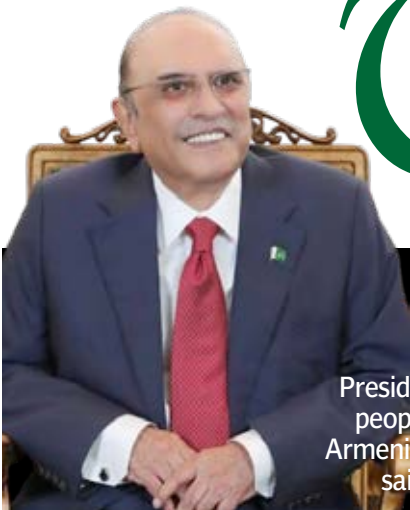




Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



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ایک صحابی نے سنا کہ ایک دوسرے صحابی
سورۃ قل مولود بار بار پڑھتے ہیں جب صبح
ہوئی تو وہ رسول اللہ ﷺ کے پاس آئے اور
نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم سے اس کا ذکر کیا وہ
صحابی اس سورت کو کم سمجھتے لیکن نبی کریم
صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے فرمایا کہ اس ذات کی قسم
جس کے ہاتھ میں میری جان ہے یہ قرآن مجید
کے ایک تہائی حصہ کے برابر ہے۔
(بخاری: ۱۰۱۷۱، صحیح مسلم: ۶۶۴۳)
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President Zardari felicitates Armenia on 35th Independence Day

President Asif Ali Zardari has extended warm felicitations to the government and the people of Armenia on the occasion of the 35th Independence Day of the Republic of Armenia. In his message to President of Armenia Vahagn Khachaturyan, the President said Pakistan and Armenia have entered a new chapter in their bilateral relations.



Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan pays tribute to Professor Abdul Ghani Bhat

Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan has paid tribute to the late Professor Abdul Ghani Bhat, former President of the Muslim Conference in Srinagar and former Chairman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), describing him as a prominent Kashmiri political leader, intellectual and advocate of a peaceful political approach to the Kashmir issue.

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Protest

KARACHI: Supporters and activists of the gather before starting a 'train march' towards the country's capital Islamabad against the increased petroleum levy, rising fuel prices and inflation, at a railway station, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

Eight militants killed, six security personnel martyred in Hangu firefight



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Eight militants were killed and six security personnel, including two young army officers, were martyred in an exchange of fire in Hangu district, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Sunday.

The military's media wing said a security forces convoy came under attack from militants, triggering an intense exchange of fire.

It said troops effectively engaged the attackers and killed eight militants, whom it described as members of "Indian sponsored Fitna-al-Khwarji".

ISPR said Captain Abuzar Farooq, 23, a resident of Gujranwala, and Lieutenant Sheraz Babar, 22, from

Chakwal, were among the six personnel martyred in the clash.

The two officers were leading their troops from the front when they made the ultimate sacrifice, it added.

A sanitisation operation was launched in the area following the clash to locate and eliminate any other militants who may still be present.

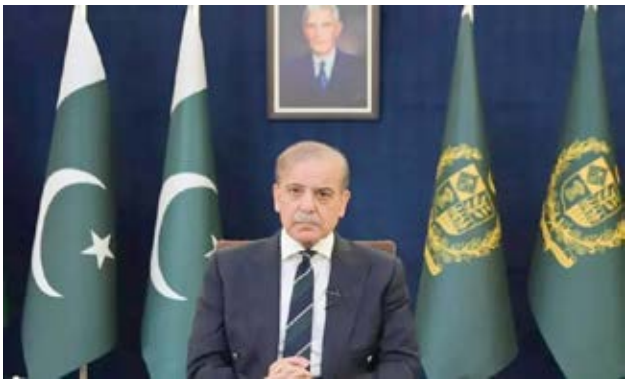
According to ISPR, the counterterrorism campaign under the government-approved "Azm-e-Istehkam" initiative will continue with full force against what it described as foreign-sponsored terrorism.

The military's media wing paid tribute to the fallen personnel, saying their sacrifices reaffirmed the security forces' commitment to protecting the country.

PM Shehbaz Reaffirms Pakistan's Commitment to Global Peace on International Day of Peace

City News

ISLAMABAD: As the world observed International Day of Peace on Monday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif renewed Pakistan's commitment to peaceful coexistence, global stability, equal opportunities and justice. In his message, he said Pakistan takes pride in its constructive role in advancing regional and international peace, citing sincere efforts for conflict resolution, de-escalation of tensions, and consistent contributions to UN peace-keeping missions as a source of national pride.



Referring to this year's theme, "Invest in Peace, For Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day," he said

peace is not merely the absence of conflict but is reflected in economic and social well-being,

protection of rights, dignity and inclusion. He stressed that an equitable, non-discriminatory social order is essential for lasting peace, rooted in Islamic teachings and Pakistan's Constitution.

The prime minister highlighted government policies protecting the rights of women, children, minorities, persons with disabilities and vulnerable groups, and cited the National Action Plan for Human Rights 2026 as a comprehensive framework promoting inter-faith harmony, preventing hate speech, protecting minorities, and improving access to justice

and institutional accountability.

He underlined the role of education in nurturing civic responsibility, tolerance and respect for diversity, particularly in universities, and stressed that protecting victims of rights violations strengthens citizens' trust in the state.

Shehbaz called on all citizens to combat hatred, intolerance and discrimination, describing peace-building as a shared responsibility of institutions, civil society, religious leaders, teachers, media and families, and prayed for lasting peace and prosperity for Pakistan and the world.

Govt withdrawing from electricity procurement starting today: Awais Leghari

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Energy Minister Awais Leghari said on Sunday that the government was beginning to withdraw from its role as the sole buyer of electricity as Pakistan moves towards a competitive power market.

Speaking to the media in Islamabad, Leghari said electricity producers and consumers would increasingly be able to buy and sell power directly under the new system, marking a shift away

from the existing single-buyer model.

He said the government's priority remained providing affordable electricity to consumers, adding that greater competition and transparency in power trading would help bring down electricity costs.

Leghari said the government had been working for the past two years to provide cheaper electricity and had introduced significant reforms in the power sector. Under the new system, elec-

tricity producers and consumers would conduct transactions directly, with the mechanism initially being introduced for industrial and other large consumers.

He added that 800 megawatts of electricity would be offered through auctions over the next five years, with 400MW to be offered in the first phase.

Leghari said the electricity trading system would be based on transparency and would eventually lead to the development of



a power market in the coming years.

PM hails security forces for killing five terrorists, rescuing 23 hostages

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif praised security forces for successfully conducting an operation against terrorists near Kalat along the N-25 highway connecting Chaman and Karachi.

In a statement, the prime minister commended the forces for their timely and effective action, which resulted in the killing of five terrorists and the safe recovery of 23 abducted individuals from a terrorist hideout.

He said the operation had thwarted the militants' alleged plans to disrupt public movement, carry out kidnap-

pings for ransom, extort citizens and snatch vehicles along the national highway.

The prime minister also lauded the professional capabilities of the security forces for recovering a large quantity of arms, ammunition and explosives. Six trucks, three buses and two other vehicles were also recovered from the terrorists' possession.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to combating terrorism, Shehbaz Sharif said decisive operations under Operation Azm-e-Istehkam would continue until, according to the government, the country was rid of foreign-sponsored terrorism.

Iran says Hormuz will stay closed until US fulfils commitments

Reuters

Iran will keep the Strait of Hormuz closed until the United States fulfils commitments made under a June agreement and meets Tehran's conditions, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on Sunday.

Addressing parliament, Ghalibaf said Iran had conveyed its demands to the US through intermediaries, according to state broadcaster IRIB.

He said Washington was aware that Tehran would not accept what he described as "deception and unilateral imposition", adding that the strait would not be reopened until Iran's "legitimate rights" were recognised and US commitments were fulfilled. Ghalibaf also ruled out a

return to the previous negotiating framework before those conditions were met.

Tensions in the region intensified after the United States and Israel launched attacks on Iran on February 28, prompting Tehran to carry out strikes on countries hosting US military assets.

Iran subsequently closed the Strait of Hormuz, a key route for global oil and gas shipments.

Washington and Tehran reached an agreement in June that included a halt to military operations and arrangements for restoring navigation through the strategic waterway.

However, the agreement later broke down amid disagreements over navigation and security arrangements in the strait.

Ishaq Dar Leaves for New York to Attend UNGA 81st Session

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar left Islamabad on Sunday for New York, where he will accompany Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the 81st Session of the UN General

Assembly from September 21-25.

Dar has an extensive programme lined up, including the OIC Contact Group meeting on Jammu & Kashmir, where he will highlight Pakistan's support for Kashmiris' right to self-determination. He will also attend several OIC Ministerial meet-

ings, including the Foreign Ministers' Annual Coordination Meeting and other Contact Group sessions.

Reflecting Pakistan's support for the Palestinian cause, Dar will attend the Group of Eight Arab Islamic countries meeting and the Ministerial Meeting of the Global

Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution. He will also deliver a statement at the UN Security Council briefing on artificial intelligence and attend a meeting on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, besides chairing the ECO Council of Ministers meeting.

Dar will hold bilateral meetings with several counterparts and accompany the prime minister in his engagements, using the occasion to highlight Pakistan's efforts for regional and international peace while exchanging views on key global challenges.

