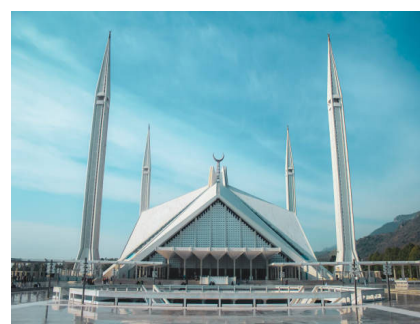




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Iran says no talks with US planned, focus remains on defending country



ANI

TEHRAN: Iran has no plans to engage in talks with the United States and is focused solely on defending the country, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said on Wednesday, according to Al Jazeera.

Speaking to reporters, Baghaei said Tehran would honour its international commitments only if Washington fulfilled its own obligations. "Our commitments remain in effect only as long as the other side fulfills its pledges," he said.

Baghaei added that Iran had ceased implementing its obligations under the memorandum of

understanding after the United States failed to uphold its side of the temporary agreement. "After the other party violated its obligations, we also refrained from implementing ours in any area where it was required," he said.

"Iranian state media claims that US forces struck a civilian wheat storage facility in Hoveyze on July 14. This is FALSE," CENTCOM posted on social media. Earlier, the US CENTCOM said it "completed a morning round of strikes against Iran at 7:30am ET on Wednesday."

It stated in a post on X that precision munitions were launched against coastal defense systems, cruise missile storage and launch

sites on Greater Tunb Island during the 90-minute wave of strikes. "The strikes further degraded Iran's ability to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz," it added.

Separately, CENTCOM stated that it had started a new round of attacks on Iran, beginning at 6am EST on Wednesday (3pm PKT). "The strikes are designed to further degrade military capabilities Iranian forces have used to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz," CENTCOM said in a post on X.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) threatened to cut off all energy exports from the Middle East over the reimposition

by the US of naval blockade on its ports. "The export of oil and gas from the region will be either for everyone or for no one," it said in a statement.

Days of retaliatory strikes across the Middle East by Iran and the US – and both nations' attempts to assert control over the Strait of Hormuz – threaten to push the region back to all-out war.

When President Trump announced the return of the blockade on Iran on Monday, he also said he would impose a 20 percent fee on ships passing through the strait. But he dropped the plan to collect tolls hours before resuming the blockade, citing requests from allies in the Gulf.

PM directs FBR to provide all possible facilities to business community



ANI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said the business community was the backbone of the national economy and should be provided with every possible facility to enhance production and boost exports.

Chairing a meeting to review the affairs of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the prime minister directed the Board to work closely with the business community and resolve their legitimate concerns on a priority basis. He also instructed senior FBR officials to visit Karachi during the first week of every month to maintain direct engagement with the business community and ensure the prompt resolution of their issues.

He expressed his confidence that Pakistan's economy was on the path to stability, and the current year will be marked by economic growth and the expansion of business activities.

He said companies that comply with tax laws would be officially recognized and encouraged in appreciation of their contribution. The prime minister emphasized that the government's objective was to promote ease of doing business, encourage investment and exports, and make the tax system more transparent and simpler to strengthen the confidence of the business community. The meeting was also briefed on

the performance of the FBR and the implementation of ongoing reforms.

It was informed in the meeting that production monitoring systems had been installed in the sugar, cement, tobacco, tiles, and fertilizer industries.

The installation of production monitoring systems in the textile and beverages industries is currently underway. During the past year, production monitoring in the sugar industry resulted in the collection of an additional Rs42 billion in taxes, the meeting was told. In the cement industry, production monitoring led to the collection of an additional Rs 38 billion in tax revenue over the past year. Similarly, the meeting was further informed that in the beverages industry, production monitoring generated an additional Rs15 billion in tax revenue during the past year.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Minister of State for Finance and Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Haroon Akhtar, Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan Jameel Ahmad, and other senior government officials.

FATA, PATA won't pay taxes until given NFC share: K-P Governor Kundi



ANI

PESHAWAR: Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday made it clear that the people of the erstwhile tribal areas would not pay taxes until they were granted their rightful share under the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, asserting that issuing directives from Islamabad was far easier than implementing them on the ground.

Addressing an interactive session organised by the K-P Sports Writers Association at the Governor's House, the governor criticised the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for its tax collection drive in the merged districts, questioning whether the FBR chairman had ever visited Waziristan, Khyber, Bajaur, Mohmand or Parachinar to understand the plight of the local population. "The state had promised us that it would spend Rs100 billion annually in FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) and PATA (Provincially Administered Tribal Areas), but the federation failed to fulfil its com-

mitment," Kundi stated while interacting with media representatives.

"A committee formed regarding the merged tribal districts had recommended that Rs200 billion to Rs250 billion be provided. Even that was ignored. We didn't even receive the Rs100 billion that was promised."

The governor announced that he would appeal to the prime minister to reconsider and withdraw the tax decision, warning that otherwise all political parties in K-P would jointly formulate a strategy. He also called upon the chief minister to convene all political parties and devise a collective action plan.

"If the chief minister faces any issue or compulsion, then he should stand with us. Then we will see who dares to collect taxes from us," Kundi asserted.

During the ceremony, Governor Kundi distributed awards and certificates among sports journalists who had demonstrated outstanding performance. He expressed concern over the lack of sports infrastructure in the province, noting that there was not a single fully equipped cricket stadium meeting first-class standards in K-P.

"More than half of the national cricket team players belong to K-P, which is clear evidence of the province's unparalleled talent," he remarked, while lamenting the scarcity of playing fields and basic facilities for athletes. Expressing regret over the decline of squash and hockey, the governor pointed out that Pakistan had dominated world squash for 16 consecutive years, but no world-class champion of Jansher Khan's calibre had emerged since. Similarly, the national sport, hockey, is also in decline, requiring immediate and effective measures for its revival.

Increasing domestic oil, gas production a key priority of govt: DPM/FM Dar

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Wednesday, reaffirmed that increasing domestic oil and gas production remained a key priority of the Government's energy security agenda and assured full support to provide a secure and enabling environment for the sector. The DPM/FM chaired a meeting of the Committee on the Exploration and Production (E&P) sector.

The committee reviewed progress on key initiatives and was briefed on ongoing offshore and onshore exploration activities, existing challenges, and reforms in the gas sector, including the completion of studies to support its long-term development, Office of the DPM said in a press



release.

The meeting was attended by the Minister for Petroleum, Minister for Maritime Affairs, SAPM Tariq Bajwa, senior officials from relevant ministries, and heads of leading E&P companies.

Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister was also briefed on efforts to settle circular debt and optimize LNG supplies through indigenous exploration and production.

Bilawal says criticism against Pakistan Army will not be tolerated

ANI

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said criticism against the Pakistan Army would not be tolerated, urging political leaders to exercise caution in their choice of words. Addressing PPP office-bearers and ticket holders in Azad Kashmir, Bilawal said law enforcement agencies should conduct investigations strictly in accordance with the law, adding that he had discussed his proposal with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. He said constitutional amendments could not be imposed through the use of force or protest sit-ins, stressing that the PPP was prepared for dialogue and debate. He maintained that the future of Kashmir should be



decided by the Kashmiri people themselves and expressed his desire to see representatives of Kashmiri refugees in parliament. The PPP chairman said he favoured resolving the issues of

their election campaign by reaching out to voters door-to-door, saying the party remained committed to providing employment opportunities and protecting people's rights.

