's body was reportedly discovered inside the family's home.

The victim's brother lodged the complaint, while family members also demanded the arrest of her father-in-law, who was named in the FIR.

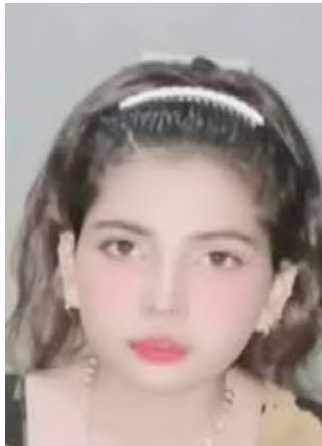
Police are investigating the circumstances surrounding the death and the allegations contained in the FIR. The case illustrates why allegations of domestic violence and abuse require immediate and professional investigation, protection



Crime Statistics Tell a More Complicated Story

It would, however, be inaccurate to suggest that every form of crime in Punjab is increasing.

Punjab Police has reported significant improvements in several categories. In Rawalpindi, police said during the first four months of 2026 that robbery declined by 86 percent, overall murder by 32 percent, street crime by 35 percent and motor-



cycle snatching by 70 percent compared with the same period of the previous year.

Similarly, the Punjab Crime Control Department has claimed substantial reductions in serious crime in Lahore and Multan following its operations. Its figures showed major reductions in murder, robbery, dacoity, vehicle snatching and theft.

The provincial police have

also intensified action against proclaimed offenders, court absconders and habitual criminals. In May 2026, Punjab Police reported the arrest of more than 58,000 proclaimed offenders, over 20,000 court absconders and more than 11,000 habitual criminals during the year.

These measures indicate that law-enforcement agencies are actively pursuing criminal

networks. Nevertheless, arrests and operations alone cannot provide a complete solution.

Why the Problem Persists

Crime is influenced by a combination of economic, social, institutional and behavioural factors. Rapid urbanisation, unemployment, drug-related activity, family disputes, weak social protection, inadequate awareness of legal rights and delays in crim-

inal justice can all contribute to vulnerability.

For women, the problem can be particularly severe because domestic abuse may remain hidden for long periods. Victims may face social pressure, economic dependence, fear of retaliation or a lack of confidence that reporting an offence will result in protection and justice.

The Punjab Gender Parity Report also highlights a serious concern regarding convictions. Despite the increase in reported gender-based violence, the conviction rate declined from 5.49 percent in 2023 to 4.88 percent in 2024.

This gap between reported cases and successful convictions deserves close attention. Registration of an FIR is only the first stage of justice. Effective investigation, evidence collection, forensic examination, witness protection, prosecution and timely judicial proceedings are equally important.

The Need for Stronger Investigation and Accountability

Punjab needs a crime-control strategy that combines prevention with justice.

First, police stations must become more accessible and responsive to victims, particularly women and children. Complaints involving domestic violence, threats and repeated abuse should receive prompt risk assessment rather than being treated merely as private family disputes.

Second, investigations into serious crimes must be evidence-based and professionally conducted. Modern forensic capabilities, digital investigation, accurate documentation and coordination between police and prosecutors can strengthen cases before the courts.

Third, the criminal justice system needs greater accountability for investigation delays. Punjab Police reported that its 1787 complaint centre had resolved more than 34,000 complaints during 2026, including thousands concerning case registration and slow investigations.

Fourth, prevention must begin at the community level. Schools, universities, local administrations, civil-society organisations and community leaders can play a role in promoting awareness about violence, reporting mechanisms and legal protections.

Technology Can Help — But It Is Not Enough

Punjab has increasingly turned to technology to strengthen policing. The Punjab Safe Cities Authority has reported substan-

tial reductions in crime in Lahore through the use of surveillance cameras, data analytics and AI-assisted policing.

Technology can improve response times, identify patterns and support investigations. But cameras and databases cannot replace trained investigators, responsible policing, functioning prosecution systems and an independent justice process.

