

Daily **FINANCIAL TIMES**Email: dailyfinancialtimes2@gmail.com, Whatsapp: 00923060106475
Website: <https://dailyfinancialtime.com>

Editor: JAVED SIDDIQ

Islamabad

Vol: 14 Issue: 311 Pages: 4 Price: 20 Wednesday July 22 2026

The Newspaper of ANI Media Group

Trump threatens strike on Iran's Pickaxe Mountain



ANI

US President Donald Trump has said the US will be hitting the Pickaxe Mountain area, located near Iran's heavily damaged Natanz uranium enrichment facility, "very heavily, pretty soon."

Linked to Iran's nuclear programme, Pickaxe Mountain is a heavily fortified site that hosts two deeply buried tunnel complexes.

Trump had threatened to attack the site last week, saying the US was "going to take out Pickaxe Mountain." He also said on Tuesday that Tehran wanted to "desperately meet." "Until they're ready to meet in a meaningful way, we have no interest," he added.

Trump was asked about the Iran-

backed Houthi's threats to shipping in the Red Sea. If the group follows through on its threats of a naval blockade, "we'll just have to take care of business," he said during the Lebanese President Joseph Aoun's visit to the White House.

The US president vowed to help the Middle East country which he said has been "very badly treated." "We're going to have it properly treated, and treated with respect that it deserves," Trump said. "There's a Hezbollah problem, but we've done some things that I think the world will take notice."

The Lebanese leader thanked Trump for the "historic achievement" in signing a Lebanon-Israel framework. "I've been looking forward to

this visit for a long time," Aoun said, adding that "it's about time for Lebanon and the whole region to be stable and secure." Trump said he would speak to Hezbollah if Aoun wanted him to. "I would speak to Hezbollah. I speak to everybody. I'll speak to people that a lot of people think I shouldn't be speaking to, and things work out," he said.

In June, Trump said he spoke with Hezbollah through intermediaries and secured a pledge that it would not attack Israel. Before then, no US president had ever spoken with Hezbollah, with or without intermediaries. The group is designated as a terrorist organization by the US.

Two oil tankers carrying Saudi crude to Asia reversed course in

the Red Sea on Tuesday after threats from Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis, as a widening Middle East conflict disrupted shipping through two of the world's most critical energy chokepoints. The diversions came as US forces bombed targets in the south and west of Iran overnight, Tehran targeted US sites in Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan and at least one tanker was hit in the Strait of Hormuz in the latest escalation of violence that has all but wrecked an interim peace deal signed last month. The two tankers, which loaded Saudi crude bound for China and India this week, made U-turns and were headed toward the Suez, shipping data on LSEG showed.

Maryam hits out at PPP as PML-N launches AJK election campaign

ANI

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Tuesday launched its election campaign for the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) polls, with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz aiming at the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), her party's ally in the federal government, for failing to resolve the region's issues despite being in power there.

Addressing a public gathering in Muzaffarabad, Maryam promised to replicate Punjab's development model in AJK, announcing a package of welfare and infrastructure initiatives, including the introduction of electric buses, mobile hospitals and social protection schemes, while urging voters to elect the PML-N in the July 27 legislative assembly elections. Announcing what she described as "gifts" for the people of Muzaffarabad, the Punjab chief minister said 10 green electric buses would be provided for the AJK capital, while 15 "hospitals on wheels" mobile hospitals would be launched to improve healthcare services in remote areas. "I am not here merely to make promises. I am here to present our performance over the last two years in Punjab," she said, urging voters to compare the governance record of the PML-N with that of its political rivals. Maryam said she regarded both AJK and IIOJK as her home and described herself as a Kashmiri "by blood, by heart, by soul and by ancestry." "This is my native city, Kashmir is our jugular vein. These valleys, these mountains and these brothers and sisters are mine," she declared, paying tribute to the martyrs of Kashmir and reaffirming Pakistan's support for the Kashmir cause. She questioned why the long-awaited Kohala-Muzaffarabad motorway had not yet been completed and said the PML-N was committed to improving road infrastructure across AJK. "If the people elect a PML-N government in AJK, we will change your destiny," she said, adding that the development witnessed in Punjab could be replicated in the region. Referring to the public transport system introduced in Punjab, Maryam said green electric buses had reached even tehsil headquarters, and similar projects would be implemented in AJK.

She criticised the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), asking why the party had failed to address public issues despite



being in government in AJK.

"Some people have been coming here over the past few days, delivering speeches, airing grievances, voicing complaints and levelling allegations. I want to remind them, in all sincerity, who they are accusing. The government here is their own," she said.

Without naming former prime minister Imran Khan directly, she also referred to his past remarks regarding the numerical strength of political parties in the 2021 polls, saying political realities had changed because of the public's support for the PML-N.

Highlighting Punjab's welfare initiatives, Maryam said more than 400 children from AJK had received life-saving surgeries in Punjab hospitals. She added that over seven million people had been provided free medicines under the provincial healthcare programme.

She said the Punjab government had launched doorstep public service delivery through the "Maryam Ki Dastak" initiative, under which birth and other official certificates were being delivered to citizens at their homes. Similar governance reforms, she said, would be introduced in AJK. The Punjab chief minister also highlighted several social welfare programmes, including the Nawaz Sharif Roshan Card under which deserving families receive monthly food assistance worth Rs3,000, and the Rehmat Card for widows providing annual financial assistance of Rs100,000.

She further announced that a "Himmat Card" would be introduced for persons with disabilities in AJK if the PML-N formed the next government.

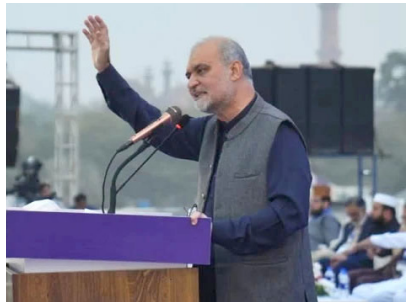
JI to block highways nationwide on Aug 7 over inflation, rising fuel prices

ANI

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Chief Hafiz Naemur Rehman on Tuesday announced a nationwide blockade of major highways on August 7 as part of the party's campaign against inflation, petroleum levy and rising fuel prices, warning that any attempt by the government to stop the peaceful protest could push the movement towards an anti-government campaign. Amid volatility in global oil rates on the back of renewed hostilities in the Middle East, the government decided to switch to a daily fuel price review mechanism on Friday. The daily pricing is based on a seven-day weekly average of international market prices to align with international standards. The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) will update petroleum product prices daily on its website to ensure transparency and allow the immediate impact of international price fluctuations to be passed on to consumers. Addressing a press conference at JI headquarters in Lahore's Mansoorah, Rehman said the party would organise corner meetings, sit-ins and a countrywide mobilisation campaign before August 7. He said people from all walks of life, including traders, industrialists, lawyers, students, religious scholars and youth, would participate in the protest.