Reversing Monal Restaurant demolition order; FCCP releases written judgment

ANI

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court has issued a detailed eight-page written order formally reversing the previous decision to demolish the Monal Restaurant, located in the Margalla Hills. The court ruled that the previous judgment could not be sustained as it was issued without providing the affected parties a fair opportunity to be heard, noting that the judicial process had exceeded its jurisdiction, thereby failing to meet the requirements of justice. The judgment, authored by Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, highlights that the dispute concerning the lease and land ownership of the Monal Restaurant was already sub judice (pending) in a civil court. Despite this, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) issued a ruling on a constitutional petition before the civil court could reach a verdict.

Population, climate biggest challenges: Aurangzeb

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, on Wednesday, warned that Pakistan's future potential could be severely undermined unless the country addresses rapid population growth and climate change, describing both as existential challenges that require sustained policy reforms, institutional coordination and long-term financing.

Addressing the World Population Day 2026 commemorative conference, Aurangzeb said the government's efforts had evolved from the National Population Stabilisation



Plan to the National Population Council, bringing together civil and military leadership, provincial governments and the federation to ensure effective implementation.

"We have known the 'what' and the 'why' for the longest time. The real question has always been the 'how'

and the 'who,'" he said, adding that the council would help deliver results through clear targets, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and regular performance reviews.

"You can only deliver what you can measure," Aurangzeb said, assuring the Health Ministry of the Finance Ministry's continued support. He said governments often prepare budgets with short-term priorities in mind, but population growth and climate change demand long-term planning. "If we do not address these two existential issues, then by the time Pakistan completes 100 years in 2047, we are not going to achieve our true potential," he warned.



Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, in a meeting with Ms. Jane Marriott CMG OBE, British High Commissioner to Pakistan, to discuss Pakistan's reform agenda and Pakistan-United Kingdom economic cooperation

Historic legacy of Pak-Turkiye relations must continue: Atta Tarar

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to its deep-rooted brotherly ties with Turkiye, stressing that the historic legacy established by their forefathers must be carried forward for future generations. Addressing a commemoration ceremony of the 10th Democracy and National Solidarity Day of Turkiye, the minister said, Pakistan and Turkiye enjoyed a relationship which went beyond the creation of Pakistan. "Our forefathers stood shoulder to shoulder with the Turkish Presidents during their war of salvation," he said, recalling the support extended by the women of sub-continent to help Turkish brothers and sisters at that point in time. "This is something that has been passed on to us through the generations," he said, adding, "our elders have given us these stories as part of our inheritance." "While growing up, we learnt about the contributions that have been made over time and decades," he noted. "The Muslims of the subcontinent, when Pakistan did not exist, had this great feeling of brotherhood for their Turkish brothers and sisters," he said,

reaffirming strongly that the bond has gotten only stronger over the decades. The minister said he has been part of various official interactions between the two countries and first hand witnessed strongly growing bilateral partnership. He also highlighted the growing people-to-people relations between the two countries. Citing a line of Pakistani national anthem: "Parchame Sitara o Hilal, Rahbari Tarakki o Kamal", which means that the flag with the star and the crescent is a symbol of prosperity and zenith of glory, he said the two countries "share the same crescent and the same star, which is a sign of progress for both countries." He also paid tribute to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, for guiding Turkish nation to prosperity, economic transformation and military might. "This is the reason that the people were content and the people were ready to face any kind of difficulty to stand up for their government and to stand up for their leader." Speaking about the Democracy and National Solidarity Day, he praised the Turkish President for his leadership in the face of adversity. Citing the Turkish President who during his address to the nation said, "I am coming to Istanbul and we will fight together to save our nation and to stand

united," the minister said, adding that moment was a turning point which led to scores of people coming out on the streets. He also paid homage to the 250 martyrs who fearlessly, with courage, with bravery laid down their lives for the Turkish Republic. He said sacrifices of those martyrs did not go in vain as across the capitals of the world, including Islamabad, a message of solidarity was being sent to their families and loved ones. Speaking about the issue of Northern Cyprus, he said Pakistan had always supported the stance of Turkiye. "And vice versa with regard to the issue of Kashmir, Turkey has always supported Pakistan as far as the Kashmir cause is concerned." "I was very happy to witness a very young Dr. Irfan Nazirolu in the parliament and standing like a warrior facing the situation when the parliament building was being bombed," he said while appreciating the historic services rendered by the Ambassador of Turkiye to Pakistan during that time. "On this day, when the Turkish nation not only achieved one of its moments of great courage and of sacrifice, but I think for the future generations, they left a message that when the going gets tough, the tough gets going," he remarked.

He hoped that the sacrifices of martyrs gave the people of Turkiye more strength to strengthen thier nation and gave the people a way forward for progress. He expressed heartfelt gratitude to the entire Turkish leadership for their expression of love and solidarity with the Pakistani people. The minister also thanked the people of Turkiye for showing immense love towards their Pakistani brothers and sisters when they visit their country. "Pakistan has, Pakistan will always stand by the Turkish brothers and sisters as we have shown on every occasion," he stressed. Towards the conclusion of his address, he recalled his grandfather visit to Turkiye as a President of Pakistan in 1998 which entailed very fond memories. Tarar said he still have many memorable photographs from that visit during which his grandfather was received by the then president, Mr. Salman Demirel. "So, when I say that these memories and these stories have been passed on to us through the generations, we have actually kept them very dear to our heart, like one holds a legacy close to one's heart," he noted.

Pakistan to host Pak-China health business summit

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services Mustafa Kamal on Wednesday announced that Pakistan will host a major international health business event featuring around 160 Chinese companies and a business-to-business (B2B) conference. Addressing a press conference, the minister said that nearly 500 Pakistani and Chinese firms will attend the event to promote investment, technology transfer and collaboration in the health sector. He said the upcoming Pakistan-China health business summit would focus on six key sectors, including biotechnology, vaccines, clinical trials, herbal medicine and other health-related industries. He said Pakistan currently imports nearly 90 percent of the raw materials required for its pharmaceutical industry. He expressed confidence that the event would help promote local manufacturing, attract investment, facilitate technology transfer and encourage joint ventures between Pakistani and Chinese companies. He said Pakistani and Chinese firms had been in contact for the past month, with several business meetings already held ahead of the conference. During the event, a number of agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) are expected to be signed to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in the health sector. Mustafa Kamal appreciated the contributions of Haroon Akhtar, Qaiser Ahmed and Pakistan's Ambassador to China in making the initiative possible. He added that the project was being implemented in line with the Prime Minister's vision of boosting investment, promoting local industry and modernizing Pakistan's healthcare sector.