The ultimate measure of a successful crime-control strategy should therefore not simply be the number of arrests or operations conducted. It should be whether citizens feel safe, victims receive protection, investigations produce credible evidence and courts are able to deliver timely justice.

A Test for Punjab's Institutions

Punjab's current crime picture is neither one of unchecked criminality nor one of complete success. The available evidence shows a mixed landscape: conventional street and property crimes have declined in several areas, while violence against women and gender-based violence remain deeply concerning.

The alleged murder of Hina Javed in Rawalpindi is a reminder that crime is not confined to streets, markets or isolated criminal networks. It can also occur behind closed doors, within families and in circumstances where victims may have limited ability to seek help.

The province therefore needs a balanced strategy: strong action against organised crime, better policing of violent offences, serious attention to domestic violence, improved investigation, stronger prosecution and greater protection for victims.

Punjab has the institutional capacity, police infrastructure and technological resources to make significant progress. The challenge now is to ensure that these resources translate into safer homes, safer streets and a justice system in which victims can trust that their complaints will be heard and acted upon.

The real test of Punjab's crime-control policy will not be found only in declining statistics. It will be measured in whether ordinary citizens — particularly women and other vulnerable members of society — can live without fear and with confidence that the law will protect them when they need it most.

The writer is Editor, Daily The Spokesman, Founder President: Tourism Association of Pakistan And Convener FPCCI standing committee on Heritage & Hospitality. He can be reached at naveedspokesman@gmail.com



Smog pollution: A threat to health and environments

Smog is a serious environmental problem affecting many urban and agricultural regions. Formed from a mixture of smoke, fog, harmful gases, dust and fine particles, it reduces air quality and visibility and threatens human health, agriculture, transportation and the environment. Understanding its causes and adopting effective preventive measures are essential for a cleaner and healthier future. Smog generally occurs in two major forms: classical smog and photochemical smog. Classical smog is usually linked with the burning of coal and other fossil fuels. It contains smoke, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter, and fog. This type of smog is more common in cold and humid weather conditions on the other hand photochemical smog

is more common in urban areas with heavy traffic and industrial activities. It forms when pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds react in the presence of sunlight. Photochemical smog can cause eye irritation, breathing problems and damage to plants.

Smog is caused by a combination of human activities and unfavorable weather conditions. The major causes include: 1-A large number of vehicles release harmful gases like nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and hydrocarbons into the atmosphere. 2-Factories and industries release smoke, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter. 3-After harvesting crops, particularly rice, farmers sometimes burn leftover straw and residues to clear their fields quickly. This practice releases

smoke and fine particulate matter into the atmosphere. Rice residue burning can significantly worsen air pollution during the post-harvest season. 4-The burning of coal, wood, plastic, garbage and other materials releases harmful gases and particles. Open waste burning is a major environmental concern in many urban and rural areas. 5-Construction activities, unpaved roads and poorly managed soil and dust contribute large amounts of particulate matter to the air.

6-During winter, low temperatures and low wind speed can trap pollutants near the ground. Fog and high humidity

may further increase the concentration of smog.

Smog can be reduced through preventive actions taken by every individual, farmers, industries and government institutions. 1-Regular vehicle inspection of Public transport, carpools and electric vehicles can help to reduce emissions. 2-Industries should install modern emission-control units, such as filters and scrubbers, and strictly follow environmental regulations. 3-Farmers should be provided with affordable machinery and practical alternatives for managing rice residues. Rice straw can be incorporated into the



Analysis
Dr. Qudsia Nazir

soil, converted into compost, used for bioenergy. 4-Open burning of municipal and agricultural waste should be discouraged. 5-Trees plantation can help to improve environmental quality by trapping dust and absorbing certain air pollutants. Large-scale plantation programs can improve environmental quality by trapping dust, absorbing pollutants, and promoting cleaner. Effective smog control also requires long-term strategies and improved environmental monitoring to identify pollution sources and provide timely public warnings. Farmers need financial support, training and modern machinery, while research institutions should develop cost-effective technologies to convert agricultural waste into useful products. Individuals can help to reduce smog by using public transport,

conserving energy and avoiding waste burning. Public awareness through media and educational institutions can further promote environmentally responsible behavior.