He said major roads in all four provinces and district headquarters would be blocked on August 7, adding that the protest would remain peaceful and ambulances would be allowed to pass.

Criticising the increase in petroleum prices, the JI chief said the government was using the war as a pretext to raise fuel prices, even though the petroleum levy and other taxes were unrelated to the conflict. He claimed that if the petroleum levy and other taxes were abolished, the



price of petrol should not exceed Rs250 per litre. He alleged that the government had empowered the OGRA to determine petroleum prices on a daily basis, despite the fact that the petroleum levy had no legal linkage with the regulator. According to him, the government was collecting around Rs1.8 trillion annually through petroleum levy, placing the burden on motorcyclists, labourers and the middle class.

Describing the levy as "economic terrorism", Rehman said the government was collecting taxes even from people outside the formal tax net through indirect taxation.

He said JI was not opposed to the defence budget but objected to the privileges enjoyed by judges, senior military officers, bureaucrats, lawmakers and other senior public officials. He alleged that while ordinary citizens were struggling with inflation, the ruling elite continued to benefit from state-funded perks.

The JI chief also criticised the Punjab government's health and education policies, alleging that basic health units and public schools were being sold and renamed to mislead the public.

He further claimed that poverty had increased in Punjab under the current administration.

Sharjeel slams PML-N over 'fake mandate' politics

ANI

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon on Tuesday lashed out at Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz over her public remarks, calling her party a "Form 47 product" and accusing it of seeking "political sympathy" in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) despite what he termed a "fake mandate".

In a statement, Sharjeel said the AJK people had previously rejected "manufactured representation" and would do so again. "A party that has come into power based on a questionable mandate is now attempting to portray itself as a defender of Kashmiri rights," he said. He alleged that the party's political history was marked by disregard for the public mandate. "A party that deprives its own people of their right to vote has no moral

grounds to speak on the rights of Kashmiris," he added. Referring to Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) victory in the Gilgit-Baltistan elections, the senior minister claimed that Kashmiris would similarly reject Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's politics. He also criticised governance in Punjab, saying many residents still travelled to Sindh, particularly Karachi, for better healthcare facilities. "Instead of criticising others, they should review their own performance," he added.

Sharjeel reiterated that the PPP believed in democratic values, constitutional supremacy and genuine public mandate. "Our politics revolves around public trust and service, not just the pursuit of power," he said. He added that voters would continue to reject what he described as "politics of a fake mandate" in future elections.

Pakistan will continue role as sincere mediator: PM

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday, during a call by Interior Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran Eskandar Momeni, emphasised that Pakistan would continue to play its role as an honest and sincere mediator and facilitator, and reiterated the country's strong commitment to regional peace and stability.

The Interior Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who is on an official visit to Pakistan, called on the prime minister here at the Prime Minister House, a PM Office's news release said.

During the meeting, the prime minister shared his deep concern over the recent escalation in the Gulf region and urged all sides to exercise restraint and refrain from actions that could further destabilize the region.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif welcomed



the Iranian Interior Minister and his delegation to Pakistan. While recalling his visit to Tehran earlier this month to attend the funeral ceremony of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, the Prime Minister conveyed his respectful regards and good wishes

for the Supreme Leader, Sayyid Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei and President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian. Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni thanked the Prime Minister for the warm welcome accorded to him and his delegation in Islamabad.

Iranian interior minister discusses border security with CDF Asim Munir

ANI

RAWALPINDI: Interior Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran Eskandar Momeni called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ here on Tuesday at the General Headquarters (GHQ). During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional and bilateral security and effective border management were discussed, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The visiting Iranian dignitary appreciated Pakistan's consistent efforts and indispensable diplomatic role in easing regional tensions, encouraging de-



escalation and serving as an anchor for peace. The meeting concluded on reaffirmation of resolve to maintain close

coordination and cooperative mechanisms to safeguard regional security and mutual prosperity.



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding the launch of AI-based Prime Minister's Office System (PMOS).

Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail Hails University of Turbat as a Model Institution of Higher Education

BY: ANI Correspondent:

QUETTA--- Governor of Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has praised the University of Turbat as a model higher education institution, saying it is Pakistan's only university where more than half of the student population comprises female students, reflecting significant progress in education and social development.

Chairing the university's 10th Senate meeting, the Governor commended the institution for improving its ranking and scoring performance to 91.4 percent, crediting Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Gul Hassan and his team for the achievement. He added that excellence is a continuous process and encouraged the university to maintain its momentum.

The meeting was attended by Provincial Education Minister Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani,



Balochistan High Court Justice Sardar Ahmad Halimi, senior education officials and members of the university senate.

Governor Mandokhail emphasized that the Senate is the university's highest decision-making body

and that its decisions are essential for ensuring transparency, accountability and institutional stability. He also urged students to remain committed to learning, describing education as the strongest investment for a brighter future.

Major Employment Gateway Opens for Skilled Pakistanis as Pak-Saudi Companies Sign Historic Trilateral Agreement

BY: FT Correspondent:

ISLAMABAD--- Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have signed a landmark trilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to expand overseas employment opportunities for skilled Pakistani workers, particularly drivers, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The agreement was signed between Fouji Foundation Pakistan, Shalaan and GL, and Operating Company for Hunger Station of Saudi Arabia during a ceremony held at the KHM Group Head Office. The signatories included Major General (Retd.) Ehsan Mehmood, Khalid Nawaz Sadhraich, and Nazieh Al Nouri.

Under the agreement, the three organizations will facilitate the transparent and merit-based recruitment of thousands of professionally



trained Pakistani drivers for employment in Saudi Arabia, offering competitive salaries and improved career opportunities.

Speaking at the ceremony, Khalid Nawaz Sadhraich, CEO of Shalaan Agency, said the agreement marked a major milestone for Pakistan's manpower export sector and would create thousands of jobs, increase remittances, strengthen foreign

exchange reserves and deepen Pakistan-Saudi economic ties.

Saudi delegates praised the professionalism and recruitment standards of the Pakistani partners and expressed confidence that the collaboration would help meet Saudi Arabia's growing demand for skilled workers while creating sustainable employment opportunities for Pakistan's workforce.