IHC seeks government's response to challenge against 50% motorway toll surcharge

ANI

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday sought responses from the Ministry of Communications and other respondents on a petition challenging a notification imposing a 50 percent surcharge on motorway tolls for vehicles with insufficient M-Tag balance. Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar heard the petition filed by the Judicial Activism Panel and issued notices to the respondents, directing them to submit their replies. During the hearing, the chief justice observed that the matter appeared to be a government policy issue and questioned the extent of the court's intervention. Counsel for the petitioner, Mehfooz Bukhari, argued that the 50 percent increase in toll charges for vehicles with low M-Tag balance was arbitrary, excessive and without lawful justification. The court issued notices to the Ministry of Communications and other respondents and adjourned further proceedings. The Judicial Activism Panel has challenged the June 3, 2025 notification introducing the enhanced toll charges for vehicles with insufficient M-Tag balance.

Kamal for collective action to address population challenge

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services Syed Mustafa Kamal on Wednesday stressed the need for collective efforts to tackle Pakistan's growing population challenge. Addressing a seminar held to mark World Population Day, the minister said around 26 million children in Pakistan were out of school, while 43 percent of the country's population comprised children. He said the rapidly increasing population was placing an enormous burden on hospitals, educational institutions and public infrastructure, affecting the delivery of quality services. He urged religious scholars, teachers and all segments of society to help create

awareness about responsible family planning. The minister said nearly 11,000 women die every year in Pakistan due to pregnancy or childbirth-related complications, adding that although pregnancy was not a disease, timely medical care and proper maternal health services could significantly reduce maternal deaths. He said more than 400,000 children under the age of five die annually from preventable causes, emphasizing that improving access to healthcare, medicines and timely treatment was essential to saving lives. Mustafa Kamal said birth spacing, maternal and child health and family planning were not only health issues but were also directly linked to national security, economic stability and sustainable

development. He warned that failure to address the challenge could adversely affect Pakistan's development and cited examples of Iran and Bangladesh where effective policies had helped manage population growth. The minister clarified that the population issue was a national economic challenge rather than an issue targeting any particular group or ideology. He suggested that incentives should be considered for families adopting healthy birth spacing practices. He noted that contraceptives had previously been subject to an 18 percent tax, making them expensive and less accessible. According to the minister, around 30

percent of families wished to space births but were unable to do so due to financial or logistical constraints. He said removing taxes on contraceptives could help prevent nearly 1.5 million unintended pregnancies every year. Announcing a major policy decision, Mustafa Kamal said the government had reduced the tax on contraceptives to zero. He said the move would make the products more affordable, improve public access, encourage local manufacturing and attract fresh investment while strengthening maternal and child health and family planning efforts. The minister expressed hope that all national institutions would continue working together for a healthier and more prosperous Pakistan.

FGP, NPC call for collaboration to promote Pakistan's progress

ANI

ISLAMABAD: National media institutions and the development sector must forge stronger partnerships to promote informed public discourse on Pakistan's key development challenges and equip journalists with specialized knowledge to effectively report on emerging policy issues. This shared vision emerged during an extensive meeting between a delegation of the National Press Club (NPC), Islamabad, and the leadership of Freedom Gate Prosperity (FGP) at the FGP's office in Islamabad. The NPC delegation was warmly received by Muhammad Anwar, CEO of FGP; prominent business leader and trainer Tauseef Zaman; FGP Board Member and senior broadcaster Urooj Raza Sayyami; senior journalist and Strategic Advisor Shafqat Aziz; and Dr. Shahbaz Tariq, Head of Economy at FGP. Welcoming the delegation, Muhammad Anwar highlighted the growing importance of evidence-based dialogue and constructive engagement between media, policymakers and development organizations. He said FGP is committed to serving as a bridge among

public institutions, the media, academia and the development sector to promote informed policymaking and inclusive national development. He also emphasized the need for joint capacity-building initiatives to strengthen reporting on economic, social and environmental issues. President of NPC, Abdul Razzaq Sial appreciated FGP's multidimensional work and stressed that the media has a vital responsibility to bring development issues into the national mainstream. He said journalists require continuous exposure to emerging subjects such as climate change, economic reforms, governance, artificial intelligence and sustainable development so they can better inform the public and contribute to constructive national discourse. Earlier, Urooj Raza Sayyami outlined potential avenues of collaboration between the National Press Club and FGP, including thematic dialogues, professional development programmes, media fellowships and specialized training workshops focusing on governance, climate resilience, economic development and emerging public policy issues.

Govt moves to grant degree-awarding status to Pakistan Marine academy: Junaid

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said on Wednesday that the government had taken another significant step towards upgrading the Pakistan Marine Academy into a degree-awarding institution by submitting a summary to the prime minister for in-principle approval. In a statement, Junaid Chaudhry said consultations with all relevant stakeholders had

already been completed and the required procedural formalities fulfilled. He said that following the prime minister's in-principle approval, the summary would be forwarded to the Ministry of Law for legal vetting before being placed before the federal cabinet for final approval. Junaid Chaudhry said the proposed upgrade was part of the government's broader agenda to modernise the maritime sector and bring maritime education in line with international standards.

AIOU reaffirms commitment to promoting Iqbal's thought and philosophy

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to promoting the thought and philosophy of Allama Muhammad Iqbal through sustained academic, research and intellectual initiatives. The commitment was reiterated during a distinguished scholarly session organized to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of the Poet of the East, Allama Muhammad Iqbal. The event featured eminent poet, writer and scholar Ifitikhar Arif as the keynote speaker and was presided over by Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Nasir Mahmood. In his presidential address, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr Nasir Mahmood said that Allama Muhammad Iqbal's message continues to serve as a beacon of intellectual, moral, and spiritual guidance for the younger generation. He emphasized that in keeping with its name and mission, AIOU considers the promotion of Iqbal's thought a national.

CDA Chairman calls for global collaboration to strengthen Islamabad's green future

ANI



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Lt. (Retd.) Sohail Ashraf reaffirmed the

Authority's commitment to making Islamabad greener, more environmentally sustainable and aesthetically vibrant through collaborative initiatives with national and international partners.

Speaking at a tree plantation event organised by The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) at the Ankara Park for leaving a lasting green legacy, the CDA chairman said Islamabad's identity has always been closely associated with its lush greenery and natural beauty, emphasizing that environmental preservation remains at the heart of the capital's development strategy. "I think this forum is beautiful, and Islamabad is beautiful. Whenever you visit Islamabad, the fundamentals focus is on greenery," he said, adding that the city's green landscape significantly contributes to its unique character and quality of life. Lt. (Retd.) Sohail Ashraf described the tree plantation campaign as an important milestone in promoting environmental sustainability, noting that it was the first Green Initiative event he had attended since assuming his responsibilities.

Solangi Highlights Pakistan's Proactive Diplomacy

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Spokesperson to the President, Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday said Pakistan was pursuing a policy of strategic balance with regional neighbours and proactive diplomacy to safeguard its national interests amid a rapidly transforming geopolitical environment. Addressing a one-day international conference titled "Pakistan in a Transforming Geopolitical Environment," jointly organized by the Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Solangi termed the event timely and significant for bringing together scholars and policy experts from around the world at a critical juncture in international affairs.



He said the world was witnessing a historic transition from a unipolar to a more contested multipolar order, said a news release issued here. He said the international order established after the Second World War was facing unprecedented challenges, with multilateral institutions becoming increasingly ineffective and power politics replacing the rule-based international system.