The take home message is smog is a complex environmental problem caused by vehicle and industrial emissions, crop-residue and waste burning, dust, and unfavorable weather conditions. It threatens human health, agriculture, transportation and economic activities. Coordinated efforts to control emissions, improve crop-residue management and enhance environmental awareness can pave the way for a cleaner and healthier future.

(The Writer is Principal Scientist of Soil Chemistry Section from Ayub Agricultural Research Institute (ARI) Faisalabad.)

IS Time to Learn from China

Transform Pakistan with District-Wise Industrial Clusters: Chaudhry Zulfiqua

By Zain Khan Malghani

MULTAN: Prominent industrialist Chaudhry Zulfikar Ali Anjum, Chairman of the SM Group of Companies (Volka & Kims), has proposed a comprehensive national policy for developing district-wise industrial clusters after returning from a five-day study visit to China. Sharing his observations, he stressed that Pakistan should learn from China's economic and technological experience rather than attempt to simply replicate its development model.

He noted that Pakistan and China were founded just two years apart—in 1947 and 1949 respectively—yet China has achieved extraordinary progress in infrastructure, industry, exports, technology, and human resource development over the following decades, offering valuable lessons for Pakistan.

During his visit, Anjum closely observed China's modern industrial systems, automation, transportation networks, small industries, home-based businesses, and industrial clusters. He explained that China's real success lies not in large factories or high-speed trains alone, but in an integrated economic structure connecting large industries, small enterprises, home-based businesses, rural production units, skilled workers, raw-material suppliers, and exporters through unified supply chains. He cited China's CR400 Fuxing trains, which run at 350 km/h, and the next-generation CR450 currently under development for 400 km/h, as examples of how sustained research and indigenous technology drive national connectivity—suggesting Pakistan could similarly modernize its freight rail system with Chinese cooperation.

A key lesson, he said, is that



infrastructure development should extend beyond major cities. Providing rural areas and small industrial centers with quality roads, reliable and affordable electricity, high-speed internet, warehousing, cold storage, and training facilities would allow them to meaningfully contribute to national production and exports. Anjum proposed that Pakistan immediately formulate a National

Cottage and Cluster Industry Development Policy, under which each district's specific productive potential and local skills would be identified and matched with specialized industrial clusters. These clusters would offer shared machinery centers, testing labs, design and packaging facilities, technical training, quality certification, easy financing, credit guarantees, affordable power,

and digital marketing and export support. He also called for a simplified one-window system to handle business registration, taxation, banking, and electricity connections, arguing that excessive paperwork discourages entrepreneurship and that the state should facilitate business rather than obstruct it.

He emphasized the need for a broader socio-economic shift—from producing job-seekers to producing entrepreneurs who generate employment. He illustrated this with the example of a small home-based unit where family members manufacture goods, receive orders online, and ship products nationally or internationally via courier and logistics services, calling this the real strength of cottage industry, particularly for women and young people.

Highlighting China's cluster-based economy, Anjum explained how concentrating

similar businesses in one area lowers production costs, improves quality, and strengthens competitiveness by making raw materials, labor, machinery, and buyers all locally accessible. He noted that China integrates small businesses into large industrial supply chains rather than treating them as separate, and recommended Pakistan adopt the same approach, with industrial clusters built around major factories.

He pointed to Pakistan's district-level strengths—Multan and South Punjab in mangoes, agriculture, and textiles; Sialkot in sports goods and surgical instruments; Faisalabad in textiles; Gujranwala in engineering products—arguing these should be linked with modern machinery, certification, branding, e-commerce, and export systems.