Jhelum Bids Farewell to ADC Revenue Sania Safi Ahead of Senior Management Course

BY: ANI Correspondent:

JHELUM--- A farewell dinner was hosted in honour of Ms. Sania Safi, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue), Jhelum, by Farhat Kamal Zia Advocate, General Secretary of Noor Welfare Society, at Jhelum Gymkhana before her departure to attend a senior management course.

The event was attended by Assistant Commissioner Jhelum Abdullah Ghazi, Assistant Commissioner Dina Taimur Wahab, Assistant Commissioner Sohawa Ghazala Asghar, CEO Education Dr. Nazia Shahzadi, Deputy Director Social Welfare Khizar Hayat Khan, Superintendent District Jail Yasir Khan, Chaudhry Zia-ul-Mulk Advocate, and other distinguished guests.



Speakers praised Ms. Sania Safi for her outstanding services as ADC (Revenue), particularly her effective leadership during last year's floods. They commended her professional-

ism, integrity, dedication to public service and people-friendly approach, and extended their best wishes for her future responsibilities and continued success.

Centrum Air to Launch Direct Karachi-Tashkent Flights from September 3

BY: FT Correspondent:

KARACHI--- Centrum Air will launch direct scheduled flights between Karachi and Tashkent from September 3, 2026, marking a new chapter in Pakistan-Uzbekistan connectivity.

The airline will operate two weekly flights on Thursdays and Sundays, aiming to strengthen business, tourism and cultural ties while creating new opportunities for trade, investment and travel between the two countries. The new route will also provide convenient onward connections through Tashkent to destinations across Central Asia and the CIS region.

Centrum Air said the service will make it easier for travellers to explore Uzbekistan's rich cultural and historical heritage, including Samarkand,



Bukhara, the Centre for Islamic Civilization in Tashkent and the Imam Al-Bukhari Memorial Complex, while

supporting closer people-to-people and economic links between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

DC Chaudhry Adeel Haider Briar, MD WASA Ali Ahmed Chaudhry Lead Rainwater Drainage Operation in Mandi Bahauddin

By: FT Correspondent:

MANDI BAHAUDDIN---Following torrential monsoon rains that flooded streets, roads and markets across Mandi Bahauddin, Deputy Commissioner Chaudhry Adeel Haider Briar, accompanied by Managing Director WASA Ali Ahmed Chaudhry, personally supervised rainwater drainage operations across the city. WASA teams were immediately deployed to low-lying areas, including College Chowk, Jail Road, Dakhana Road and Railway Warehouse, where drainage and sewer cleaning operations were carried out on an emergency basis.



Suction machines and dewatering pumps were used to remove accumulated rainwater, restoring normal conditions within a few hours.

MD WASA Ali Ahmed Chaudhry said the district administration and

WASA remain fully prepared to tackle any emergency during the monsoon season. He added that officers and staff are working round the clock to ensure efficient drainage and provide timely relief to residents.

Pakistan Celebrates World Chess Day, Reaffirms Commitment to Developing Young Talent

BY: ANI Correspondent:

ISLAMABAD-- The Chess Federation of Pakistan (CFP) celebrated World Chess Day by reaffirming its commitment to promoting chess across the country and developing young talent.

CFP President Syed Zeeshan Naqvi, the chief guest at the ceremony, said the federation is taking practical steps to strengthen chess at the grassroots and national levels. He noted that the record participation in the recent National Chess Championship reflects the game's growing popularity in Pakistan.

Naqvi said the federation will continue organizing tournaments, train-



ing programmes and development initiatives to prepare future champions and enhance Pakistan's presence in international chess.

The event was attended by CFP

Vice President Rehan Azam, federation officials, players and chess enthusiasts, and concluded with a cake-cutting ceremony to mark World Chess Day.

Mona J Introduces Exclusive New York Manhattan High Glam Makeup Look in Pakistan

BY: ANI Correspondent:

KARACHI--- Renowned makeup artist Mona J has unveiled her latest New York Manhattan High Glam makeup look after completing an advanced masterclass at the New York Makeup Academy (NYMUA).

Inspired by one of the world's leading beauty and fashion capitals, the new look features signature smoky eyes, sculpted high-contour cheeks, beautifully defined lips and a glamorous Hollywood-inspired finish. Designed for brides, formal events and special occasions, the style blends timeless elegance with modern fashion trends. Mona J said the exclusive makeover offers clients a premium international beauty experience, bringing the latest New York-inspired glamour to Pakistan. The new signature look is available exclusively through appointments with Mona J, reflecting her motto: "Learn, Create, Inspire."



Pakistan-China Economic Partnership Enters New Phase of Business Collaboration: Ambassador Khalil Hashmi

BY: Hurish Shah:

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador to China, H.E. Khalil Hashmi, said Pakistan-China economic relations are entering a new phase of investment-led business-to-business (B2B) cooperation aimed at translating the two countries' strong political ties into greater trade, investment and industrial partnerships.

Addressing an interactive session at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), he said the Pakistan Embassy has identified 21 priority sectors for investment cooperation and organized several B2B conferences and investment roadshows, resulting in over 670 MoUs, around 40 joint ventures, and investment commitments exceeding US\$22 billion. He stressed the need to convert these agreements into operational projects and sustainable investments.

ICCI President Sardar Tahir



Mehmood said China remains Pakistan's most trusted strategic economic partner and emphasized expanding private-sector collaboration, technology transfer and joint ventures. He added that ICCI is committed to strengthening business linkages and facilitating Chinese investment through its Business Facilitation Desks in Guangzhou and

Islamabad. The session, moderated by ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub, concluded with a Q&A on investment opportunities, trade facilitation and market access. ICCI Vice President Mohammad Irfan Chaudhry reaffirmed the Chamber's commitment to promoting Pakistan-China business cooperation.

ISSI, PAIDAR commemorate South Africa's National Day, Nelson Mandela International Day

ANI

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with the Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR), on Tuesday commemorated South Africa's National Day and Nelson Mandela International Day, with speakers highlighting the enduring legacy of Nelson Mandela and reaffirming Pakistan's longstanding friendship with South Africa.

The event, organized by the Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at ISSI, was attended by Acting High Commissioner of South Africa to Pakistan Rudolph Pierre Jordaan as the chief guest and Additional Foreign Secretary (Africa) Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan as the guest of honour, said a press release. Addressing the ceremony, ISSI Director General Ambassador Moin ul Haque said Pakistan and South Africa enjoyed warm and longstanding relations founded on the shared values of justice, freedom, equality and mutual respect.

Recalling Pakistan's steadfast support for South Africa's struggle against apartheid, he highlighted the growing cooperation between the two countries in bilateral and multilateral forums.