Solangi said Pakistan currently stood at the intersection of three major geopolitical transitions, including evolving relations with Afghanistan, the changing strategic landscape in West Asia, and the emergence of a multipolar global order. He said the years 2025-26 had been among the most consequential for Pakistan's external environment, citing conflict with India, tensions along the western border, developments in West Asia and evolving regional dynamics. He said Pakistan had sought to maintain strategic balance by strengthening its longstanding partnership with China, sustaining constructive ties with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, preserving working relations with the United States, and positioning itself as a bridge-builder rather than aligning with competing blocs.

Pakistan, SCO agree to strengthen cultural cooperation ahead of 2027 chairmanship

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on Wednesday agreed to further strengthen cooperation in culture, heritage conservation, tourism and people-to-people exchanges as the country prepares to assume the SCO Chairmanship in 2027. The understanding was reached during a meeting between Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Aurangzeb Khan Khichi and SCO Secretary-General Nurlan Yermekbayev at the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture. Pakistan, SCO agree to strengthen cultural cooperation ahead of 2027 chairmanship. Welcoming the SCO Secretary-General and his delegation, the minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the objectives and principles of the SCO and said culture served as a bridge for peace, dialogue and mutual understanding. Highlighting



Pakistan's rich civilizational heritage, including the Indus Valley Civilization, Gandhara Civilization, Buddhist heritage, Islamic architecture and diverse intangible cultural traditions, he said cultural diplomacy remained an effective tool for promoting regional harmony and cooperation. Khichi said Pakistan was ready to deepen collaboration with SCO

member states in heritage conservation, museums, archaeology, cultural tourism, creative industries, handicrafts, performing arts and youth exchanges. Referring to Pakistan's growing role within the organization, the minister said the country was expected to assume the SCO Chairmanship in 2027 and host the 24th Meeting of the SCO Ministers of Culture.

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Opinion

3

Africa pays a high price for dollar dependence

HAFED AL-GHWELL

Governments across Africa are rightfully questioning the wisdom of anchoring their countries’ futures to the US dollar. The instinct grows from patterns that have shaped the continent’s financial stability, trade resilience, and growth prospects for decades.

A currency that once promised predictability now functions as a vehicle for volatility that African policymakers never signed up for. Each Federal Reserve rate hike, for instance, tightens African credit conditions as if Washington were running monetary policy for Nairobi, Accra, and Lusaka.

Dedollarization — reducing reliance on the US dollar for trade, reserves, and financial transactions — speaks to a desire for insulation, bargaining power, and policy autonomy in an era where external shocks arrive with unprecedented regularity.

While talk of dedollarization is not exactly new, it has gained traction in recent years, after several African currencies lost nearly half of their value against the dollar. Such depreciations erode tax bases, inflate debt

burdens, and push countries toward International Monetary Fund programs that come with significant political costs.

Moreover, roughly 70 percent of Africa’s external debt is dollar-denominated. As the dollar strengthens, debt service costs balloon without any new borrowing. In one year alone, African governments paid more than \$60 billion in interest on external debt, and a third of that stemmed from dollar appreciation rather than fundamentals.

A continent seeking structural transformation cannot tolerate a global monetary system that amplifies domestic vulnerabilities. Naturally, leaders see a mismatch: African economies are diversifying, yet currency arrangements still resemble the 1980s. The dollar’s dominance magnifies inflation pass-through because the region’s import dependence makes exchange rate shocks automatically inflationary even where fiscal discipline is relatively decent. Food imports alone cost Africa more than \$35 billion annually, so a stronger dollar can quickly turn a food security issue into a macroeconomic crisis.

Thus, the heightening pursuit of dedollari-

zation is an attempt to negotiate from a position of less fragility rather than an outright rejection of global markets. Consider this: When Kenya pays for imported crude in Kenyan shillings or when Nigeria explores yuan settlements for infrastructure deals, the goal is strategic hedging. Policymakers want to reduce single-currency exposure in the same way investors diversify portfolios. Russia’s removal from dollar-based clearing systems, for example, demonstrated how geopolitical tremors can easily spill into Africa’s trade channels even when the continent is not a party to any conflict. Some African governments are also reading the room. Global south partners, from Brazil to Indonesia, are experimenting with local currency settlement mechanisms. BRICS expansion invited African countries into a club openly discussing non-dollar settlement infrastructure.

Moreover, China accounts for more than a fifth of Africa’s trade, and yuan-denominated transactions are rising from a small baseline. The share is still marginal, yet the direction signals Africa’s turn toward a multipolar currency environment before one emerges fully

without them.

The Africa Continental Free Trade Area adds another layer. A continent-wide free trade area needs frictionless payment channels to make intra-African commerce more attractive than sourcing from Europe or Asia. To date, roughly 15 percent of Africa’s trade is intracontinental. One reason is the cost and complexity of using a third currency for African-to-African trade. A Ghanaian processing firm buying Kenyan tea, for instance, often settles in dollars, even though neither economy uses the currency domestically. That situation makes African trade more expensive by an estimated \$5 billion annually in transaction and hedging costs.

The Pan-African Payment and Settlement System, or PAPSS, launched with AfCFTA support, attempts to rewrite this by enabling instant cross-border settlements in local currencies. Dedollarization gives PAPSS a fighting chance. Without efforts to reduce dependence on the dollar, AfCFTA risks importing the very structural weaknesses it aims to correct. After all, regional supply chains cannot gain traction if currency swings routinely

erase profit margins. Clearing trade in local currencies might not be a silver bullet, but it is a meaningful step toward normalizing African-to-African transactions. However, skeptics point out that African currencies lack depth, stability, and convertibility, making rapid dedollarization risky. The statement is valid, but incomplete. African policymakers are not proposing to replace the dollar with a patchwork of volatile currencies overnight. Instead, they are reducing exposure in incremental steps: expanding swap lines, piloting common payment platforms, and signing bilateral agreements that allow settlement in mutually accepted currencies. Some argue that dedollarization could also alienate the US. However, a more resilient Africa ultimately aligns with US interests. Fragile currencies reduce Africa’s capacity to buy American goods, service American-held debt or collaborate in security partnerships. A region forever one shock away from default cannot be a reliable counterweight to growing external influence or as a steady partner in global governance.

— Arab news

Tripoli deserves better than its current leaders

DR. DANIA KOLEILAT KHATIB

A building collapse in Tripoli, Lebanon, last week killed 14 people. The building was in Bab Al-Tabbaneh, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Tripoli, which is in turn one of the poorest cities in Lebanon and even in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The fall of the building makes us ask the question: Why did this happen to these people? Many do not know the rich history of the precious city. Tripoli was once a capital of trade, culture, and art in the Ottoman Empire. Why this degeneration? And who is responsible?

The building collapse in Tripoli was not an accident, nor was it the first tragedy this year to take innocent lives. It was the predictable outcome of years of neglect by local authorities and successive governments. The dangers posed by these buildings are widely known, yet no preventive action has been taken. Lebanon has a proven record of corruption. Lebanese officials have always acted with impunity. Relying on the blind allegiance of their constituencies, the welfare of the people has never been their primary concern.