On CPEC's next phase, he urged prioritizing SMEs, cottage industries, industrial clusters,

joint ventures, local vendor development, and technology transfer alongside major projects, including local manufacturing of machinery and spare parts with Chinese partners to reduce import dependence.

He also proposed sending Pakistani government officials, engineers, technical officers, and policymakers on purposeful, outcome-driven study visits to China's industrial and research centers, paired with Train-the-Trainer programs and university-industry research linkages.

Anjum concluded that Pakistan should not merely import Chinese machines but absorb the underlying knowledge, discipline, and innovation systems behind them, stating that a strong national economy is built not by a few large factories, but by millions of small, organized productive units connected through effective supply chains.

Awareness of Environmental Education for Sustainable Development in Schools

Environmental degradation has become one of humanity's greatest challenges. Climate change, deforestation, air and water pollution, biodiversity loss, and excessive use of natural resources threaten ecosystems, human health, and economic development. Pakistan is particularly vulnerable to climate change, facing floods, droughts, rising temperatures, and water scarcity. In such circumstances, schools have a crucial responsibility to cultivate environmental awareness among young learners. Environmental education is no longer optional; it is essential for sustainable development and preparing future generations to protect the planet.

Environmental education extends beyond teaching facts about nature. It develops knowledge, values, attitudes, and practical skills that encourage students to make responsible decisions. From an early age, children should understand the importance of conserving resources, reducing pollution, protecting wildlife, and adopting sustainable lifestyles. Schools provide an ideal environment for developing these habits because values formed during childhood often remain throughout life.

Sustainable development emphasizes meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Achieving this requires environmentally conscious citizens who understand the relationship between economic progress, social well-being, and environmental protection. Schools should therefore integrate sustainability into everyday learning rather than treating it as a separate topic.

Environmental education should be incorporated across subjects. Science can explain ecosystems, biodiversity, and climate change, while geography can focus on natural resources and environmental challenges. Social studies can highlight civic responsibility, environmental laws, and sustainable communities. Language classes can encourage students to write essays, speeches, and stories promoting conservation. Such interdisciplinary learning helps students recognize that environmental responsibility is relevant to everyday life.

Practical activities make environmental education more meaningful. Tree plantation campaigns, recycling projects, school gardens, cleanliness drives, water conservation, and waste segregation allow students to apply classroom knowledge to real-life situations.

These activities develop teamwork, leadership, responsibility, and problem-solving skills while creating a lasting sense of environmental stewardship.

Teachers play a pivotal role in promoting environmental awareness. Beyond delivering lessons, they inspire students through their behaviour and commitment to sustainable practices. Teachers can encourage students to minimize waste, reduce plastic use, conserve electricity, and appreciate nature. Their enthusiasm motivates students to adopt environmentally friendly habits at home and in their communities.

Parents also have an important role in reinforcing environmental values. Schools and families should promote practices such as planting trees, saving water, reducing food waste, using reusable bags, and maintaining cleanliness. When children observe responsible behaviour at school and home, they are more likely to develop lifelong sustainable habits.

Technology has become a valuable

tool in environmental education. Educational videos, documentaries, virtual field trips, mobile applications, online simulations, and interactive platforms help students understand complex environmental issues. Digital resources allow learners to explore global challenges, scientific innovations, and conservation initiatives while connecting classroom learning with real-world experiences.

Pakistan has taken several initiatives to address environmental challenges, but greater emphasis on environmental education is needed. Educational institutions should establish eco-clubs, organize awareness campaigns, celebrate environmental days, and encourage students to participate in local conservation projects. Partnerships with environmental organizations, universities, and government agencies can strengthen practical learning opportunities.

Despite its importance, environmental education faces several challenges. Many schools lack adequate

resources, trained teachers, green spaces, and practical facilities. Examination-oriented education often leaves little room for project-based activities. Rural and under-resourced schools face additional financial and infrastructural limitations. Addressing these challenges requires government investment, curriculum reforms, and teacher training focused on sustainability.