Distance between government and people erased, says PM Iftikhar Gilani



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Iftikhar Gilani spent the day meeting a steady stream of public delegations at the Prime Minister's House, as citizens from morning till evening showered him with congratulations, flowers and prayers. Residents expressed happi-

ness at finding their prime minister accessible among them and used the occasion to apprise him of the problems facing their areas. On Sunday, delegations arrived at the PM House from all union councils of Muzaffarabad city as well as various parts of Azad Kashmir. The visiting groups, which included young

people and women, came to congratulate Prime Minister Iftikhar Gilani on assuming office and to highlight issues specific to their respective localities. Speaking to the delegations, Prime Minister Gilani said that his government's priorities are centred on the common man. He said the government would review the problems

confronting the public, devise a plan to resolve them, and ensure its implementation. The prime minister added that the government's focus is on development that directly benefits ordinary citizens, so that people do not have to repeatedly knock on doors to obtain basic facilities.

World Peace Day Marathon

KARACHI: Runners participate in the World Peace Day Marathon, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

Special Seminar Held to Mark Pakistan Defence Day Under the 'Jhuggi' Education Project

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: A special seminar commemorating Pakistan Defence Day was organized under the 'Jhuggi' Education Project, spearheaded by the Ghayas Jhuggi Education Foundation. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Faisalabad, Nasir Javed Rana, attended the seminar as the chief guest. Other notable attendees included Mubashir Hussain Chand (Chief Organizer and CEO, Ghayas Jhuggi Foundation) and Haji Muhammad Abid (Chairman, FCCI Standing Committee on Traffic). Children associated with the 'Jhuggi' Education Project presented patriotic songs, speeches, and special



tableau performances. Through their performances, the children highlighted the significance of Pakistan Defence Day, love for the homeland,

and the sacrifices made by martyrs—efforts that were highly appreciated by the audience. Speaking on the occasion, CTO Faisalabad Nasir Javed Rana praised the children's performances and activities, noting that education and positive engagements play a vital role in shaping a child's personality. He emphasized that providing educational opportunities to children from underprivileged sections of society is a collective responsibility, as education forms the foundation of a bright future for them. The event concluded with a special prayer for the security, progress, and prosperity of the country and the nation.

Commissioner reviews MDCAT arrangements at Hyderabad, Jamshoro Centres



Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

HYDERABAD: Commissioner Hyderabad Division Fayaz Hussain Abbasi visited the MDCAT 2026 examination centres at Public School Hyderabad and LUMS Jamshoro during the ongoing test and reviewed the examination process and arrangements. Talking to the media, the Commissioner said that the administration was closely monitoring the examination process to ensure a peaceful, transparent and disciplined environment for candidates. He said

special attention was being given to security, facilities for students and the smooth conduct of the examination. He said MDCAT was an important examination for students aspiring to pursue medical and dental education, adding that all relevant departments had been mobilised to facilitate candidates and ensure the smooth conduct of the test. Deputy Commissioners, Director General Health, District Health Officers, concerned Assistant Commissioners and police officials accompanied the Commissioner during his visits.

ADB, World Bank-Funded MEPCO Projects Reviewed



Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Planning Commission Project Director (M&E) Engineer Amir Zamir Khan visited MEPCO headquarters to review progress on projects funded by the Asian Development Bank and World Bank. The meeting examined procurement, equipment installation, technical issues and obstacles affecting timely completion. MEPCO's Project Management Unit briefed the visiting official on ongoing work. Khan commended MEPCO's procurement procedures and assured Planning Commission support in resolving issues involving external stakeholders, in coordination with the Economic Affairs Division, Ministry of Energy and other relevant bodies.

MEPCO officials said development projects focusing on system upgrading and automation were progressing rapidly under CEO Engineer Gul Muhammad Zahid. The initiatives aim to modernize the distribution network, reduce power losses, combat electricity theft and improve supply reliability. World Bank-supported projects include six new 132kV grid stations, 21 kilometres of transmission lines, 9,000 Automated Power Monitoring Systems (APMS) units, feeder upgrades and staff training. ADB-funded projects include 150,000 three-phase smart meters, APMS installation on 13,323 distribution transformers and establishment of a data centre. Officials said APMS would enable continuous monitoring, provide accurate consumption and loss data, and strengthen measures against electricity theft. Teams were directed to maintain close coordination for timely completion.

SDM Bhimber Reviews Implementation of Petroleum Relief Package Scheme



Bureau Report

BHIMBER: Under the directives of Bhimber District Magistrate Chaudhry Muhammad Tariq, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Bhimber, Sohail Bashir, took the following actions to review the implementation of the Petroleum Relief Package Scheme introduced by Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif: He inspected various petrol pumps in the Bhimber subdivision and gathered information from citizens present at the sites. He directed all pump owners to display standardized flex banners to inform and guide the public, ensuring that truly deserving individuals can benefit from the scheme. He issued separate instructions to the Assistant Director of Industries to take appropriate measures in this regard. A daily monitoring report regarding the scheme will be submitted to higher authorities. The public has been informed that to avail the benefits of the Petroleum Relief Package, consumers must register free of cost using their registered mobile SIM numbers. To refuel an 800cc vehicle or motorcycle, consumers should send an SMS in advance to the relevant pump's focal person; this will ensure prompt refuelling and prevent inconvenience to others. It has also been clarified that the motorcycle or vehicle must be registered in the name of the National Identity Card (NIC) holder.

Mohenjo Daro Passenger Train Service Restored on ML-2 After Sustained Public Campaign

Azad Baloch

DADU: The Mohenjo Daro Passenger Train service on the ML-2 railway line has been restored after nearly six months of suspension, providing relief to passengers dependent on affordable rail transport between Sukkur and Kotri. The restoration followed a sustained campaign by Rahmani Nagar resident Mashhoor Memon, who had raised railway-related public grievances for more than three years. After reviewing the railway track and arrangements, Pakistan Railways authorities resumed the service at an inaugural ceremony at Sukkur Railway Station, led by DS Sukkur Railway Farman Ghani, alongside Memon and other participants. The train received a warm welcome at various stations along the route. Memon travelled with associates to Sita Road, while former Sindh minister Pir Mazhar-ul-Haq boarded at Sindh University Railway Station with supporters. Campaign participants urged passengers to purchase official tickets and use the railway service properly. They also recalled that more than 14 passenger and freight trains once operated on ML-2, including Khushhal Khan Khattak, Bolan Mail, Shah Nawaz and Shahbaz. Railway users have expressed concerns over deteriorating track conditions and inadequate maintenance. The restoration is being viewed as an important step toward reviving affordable rail connectivity for communities along the ML-2 corridor.

ACE Toba Tek Singh arrests agriculture officer in Rs17.55m Funds Case

Correspondent

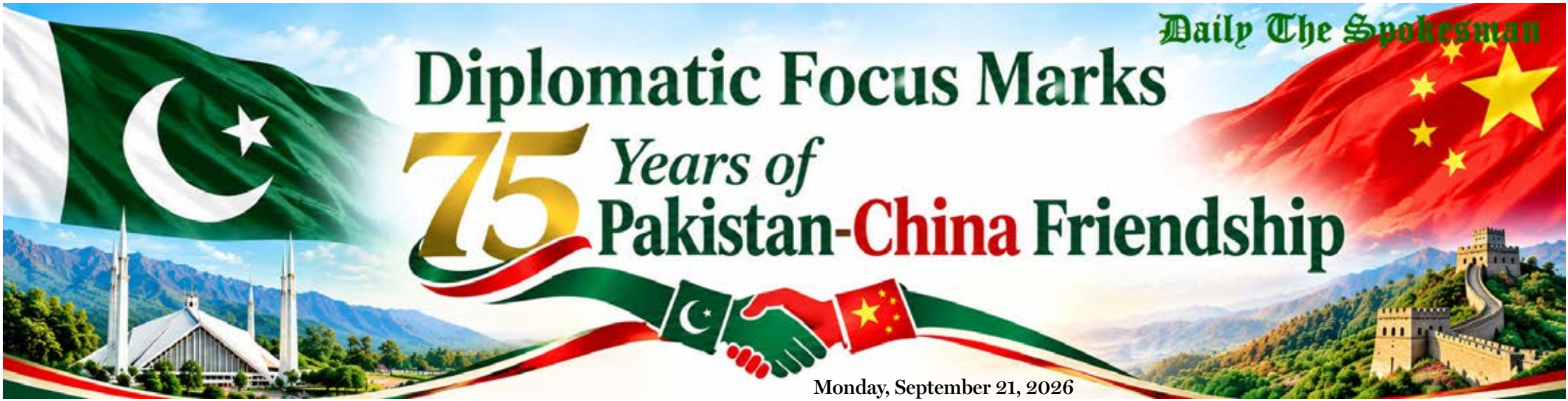
TOBA TEK SINGH: The Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) has arrested Assistant Director Agriculture Pirmahal Muhammad Shakeel Arshad over alleged misappropriation of Rs17.55 million and preparation of fake documents. ACE officials said the accused allegedly misappropriated funds collected from farmers as fines under the Smog Act between July 1 and December 31, 2025. Instead of depositing the amount in government treasury, he allegedly prepared a fake National Bank of Pakistan challan with a forged stamp and placed it in the departmental file to show the amount had been deposited. A case was registered against him at Anti-Corruption Police Station, Toba Tek Singh, under PPC Sections 420, 468, 471, 409 and Section 5(2)47 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, on complaint of ASI Akhtar Hussain. Circle Officer Hafiz Muhammad Saeed Farooq said the arrest reflects CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif's "Corruption-Free Punjab" vision, adding further legal action would follow based on investigation findings.