Paying tribute to Nelson Mandela, he described him as a global symbol of reconciliation, resilience, and moral courage whose enduring legacy continues to inspire humanity and strengthen the bonds of friendship between Pakistan and South Africa. Acting High Commissioner R. Pierre Jordaan thanked ISSI for commemorating Nelson Mandela International Day alongside South



Africa's National Day.

He noted that the occasion celebrated South Africa's democratic journey and Mandela's enduring legacy. He highlighted Mandela's life-long struggle for justice, equality, reconciliation, and human dignity, describing him as a global symbol of peace whose leadership continues to inspire people worldwide.

Recalling Mandela's message of forgiveness over bitterness after 27 years of imprisonment, he emphasized that true leadership lies in reconciliation, compassion, and service to humanity. Reflecting on today's global challenges, he called for greater respect for international law, multilateralism, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. He stressed that Mandela's vision remains a powerful reminder that lasting peace can only be achieved through dialogue, justice, and shared responsibility. Concluding with Mandela's words from Long Walk to Freedom, he

encouraged everyone to work towards a more just, peaceful, and inclusive world, reminding the audience that "it is still in our hands to do good." Director CAMEA Dr. Amina Khan highlighted the significance of the occasion, paying tribute to Nelson Mandela's contribution to freedom and recalling Pakistan's longstanding support for the anti-apartheid movement, including Mandela's historic visit to Pakistan and ISSI in 1992. She also reaffirmed CAMEA's commitment to strengthening Pakistan-Africa relations under the 'Engage Africa' policy. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, President of PAIDAR, said Pakistan took pride in South Africa's commitment to human rights and universal freedoms. He noted that Nelson Mandela admired Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and drew parallels between the two leaders' unwavering commitment to securing freedom for their people.

Daily

FINANCIAL TIMES

Group Editor: Dr. Waheed Mehmood Khan, Editor: Javed Siddiq

Executive Editor: Naseem Hassan Awan, Joint Editor: Hurish Shah

Disclaimer: All articles, columns, and opinions published in Financial Times are solely the views of their respective authors. The publication does not necessarily endorse or agree with the opinions, views, or positions expressed therein.

US-Iran peace process: Iranian minister meets Pakistani military and political leaders



BY:Asghar Ali Mubarak :Published by ANI

Pakistan’s mediation to prevent a direct war between the US and Iran has reached a critical juncture. The historic ‘Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding’ (Islamabad MoU), reached on June 17, 2026, through the efforts of Pakistan and Qatar, was suspended in early July after renewed attacks by the parties. Pakistan, however, has not given up on the diplomatic front and is working to revive the peace process. According to the Prime Minister’s Office, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed deep concern over the recent military tensions between the US and Iran in the Gulf. He urged all parties to exercise restraint and avoid actions that could further destabilize the region. The Prime Minister reiterated that Pakistan is fully committed to continuing its constructive role as an “honest and sincere mediator and facilitator” for peace and stability in the region.

Iranian Interior Minister Eskandhar Momeni highly appreciated the tireless diplomatic efforts of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, which resulted in the signing of the landmark ‘Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding’ between the US and Iran. The Iranian Interior Minister is accompanied by a delegation comprising senior officials from Customs, Agriculture, Transport, and the National Iranian Oil Company. Discussions were held on strengthening border infrastructure and transit links to increase the current annual trade between the two countries from \$3 billion to \$10 billion in light of the directives of Iranian President Masoud Peshmerga. Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif conveyed his best wishes to the current leadership of Iran (President Masoud Peshmerga), recalling his visit to Tehran earlier this month and his attendance at the funeral of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni thanked the Prime Minister for the warm welcome in Islamabad and conveyed the best wishes of the Iranian leadership. He said that he had come to Pakistan with a delegation of high-ranking government officials to further strengthen the relations between the two countries.

The main objective of the meeting between Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Iranian Interior Minister Eskandhar Momeni is to reduce the recent tension between the US and Iran and advance the peace process.

Pakistan’s military and political leaders played a key role in brokering an interim agreement between the US and Iran last month. The Iranian interior minister highly appreciated Pakistan’s indispensable diplomatic role and sustained efforts to reduce the recent tension in the region.

Efforts are underway to bring Iran and the US back to the table under a joint proposal presented by Pakistan and Qatar. The US has also indicated that it is ready for real and serious negotiations.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), matters of mutual interest, the regional security situation, and effective border management between the two countries were discussed in detail during the meeting. The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to maintain close contacts and mechanisms of mutual cooperation for the protection of regional security and mutual prosperity. Before arriving at GHQ, Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni also called on Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif in Islamabad, where he conveyed a special message from Iranian President Masoud Peshmerga. The Prime Minister also agreed to further strengthen Pak-Iran relations and maintain close ties between the two countries. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the regional and bilateral security situation was discussed during the meeting between Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni. Issues related to effective border management were discussed during the meeting. The Iranian Interior Minister appreciated Pakistan’s continuous efforts and indispensable diplomatic role in reducing regional tensions. According to the ISPR, the Iranian Interior Minister appreciated Pakistan’s efforts to encourage de-escalation and serve as a peace advocate. According to the ISPR, the meeting reaffirmed the commitment to maintain close coordination and cooperative mechanisms for the protection of regional security and mutual prosperity.The ‘Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding’ is a historic 14-point peace agreement between the United States and Iran, signed on June 17, 2026. The main objective of this agreement was to end the direct US-Iran war that began in early 2026 and the