Educational policymakers should make environmental literacy a core learning outcome at every stage of schooling. Curriculum developers must integrate climate education, disaster preparedness, biodiversity conservation, renewable energy, and responsible consumption into school programmes. Assessment should evaluate not only theoretical knowledge but also participation in environmental projects and community activities.

Environmental education also contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4 on Quality Education and Goal 13 on Climate Action. By empowering students with environmental knowledge and practical skills, schools prepare future citizens capable of making informed decisions. Educated youth can become ambassadors

for sustainable development within their families and communities.

Environmental education can also encourage innovation and green entrepreneurship. By identifying local environmental challenges and developing practical solutions, students cultivate creativity, leadership, and entrepreneurial thinking that can contribute to sustainable economic growth and conservation in Pakistan.

In conclusion, environmental education is an essential foundation for sustainable development. Schools have a unique opportunity to cultivate responsible citizens who understand the importance of protecting natural resources and preserving ecological balance. Through curriculum integration, practical learning, community participation, and supportive policies, Pakistan can prepare its young generation to address environmental challenges with confidence and responsibility. Investing in environmental education today means investing in a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future.

The writer holds a PhD in Media Sciences, Rawalpindi. Email: malik-tariq.media@gmail.com

Trump: Destroying the Alliances America Built

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the United States, so they alone are unlikely to dismantle the continental economy. But their significance lies in the precedent and in their interaction with existing disputes involving steel, aluminum, automobiles and lumber. citeturn0news49

Tariffs are initially paid by importers. Depending upon competition and supply alternatives, some of that burden may be absorbed by businesses and some passed to consumers through higher prices. Canadian exporters meanwhile face reduced competitiveness in their largest market. Retaliatory tariffs then impose similar pressures in the opposite direction.

The greater cost, however, may emerge over years rather than months.

If Canada concludes that dependence upon the American market has become a strategic vulnerability, it will logically accelerate diversification toward Europe, Asia and other markets. Companies will redesign supply chains. Governments will seek alternative suppliers. Investment decisions will increasingly incorporate political risk once largely absent from U.S.-Canada commerce.

Europe faces a similar calculation on security. If American military guarantees appear conditional, European governments have greater reason to develop strategic autonomy. Ironically, NATO allies are already moving dramatically in that direction:

European allies and Canada added more than \$90 billion in real defense spending in 2025 alone. citeturn0search11

Here lies the paradox of Trump's strategy.

American power after World War II did not rest solely upon military superiority, nuclear weapons, the dollar or the enormous American market. Its greatest multiplier was an international network of countries that voluntarily tied their prosperity and security to the United States.

Trump increasingly treats those dependencies as bargaining chips: military protection can leverage greater defense commitments; market access can leverage trade concessions; and alliance solidarity can become a

test of support for American military campaigns.

There is legitimate logic behind demanding fair burden-sharing. Allies should contribute adequately to their defense, and trade agreements should provide reciprocal benefits. But demanding fairness within an alliance is fundamentally different from weaponizing the alliance itself. The first can strengthen partnerships. The second teaches partners to reduce their dependence.

That is why the present confrontation extends far beyond tariffs or NATO spending. Europe spent generations discovering that interdependence could transform former enemies into partners. North America spent three decades building production

and trade networks worth trillions of dollars. NATO spent nearly eight decades constructing something even harder to quantify: confidence that allies would stand together when genuinely attacked.

These systems took decades to build because trust accumulates slowly. It can disappear remarkably quickly.

Trump may secure individual concessions by exploiting America's extraordinary economic and military weight. But if the longer-term result is a Canada searching for alternative markets, a Europe preparing to defend itself without assured American support and allies designing supply chains specifically to reduce exposure to Washington, tactical

victories could produce strategic losses.