Power-Market Reform Must Deliver Competitive Energy System for Textile Sector



Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Pakistan's power-market reforms must translate into a commercially viable, reliable and transparent energy system for the export-oriented textile sector, stakeholders said at a dialogue titled "Threads of Accountability: Traceability and Energy Policy for Textile Competitiveness," organised by Alternate Development Services (ADS). Participants included textile manufacturers, power-sector professionals, sustainability specialists and renewable-energy stakeholders. ADS Chief Executive Amjad Nazeer introduced the Shared Transition Responsibility Movement (STRM), urging manufacturers, brands and financiers to share decarbonisation costs. ADS Energy Transition Officer Muhammad Usman Bin Ahmed discussed the Competitive Trading Bilateral Contract Market (CTBCM), covering competitive procurement, bilateral contracting, wheeling, Use of System Charges (UoS), security guarantees and firm-capacity requirements for renewables. The dialogue noted NEPRA's September 2026 determination sets effective UoS at Rs9.46/kWh for B-3 and Rs12.32/kWh for B-4 consumers, including Rs3.23/kWh in Distribution of Subsidy Surcharge. Experts discussed network capacity, metering and transmission constraints. FPCCI's Rehan Javed highlighted rising generation costs, while others addressed digital traceability and verification. Participants stressed energy efficiency and waste-heat recovery as decarbonisation foundations, concluding that market liberalisation alone cannot succeed without reliable, transparent, economically viable reforms.



Diplomatic Focus Marks 75 Years of Pakistan-China Friendship with Grand Seminar and Dinner Reception in Islamabad

By Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Diplomatic Focus, a leading media group specializing in coverage of Pakistan's foreign relations, organized a high-profile seminar and dinner reception at the Capital Ballroom of the Mövenpick Hotel Islamabad to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the People's Republic of China, spanning 1951 to 2026.

The event brought together ambassadors, high commissioners, senators, parliamentarians, senior government officials, business leaders, academics, media representatives and members of the diplomatic corps for an evening dedicated to celebrating one of Pakistan's most enduring international partnerships.

The programme opened with a cultural performance titled "Pak-China Dosti," presented by students of Roots Millennium Schools. The performance offered a vibrant tribute to the deep people-to-people bonds between the two countries and received warm applause from the audience.

Delivering the welcome address, Mian Fazal Elahi, CEO, Editor-in-Chief and Publisher of Diplomatic Focus and Chairman of RBI Media Minds, welcomed the distinguished guests and highlighted the organization's longstanding efforts to promote diplomacy, international understanding and stronger Pakistan-China relations.

Reflecting on more than four decades of experience in journalism since 1980, Elahi said Diplomatic Focus had consistently provided a platform for ambassadors, diplomats, government officials, business leaders, academics and civil society representatives to discuss opportunities and challenges shaping Pakistan's international relations, particularly ties with China.

He said the beginning of a new phase of cooperation under CPEC Phase-II offered significant opportunities in energy, investment, industry, agriculture, technology, education, tourism and trade. He called upon the private sector, academia, youth and media to contribute actively to this next chapter of bilateral cooperation.

The keynote sessions featured speakers representing education, energy, business, aviation, defence, maritime affairs and academia.

Mr. Sirhaan Ahmed Khan, CEO of Falcon Oil Group (Private) Limited, discussed the energy and investment

dimensions of CPEC Phase-II. He outlined his company's proposed Falcon Oils Refinery and Storage Complex at Dhabeji, Sindh, a business-to-business initiative involving a proposed 100,000-barrels-per-day refinery and approximately four million metric tons of storage capacity, with an estimated investment of US\$3.5 billion.

Khan said the project aimed to combine Pakistani and Chinese expertise, engineering and technology and expressed interest in expanding cooperation with China Energy Engineering Corporation Limited and other Chinese enterprises. He described the initiative as a potential contribution to Pakistan's energy security, industrial development and employment generation.

Ms. Nishat Fatima, CEO of South Air, discussed the importance of aviation connectivity in supporting economic integration. She said improved air links between Gwadar, Punjab, Sindh and northern tourism destinations could facilitate Chinese investment, tourism and business exchanges.

Dr. Faisal Mushtaq, Chairman of Roots Millennium Education System, highlighted the importance of education, scholarships, academic exchanges and institutional linkages in strengthening long-term people-to-people relations between Pakistan and China.

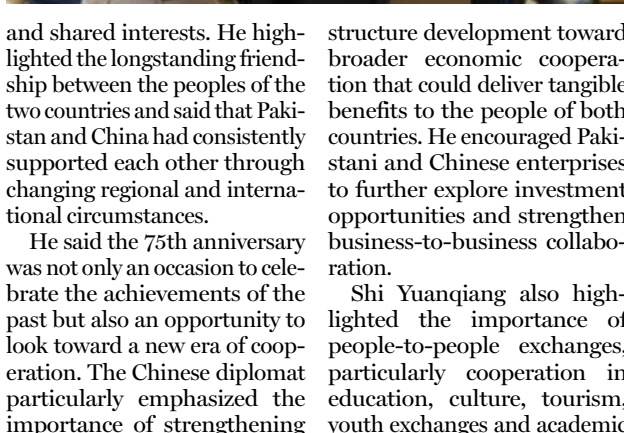
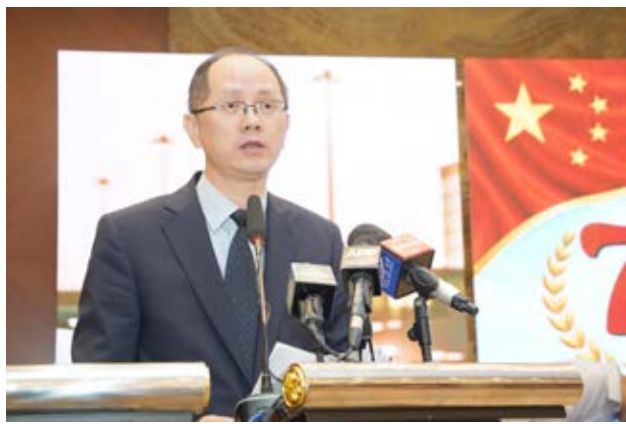
Ms. Aamna Manawwar Awan, President of COPAIR, emphasized stronger connectivity among cities, businesses, investors and markets to promote trade, tourism and investment.

Prof. Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Vice Chancellor of Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, highlighted the expanding scope of academic and research cooperation between Pakistani and Chinese institutions.

Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, Chairman of the Pakistan-China Institute, delivered a special keynote address and shared his perspective on the longstanding strategic relationship between Pakistan and China.

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Advisor/Coordinator to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Tourism and CEO of Centaurus Group, spoke about tourism and investment opportunities, while Mr. Murtaza Solangi, Spokesperson to the President, discussed the importance of public communication and media diplomacy in strengthening mutual understanding.

The Chief Guest, Mr. Syedal Khan Nasir, Deputy Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan,



Pakistan to deepen bilateral cooperation and strengthen coordination in regional and international affairs. He said both sides should continue building on the achievements of the past 75 years while creating new opportunities for future generations.

The Chinese representative also highlighted the importance of maintaining close communication, enhancing mutual understanding and encouraging greater participation by the business community, youth, academia and media in strengthening Pakistan-China friendship.

He described the Pakistan-China relationship as a partnership with strong foundations and significant potential for further development, particularly as both countries move toward the next phase of economic cooperation under CPEC.

The remarks received warm appreciation from the participants, reflecting the significance attached to the 75th anniversary and the future direction of bilateral relations.

The commemorative cake-cutting ceremony subsequently marked the 75th anniversary of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations. The ceremony was joined by the Chief Guest, Chinese Embassy representatives, Deputy Chairman of the Senate, keynote speakers and representatives of Diplomatic Focus.

Souvenirs, shields, certificates of appreciation and bouquets were presented to distinguished guests and speakers, including Mr. Syedal Khan Nasir, Mian Fazal Elahi, Dr. Faisal Mushtaq, Mr. Sirhaan Ahmed Khan, Ms. Aamna Manawwar Awan, Ms. Nishat Fatima, Prof. Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Mr. Murtaza Solangi and Chinese Embassy officials, including Mr. Shi Yuanqiang, Ms. Zhuang Xinyan and other embassy staff.

In the vote of thanks, Mian Fazal Elahi expressed gratitude to all guests, speakers, diplomatic missions, partners and sponsors for contributing to the success of the event. He said the seminar had brought together representatives from government, parliament, diplomacy, defence, academia, business, aviation and the Chinese Embassy to discuss the future trajectory of Pakistan-China cooperation.

The seminar's theme, "CPEC Phase-II: Energy, Investment, Defence, Cooperation & Future Prospects," reflected the expanding scope of bilateral relations beyond infrastructure development toward deeper cooperation in industry, energy security, aviation, tourism, education, technology and investment.

The event concluded with a dinner reception in an atmosphere of friendship and goodwill, reaffirming the enduring spirit of "Pakistan-China Dosti."

Photos by Ramzan Mughal

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Silencing Hate, Before Hate Silences Humanity

The conference room at UN Headquarters may have felt far removed from a desecrated mosque or a hate-filled social media feed, but the message delivered there on Thursday was urgent and immediate: hate speech, and Islamophobia in particular, has metastasized into one of the defining threats to human coexistence in the digital age.

Pakistan's intervention at the interreligious dialogue conference, co-hosted by Morocco, UNOSAPG and UNAOC, was more than diplomatic boilerplate. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad's warning that Islamophobia has become a "profitable industry" in some places, sustained by a symbiotic relationship with local power structures, names something too many international forums shy away from acknowledging: hatred is not always spontaneous or irrational. Sometimes it is manufactured, monetized, and mainstreamed for political gain.

That mainstreaming is the real danger. As Secretary-General Guterres noted, hate speech's "toxic message is spreading fast and striking deep," no longer confined to the margins of public discourse but increasingly normalized in it. The digital revolution, which promised to connect humanity, has instead become an accelerant—algorithms reward outrage, disinformation travels faster than correction, and vulnerable communities bear the cost in the form of real-world violence, from attacks on worshippers to the vandalizing of religious sites.