military tensions in the Gulf. Pakistan, along with Qatar, played the role of the central mediator in this peace process. After prolonged diplomatic efforts by Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Asim Munir, and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, US President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Peshmerga signed the memorandum electronically. Ceasefire: Immediate and permanent cessation of military operations on all fronts (including Lebanon). Opening of the Strait of Hormuz: Iran assured the immediate opening of the Strait of Hormuz to restore international commercial shipping. Ending of naval blockade: The US announced the end of its severe naval blockade of Iranian ports. Financial relief and funds: The US issued a 60-day license for the recovery of Iran’s frozen assets and the sale of oil. Nuclear program: The start of talks on Iran’s uranium enrichment issues under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Future framework: The parties were given 60 days to reach a final peace agreement. Just a month after the agreement, in July 2026, this memorandum of understanding fell into a serious crisis and has been effectively suspended: Iran’s announcement: On July 18, 2026, Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister officially announced the suspension of all its obligations under the Islamabad Memorandum. Iran’s position is that the United States has broken the agreement itself by continuing to attack Iranian defense facilities. US position: President Donald Trump has also declared the truce over in his statements. Strait of Hormuz closed again: After the resumption of military clashes and attacks between the two countries, the Strait of Hormuz has been closed once again, which has increased crude oil prices in the global market. Pakistan’s current position: Despite the suspension of the agreement, according to the Foreign Office of Pakistan, the Pakistani leadership has not yet given up on this mediation. The recent visit of Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni to Islamabad (July 2026) is also a link in this series, where Pakistan and Qatar are trying to bring the parties back to the basic outline of the ‘Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding’ through behind-the-scenes diplomacy. Pakistan and Qatar have presented a new joint proposal to Tehran and Washington, under which both countries have been asked to return to the position before July 9 so that the stalled talks can resume. This new proposal recommends a temporary 2-week ceasefire to immediately stop the ongoing air and naval attacks between the two countries. According to the proposal, Iran will reopen the trade routes of the Strait of Hormuz for 10 days, while the US will suspend the naval blockade of Iranian ports and the current sanctions on oil sales. Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni arrived in Islamabad carrying a special message from Iranian President Masoud Peshmerga. He held important meetings with Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif. According to the ISPR, the Iranian delegation highly appreciated Pakistan’s “indispensable and consistent diplomatic role” in reducing tensions and bringing peace to the region. Iran has expressed its willingness to use Pakistan’s mediation again for indirect contacts between Tehran and Washington. The Iranian Foreign Office has made it clear that a renewed war between the US and Iran is not in anyone’s interest and could push the entire region towards destruction. The Foreign Office spokesperson clearly stated in a press briefing that “the impression that Pakistan has given up efforts is not correct. At present, the security environment is dominated by military tension, but the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding is still the only viable framework for future peace talks.” Pakistan’s military and political leadership is currently pursuing extreme “defensive diplomacy” to ensure the security of its 900-kilometer border with Iran and to protect Pakistan from the effects of this major Gulf war.The tension between Iran and the United States in the Middle East has once again entered a very dangerous and strategic crisis that has seriously threatened the peace and stability of the entire region. During the military operations and intense air and naval attacks that have been ongoing for the past twelve days, the United States is targeting those Iranian targets, installations, and infrastructure that were protected until recently due to Pakistan’s dynamic diplomatic efforts. The strategic balance that Islamabad established between Tehran and Washington through backdoor diplomacy to save the region from a terrible catastrophe has been completely destroyed due to the intensity of the recent attacks and geopolitical tensions. This situation has not only brought the two powers

to a major confrontation but has also caused irreparable damage to all those diplomatic means that were helping to maintain peace in the region until now. Tehran’s top military and political leadership is expressing strong distrust of Washington’s military actions, which seem to be blocking all avenues for negotiations and diplomatic efforts. In response to the US attacks, Iran has announced that it will effectively suspend the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, block the Strait of Hormuz, and stop ships passing through it. The blockade of the Strait of Hormuz is not only expected to affect the supply of oil and LNG worldwide, but it is also creating a new and severe energy crisis in the global market. In response to the US advances and sanctions, the biggest targets of Iran’s war strategy are becoming the countries of the Middle East, especially Jordan, Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. During this ongoing tension, Iran’s attacks on the highly sensitive facilities that make seawater drinkable (desalination plants) have put the Gulf region in extraordinary danger. Kuwait has recently accused Iran of directly targeting the country’s major water plant for the second time, raising serious concerns about the supply of clean drinking water and human safety in the entire Gulf region. According to the Gulf Research Center, the extremely limited natural water available underground and desalination plants that purify seawater and make it drinkable together provide about 90 percent of the water supply and daily needs of the entire region. Due to global climate change, a huge increase in temperature and a decrease in groundwater levels in recent years, more than 400 water plants are active along the entire Gulf belt from the United Arab Emirates to Kuwait, which provide water to millions of residents and industrial sectors in this driest, hottest and most arid region in the world. The six member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman, have a 60 percent global seawater desalination capacity. Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates get 90 percent of their drinking water, 86 percent of their water, 70 percent of their water, and 42 percent of their water from these plants. This is why attacks on these plants are creating a terrible economic, humanitarian, and environmental crisis, putting the lives of millions of innocent civilians at risk. In this worrying scenario, Kuwait, despite its long-term conventional defense agreement with the United States and the presence of the American security umbrella, is interested in utilizing the broad-based model of military cooperation established over decades between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. According to a report by the international news agency Reuters, the framework of the Pak-Kuwait talks includes military training, joint exercises, transfer of defense technology, air defense support, drone security, intelligence, and exchange of high-level military delegations to create a sustainable, credible, and comprehensive strategic framework. Although there is a framework for limited military cooperation between the two countries since 2023, Kuwait is keen to expand it into a robust security framework in the light of current threats. The impression is that it wants to rely on the military experience of the Pakistani forces to protect its borders and airspace, but Pakistan has not yet announced any formal defense and combat agreement in this regard.

For Pakistan, the security situation in the Middle East is nothing less than a very complex diplomatic test. On the one hand, Islamabad is condemning in the strongest terms the attacks on civilian populations and economic infrastructure of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states and is constantly convincing Tehran through diplomatic channels that attacks on Gulf installations will irreparably increase regional tensions, and this will harm the Muslim world. Although a few months ago, as a result of Pakistan’s mediation and diplomatic pressure, Iran had officially assured that it would not directly attack Saudi Arabia, the situation has become more exciting and unpredictable due to US attacks, Tehran’s hardline policy, and the new alignment of the region, the Houthis rebels, and other Iranian actions. Pakistan has always maintained that mutual conflict between Muslim countries will only strengthen the strategic interests of imperialist and hostile powers, which will weaken all regional Muslim countries economically and politically. Islamabad has maintained a very cautious, far-sighted and neutral diplomatic balance in all difficulties and crises and is reluctant to make itself part of any one bloc.

Opinion

3

National Unity and Economic Stability: The Road Ahead for Pakistan



Written By: Sumblina Hassan
Former Secretary to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto
Former In-Charge, Office 10 (UK) RCC Bilawal Bhutto:
Published By: ANI News Agency

Pakistan stands at a critical point in its history where economic stability and national unity are deeply connected. No country can achieve sustainable development if its people remain divided by political polarization, ethnic differences, or social inequality. Likewise, economic prosperity cannot be secured without peace, trust, and a shared national vision. For Pakistan, the road ahead requires strengthening both human unity and economic resilience simultaneously.

Pakistan has faced numerous economic challenges over the past decade, including inflation, unemployment, a growing public debt, and recurring balance-of-payments crises. While global economic uncertainties have contributed to these problems, domestic political instability and policy inconsistency have also slowed progress. Investors seek stability, businesses require predictable policies, and citizens need confidence in the future. National unity creates the environment where long-term economic reforms can succeed.