According to Raymond Mitri, an activist who heads Lebanon’s anticorruption task force: “The justice system also bears primary responsibility, as those in power have grown accustomed to acting with impunity.” He added: “This culture of no accountability has enabled repeated failures and avoidable deaths.” It is time for the prosecutor general to open a thorough investigation and hold the heads of the relevant authorities accountable for this week’s tragic incident. Without real consequences, this tragic pattern will continue and more lives will be lost.

The collapse of the building in Tripoli is the result of decades of negligence. It is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the city’s problems. I went to Tripoli a few years ago and I was shocked by the poverty, lack of infrastructure, and lack of employment. The city’s inhabitants face huge health risks because of unregulated trash dumps that also pollute the Mediterranean Sea. Tripoli mirrors the problems of Lebanon. In Tripoli, however, they are more concentrated and more severe. Historically, the city has not been lucky with its leadership. In fact, Lebanon as a whole has not been lucky with its political class, but Tripoli has suffered particularly badly. During the civil war,

various Islamist factions coalesced and created Harakat Al-Tawhid (the Islamic Unity Movement), which controlled the city. The state has been barely present. Each neighborhood has a “kabaday” (strongman) running the show. There is no real law enforcement in the city.

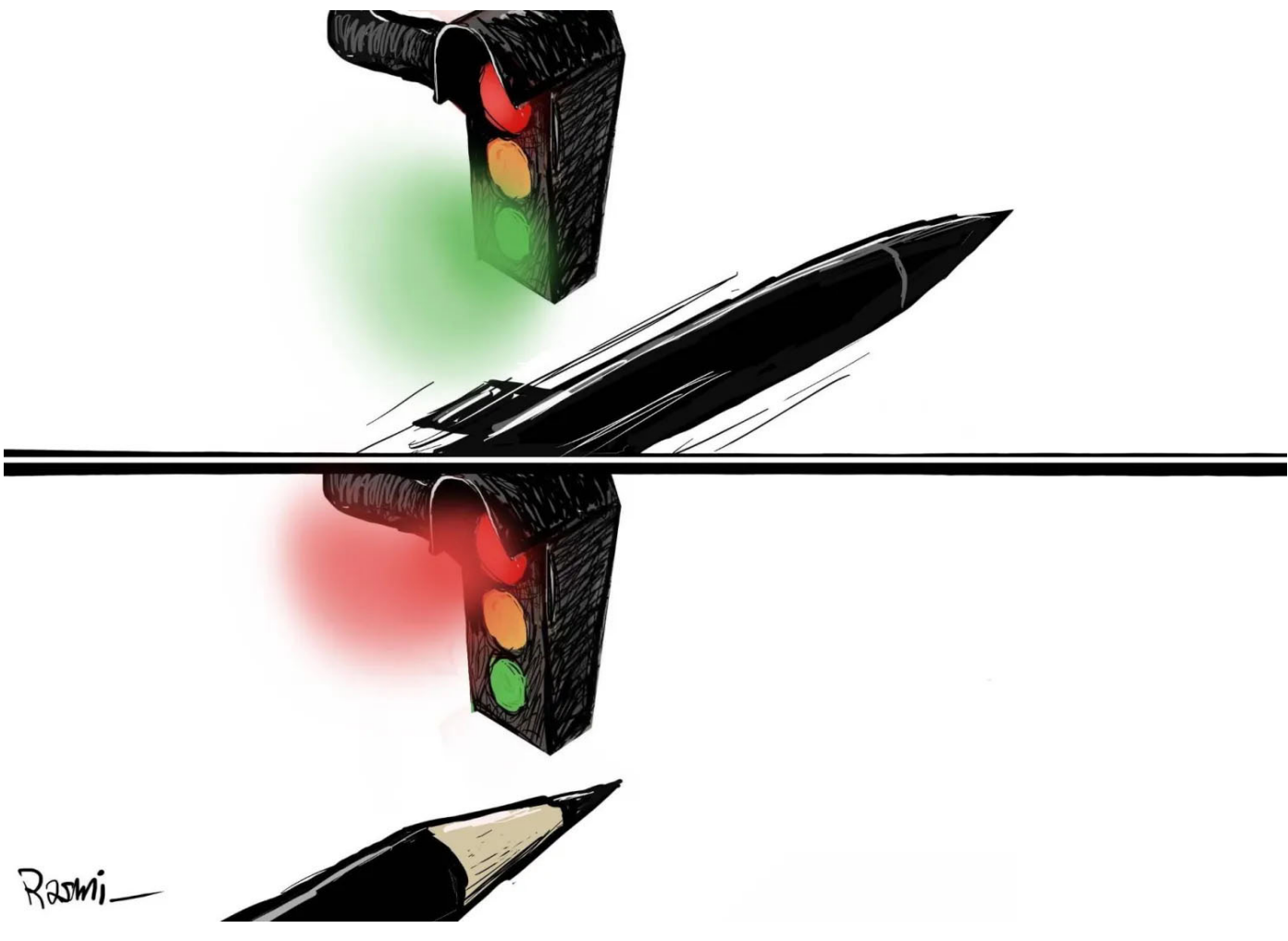
According to a lawyer friend of mine, the city is run by mafia-like organizations. The most important people are those who control the power generators. The generators’ owners divide the areas among themselves. Citizens of each neighborhood are thus compelled to buy electricity from the designated generator owner for that specific area. It is sad to see this historic city languishing. It is sad to see its historic monuments unattended. It is sad to see the kind, generous, and skilled people of Tripoli struggle with poverty and a lack of opportunity.

The irony is that Tripoli is home to some of the wealthiest people in Lebanon and even the entire Arab world. The political class is rich and prosperous and it surrounds itself with fences to protect itself from the ire of the people that it controls. According to Amine Bashir, a lawyer and political activist from Tripoli, members of the city’s traditional political class do not care about the people. On the contrary, it is in their interest to keep the people poor. The poorer they are, the cheaper it will be to buy their vote on election day. They use the people as an “election reservoir.”

At the end of the day, it is not only Tripoli in this situation. Unfortunately, the Lebanese political elite looks at the people as a means to control the country and its resources. The people are a ladder that will allow them to reach the summit of power. Following last week’s building collapse, the state sent the army to Tripoli to protect the politicians from the wrath of the people. This situation made me ask myself: When will the state use its capabilities to protect the people from the corruption of the political class?

Tripoli has suffered from negligence and impunity — this week’s tragedy is a warning that this needs to stop. The people in power need to be held accountable. The people of Tripoli deserve that. They need to rise and the system governing the city needs to fall. If the system does not fall, more buildings like the one in Bab Al-Tabbaneh will do so instead.

— Arab news



Jordan’s growing role in Turkish foreign policy

DR. SINEM CENGİZ

Turkiye and Jordan were significantly affected by the Syrian civil war that lasted more than a decade. Now, with the collapse of the Bashar Assad regime in December 2024, a new dynamic has emerged along Türkiye’s southern and Jordan’s northern borders — one that calls for closer coordination between the two states.