What makes this moment particularly dangerous is the well-documented pipeline from words to atrocities. Guterres was blunt: hate speech, left unchecked, "incites violence, drives conflict, and contributes to the perpetration of atrocity crimes." History offers no shortage of proof. Genocide rarely begins with weapons; it begins with language that strips a community of its humanity in the public imagination.

Pakistan's call to fully implement existing UN mechanisms—the General Assembly resolutions and the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech—is a reminder that the world is not short on frameworks. It is short on enforcement, political will, and the courage to confront hate speech even when it is politically convenient to look away.

Interreligious and intercultural dialogue, as Ambassador Ahmad argued, is not a soft diplomatic nicety but a practical necessity—perhaps the only durable antidote to a mindset that thrives on division. But dialogue alone cannot substitute for accountability: technology companies must be pressed to curb amplification of hateful content, and states must resist the temptation to weaponize religious or ethnic identity for domestic advantage.

The stakes, as Pakistan rightly framed them, are nothing less than posterity, shared values, and civilization itself. Words matter. It is past time the world treated them accordingly.

EU Enacts Strict Laws on Social Media Use by Minors

The European Commission has proposed strict restrictions on children's access to social media through its September 2026 EU KIDS Act initiative. The proposal would exclude children under thirteen, permit supervised accounts between thirteen and fifteen with limited features and one hour of daily access, and require protective design for older minors. These laws represent a significant effort to place responsibility on platforms for how they engage with children.

The initiative reflects a wider concern about digital platforms occupying an expanding share of childhood. Phones entertain toddlers, games compete with homework, and social media accompanies children into bedrooms, classrooms, and family gatherings. The issue extends beyond individual pieces of harmful content. It concerns time, attention, relationships, and the commercial systems competing for them. Protecting children requires a coherent approach to platform design, age restrictions, parental responsibility, and the ways children actually gain access.

The problem can begin before a child understands what a screen represents. Parents sometimes hand over phones to calm young children or keep them occupied while completing household tasks. An occasional distraction can become a familiar routine. Yet early childhood requires conversation, movement, play,

and sleep. World Health Organization guidance recommends no sedentary screen time for infants and one-year-olds, and no more than one hour daily for children aged two to four, with less preferred.

As children grow, the question becomes what prolonged digital engagement displaces. Time spent scrolling or gaming can reduce opportunities for reading, exercise, creative activity, and conversation. Families may occupy the same room while interacting mainly with separate screens. Online friendships can be valuable, but they should not become the only relationships children learn to maintain. Their development also involves listening, negotiating disagreements, recognizing emotions, and participating in the everyday responsibilities of home, school, and community.

These concerns do not establish that every child develops an addiction or that all online activity is harmful. They do establish the need to examine risks carefully. The U. S. Surgeon General's advisory identifies significant concerns while acknowledging gaps in understanding and concludes that social media cannot currently be considered sufficiently safe for children and adolescents. Educational and social benefits therefore belong alongside an assessment of exposure,

design, developmental stage, and the activities that screen use replaces.

Platform design is central to that assessment. Autoplay removes stopping points; notifications invite repeated returns; recommendation systems select further material based on previous interactions. A child's brief interest can become a succession of similar content. The concern is not simply that technology offers entertainment, but that engagement mechanisms can make disengagement difficult. The European proposal addresses this problem by combining age thresholds with restrictions on platform operation, rather than relying entirely on parental permission.

Australia has already implemented a minimum account age of sixteen for covered platforms, effective since December 2025. The United Kingdom has announced restrictions on certain services for under-sixteens, expected from spring 2027. Their coverage and implementation differ, but both place obligations on companies. Australia also requires alternatives to government identification for age checks. Child protection therefore need not be equated with requiring every user to surrender identity documents to every platform.

In the United States, federal COPPA

rules protect children's personal information, while states pursue additional measures concerning access and harmful design. California signed further legislation addressing social media and companion chatbots in September 2026. These protections should be recognized without confusing privacy consent with comprehensive supervision. Permission to collect specified information does not establish that a parent continuously observes a child's interactions or that every platform feature is appropriate.

Indeed, parental permission can leave a practical gap. An adult may allow a child to use an existing account, hand over an unlocked phone, or provide access to a game to keep the household quiet. An age check can identify the account holder without identifying everyone subsequently using the device. Restrictions on children's registrations therefore address only part of the problem. Adult ownership should not be mistaken for proof that a service is being used exclusively by adults.

One broader proposal is to prohibit children under eighteen from using adults' accounts on restricted services and establish defined daily access windows covering adults as well. Social media, gaming, and communication applications would become unavailable outside those windows, including overnight. Its intended purpose would be to reduce opportunities for bypassing children's

Continued on Page 7



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

Emerging Trends and Challenges of Higher Education in Pakistan

Higher education is a vital pillar of national development. It produces skilled professionals, researchers, innovators and responsible citizens who contribute to economic growth and social progress. In Pakistan, higher education has expanded significantly over the past few decades, with more universities, degree programmes and opportunities for students. However, the sector is also facing serious challenges that require timely reforms, effective policies and sustained investment.

One of the most significant emerging trends is the rapid growth of digital education. Online learning, virtual classrooms, learning management systems and digital resources have become increasingly important. The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of technology in education and demonstrated the potential of distance and blended learning. Artificial intelligence, data analytics and other emerging technologies are now creating new opportunities for teaching, research and academic administration. Pakistan needs to embrace these developments while ensuring that students and institutions have reliable internet access and adequate digital infrastructure.

Another important trend is the growing emphasis on skills-based and market-oriented education. Employers increasingly seek graduates with communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy and professional skills. Traditional degree programmes alone may not be sufficient to prepare young people for a rapidly changing labour market. Universities therefore need stronger links with industry and professional organizations. Internships, practical training, entrepreneurship programmes and industry-led courses can help reduce the gap between academic learning and employment requirements.

Research and innovation are also becoming increasingly important. Pakistan has talented researchers and young academics, but limited research funding, inadequate laboratories, weak industry-academia collaboration and insufficient international cooperation continue to restrict the country's research potential. Universities should promote research that addresses national challenges such as climate change, water scarcity, energy security, agriculture, public health, poverty and technological development.

Despite these positive trends, access and affordability remain major challenges. Many talented students, particularly those from low-income families and remote areas, struggle to enter or continue higher education because of tuition fees, transportation costs, limited institutions and inadequate financial assistance. Regional disparities are also significant. Students in rural and less-developed areas often have fewer opportunities than those living in major urban centres. Scholarships, need-based financial aid, distance education and the expansion of quality institutions in underserved regions can help address these inequalities.

Quality assurance is another pressing concern. The expansion of universities and degree programmes has not always been accompanied by comparable improvements in academic standards. Shortages of qualified faculty, outdated curricula, inadequate research facilities and weak academic governance can negatively affect the quality of education. Universities must focus not merely on increasing enrolment but also on improving learning outcomes, faculty development, accreditation and institutional accountability.

The brain drain of highly qualified academics and graduates presents another challenge. Many talented Pakistanis seek better research facilities, salaries and professional opportunities abroad. While international mobility can be beneficial, Pakistan needs poli-

cies that encourage skilled professionals to contribute to the country. Competitive career opportunities, research grants, modern laboratories and merit-based academic environments can help retain talent.

Another emerging challenge is the responsible use of artificial intelligence. AI can support personalized learning, research, assessment and academic management, but it also raises concerns about plagiarism, academic integrity, misinformation and overdependence on technology. Universities should develop clear policies for ethical AI use and teach students how to use these technologies responsibly rather than simply restricting them.

Furthermore, academic governance and institutional autonomy require greater attention. Universities need transparent decision-making, merit-based appointments and efficient financial management. Political or administrative interference can weaken academic independence and discourage innovation. Strong governance mechanisms can improve institutional performance and restore public confidence in higher education.

Higher education in Pakistan is therefore at a critical crossroads. The country has a young population, expanding technological opportunities and considerable intellectual potential. However, these advantages can only be transformed into national progress through sustained investment, effective governance, quality teaching and meaningful research.

In conclusion, Pakistan must move from an expansion-focused model of higher education towards one based on quality, innovation, accessibility and employability. Universities, policymakers, industry and society must work together to build an education system that prepares young people not only to find jobs but also to create knowledge, generate employment and solve national problems. A strong and future-ready higher education system is essential for building a prosperous, innovative and competitive Pakistan.

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Dr. T. M. Malik

Rising fuel Prices: Why Are People still Silent?

In Pakistan, petrol and diesel prices are now rising almost every day, having a deep impact on the daily lives of ordinary people. The new price of petrol has reached approximately Rs. 389 per litre, while the price of High-Speed Diesel has risen to around Rs. 424 per litre. Since July 2026, petrol prices have increased by approximately 23 percent and diesel prices by around 18 percent. In April 2026, fuel prices also witnessed a significant increase, when petrol reached Rs. 458 and diesel Rs. 520 per litre.

However, the current increase in petrol and diesel prices is not merely about the figures displayed at fuel stations. It means more expensive transportation, higher fares, rising prices of essential commodities, and increasing agricultural costs, all of which directly affect the lives of ordinary citizens.

Official inflation figures also point towards the seriousness of the situation. According to the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), weekly inflation increased by 0.49 percent during one week of September 2026, while overall inflation this year has been recorded at 10.64 percent, with increases in diesel and petrol prices having a significant impact. In August 2026, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was recorded at 11.1 percent, with transportation costs also contributing significantly to inflation. On the other hand, the Petroleum Development Levy

and other taxes are also included in fuel prices. This means that, along with global crude oil prices and the exchange rate, local taxes and government policies also influence petrol and diesel prices. Therefore, the issue of fuel prices is not limited to the international oil market; it also involves questions related to domestic fiscal policy. The question now is: when the impact of fuel prices has reached almost every sector of life, why is the public response still so weak?