America helped build the postwar system because its leaders understood that prosperous allies, integrated economies and collective security multiplied American power.

The danger today is that by weaponizing those very interdependencies, Washington may achieve the opposite: turning countries that once considered dependence upon America an advantage into countries determined never again to depend upon it.

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

New Provinces

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The creation of provinces should be guided strictly by national interest, with population size and geographical continuity as the principal criteria rather than language, ethnicity, tribe, or sect, so that administrative reform strengthens rather than fragments Pakistan. The argument warns that identity-based provincial policies can intensify ethnic and linguistic divisions, drawing on Pakistan's history of conflict associated with identity politics and noting that provinces such as Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa have historically been linked to linguistic and ethnic identities. New provinces should instead be diverse, pluralistic, and inclusive administrative and development units in which no ethnic or linguistic group claims exclusive ownership; regional cultures and languages should be preserved, but within a broader civic Pakistani identity in which provinces are viewed as branches of one national state rather than separate homelands. Political parties are urged to treat provincial reform as a national structural necessity rather than an electoral bargaining tool, because past governments have repeatedly used the issue to

reward supporters, punish opponents, gain votes, or avoid disturbing existing power structures. The proposed reform requires political statesmanship that puts citizens' interests above partisan calculations. The people themselves, including communities in Hazara, Saraiki-speaking southern Punjab, Bahawalpur, and various parts of Balochistan, are seeking greater administrative representation, resources, autonomy, and participation. Responding to these aspirations through carefully designed, geographically and demographically viable provinces could improve representation and development, demonstrate genuine commitment to state reform, restore public trust, and strengthen Pakistan's unity by bringing government closer to its citizens while maintaining an overarching national identity.

The creation of new provinces in Pakistan is not a luxury that the country can afford to postpone or a whimsical idea that can be dismissed lightly, but rather a fundamental and indispensable reform that is essential for the long-term health, stability, and prosperity of the nation, and it is a reform whose time has definitively come. The current four-province structure is a relic of the past, a coloni-

al-era administrative convenience that is completely inadequate to address the complex challenges of a twenty-first-century nation of over two hundred and forty million people, and its continuation is a primary cause of the inefficiency, inequality, and alienation that plague the country. The conversion of existing divisions into provinces offers a practical, low-cost, and readily implementable solution that leverages existing infrastructure and avoids the fiscal burden of building new state structures from scratch, making it a prudent and intelligent policy choice. The creation of new provinces will not only improve governance and administrative efficiency but will also generate a significant number of new jobs and economic opportunities, providing a much-needed boost to regional economies and offering new prospects for the country's burgeoning youth population. At the same time, this structural reform must be accompanied by a sustained and resolute effort to eradicate corruption and plug the financial leakages that drain the public treasury, as these resources are the lifeblood of the new provinces and are essential for funding the development projects that

will transform the lives of the people. The principles of demarcation must be based on population and geography, with a steadfast refusal to allow language or ethnicity to become the defining characteristics of the new units, in order to ensure that these provinces become symbols of national unity and not sources of further division. The political parties must rise above their petty rivalries and act with a sense of collective responsibility, recognizing that the creation of new provinces is a national cause that transcends party lines, and the government must have the courage and the resolve to move forward with this agenda, confident in the knowledge that the people of Pakistan will embrace this decision as a historic step towards a stronger, more prosperous, and more just nation. The path forward is clear; the arguments are compelling, and the time for action is now, for in the creation of new provinces lies the key to unlocking Pakistan's immense potential and ensuring a brighter future for all its citizens, a future where governance is not a distant and abstract concept but a tangible, responsive, and empowering reality for every man, woman, and child in the country.

Tarar says severe ...

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the base camp, but the adverse weather had hampered the retrieval operation.

Tarar said a helicopter had been authorised and coordination had been established between the

Gilgit-Baltistan government and the FCNA, while alternate arrangements were also in place.