Human unity begins with recognizing that every citizen, regardless of province, ethnicity, language, or religion, has an equal stake in Pakistan’s future. Diversity is one of the country’s greatest strengths. When people feel included and respected, they are more willing to contribute to national development. Governments, educational institutions, media, and civil society all have a responsibility to promote tolerance, dialogue, and mutual respect instead of division.

Economic stability depends on strengthening productive sectors of the economy. Agriculture remains the backbone of Pakistan, while manufacturing, information technology, tourism, and renewable energy offer tremendous opportunities for growth. Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), encouraging entrepreneurship, and creating a business-friendly environment can generate employment and expand exports. Digital transformation and innova-

tion should become central pillars of Pakistan’s economic strategy.

As Pakistan embraces digital innovation and artificial intelligence, including technologies such as ChatGPT, it is essential that technological advancement is guided by strong ethical principles and responsible governance. Innovation must remain human-centred, ensuring that it strengthens rather than replaces the human element. It should protect vulnerable communities, support entrepreneurs and young innovators, and operate within a robust legal framework that safeguards the public interest. Any major technological advancement should be evaluated through clear criteria that balance economic growth with social responsibility, ensuring that digital progress enhances productivity while remaining inclusive, transparent, and accountable. Nothing should be allowed to develop without appropriate oversight, as only responsible innovation can safely raise the bar for sustainable economic development and long-term national prosperity.

Education and skill development are equally essential. A young population can become Pakistan’s greatest economic advantage if provided with quality education, vocational training, and opportunities for innovation. Investment in human capital not only improves productivity but also reduces poverty and social inequality. A skilled workforce attracts foreign investment and strengthens national competitiveness in global markets.

Good governance plays a decisive role in achieving both unity and economic progress. Transparency, accountability, and merit-based institutions build public trust. Fighting corruption, simplifying business regulations, and ensuring fair implementation of laws create confidence among investors and citizens alike. Strong institutions are more important than short-term political gains.

The overseas Pakistani community also represents an invaluable national asset. Beyond remittances, the diaspora contributes knowledge, investment, technology, and international networks. Creating policies that encourage overseas Pakistanis to invest in industry, education, and innovation can significantly strengthen the national economy.

Social protection programs must accompany economic reforms. Inflation and economic adjustments often affect low-income families the most. Expanding targeted support, improving healthcare, and ensuring food security help maintain social cohesion while protecting vulnerable communities. Inclusive growth ensures that economic progress benefits all segments of society.

Climate resilience has also become

an economic necessity. Pakistan’s agriculture, water resources, and infrastructure are increasingly vulnerable to climate change. Investing in sustainable development, water conservation, renewable energy, and disaster preparedness will reduce long-term economic risks while creating new employment opportunities.

At the same time, Pakistan should strengthen its independent scientific and research capabilities to better understand the causes and consequences of climate change. A dedicated national scientific body, comprising climate experts, environmental scientists, and research institutions, should be empowered to investigate changing weather patterns using credible scientific evidence and internationally accepted research methodologies. Public concerns regarding emerging technologies, weather modification techniques, and commercial activities that may affect the environment should be examined through transparent, evidence-based inquiry. The government should work closely with academia, scientific institutions, and responsible private-sector partners to develop policies that protect Pakistan’s environmental, economic, and national interests. Effective legislation, regulatory oversight, and scientific cooperation will ensure that innovation serves the public good while safeguarding the country against environmental risks and exploitation.

The media has an important role in promoting national unity by encouraging constructive dialogue, fact-based reporting, and responsible journalism. Instead of amplifying division, media organizations should highlight success stories, innovative solutions, and examples of cooperation across communities. Public discourse that focuses on solutions rather than conflict strengthens democratic institutions and national confidence.

Ultimately, Pakistan’s future will not be determined solely by economic statistics or political transitions, but by its ability to unite its people behind a common national purpose. Economic stability and national unity are not separate ambitions—they are mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development. By investing in human capital, strengthening democratic institutions, embracing innovation, ensuring social justice, and fostering a culture of tolerance and accountability, Pakistan can transform its challenges into opportunities. The road ahead demands collective responsibility, visionary leadership, and unwavering public trust. If these foundations are nurtured, Pakistan can emerge as a stronger, more prosperous, and more resilient nation, capable of securing lasting progress for generations to come.

US-Europe rift serves neither, but is it inevitable?

YOSSI MEKELBERG

A rift between the US and Europe is quickly brewing. However, neither side can afford it or will benefit from it. Worse, this long-standing alliance now faces its severest test yet, which is bound to remain for the next three years. It is already leaving deep scars.

The security and prosperity of what is known as the West depend on close transatlantic relationships. When this alliance weakens, it only serves those the US and Europe perceive as their main rivals: China and Russia. One would not be surprised if the leaderships in Beijing and Moscow were rubbing their hands with glee at every spat between the Trump administration and America’s NATO allies. The American administration’s insistence on acquiring Greenland has proven to be, for the EU, the UK and Canada, the final straw. For them, this was a red line they could not afford to let Washington cross without mounting a challenge, as they did.

The strategic importance of Greenland – the world’s largest island – is indisputable and it will only increase because of the unfortunate impact of climate change. Its strategic position between the US and Russia makes it a front-line area of growing importance as the ice sheets melt. Global warming is causing Greenland’s ice sheet and the rest of the Arctic’s sea ice to melt, opening new sea routes that will serve as an alternative to traditional, costly navigation through the Suez and Panama canals. Add to this Greenland’s rich mineral and hydrocarbon deposits and the attraction of this massive island, despite its harsh weather, lack of infrastructure and remoteness, is turning it into the US’ latest frontier.

Alas, the way President Donald Trump is going about it alienates his country’s closest allies and does so needlessly. The idea of the American frontier underpins the country’s historical westward expansion, with European settlers moving from the original settlements along the Atlantic Coast toward the Pacific Coast. This was a combination of ideology and utilitarianism, eventually resulting, for instance, in the purchase of Alaska in 1867 for the modest sum of \$7.2 million (about \$150 million today).

Acquiring territories reflected the “manifest destiny” notion, coined by John L. O’Sullivan in 1845, that

America had a special destiny to stretch across the continent. However, it was another US president, Woodrow Wilson, with his notable 14 points during the First World War, who made his country the champion of the right to self-determination – a position that now seems reversed by the current US administration.

Greenland, in Trump’s thinking, epitomizes this. And it is no longer a fight between the so-called new world and the old world of colonial Europe, but a confrontation that undermines the closest of allies, which share similar security concerns and, at least until recently, similar values and respect for the norms of a rules-based world order.