Why, despite such continuous economic pressure, is there no significant public resistance in Pakistani society? There are examples from different countries where people have protested against rising fuel prices and taxes. In 2018, France witnessed the "Yellow Vest" movement, in which people reacted against increases in fuel taxes and the rising cost of living. In several other European countries, truck drivers, farmers and people associated with various sectors also protested against increasing fuel costs. These examples at least demonstrate that when an economic problem affects a particular group or sector in an organized manner, public unions, civil society, and political and non-political organizations can play a role in transforming that concern into a collective voice. In Pakistan, however, such organized and sustained movements appear to be relatively weak.

Continued on Page 7



Mansoor Nizamani



Islamabad
30° – 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr4:31 am
Zohr12:02 pm
Asr4:23 pm
Maghrib6:08 pm
Isha7:31 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 &
& Rescue Services 4451122
Motorway Police9266044
Motorway Police 9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance115
PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi5555489
CAA 9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH561111
MH561116
MH561116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ5556311-4
RGH9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS9261170-79
Polyclinic 9218300-09
Shifa International4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA 9221334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864
TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan
Corporation 9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town 5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service
E-7, F-10 & F-11 9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-89203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-89266316
Wapda Islamabad.....9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint..... 119, 9272249

CM calls for cleaner, greener Punjab on World Cleanup Day

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Sunday said making the province clean and green and ensuring a healthy population was the government's top priority.

In her message on World Cleanup Day, she said a clean Punjab was the founda-

tion of a healthy and prosperous future, while the "Suthra Punjab" project would lay the basis for a healthier Punjab.

The chief minister said the programme was one of the largest projects of its kind in the world and, for the first time, a systematic cleanliness programme had been launched not only in cities but also in 25,000 villages.



She said cleanliness of roads, streets and neighbourhoods was also being monitored through Safe City cameras. "Ensuring cleanliness in streets and neighbourhoods is the government's responsibility, but maintaining it is the citizens' duty," she added.

The chief minister said sustainable and environment-friendly measures were

being taken under the Suthra Punjab programme, including waste management, recycling and cleanliness of public places.

She stressed that keeping the environment clean was essential for protecting the planet and preventing diseases, adding that a clean environment guaranteed a better quality of life.

"Keeping our surroundings clean is our collective social responsibility," she said, urging citizens to properly dispose of waste, avoid the use of plastic and play their part in keeping their homes, streets and neighbourhoods clean.

She also noted that cleanliness held special importance in Islam, saying: "Cleanliness is half of faith."

Waiting for customers

RAWALPINDI: Labourers are sitting along with their tools alongside a road at Hathi Chowk area wait for customers during Sunday holiday, in the city.



Photo: Online

September Polio Vaccination Campaign Launched in Karachi

Bureau Report

KARACHI: The September Sub-National Immunization Days (SNIDs) for polio vaccination were inaugurated at the Rotary Club of Karachi Community Centre in Gulistan-e-Jauhar. National Chair PolioPlus Committee Aziz Memon, EOC Focal Person Dr Ahmad Ali Shaikh, Rotary District 3271 Governor Shahzad Sabir and DGE Fahad Sikandar inaugurated the campaign.

Scheduled from September 21 to 27, the campaign will target 31 million children under five in 115 high-risk districts across Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh.

Three nationwide campaigns conducted earlier this year covered 45 million children. In selected high-risk areas, oral polio vaccine (OPV) was administered alongside



fractional injectable polio vaccine (fIPV) to strengthen immunity among vulnerable children.

Aziz Memon said polio eradication was a collective respon-

sibility and urged parents and caregivers to ensure children receive recommended vaccinations. He highlighted Rotarians' role in supporting front-line workers, monitoring

campaigns and countering misinformation.

Pakistan and Afghanistan remain the only countries where polio has not been eradicated.

CM commends security forces for Kalat operation

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Sunday expressed appreciation for the successful operation against the terrorists near Kalat on the Chaman-Karachi N-25 highway.



The chief minister paid tribute to the security forces for killing five terrorists and safely recovering 23 hostages during the operation.

Pakistan demands Afghan action after Kohat attack

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has demanded concrete action from the Afghan Taliban against terrorist networks operating from Afghanistan after investigators identified one of the suicide bombers involved in the deadly Kohat Police Lines attack as an Afghan national.

Security sources identified the bomber as Mutee-Ullah, an Afghan citizen, while the identity of the second suicide attacker is still being verified. The development, according to Pakistani officials, has added to Islamabad's concerns over the use of Afghan territory for attacks inside Pakistan.

The attack on Friday targeted a mosque inside the Kohat Police Lines during Friday prayers. Eight terrorists were killed during a clearance operation that continued into Saturday, while the death toll rose to 23, including 17 police personnel and six civilians. More than 100 people were injured.

According to police, the assault began with a suicide bombing near the mosque, after which some of the attackers entered the Special Branch building.

Security forces cordoned off the compound and launched an operation to eliminate the militants. The Additional Inspector General of the Counter Terrorism Department was also injured during the operation.

Islamabad strongly condemns attack

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting strongly condemned the attack and said the identification of an Afghan national among the attackers reinforced Pakistan's longstanding concerns about terrorism emanating from Afghan territory.

In a statement on X, the ministry said Pakistan had repeatedly raised concerns over the use of Afghan territory by Fitna al-Khawarij and other terrorist groups to plan and launch attacks inside the country.

It said the presence of terrorist sanctuaries, recruitment networks and support infrastructure in Afghanistan posed a direct threat to Pakistan's security.

"These concerns have been conveyed repeatedly to the Afghan Taliban regime and their interlocutors," the ministry said, urging Kabul to dismantle the networks instead of deflecting responsibility.

The ministry also criticised Afghan Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid for threatening Pakistan with a "crushing response", saying the Afghan authorities should instead address the militant networks that are operating from Afghan soil.

Quran Mahals to Be Set Up Across Punjab for Dignified Disposal of Sacred Pages: Dr. Ehsan Bhutta



Bureau Report

LAHORE: Secretary/Chief Administrator Auqaf Punjab Dr. Ehsan Bhutta has said the Punjab government is taking comprehensive measures to protect worn-out and damaged pages of the Holy Quran from desecration, with district-level Quran Mahals being established to provide citizens secure facilities for depositing sacred literature. Speaking during visits to Sahiwal and Pakpattan, he said that under directives of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, no negligence in handling sacred pages would be tolerated. He noted that eight Quran Mahals already exist at the divisional level, while the Punjab Quran Board has signed an MoU with Madina Foundation for monthly collection and dignified recycling of sacred pages at its Faisalabad facility.

In Sahiwal, he inspected Kameer Mosque, and in Pakpattan met the Deputy Commissioner to discuss establishing a district Quran Mahal. He also visited the shrine of Baba Farid-ud-Din Masood Ganj Shakar (RA), inspected the Auqaf dispensary, and ordered a documentary on the saint's teachings for visitors. He confirmed completion of the shrine's adjoining mosque expansion, with a new ablution facility now underway to serve worshippers better.

Agriculture Internship Programme Supports Young Graduates in Attock

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: A ceremony was held by the Agriculture Extension Department Attock to mark the completion of Phase-II internships and induction training for Phase-III interns under the Chief Minister Punjab Internship Program for Agricultural Graduates. Member National Assembly Sheikh Aftab Ahmed was the chief guest.

Deputy Director Agriculture (Extension) Dr Muhammad Javed said the programme was helping agricultural graduates gain practical education and farmers' needs. Phase-II interns reported on their work, including support for Kisan Cards, the Green Tractor Scheme, plant clinics, and interns at the conclusion of the ceremony.



farmer training and crop production competitions. The new Phase-III interns pledged to promote modern farming practices and provide research-based solutions to crop, pest and soil-related problems.

Sheikh Aftab appreciated the Punjab government's agricultural initiatives and the department's training efforts, expressing hope that young professionals would contribute to higher production, farmer prosperity and food security. He distributed completion certificates among Phase-II interns at the conclusion of the ceremony.

 Bull & Bears

PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
169,043.19	168,021.80
Day's High	Day's Low
169,576.52	168,222.91
Index Value	Change
13,474,387,451	+ 1021.39
Percentage	Time
+0.61%	17 Sept, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,816.14	+ 127.67
Percentage	Time
+ 1.19%	17 Sept, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
51,801.41	+ 339.51
Percentage	Time
+0.66%	17 Sept, 1:45 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
64,136.25	+ 213.25
Percentage	Time
+0.33%	17 Sept, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	196.61	200.45
Bahrain Dinar	734.24	744.98
Canadian Dollar	198.06	203.75
China Yuan	38.27	38.99
Danish Krone	42.85	43.45
Euro	320.52	324.53
Hong Kong Dollar	35.00	35.97
Indian Rupee	2.60	3.12
Japanese Yen	1.7339	1.8337
Kuwaiti Dinar	884.86	894.89
Malaysian Ringgit	68	68.85
NewZealand \$	158.48	162.15
Norwegians Krone	28.25	28.60
Omani Riyal	719.14	729.45
Qatari Riyal	74.97	75.69
Saudi Riyal	73.8	74.5
Singapore Dollar	217.65	223.15
Swedish Korona	28.45	28.95
Swiss Franc	338.25	342.95
Thai Bhat	8.25	8.95
U.A.E Dirham	75.50	76.40
UK Pound Sterling	374.26	378.78
US Dollar	278	278.3

Fuel could hit Rs1,000 per litre if shortage emerges, warns petroleum minister

 Monitoring Report

LAHORE: Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik issued a stark warning on Sunday that petrol prices could reach Rs1,000 per litre if a fuel shortage emerged in the country, as global oil prices continued to surge amid renewed hostilities in the Middle East.