"Whatever can be done in these circumstances, will be done," he said. The minister added that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was being kept updated on the situation.

The Most Important AI Revolution ...

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citizens. That is a much harder challenge. It is also a far more worthwhile one. I suspect history will remember this period rather differently from the way we describe it today. It may not be remembered as the moment machines became intelligent. It may be remembered as the moment governments were compelled to become more thoughtful. Perhaps that is the real revolution. Not smarter software but smarter institutions.

And if that proves to be true, the defining governments of this century will not be those that purchased the most advanced technology.

They will be the ones that developed the wisdom to use it well.

The writer is a software engineer by education, business leader and Advisor to the Chief Minister of Punjab on Artificial Intelligence and Special Initiatives. He writes on the future of governance, Artificial Intelligence, digital transformation and public policy.

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari in a meeting with Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Mr Nawaf bin Said Al-Malkiy, at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Sunday.



Photo: PID

President appreciates Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malkiy’s contribution to strengthening Pak-Saudi ties

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has appreciated the contribution of Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malkiy, towards strengthening the longstanding fraternal and strategic ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The President said this while

talking to Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malkiy who called on him for a farewell call at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The President expressed appreciation for his dedicated service and the friendship, warmth and cooperation he extended to Pakistan during his tenure. He said the Ambassador had played an important role in advancing

bilateral relations, particularly in the political, economic and trade spheres.

The President said Pakistan deeply values its time-tested friendship and strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia and appreciated the Kingdom’s steadfast support for Pakistan. He also expressed confidence that the strong foundation laid during Ambassador

Nawaf’s tenure would continue to guide bilateral cooperation in the years ahead.

Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malkiy, who has served as Saudi Arabia’s Ambassador to Pakistan since 2017, thanked the President and the Government and people of Pakistan for the warmth and cooperation extended to him during his stay in the country. He said he would

continue to hold Pakistan and its people in high regard.

The President wished Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malkiy success and the very best for his future endeavours, saying that Pakistan would always remain his second home.

Senator Sherry Rehman was also present during the meeting.

NDMA disburses aid to 34 Balochistan mine victim families

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), on the directives of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, on Sunday distributed ex-gratia assistance of Rs two million each to the bereaved families of 34 coal-mine workers who were killed in a tragic mining inci-

dent in Balochistan on July 30, providing immediate financial support to the affected families.

The cheques were handed over in Shangla, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, by an NDMA team in coordination with local representative Dr Ibadullah Khan.

The federal assistance reflected the government’s solidarity with the bereaved



families and its commitment to supporting communities affected by disasters and tragedies.

The initiative also underscored the government’s resolve to safeguard the lives and welfare of workers employed

in high-risk sectors, while extending timely assistance to families facing hardship after the loss of their loved ones.

Hina Javed murder case: Family reveals troubling details about her marriage

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: The family of Hina Javed, a 42-year-old parliamentary employee who was killed Aug. 20 in the Lal Kurti area of Rawalpindi, is speaking out about changes in her behavior after her arranged marriage last November, as police continue their investigation into her death.

Javed’s sister-in-law, Sabah Malik, told BOL News that Javed had become withdrawn and reserved following her wedding, a significant departure from the confident, career-oriented woman they had known for years.

“Hina was an independent, confident, career-oriented woman who was full of life,” Malik said in an interview with BOL News. “After marriage, she became quieter and more introverted.”

Malik said Javed had worked for



the National Assembly for years and had recently received a promotion, sharing the news with her family days before her death.

“She was extremely soft-hearted, loving and kept the family together,” Malik said. “She cared for her parents and visited them daily with her sister-in-law.”

Family members repeatedly asked Javed if she was happy in her marriage, but she would change the subject rather than answer, according to Malik.

Javed’s sister-in-law told that Javed had been visiting her parents’ home daily for the past 9 to 10 months. She said she never sensed Javed was in distress, but acknowledged that Javed would grow silent or deflect questions when asked about her married life.