Jordan, a relatively small state known for its neutral regional policy, has not traditionally occupied a prominent place in Turkish foreign policy. But its geopolitical importance is far too significant to neglect. It has crucial potential when it comes to countering shared regional security challenges. Recent high-level meetings between Ankara and Amman, therefore, merit a closer look to better understand the possibility for Turkish-Jordanian cooperation.

Jordan’s King Abdullah paid an official visit to Türkiye last week at the invitation of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who received him at the Dolmabahce Palace in Istanbul. King Abdullah’s last visit to Türkiye took place in February 2019. Back then, the regional picture looked very different. Now, the region has been reshaped by a series of major events — from the Oct. 7 attacks to the Iran-Israel war and the fall of the Assad regime — that have fundamentally shifted the political and security dynamics surrounding these two countries.

With the fall of the Assad regime, Jordan has emerged as a key partner in Türkiye’s regional policy, particularly regarding Syria and Gaza. For Türkiye, Jordan represents both a stabilizing actor on its southern periphery and a practical partner in managing the post-Assad regional order. Amman and Ankara have found themselves on the same page in regard to regional crises. Jordan therefore became part of a regional cooperation mechanism established between Türkiye, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, which is aimed at coordinating responses to shared security challenges. Amman has hosted high-level regional security meetings led by Türkiye, bringing together foreign ministers, defense ministers and intelligence chiefs to discuss counterterrorism efforts and broader regional threats. It was through Jordanian-Turkish cooperation that a joint mission to support Syria’s fight against terrorist organizations, particularly Daesh, was established. At the request of the new leadership in Syria, this joint mission was set up to operate in Damascus,

marking a concrete step toward institutionalized regional security cooperation. Jordan and Türkiye are also part of US President Donald Trump’s Board of Peace, further highlighting their shared role in the Gaza peace process. In their joint statement, King Abdullah and Erdogan underscored the importance of preserving the territorial integrity, sovereignty and national unity of all regional states. This emphasis reflects a shared outlook. Jordan has long pursued a status quo-oriented foreign policy, prioritizing stability along its borders. Türkiye’s support for a centralized and territorially unified Syria closely aligns with Jordanian interests in this regard. Both countries view fragmentation and instability in Syria as a direct threat to their security, making their policy convergence not only strategic but also necessary.

Jordan was also chosen to host NATO’s first liaison office in the Middle East. This opened last September, underscoring the country’s geopolitical importance. Jordan has been a member of NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue since 1995. As a NATO partner, Türkiye views the alliance’s cooperation with Amman as increasingly significant, as its presence in the country will help strengthen the regional security architecture. Amman not only occupies a key position in terms of security cooperation, but also in economic coordination. Jordan and Türkiye, along with Syria, are working on a joint initiative to restore the historic Hejaz railway, focusing on the segment linking the three countries as part of efforts to rebuild regional transport and trade networks disrupted by years of conflict and border closures. Officials from the three countries have agreed on preliminary terms to draft a memorandum of understanding covering the restoration of damaged railway lines.

At one time, the railway was referred to as the “Iron Silk Road” due to its economic, social and political importance. The railway is “a relic of the bygone dream of regional unity before wars, borders and more advanced modes of transportation rendered its services obsolete.” Today, the three nations see its revival as both symbolic and strategic to restore regional connectivity, boost trade and contribute to postwar reconstruction. Another key cooperation between Ankara and Amman involves boosting the overland freight route from Jordan’s Aqaba Port to Türkiye and onward to Eastern Europe through trilateral cooperation agreements.

— Arab news

Letters to the Editor

ECE classrooms

The School Education & Literacy Department, Sindh, issued comprehensive directions regarding the functioning of Early Childhood Education (ECE) classes in government schools. The circular clearly mandates well-equipped ECE classrooms with essential facilities and a strict regulatory structure. But in many schools, ECE classrooms are neither properly equipped nor child friendly. Basic facilities such as learning corners, age-appropriate furniture, play materials, storybooks, floor mats and visual aids are either missing or inadequate. In several cases, ECE sections are functioning in shared or overcrowded rooms. The prescribed age limit of 3-5 years is also not being strictly observed, undermining developmentally appropriate learning. Similarly, the notified class strength of 25-30 students is frequently exceeded, affecting individual attention. The circular further emphasises that ECE classes should ideally have two teachers (a teacher and an assistant), yet many schools operate with a single teacher, placing undue burden on staff and compromising quality. Moreover, despite clear instructions, ECE teachers are often assigned duties in higher classes, which directly violates the policy framework. The provision allowing dedicated preparation time for ECE teachers and strict adherence to the approved

timetable and syllabus also appears neglected in practice. Issuance of progressive circulars is commendable but without effective monitoring, physical inspections by higher authorities and accountability mechanisms, these policies remain confined to official documents. The government must ensure strict enforcement of its own directives to strengthen early childhood education in Sindh.

Ali Hussain
Karachi

School under construction

As a citizen of Turbat, I have observed that the Sheikhani Bazar School has a building under construction that has been left incomplete since 2013. This long delay has created serious concerns among students. Students are forced to study in overcrowded classrooms, and their studies are disrupted due to lack of space. This incomplete structure portrays a negative image of the school and the education system overall as well. Moreover, it limits the school’s ability to introduce new classrooms and facilities such as laboratories and a library. Education is the foundation of any nation, and such delays directly affect the future of students. It is deeply disappointing that a project meant to improve an educational facility has instead become a symbol of neglect and delay. Therefore, I strongly request the concerned authorities to take immedi-

ate action and complete the construction work as soon as possible. The future of our students depends on proper educational facilities.

Zeebjan Akther
Chasar, Turbat

Inexperienced invigilators

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa’s examination boards, beginning with BISE Swat, have decided to appoint fresh graduates for invigilation and marking — a move presented as reform. While the intent to engage youth is commendable, the policy raises serious concerns about examination credibility. Invigilation is not a routine clerical task; it requires authority, classroom control and the experience to enforce rules under pressure. Expecting new graduates to manage crowded halls overlooks the reality of organised cheating networks. Even senior teachers, backed by institutional authority, often face intimidation. It is unrealistic to assume temporary appointees can withstand such pressure without similar safeguards. Moreover, temporary staff operate without a clear legal framework to ensure accountability in cases of malpractice. If K-P boards wish to involve young professionals, they should adopt a hybrid model — pairing them with seasoned invigilators.

Manzar Hassan

Starmer is learning the lessons of politics the hard way

YOSSI MEKELBERG

Few could have foreseen that merely 17 months after Keir Starmer led the Labour Party to victory in the UK general election, winning a 174-seat majority in Parliament, that he would find himself fighting for his job.

While the British prime minister must take much of the blame for being in this situation — and in his defense, he does admit responsibility — the underlying difficulties of UK politics and society go far beyond one leader’s shortcomings. The country has had six prime ministers in the past decade, which is hardly a sign of a functioning political system. Part of the predicament that Starmer finds himself in is how he sees his role; part of it has to do with the way British politics is conducted; and, more generally, the unforgiving nature of modern politics, which in an age of instant communication, constant scrutiny, and unbearable impatience, means that governments can be judged too harshly and too quickly.