Speaking to journalists in Lahore, Malik said petroleum prices had already risen by 50% in Pakistan, with prices in Europe and the United States also climbing sharply.

He said Houthi attacks were unacceptable and that the government was providing relief to vulnerable segments of society to cushion the impact of rising fuel costs.

On the energy front, the minister said work had begun on oil wells and the government expected to discover domestic crude oil by October, which could help reduce reliance on expensive imports.

The warning came as fuel prices recorded a sharp increase amid heightened volatility in global oil markets triggered by renewed hostilities in the Middle East and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The further escalation followed the collapse of a fragile cease-fire reached in June between Tehran and Washington, along with Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia's civilian and economic infrastructure, raising concerns over disruptions to energy shipments.

Following the latest price revision, petrol is now being sold at Rs389.14 per litre while high-speed diesel stands at Rs424.04 per litre. In response to the rising prices, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif last Sunday launched a special relief scheme providing Rs100 per litre discount on petrol for motorcyclists, rickshaw and Chingchi owners and drivers of vehicles up to 800cc.

Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima subsequently announced three major revisions to the scheme. She said eligibility had been extended to motorcycles registered from January 1, 2006, instead of the previous 2011 cut-off, in response to feedback from citizens and journalists.

The previous five-litre limit per token has been abolished, with eligible two and three-wheeler users now able to purchase fuel according to their own requirements. Each eligible user can obtain four tokens per month with each token carrying a relief amount of Rs500.

Qaiser Sheikh Visits Cadet College Malir, Receives Ceremonial Guard of Honour by Cadets

 Bureau Report

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Investment and Chairman, Board of Investment (BOI), Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh visited Cadet College Malir on Saturday on the invitation of Principal Khuzema Gohar, where he was accorded a warm welcome and an impressive ceremonial

salute by the cadets.

The visit gave the federal minister an opportunity to interact with cadets and faculty and appreciate the institution's efforts in providing quality education and training. Prince Hayat Khan, former MNA Kanwar Qutubuddin, Shahid Umar and social figure Nafees Haider were also present.



Addressing the cadets, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said Pakistan's youth are among the country's most valuable assets, stressing that education must go beyond academics to build discipline, character, patriotism and leadership. He said young people would play a central role in the country's economic transformation through innovation, entrepreneurship and investment-led growth, adding that the government is working to facilitate businesses and reduce regulatory barriers to attract investment and

create employment.

Referring to Marka-e-Haq, the minister paid tribute to Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for his leadership in national defence and in presenting Pakistan's position internationally.

Principal Khuzema Gohar earlier welcomed the minister and briefed him on the college's educational and co-curricular activities. The minister encouraged cadets to pursue excellence and uphold integrity and service to the nation.

Address

Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani addressing the Pakistan international auto show gala dinner organized by the Pakistan Association of automotive parts and accessories manufacturers (Paapam)



Photo: APP

Pakistan International Auto Show 2026 Attracts Over 300,000 Visitors

 Commerce Desk

LAHORE: The Pakistan International Auto Show (PAPS) 2026 concluded at the Lahore International Expo Centre after attracting more than 300,000 visitors over three days. The event brought together automobile manufacturers, auto-parts producers, dealers, industry experts, government representatives and automobile enthusiasts.

Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif inaugurated the exhibition, where leading companies showcased existing and newly introduced vehicles. New models from BYD, Chery, JAC and Suzuki were among the major attractions. Senior government offi-

cials, including Punjab Minister Bilal Yasin, Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal and Haroon Akhtar Khan, visited the exhibition. The PAPS 2026 Gala Dinner was attended by Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani as chief guest.

An automotive industry symposium discussed technology, innovation, localization, manufacturing capabilities and emerging trends. PAAPAM Chairman Usman Aslam Malik highlighted opportunities for investment and technological development. Organizers said the strong public response demonstrated growing interest in automotive products and strengthened industry linkages and collaboration.

Zong Partners with ISP Environmental Solutions to Launch Pakistan's First-of-its-Kind Smart Waste Management Stations

 Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's leading technology services enterprise, has partnered with ISP Environmental Solutions (ISPES) to launch PecoDrop, first-of-its-kind smart waste management stations, integrating technology, data and circular-economy principles into workplace sustainability.

The smart recycling stations, to be deployed across Zong facilities, will enable source-level segregation and recovery of recyclable plastic, paper and metal, reducing recyclable waste from entering landfills. A digitally enabled system will capture data on material deposits, volumes and collections, creating a traceable data chain from disposal to recovery. Employees will earn Credits for depositing recyclables, which they can digitally track and redeem.

Zong's Head of Strategy and Spokesperson Nabila Yazdani said the initiative demonstrates how technology, data and employee participation can create a smarter, measurable approach to waste



management. ISPES CEO Dr. Zillay Maryam said the partnership engineers "the first mile of a true circular economy" through tech-integrated segregation systems.

Launched in conjunction with World Cleanup Day, the partnership reflects Zong's commitment to making sustainability an everyday, measurable workplace practice.

FDI momentum strengthens

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Finance Minister Khurram Schehzad said Sunday that Pakistan's net foreign direct investment (FDI) rose to \$316 million in August 2026, marking the highest monthly level in two years.

In a post on X, Schehzad said the increase was driven by stronger investment inflows coupled with lower repatriation and outflows, resulting in a

significantly improved net FDI position during the month.

He described the development as a positive sign as



Pakistan moves from macro-economic stability towards investment-led and sustain-

Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh to attend World Economic Forum Meetings

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, has departed for New York to attend the "Sustainable Development Impact Meetings 2026," organized by the World Economic Forum (WEF) from September 21 to 24, where he will showcase Pakistan's economic potential and favorable investment climate.

The four-day high-profile global gathering will convene world leaders, global investors, prominent business executives, and heads of international financial institutions to deliberate on strategic frameworks for sustainable development and global economic resilience, said a press release.

During the forum, the minister will highlight the attractive incentives, structural government reforms,

and streamlined ease-of-doing-business facilities available to foreign investors across strategic sectors, including energy, technology, agriculture, and manufacturing.

On the sidelines of the summit, the federal minister is scheduled to hold a series of bilateral and multilateral meetings with international investors, corporate executives, and global economic leaders, aimed at catalyzing foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into Pakistan and expanding cross-border commercial partnerships.

Economic analysts view the minister's participation at the World Economic Forum as a significant and forward-looking step toward positioning Pakistan as a competitive and stable investment destination in the region.

PM&DC President reviews MDCAT 2026 arrangements at Islamabad examination centres

ISLAMABAD: President Pakistan Medical & Dental Council (PM&DC), Prof. Dr. Rizwan Taj, visited the MDCAT 2026 examination centres at Air University main campus and Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Medical University (SZAB-MU), Islamabad, to review examination arrangements and observe the conduct of the test.

MDCAT 2026 was successfully conducted nationwide for 138,158 registered candidates at examination centres established across 34 cities and towns, in addition to an international examination centre in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

During his visit, Prof. Dr. Rizwan Taj inspected the facilities and arrangements put in place for candidates and reviewed measures adopted to ensure the smooth, transparent and orderly conduct of the examination. He expressed satisfaction with the overall arrangements and appreciated the efforts of the institutions and teams involved in conducting the examination.

Speaking on the occasion, the PM&DC President said that all possible facilities had been provided to candidates to ensure a conducive examination environment. He also noted that special examination centres had been established in Islamabad to facilitate candidates from Azad Jammu and Kashmir.



The President further stated that a post-hoc analysis of MDCAT 2026 would be undertaken following completion of the examination. The analysis will provide a comprehensive review of the examination process and help assess the effectiveness of the

arrangements and procedures adopted for the test.

MDCAT 2026 was the second examination conducted under the present PM&DC Council, in accordance with the prescribed regulatory framework, examination guidelines, approved

questions and established standards.

The successful nationwide conduct of the examination reflects the coordinated efforts of PM&DC, examination-centre administrations, security and support teams, and other stakeholders involved in the examination process.

PCB's School Cricket Initiative Commendable, Will Produce Future International Cricketers: Nuzhat Parveen

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Chief Executive Officer, District Education Authority Multan, Nuzhat Parveen, has said the Pakistan Cricket Board's initiative to promote school cricket is commendable and will produce future international cricketers for Pakistan.



A ceremony to distribute cricket uniforms to sixteen Multan district schools, held under PCB's "School Cricket Talent Hunt Program Phase II," took place at the Bahauddin Zakariya E-Library. Chief Guest Nuzhat Parveen was joined by District Sports Officer Adnan Naeem, School Cricket Coordinator Muhammad Manzoor Latifi, District Coach Tahir Mahmood Faiz, DCA Vice President Sheikh Muhammad Irshad Soni, and other officials.

Parveen said the PCB's move to provide students opportunities and facilities for cricket at the school level was praiseworthy, and stressed the importance of physical activity alongside academics, helping youth move away from social media to showcase sporting talent.

Adnan Naeem called cricket the world's most popular sport, contrasting current facilities with earlier events that lacked uniforms, equipment and proper grounds, and credited PCB and the Punjab Sports Department for promoting youth activities.

Coordinator Muhammad Manzoor Latifi noted participation had grown from nine schools last year to sixteen this year, with PCB providing all facilities free of charge, calling it a strong step for grassroots cricket. He thanked PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi and General Manager Domestic Osama Sheroon Niazi for the programme.