Before Trump’s arrival at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the fear was that the issue of Greenland was going to cause irreparable damage to the US’ relationship with most of the other members of NATO, which believed that Trump would not climb down from his demand for American sovereignty over the island.

The day before Trump addressed the forum, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney urged his fellow “middle powers” to form new alliances, accusing the great powers of abandoning the post-Second World War system of freer trade and international norms, which required an adequate response. “We understand that this rupture calls for more than adaptation,” he said, as “the old order is not coming back. We should not mourn it. Nostalgia is not a strategy. But from the fracture, we can build something better, stronger and more just.”

The response from Europe was very similar, rejecting any attempts to intimidate Denmark, the sovereign power in Greenland, or the 57,000 Greenlanders to hand the island to the US.

Trump might not have given up on his aspirations to own Greenland, but he took notice of his allies’ firm position, making a very public commitment that he would not order a military operation to achieve this objective. Later, he announced that he and NATO had agreed a compromise with which both sides were happy, though they are yet to share it with the rest of us. To ease tensions with European allies, he also withdrew the threat of additional tariffs on them for their resistance to the US annexing Greenland.

To be sure, it is almost impossible to know whether Trump just enjoys pushing the envelope, and with it testing both the zones of possible agreement and the patience of his interlocutors, or if there is a serious and definite plan. In the case of Greenland, while there is curiosity about the agreement reached, a deal could have been achieved without straining America’s relations with its close allies.

Greenland, by virtue of being part of the Kingdom of Denmark, is protected by NATO, under Article 5 of its charter, from any hostile foreign forces. And if the US or any other member believes there is an imminent threat, they could work together to fortify the defenses of the island, on and offshore, to avert such a hostile development.

Moreover, the US already has more than 100 military personnel permanently stationed at its Pituffik base at the northwestern tip of the territory, operating under a 1951 agreement with Denmark. This agreement does not limit the number of troops the US is allowed to station there. This could serve as a basis for negotiations on an increased American presence without claiming sovereignty over land that is, anyway, public.

This base, in coordination with Denmark and other NATO allies, or even additional bases, could be accorded long leases that guarantee an almost permanent American presence without violating the sovereignty of another country or deciding the future of the Greenlanders, which must be done by them alone.

One complication with Trump’s announcement is that neither the US nor NATO has legal standing in Danish territory and their leaders have not been mandated to negotiate on Denmark’s behalf. Yet, reaching an amicable agreement with Denmark on the future security of Greenland, in the spirit of the NATO family, could create goodwill for the territory’s commercial development, particularly regarding its natural resources.

Significantly, Europe has drawn a line in the sand, which seems to have been understood in Washington: deliberations, negotiations and compromises are possible, but attempts to force an entire continent that wields its own levers of power to concede territory are mutually harmful and will be strongly rejected.

—Arab News

Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand Meets Chairman Senate Yousaf Raza Gilani; Calls for Stronger Pakistan-Canada Ties

BY: Hurish Shah:

ISLAMABAD--- Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani emphasized strengthening Pakistan-Canada relations through parliamentary diplomacy, enhanced trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges while welcoming Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand during her first official visit to Pakistan.

Addressing a reception in Anita Anand's honour and later meeting her delegation, Gilani highlighted the nearly eight-decade-long friendship between Pakistan and Canada, built on mutual respect, political dialogue, economic cooperation, educational exchanges and the contributions of the Pakistani community in Canada.

He appreciated the positive outcomes of recent talks between Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Anita Anand, saying they had further strengthened bilateral trade and economic cooperation. Gilani also invited Canada to actively participate in the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference (ISC) to expand parliamentary engagement and cooperation.

The two sides discussed enhancing collaboration in trade, investment, energy, mining, information technology, artificial intelligence, education, climate change and clean technology. Gilani encouraged Canadian invest-



ment under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and welcomed progress on the proposed Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA).

The Chairman Senate also reaffirmed Pakistan's principled position on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute,

called for stronger parliamentary cooperation between the two countries, and expressed confidence that Anita Anand's visit would further strengthen Pakistan-Canada relations and open new avenues for peace, prosperity and sustainable development.

Over 30,000 Non-Formal Education Centers Active Nationwide with 1.2 Million Students Enrolled; 86% Female Teachers Enable 55% Enrollment of Girls



BY : ANI Correspondent:

ISLAMABAD--- The Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE), in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), has launched the Annual Statistical Report 2024-25 and the Federal Non-Formal Education Strategy 2025 to help bring out-of-school children back into the education system.

The report states that 30,543 non-formal education centres are educating 1.24 million children through

34,256 teachers, with female teachers making up 83-86% of the workforce and contributing to 55% girls' enrolment. The centres also provide education to refugee and minority children across Pakistan.

Speaking at the launch ceremony, Federal Secretary for Education Nadeem Mehboob said the government's priority is to bring 25.3 million out-of-school children into classrooms through a unified education system that combines academics with technical skills.

DG PIE Dr. Zaigham Qadeer said

students' progress would be monitored through the Non-Formal Education Management Information System (NFEMIS), while JICA Pakistan Chief Representative Yusuke Shinozaki reaffirmed Japan's continued support for accelerated learning programmes and teacher training. The Federal Non-Formal Education Strategy 2025 also introduces Middle-Tech and Matric-Tech programmes, digital monitoring, hybrid learning and biannual assessments to improve learning outcomes and expand access to quality education.

Atif Ikram Sheikh Rejects Visa Sale and Human Smuggling Allegations Against FPCCI

BY: FT Correspondent:

ISLAMABAD--- President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram Sheikh, has strongly rejected allegations of visa sales and human smuggling against FPCCI office-bearers, calling them baseless and a deliberate attempt to damage the reputation of Pakistan's apex trade body.

In a statement, he clarified that FPCCI neither issues nor sells visas and that trade delegations are organized solely to promote trade,



investment and business cooperation.

He further stated that FPCCI has no connection with any alleged visa scam or illegal activity. He said the federation did not submit any visa applications for the women's delegation, nor were any visas issued on its recommendation.

Atif Ikram Sheikh reaffirmed that all visa recommendation letters are issued strictly on merit and in accordance with the guidelines of the relevant embassies, ensuring transparency and compliance with the law.

NUTECH Hosts Seminar on AI's Impact on Future Jobs, Education



BY: FT Correspondent:

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Technology (NUTECH) organized a seminar on "Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Its Impact on the Future Job Market," attended by more than 487 principals and faculty members from public and private educational institutions across Pakistan.