The latest storm that threatens to unseat the current British prime minister is not unjustified, as his decision to appoint Peter Mandelson as ambassador in Washington was a total lapse of judgment. There was never any doubt that Mandelson’s political skills and wealth of experience in government, including on the international stage, would stand him in good stead in dealing with a major and challenging ally. Yet this was also someone who was nicknamed the “Prince of Darkness.” He was also one of the original spin doctors in British politics, and was twice forced to resign from government for failing to live up to the ethical standards of public life.

For a prime minister whose election campaign relied heavily on a promise to rid the country of years of Conservative sleaze, appointing Mandelson was extremely unwise. The resignation of Starmer’s chief of staff, Morgan McSweeney, the mastermind behind Mandelson’s appointment, has given the

prime minister breathing space. Yet, in the fast-paced world of modern politics, he still might be only a misstep or two away from losing his job. With Labour lagging far behind Reform in the polls and only just edging the even less popular Conservatives, and the prime minister’s approval ratings plummeting, he has his work cut out to convince the electorate that they should still trust him as leader. In the short term, he must convince those Labour MPs who can decide his future almost instantly.

It is a truism that nothing genuinely prepares a person for the most powerful job in the country, a position that depends on learning extremely fast, a strong sense of direction and values, and healthy political instincts. Winning an unassailable election victory should have given Starmer the self-belief and confidence to go against his cautious nature.

For many Labour MPs, more than half of whom have been elected for the first time, the impressive showing at the ballot box created the expectation of a radical Labour agenda — not unreasonable in light of voters comprehensively rejecting the legacy of the Conservatives’ 14 years in power. Moreover, for the more left leaning of the Labour Party, Starmer and his policies were too middle-of-the-road to begin with, and he was not their first choice to lead the party, let alone the country. However, Labour’s decisive victory left them with little ammunition to criticize those who masterminded it, including their ideological arch-nemesis McSweeney. Yet they still held high expectations for a new, radical agenda, only to be disappointed or, possibly, to have their suspicions confirmed.

To be sure, successive Conservative governments left a difficult legacy, with deep divisions over Brexit and immigration, underinvestment in public services, and a rocketing cost of living. For the new government and its leader it has not been enough to blame their predecessors for all the country’s ills; they needed to make an immediate impact while incorporating

International, National Delegations Visit Successful TB Active Case Finding Chest Camp in Phulgran

BY: ANI Correspondent:

ISLAMABAD-- The Association for Social Development (ASD), in collaboration with the National TB Control Program (NTP) and Mercy Corps, organized a successful Active Case Finding (ACF) Chest Camp in Phulgran, Islamabad, to promote early detection of tuberculosis (TB) through free community screening and awareness.

The camp witnessed strong public participation, offering free medical consultations, TB screening, and diagnostic services. Individuals identified as presumptive TB cases were referred to the National TB Control Program for further testing and free treatment. An international delegation from University College London (UCL), including Dr. Margaret Jean Thomason, Miss Horeja Gass Njai, and Dr. Asad Zaidi, visited the camp to observe patient screening and community-based TB detection activities. The delegation was joined by National TB Control Program representatives Dr. Talal and Mr.



Attaullah, while Mercy Corps was represented by Dr. Shahid Naveed and Mr. Mumtaz Gohar. They appreciated the collaborative efforts of partner organizations in advancing Pakistan's fight against tuberculosis.

During the visit, Dr. Shahid Naveed, Regional Coordinator Dr. Farooq, and District Officer Mr. Zaka Ud Din briefed the delegation on the Active Case Finding strategy, patient registration, TB screening, specimen

collection, diagnostic procedures, treatment linkage, and community awareness initiatives.

The visiting delegates praised the efforts of ASD, NTP, Mercy Corps, and the district field team, reaffirming their commitment to strengthening partnerships, expanding access to innovative TB diagnostic services, and supporting Pakistan's progress toward achieving the End TB Strategy goals.

DGTO Rejects Petition to Cancel Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders' License



BY: Special Reporter:

ISLAMABAD--- The Director General Trade Organizations (DGTO) has rejected a petition seeking the cancellation of the license of the Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries, ruling that the allegations of financial irregularities against the chamber's current administration could not be substantiated.

The decision was welcomed by the business community across Islamabad. Traders from various markets and commercial centers gathered at the chamber's office to congratulate the leadership, where a cake-cutting

ceremony was also held to celebrate the verdict. Business leaders described the DGTO's decision as a victory for justice and truth.

Chairman of the Founder Group, Saqib Taj Abbasi, said the ruling marked a triumph of truth, justice, and the confidence of the trader community.

President of the Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries, Muhammad Owais Satti, said the chamber would continue its dedicated efforts to serve small traders and safeguard their rights.

Senior Vice President Sheikh Tayyab and Vice President Sardar

Zaheer Ahmed also welcomed the decision, saying it represented a victory for small traders.

Trader leaders from G-9 Markaz, including Sajid Iqbal Gujar, Roheel Anwar Butt, and Rao Javed Akhtar, stated that the petition for the cancellation of the chamber's license was a personal initiative by an individual and had never been supported by the G-9 business community. The trader representatives reaffirmed their commitment to working in unity through the chamber's platform to protect traders' rights, address their concerns, and promote business and commercial activities in Islamabad.

Qurat ul Ain Ali Khawaja, Muhammad Abdullah Hamid Gul Discuss Governance, Media and Stability in Azad Jammu & Kashmir

By: FT Staff Reporter:

ISLAMABAD-- Qurat ul Ain Ali Khawaja, Chairperson of the All Pakistan Media Council (APMC) AJK/Islamabad Chapter, and Muhammad Abdullah Hamid Gul, Chairman of Tehreeke-e-Jawanan Pakistan (TJP), held a policy dialogue on the evolving situation in Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

The discussion focused on governance, institutional accountability, public trust, constitutional matters, strategic communication, and the role of the media in promoting long-term stability. Muhammad Abdullah Hamid Gul emphasized transparent governance, stronger institutional engagement, and peaceful democratic dialogue to address public concerns.



Qurat ul Ain Ali Khawaja highlighted the importance of responsible journalism, evidence-based public discourse, and continuous engagement between institutions, media, researchers, and citizens to strengthen national cohesion.

The meeting concluded with a

shared commitment to promoting policy-based discussions, institutional accountability, and peaceful democratic solutions for the challenges facing Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The dialogue was attended by senior members of the All Pakistan Media Council and media professionals.

French Consul General Alexis Chahtahtinsky Announces New Chapter for France's Presence in Karachi on Bastille Day



By: ANI Staff Reporter:

KARACHI: France celebrated its National Day (Bastille Day) in Karachi with a ceremony highlighting the longstanding friendship between France and Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion, French Consul General Alexis Chahtahtinsky reflected on the strong bilateral relationship and announced a new model for France's diplomatic presence in the city.

He noted that France was among the first countries to recognize Pakistan after its independence in 1947 and reaffirmed both nations' commitment to strengthening coop-

eration in diplomacy, trade, culture, and education.