Cricket uniforms were then distributed to the participating schools.

Hauthis Aggression and KSA's Defense: DG ISPR Clarifies Pakistan's Position

The recent remarks by Pakistan's Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations, Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to protecting Saudi Arabia, particularly Makkah and Madinah, collectively known as the Haramain Sharifain, from Houthi aggression. The attacks on Saudi Arabia have included missiles and drones targeting civilian areas, cities, airports, oil facilities, and economic infrastructure, while the reported drone attack toward Makkah caused exceptional anger and distress because of the city's religious significance as the location of the Kaaba and Masjid al-Haram and the direction of Muslim prayer. In an interview with an Arab television channel, the DG ISPR said Pakistan stands with Saudi Arabia in defending the Haramain and will go to any extent to protect it from aggression. He described the Pakistan-Saudi relationship as an unbreakable historical bond rooted in shared faith, values, mutual respect, and decades of cooperation between their peoples, armed forces, and political leadership. The relationship, which dates back to Pakistan's founding and Saudi Arabia's early recognition of the country, includes economic development, trade, education, culture, defence, military training,

and the past deployment of Pakistani troops in Saudi Arabia. Pakistan's military capabilities, including its armed forces and nuclear capability, provide substantial capacity to deter aggression and support allies. The DG ISPR also explained that the Mecca agreement between Pakistan, Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia is defensive in nature, intended to promote peace, regional stability, mutual support, and deterrence. Its precise implementation arrangements remain confidential because revealing military plans and security information could enable adversaries to prepare countermeasures. If any one of the three countries is attacked, the response and course of action will be collectively determined by all three and implemented accordingly, rather than through unilateral action. He indicated that there is no objection to the agreement, reflecting its acceptance as a defensive arrangement rather than an aggressive or controversial one.

The Houthi conflict in Yemen and repeated attacks on Saudi Arabia are treated as threats to regional peace, Gulf stability, the security of the holy sites, and the wider Muslim world, with the attempted strike toward Makkah regarded as an especially serious escalation because of its potential danger to lives, property, and the sanctity of the Haramain. Pakistan's position reassures Muslims that the holy sites are

not undefended, reinforces ties with Saudi Arabia and the Arab world, and emphasizes Pakistan's reliability as a partner committed to its obligations while leaving operational decisions to the three countries collectively. The Pakistani public is united in supporting the country, faith, and holy lands. This commitment is a noble opportunity, privilege, honour, and responsibility, providing comfort that Pakistan has a strong army prepared to face challenges and fulfil its commitments. The whole nation is standing with the Pakistan Army, united in its support for the defence of the Haramain, love for Saudi Arabia, and opposition to Houthi aggression, demonstrating national solidarity and Pakistan's willingness to stand by its friends. The international community is urged to take the threat seriously, protect Saudi Arabia and the holy sites, and support peace and regional security. Other countries are encouraged to share this responsibility by supporting the protection of the holy lands and the Muslim world, making the DG ISPR's message a call for unity,

collective action, and the defence of faith, peace, and sacred places.

The relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia is a model of brotherhood and cooperation. It is a relationship that is based on shared faith and shared values. It is a relationship that has stood the test of time. It is a relationship that has grown stronger over the years. The defence cooperation is a key pillar of this relationship. The Mecca agreement is a formal expression of this cooperation. The DG ISPR's statements have reaffirmed this cooperation. They have shown that the two countries are united in their commitment to defend the holy sites.

They have shown that they are prepared to work together to face any challenge. This is a source of great strength for both countries. It is a source of great strength for the Muslim world. It is a source of great hope for the future.

The people of Pakistan are a generous and brave people. They are always ready to help their brothers and sisters in faith. They have shown this in many ways. They have provided aid to many Muslim countries in times of need. They have provided troops for

peacekeeping missions. They have provided training to many armies. They have always stood up for the rights of Muslims around the world. The defence of the Haramain is a sacred duty for them. They consider it a privilege to be able to serve the holy sites. They are proud that their army is at the forefront of this effort. They are proud that their country is playing a leading role in protecting the holy land. This is a source of great honor for them. It is a source of great pride for their nation.

The DG ISPR's interview with the Arab TV channel was a masterful piece of communication. It was clear. It was direct. It was reassuring. It sent a strong message to friends and foes alike. It told friends that Pakistan stands with them. It told foes that Pakistan will not back down. It told the world that Pakistan is a responsible and reliable ally. It told the Muslim world that Pakistan is committed to the defence of the holy sites. This is exactly what needed to be said. This is exactly what needed to be heard. The DG ISPR is a skilled and professional spokesman. He represents the Pakistan Army with dignity and honor. He represents the people of Pakistan with pride and commitment. His statements have been widely praised in Pakistan and in the Muslim world. They have strengthened the morale of the people.

They have strengthened the bonds of friendship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The threat from the Houthis is not over. They may continue to attack. They may continue to threaten the holy sites. They may continue to try to destabilize the region. But they should know that they will not succeed. They should know that there are those who will stand up to them. They should know that Pakistan will not let them harm the holy sites. They should know that Pakistan will go to any extent to defend Saudi Arabia. This is the message of the DG ISPR. This is the message of the Pakistan Army. This is the message of the people of Pakistan. This is the message of the entire Muslim world. The holy sites are sacred. They are protected. They are defended. They will remain safe and secure. The enemies of Islam will not prevail. The defenders of the faith will prevail. This is the promise of history. This is the promise of faith. This is the promise of Pakistan. The nation stands with its army. The army stands with the holy sites. The holy sites stand in the hearts of all Muslims. This is an unbreakable bond. This is an eternal commitment. This is the truth that the DG ISPR has spoken. This is the truth that the world must understand. This is the truth that will guide the future.



Abdul Basit Alvi

EU Enacts Strict Laws on Social Media Use by Minors

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restrictions and create shared periods away from screens. This would go beyond current age-based approaches and would require evaluation rather than an assumption of guaranteed success.

Comprehensive coverage also means examining functions across applications. A game may contain public chat, a messaging service may distribute entertainment feeds, and a new product may reproduce features restricted elsewhere. Rules focused only on

familiar brand names can leave comparable activities untouched. At the same time, family contact, education, emergency assistance, and work communications require distinct consideration. Defining harmful functions clearly offers a more precise foundation than treating every digital interaction as identical.

Digital distraction also extends into public places and transport. While driving, social media, messaging, navigation controls, and passengers drawing attention to their screens can

divert attention from the road, sometimes with fatal consequences.

Road-safety evidence establishes this danger. The proposed restrictions would therefore also cover distracting functions within otherwise useful applications: requests for photographs, reviews, or optional reports would be deferred until the driver is safely parked, while essential navigation and emergency connectivity would remain available.

Telephone access would be

preserved without treating calls behind the wheel as distraction-free. Extending restrictions to passengers on trains and buses would pursue a different objective—encouraging conversation, social bonds, and shared attention—rather than addressing the same driving risk.

This broader proposal highlights the importance of examining individual features: an application created for navigation or communication can introduce additional interactions that compete with its core

purpose and the user's attention.

For Pakistan, the central challenge is the purpose and accountability of regulation. Human-rights organizations have criticized cybercrime provisions affecting journalists, political discussion, and ordinary users. Child protection requires a different focus: children's well-being, privacy, development, and exposure to harmful practices. Public trust depends on whether those objectives govern enforcement. Restrictions proposed as safeguards must be assessed

through their actual operation, including the powers granted, independent oversight, and remedies available to affected users.

Technology's educational, creative, and communicative benefits remain worth preserving. The challenge is to prevent those benefits from becoming an excuse for leaving children exposed to avoidable risks. Families, schools, platforms, and regulators have different responsibilities, and none can substitute entirely

for the others. Age limits, safer design, restrictions on account-sharing, and proposed access windows should be judged by their results. The ultimate measure is whether children gain healthier routines, stronger relationships, and safer opportunities to learn and grow.

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Rising fuel Prices: Why Are People still Silent?

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The reasons are not only political but also economic and social. For a daily-wage worker, spending a day protesting means losing a day's income. A small shopkeeper, driver, farmer or low-income employee is already facing the costs of electricity, gas, food, education and healthcare. In such circumstances, finding the time and resources to protest and organizing ordinary people is not easy. Political divisions also create obstacles in transforming economic problems into a collective movement. When an economic issue becomes part of the blame game between polit-

ical parties, the attention of ordinary people can shift away from the actual issue. As a result, after every increase in prices, discussions, complaints and reactions appear on social media for a few days, but eventually the issue becomes part of everyday life.

Continuous inflation also has a psychological impact: people gradually begin to adopt survival strategies instead of resistance. They reduce their travel, try to cut household expenses and even limit spending on their children's needs. Such measures may provide temporary relief, but they do not resolve the underlying problems, which continue to grow. We know

that the government attributes price increases to global oil prices, wars, the import bill or exchange-rate fluctuations. Part of this debate is certainly connected with global circumstances, but an equally legitimate question is how much relief ordinary consumers receive through local taxes, the petroleum levy, government expenditures and the price-setting mechanism. The public should be clearly informed about how much of the price of one litre of fuel represents the international cost of oil, how much consists of taxes and levies, and to what extent the government has the ability and justification to increase or reduce

the price.

The impact of rising fuel prices extends far beyond the petrol pump. Higher diesel prices increase the costs of agricultural machinery, tube wells, transportation and the movement of goods. Higher petrol prices increase the monthly expenses of millions of people who travel by motorcycles, cars, rickshaws and other means of transport. When transportation becomes more expensive, the impact reaches the markets and ultimately forces consumers to pay more. Therefore, the government needs to do more than simply increase or decrease fuel prices. It should make the entire fuel-

pricing structure transparent to the public, consider targeted relief for poor and low-income groups, and adopt policies that do not transfer the full burden of shocks in the international market onto consumers. Similarly, political parties, labour organizations, traders' organizations, civil society and the media must make economic issues a serious subject of public debate.