Police have arrested Javed’s husband and a domestic worker

in connection with her death. Her father-in-law has not yet been taken into custody, the family said.

The family is calling for the immediate arrest of the father-in-law and a full investigation into his role.

“We cannot express in words what our family has lost,” the family said in a statement. “Hina was a daughter, a sister and a friend. Her entire life was an open book to us.”

The family has demanded that the investigation proceed with full transparency, free from influence, pressure or delay. They expressed confidence in Pakistan’s legal and judicial system.

“Violence against women is a crime and should be treated as such,” the family said.

The investigation is ongoing, and authorities have not released additional details about the circumstances of Javed’s death.

Tarar urges young officers to adopt responsible communication strategies



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar has urged young civil servants to perform their duties with integrity, professionalism and a strong sense of responsibility while keeping the national interest paramount.

Addressing 217 probationary officers of the 54th Common Training Programme (CTP) during their visit to the Ministry’s Digital Communication Department, Tarar highlighted the importance of effective government communication in promoting transparency, providing accurate information and strengthening public trust in state institutions.

He said the digital age had made it essential to counter misinformation and misleading content through timely, professional and responsible communication strategies. The minister encouraged officers to serve Pakistan with humility, commitment and professional competence.

The delegation comprised 117 male and 100 female probationers from 12 federal occupational groups and services. They received briefings on government communication, national narrative, digital outreach, public awareness and countering misinformation. The officers also discussed how digital platforms can improve public outreach and communication of government policies and initiatives.

DPM/FM Dar grieved over death of former Estonia’s PM



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Sunday, expressed his deep grief over the death of former Prime Minister of

Estonia Siim Kallas.

On X handle, the DPM/FM posted, “Deeply saddened by the passing of former Prime Minister of Estonia, Mr. Siim Kallas, father of HR/VP”

On behalf of the Government and people of Pakistan, and on his own behalf, Dar extended heartfelt condolences to the European Union High Representative/Vice President Kallas and her family.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with them in this difficult hour,” he added.

D-8 Secretariat to Host Webinar on Industrial Cooperation

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Developing-8 (D-8) Organization for Economic Cooperation will convene a webinar next week focused on strengthening industrial ties among its member states, drawing on Malaysia’s track record in industrial and economic development.

The session, titled “Leveraging Malaysia’s Industrial Experience for D-8 Cooperation,” is being organized

by the D-8 Secretariat in partnership with several Malaysian government bodies: the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI), the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE), the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA), and the Halal Development Corporation (HDC).

The webinar is scheduled for 27 August 2026 at 11:00 a.m. Istanbul time (1:00 p.m. Pakistan Standard Time) and will be held online.

Flour prices soar nationwide as 20kg bag hits record Rs3,100

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Flour prices have once again increased across Pakistan, with the price of a 20-kilogram bag rising by up to Rs100 in several cities during the past week, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

The latest official data shows that Islamabad has the highest average price for a 20kg bag of flour in the country, where it is being sold for Rs3,133.33. In Rawalpindi, the same bag has reached Rs3,093.33.

Khudzar recorded the sharpest weekly increase, where the price of a 20kg flour bag rose by Rs100. Prices increased by Rs60 in Bahawalpur, Rs40 in Hyderabad, and Rs20 each in Larkana and Quetta.

According to the PBS, a 20kg flour bag is now priced at around Rs2,700 in Quetta, Rs2,900 in Bannu, and Rs3,100 in Peshawar. In Karachi, it is being sold for Rs3,000, while consumers in Lahore can buy it for around Rs2,300.

In Gujranwala, Sialkot, Sargodha, Multan and Bahawalpur, the price of a 20kg flour bag stands at approximately Rs2,800. It is available for around Rs2,580 in Sukkur and Rs2,620 in Larkana.

The continued rise in flour prices is placing additional pressure on household budgets, particularly affecting low-income and middle-income families already struggling with the rising cost of essential food items.