The Consul General highlighted the contribution of leading French companies, including CMA CGM, Louis Dreyfus Company, Schneider Electric, and L'Oréal, as well as the successful local production of the Peugeot 2008 SUV through a joint venture with Lucky Motors. He also praised the role of the Alliance Française de Karachi in promoting French language and cultural exchange since 1954.

Announcing an important development, Alexis Chahtahtinsky said that after four years of his tenure, the French government has decided to

close the French Consulate General in Karachi due to budgetary reasons. However, he emphasized that France's presence in Karachi would continue through a new Honorary Consul, the Pakistan France Business Alliance (PFBA), and the Alliance Française de Karachi.

He concluded by reaffirming the enduring friendship between the two countries, saying the closure of the Consulate marks "a new chapter" rather than the end of France's engagement with Karachi, and ended his remarks with the slogan: "Vive la France, Vive l'amitié franco-pakistanaise, Pakistan-France Dosti Zindabad!"

IG FC Major General Muhammad Asif Mujtaba Visits Frontline Troops as Operation Shaban Continues

BY: ANI Correspondent:

QUETTA--- Inspector General Frontier Corps (North) Balochistan, Major General Muhammad Asif Mujtaba, visited officers and soldiers deployed on the front line during the ongoing Operation Shaban in various parts of Balochistan.

During the visit, the IG FC reviewed the overall security situation, discussed operational matters, and issued important instructions and guidance to the troops.

According to security sources, the operation, which began on



January 5, remains underway, with intelligence-based operations continuing to target and destroy terrorist hideouts across different areas of the province. During overnight operations, several ter-

rorist hideouts were destroyed. Security sources said the number of terrorists killed in Operation Shaban has reached 121. They added that the operation will continue until all terrorists are eliminated.

Khaqan Waheed Khawaja Backs Free and Fair AJK Elections, Meets Muhammad Tahir Khokhar

By: Special Reporter:

ISLAMABAD-- Khaqan Waheed Khawaja, Chief of the Pakistan Awami Quwat Party and Chairman of Rawal General & Dental Hospital and Rawal Foundation, has expressed support for free and fair elections in Azad Jammu & Kashmir, saying the people should elect representatives committed to improving education, employment, healthcare, and technical education.

He made these remarks during a meeting at his office with Muhammad Tahir Khokhar, former AJK minister and Istihkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) candidate for Constituency LA-39



Jammu-6. Khaqan Waheed Khawaja appreciated Tahir Khokhar's political and

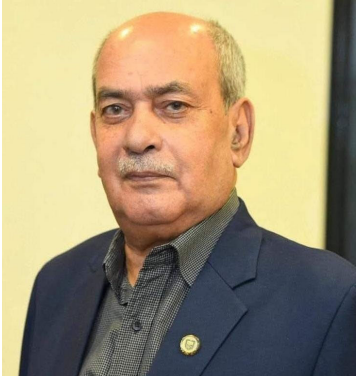
social contributions, particularly his services in healthcare, employment, and technical education, describing them as highly valuable.

The meeting was also attended by Advocate Arif Marwat, Abrar Yar, Major (Retd) Nadeem Saddal, and Mrs. Syeda Firdous, President of the Women's Wing of the Pakistan Awami Quwat Party, who visited Khaqan Waheed Khawaja to inquire about his health. Khaqan Waheed Khawaja expressed hope that voters in the upcoming Azad Kashmir elections would elect capable representatives who can effectively address the public's genuine issues and contribute to the region's development.

Cricket stadium should be built in Islamabad. PCB should pay the expenses. Khalid Chaudhry, Islamabad is not part of NFC, central government should include it.

BY: Hurish Shah

ISLAMABAD--- Former Senior Vice President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Secretary of Traders Action Committee Islamabad Khalid Chaudhry has said that CDA had allotted a plot in Shakar Parian to PCB for the construction of a cricket stadium in Shakar Parian twenty years ago, but the cricket board could not build it. Now the CDA board has announced to build it at its own expense of Rs 11 billion. Which is an abuse of the citizens of Islamabad. There is a fear that the development works of the federal capital will be



affected by paying such a huge amount. There is a lack of funds for

the development works of Islamabad. The payment of such a huge amount is inappropriate from CDA funds, the federal capital Islamabad is not part of the NFC award, Islamabad does not get any funds from the central government. Apart from this, the central government also takes about fifty billion rupees from the Islamabad Excise Department, due to which the ICT revenue decreases. Chief Commissioner ICT Sohail Ashraf should dedicate the excise revenue to Islamabad so that development work can be done in rural areas as well. Prime Minister Mian Shabbaz Sharif should take notice of the situation.

RDA Seals J7 Icon, 10 Other Illegal Buildings in Crackdown on Unauthorized Constructions

By: Staff Reporter:

RAWALPINDI-- The Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) launched an enforcement operation against illegal constructions in The Avenue-1 and Mumtaz City housing schemes, sealing eight illegally constructed residential buildings, two commercial buildings, and the J7 Icon multi-storey building for violating approved building plans and zoning regulations.

The operation was carried out under the Punjab Development of Cities Act, 1976, the RDA Building and Zoning Regulations, and other applicable planning laws. It was led by Deputy Director Planning Muhammad Daud, along with Building Inspector Shafiqur Rahman and the RDA Enforcement Squad.



An RDA spokesperson said the operation was part of the Authority's ongoing campaign against illegal constructions and unauthorized developments to ensure planned urban growth and protect the interests of genuine property owners and investors.

The spokesperson reiterated that the RDA would continue taking

strict legal action against all violations without discrimination and urged the public to verify the legal status and approval of housing schemes and construction projects before investing. Citizens were also encouraged to report illegal constructions to the RDA for prompt action in accordance with the law.

CM Mir Sarfraz Bugti Chairs 26th State Defense Conference, Reviews Security Situation in Balochistan

By: ANI Correspondent:

QUETTA-- Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Khan Bugti chaired the 26th meeting of the State Defense Conference (Hardening of the State Conference) in Quetta, where participants reviewed the overall security situation, ongoing counter-terrorism measures, and coordination between federal and provincial institutions.

The forum expressed satisfaction over the progress of the joint Operation Shaban being conducted by the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps Balochistan, and Police, reaffirming its commitment to continue operations against terrorist elements with greater effectiveness.

Participants paid tribute to the martyrs of Hanna Orak and Mangi Dam, pledging that their sacrifices would not go in vain and that efforts to eliminate terrorism and restore lasting peace in Balochistan would continue with full determination.

Addressing the meeting, Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Khan Bugti said terrorism is a national chal-



lenge that requires close cooperation between the country's political and military leadership, with the support of the people. He stated that terrorists and their facilitators would be brought to justice and that there is no place for anti-state elements in Balochistan.

He also highlighted the provincial government's governance reforms aimed at improving the performance of public institutions and ensuring better service delivery. He emphasized that the government, in close coordination with security forces, is focusing not only on maintaining law and order but

also on accelerating development projects, particularly in remote and underdeveloped areas, as sustainable peace and development go hand in hand.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps, Pakistan Coast Guard, Police, FIA, Customs, and other federal and provincial institutions.

The conference concluded with a renewed commitment by all relevant institutions to work in close coordination to strengthen the state's writ, maintain peace and stability, and ensure the protection of the people of Balochistan.