How long can the people continue to bear the burden created by the constantly rising prices of petrol and diesel? As inflation increases, incomes are not rising at the same pace, while basic expenses continue to grow. Every increase in fuel prices

therefore takes something more out of the pocket of the ordinary citizen. However, it would also be wrong to consider public silence a solution to the problem. Silence does not always mean consent; it may also be the result of helplessness, economic hardship, fear or political distrust. Therefore, the question should not only be why petrol has reached Rs. 389 or diesel Rs. 424 per litre. It should also be asked: how much of this price is the public paying, how much goes to the government, and who is responsible for providing relief? There is a need for greater government transparency and accountability and for a serious public debate on

economic policies through which some relief can be provided to the people. However, it should be remembered that public silence cannot always be taken for granted. If economic pressure continues to increase and the difficulties faced by the people are not effectively addressed, the possibility of strong public reaction cannot be ignored. Therefore, those in power should seriously consider timely and effective measures to provide relief to the people, so that the situation does not become more complicated and economic unrest does not turn into a wider social crisis.

The writer is a Teacher and Columnist

Exercise SEASPARK 2026

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf interacting with troops at Creeks Area during Exercise SEASPARK 2026



Photo: Online

Strikes could cause

Rs120bn daily loss to

economy, says Aurangzeb

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has warned that sit-ins, protests and disruption of business activities could cause the country a daily loss of Rs120 billion.

In a video statement, he said strikes could reduce daily export volumes by up to 50%, potentially disrupting the country's economic growth.

Aurangzeb said calls for marches, strikes and sit-ins

under the prevailing circumstances were difficult to understand, adding that economic stability had been achieved through difficult decisions.

He said continuing the country's economic growth was a shared responsibility and urged all stakeholders to resolve their issues through dialogue.

The minister warned that losses caused by sit-ins and protests would ultimately affect ordinary people, particularly



the poor.

Aurangzeb said Pakistan's

foreign exchange reserves had reached a record \$21.4 billion, while efforts were underway to reduce expenditures.

He said the country was also running a current account surplus and had moved from economic stabilisation towards economic growth.

The finance minister added that the export sector was also moving in the right direction and expressed optimism that economic growth would accelerate further.

PVARA Chairman Meets US Chargé

d’Affaires on Digital Assets Regulation

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State and Chairman of the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA) Bilal Bin Saqib met U. S. Chargé d’Affaires Natalie Baker to discuss Pakistan's evolving regulatory framework for digital assets.

During the meeting, Bilal Bin Saqib briefed the U. S. diplomat on developments in Pakistan's digital assets sector and the government's efforts to establish a modern and robust regulatory framework. Discussions also covered innovation, financial transparency and the future of the digital economy.

The PVARA chairman said Pakistan was laying the foundations for a digital economy while keeping the future of the financial system in view. He emphasized the importance of innovation and financial transparency in shaping the country's digital economic direction.

The meeting highlighted Pakistan's efforts to develop



a structured regulatory environment for digital assets and

promote transparency as the sector continues to evolve.

Both sides discussed issues relevant to the future develop-

ment of the digital economy and financial regulation.

The Muslim Ummah Will Not Tolerate Any

Threat to the Sanctity of Makkah: Arshad Iqbal

Spokesman Report

SIRINAGER: Advocate Arshad Iqbal, spokesperson for the Jammu Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP), has strongly condemned the reported drone attack towards Makkah and said that the sanctity, dignity and security of the holy sites are matters of profound faith and concern for the entire Muslim Ummah. Makkah is at the heart of Muslims across the world, and any act of aggression or attempt to endanger its security is completely unacceptable.

He said that Muslims, regardless of where they live in the world, cannot accept any compromise on the sanctity and security of the Holy Mosques. Any attempt to endanger the sacred

sites not only deeply hurts the religious sentiments of Muslims but also poses serious risks to peace and stability in the region.

Advocate Arshad Iqbal described the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye as a timely and important development in the present critical circumstances. He said that the Muslim world today needs to stand together, rise above differences and strengthen mutual cooperation. Greater coordination among Islamic countries for collective security, sovereignty and common interests is an important requirement of the present time.

He stressed that the Muslim Ummah today needs unity, solidarity

and a coordinated approach more than ever. Muslim countries should resolve their differences through peaceful means and adopt an effective and united position on long-standing issues, including Palestine and Kashmir, where people have endured decades of conflict and continue to struggle for their fundamental rights and justice.

Referring specifically to Jammu and Kashmir, the JKDFP spokesperson said that the people of Kashmir have been engaged in a struggle for their right to self-determination and for the determination of their political future for the past 78 years. During these decades, the Kashmiri people have made immense sacrifices and continue to await the realization of their funda-

mental political and human rights.

He said that the people of Kashmir are not only striving for their own right to self-determination but are also looking towards greater unity, solidarity and cooperation within the Muslim Ummah. They hope that the Muslim world will rise above its differences and play a meaningful collective role in seeking peaceful and just solutions to long-standing issues such as Kashmir and Palestine.

Advocate Arshad Iqbal said that the people of Jammu and Kashmir, having themselves experienced the consequences of prolonged conflict, violence and insecurity, firmly support peace, protection of human life, respect for the sanctity of religious places and adherence to international principles.

Chief of the Naval

Staff Reviews

Exercise Seaspark

2026 At Sea And

Creeks Area

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf, undertook visits to various units at sea, and in Creeks Area to review conduct of Exercise SEASPARK 2026.

The Exercise SEASPARK 2026 undergoing since 1 Sep is a major maritime exercise of Pakistan Navy, conducted biennially to rehearse full spectrum of maritime operations, providing an opportunity to demonstrate operational preparedness and ability to rapidly transition from peacetime deployments to wartime oper-

ations.

In line with changing character of war, Ex SEASPARK 2026 is being conducted under the over-arching umbrella of Operations in Information Environment (OIEs). Moreover, manifestation of Multi Domain Operations and extensive use of unmanned systems are hallmarks of the Exercise this year.

During the visits, Naval Chief interacted with personnel participating in the exercise and expressed satisfaction over their professional excellence, high morale, ops readiness and untiring resolve to be invincible at sea.

CRBC Canal Breach

Devastates Paharpur:

12 Villages Flooded,

402 Houses Destroyed;

Victims Left Homeless



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Former political aide to Benazir Bhutto Naheed Khan and former Senator and PPP Workers President Dr. Safdar Ali Abbasi have expressed grave concern over the CRBC Canal breach in Paharpur, Dera Ismail Khan, which flooded 12 villages and destroyed 402 houses. They said hundreds of families were left homeless and urgently need tents, food, clean drinking water, medicines and other essential supplies.

They called on the federal government to immediately launch emergency relief operations in coordination with the provincial government.

They also demanded an urgent assessment of losses, compensation for destroyed homes, and a review of canal maintenance and safety measures to prevent such disasters in the future.

They stressed that the affected families need immediate relief, protection and rehabilitation rather than political debate.

Saudi Arabia Is

Pakistan’s ‘Red Line’,

says Religious Affairs

Minister

ISLAMABAD: Pak-Saudi solidarity Council declared that the Holy Mosques of Makkah and Madinah are a red line for Pakistan and that the country's people are ready to sacrifice their lives for the protection holy sites.

Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, said the relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia was not merely political or governmental but a sacred and spiritual bond.

He expressed these views while addressing an All-Parties Conference on the Protection of the Holy Mosques, organised by the Pak-Saudi Solidarity Council.

The minister said the statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) reflected the sentiments of the entire nation.

Sardar Yousaf said the Pak-Saudi Solidarity Council represented the people and all political parties. "The protection of the Holy Mosques is part of our faith," he said.

Referring to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's position, he said the premier had made it clear that Pakistan stood shoulder to shoulder with Saudi Arabia and would not hesitate to make any sacrifice.

"Saudi Arabia is our red line, and we will not allow anyone to cross it," he said.

Patron of the Pak-Saudi Solidarity Council and Amir of Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith, Senator Dr Hafiz Abdul Karim, said all political and religious groups were united in their position at the conference.

He said the conference wanted to convey a message to the Houthis rebels that the people and religious scholars of Pakistan would make no compro-

mise on the protection of the Holy Mosques.

"Some time ago, when Iran was attacked, we all condemned it. Today, when the Holy Mosques have come under attack, the Houthis here remain silent," he said.

"We unanimously declare that we stand with Saudi Arabia. Makkah and Madinah are dearer to us than our lives," he said, adding that alongside Pakistan's armed forces, the Pakistani people were also prepared to go to Saudi Arabia to fight.

He said that "Jews and Hindus" were attempting to harm the Holy Land through proxies, and said such efforts would be thwarted.

AJK Assembly member Pir Mazhar Saeed Shah said Pakistan stood with Saudi Arabia and called on the Houthis to immediately halt their attacks.

He also called for the Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb and all maritime routes to be opened for everyone.

He said, "Every child in Kashmir is ready to sacrifice their life for Saudi Arabia."

Shah Owais Noorani said it was impossible for Pakistanis to remain silent if the Holy Land was attacked.

"Some people are saying that this is an issue concerning the Saudi government. We want to make it clear that we stand with the Holy Mosques as well as with the government of Saudi Arabia," he said.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil described the Pakistan-Saudi defence agreement as a historic accord and said they would protect the agreement at the cost of their lives.