The seminar featured presenta-

tions by Dr. Benish Fida and Professor Dr. Awais Yasin (TI), who discussed AI's growing influence on education, industry and future employment. Dr. Benish Fida emphasized the need for AI-driven education, curriculum enhancement, faculty development and the ethical use of artificial intelligence, while Prof. Dr. Awais Yasin highlighted NUTECH's Magic QC initia-

tive, showcasing AI-based solutions for industrial quality control.

The event concluded with an interactive Q&A session on AI adoption, career opportunities and curriculum transformation. Rector NUTECH thanked the participants and stressed the importance of ethical AI use and equipping future generations with the skills needed for an AI-driven world.

President Zardari Felicitates Belgian Leadership on National Day

BY: ANI Correspondent:

ISLAMABAD-- President Asif Ali Zardari has extended warm felicitations to King Philippe, the Government and the people of Belgium on the occasion of the country's National Day.

In his message, President Zardari said Pakistan and Belgium enjoy long-standing and cordial relations based on mutual respect, trust and goodwill. He noted that the two countries have built a constructive partnership in various fields over the years. The President said Pakistan highly values its engagement with the European Union, in which Belgium plays an important role, and expressed the hope of further strengthening bilateral cooperation



to promote peace, sustainable development and shared prosperity.

President Zardari also expressed confidence that the friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and Belgium would continue to grow for the mutual benefit of the people of both countries.

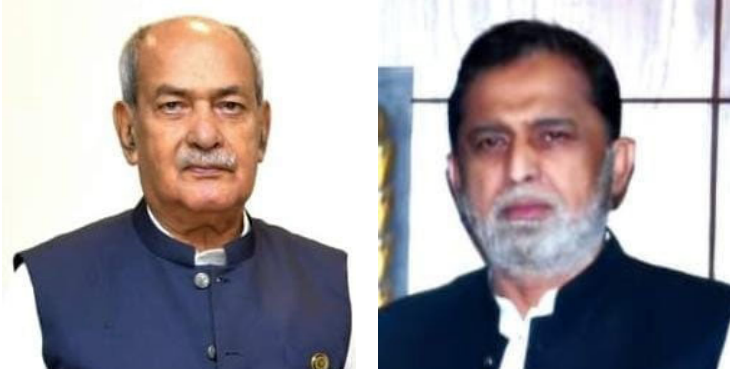
Ajmal Baloch, Khalid Chaudhry Warn Government: Strict Lockdown, Reduced Business Hours Unacceptable

BY: Hurish Shah:

ISLAMABAD--- President of the All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajiran and Traders Action Committee Islamabad Ajmal Baloch, along with Secretary and Chairman of the Traders and Market Development Committee of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Khalid Chaudhry, has warned that the business community will not accept another strict lockdown or any reduction in business hours, saying such measures would further damage the country's already struggling economy.

In a joint statement, Ajmal Baloch, Khalid Chaudhry, Mian Kamran Kakakhel, Shehzad Abbasi, Akhtar Abbasi and other trader leaders said inflation had surged due to government policies, placing essential commodities beyond the reach of ordinary citizens. They added that businesses had already shrunk significantly, while the public's purchasing power had declined sharply.

The trader representatives also



expressed concern over the government's proposal to allow OGRA to determine petroleum prices on a daily basis, arguing that it appeared to give excessive influence to oil companies at the expense of consumers.

They said imposing another strict lockdown or curtailing business hours would further weaken economic activity, increase unemployment and create additional hardships for traders and the public alike.

The business leaders warned that the trading community would reject any such decision and, if the government proceeded with what they described as anti-business measures, nationwide protests and a country-wide shutter-down strike could be announced. They urged the government to avoid decisions that would hurt businesses and the national economy, and instead adopt policies that support economic stability and protect public livelihoods.

Khaqan Waheed Khawaja Says Public Joining Pakistan Awami Quwat Party Reflects Demand for Real Change



BY: FT Correspondent:

ISLAMABAD--- Chairman of the Pakistan Awami Quwat Party and Chairman of Rawal General & Dental Hospital and Rawal Foundation, Khaqan Waheed Khawaja, said that his party believes in action rather than empty promises, adding that the growing number of people joining the party from across Pakistan reflects public disappointment with traditional political parties.

He expressed these views while addressing a meeting of party office-bearers, local leaders and workers at the party office, where social and political leader Dr. Malik Yasin from Attock formally joined the Pakistan Awami Quwat Party. The event was

also attended by prominent lawyer Usama Hussain Joyia from Mianwali, Chaudhry Zafar from Pind Begwal, international cricketer Masood Anwar, and a delegation of journalists from the Financial Times, including Dr. Majeed and Naseem Hassan.

A delegation from UC-62 Khanna Dak also met Khaqan Waheed Khawaja and raised concerns over the area's water supply. He assured residents that the issue would be addressed on a priority basis.

Khaqan Waheed Khawaja said resolving grassroots issues is the central objective of the Pakistan Awami Quwat Party, adding that the inclusion of educated professionals and community leaders from Attock, Mianwali and other districts would

further strengthen the party. He announced that a comprehensive organizational policy would soon be introduced nationwide to empower ordinary citizens, address their concerns and build a better future.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Malik Yasin said he joined the Pakistan Awami Quwat Party after witnessing its commitment to public service and fulfillment of its promises despite not being in government. He expressed confidence that the party would provide an effective platform to serve the people.

Lawyer Usama Hussain Joyia said the educated class was increasingly supporting the Pakistan Awami Quwat Party, reflecting the public's desire for genuine political change and stronger grassroots representation.

Yaseen Lone Meets Shahid Riaz Satti to Seek Support for AJK Elections



BY: FT Correspondent:

MURREE: AJK Legislative Assembly constituency Valley-4 candidate Yaseen Lone met former Punjab MPA and Parliamentary Secretary Shahid Riaz Satti at his residence, Shahid Avenue, Khanna East, Islamabad, to

discuss the upcoming Azad Jammu and Kashmir elections.

Yaseen Lone, accompanied by Pir Nisar Baba, Ali Shan, Shabbir Ahmed and other associates, sought Shahid Riaz Satti's support for his election campaign. Shahid Riaz Satti assured him that he would appeal to his sup-

porters and members of the Kashmiri community to extend full cooperation.

Yaseen Lone thanked Shahid Riaz Satti for his warm welcome, best wishes and support. The meeting also included discussions on mutual cooperation and public welfare issues.

DC Chaudhry Adeel Haider Briar Directs Immediate Rainwater Drainage in Malikwal

By: FT Correspondent:

MANDI BAHAUDDIN-- On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Chaudhry Adeel Haider Briar, Assistant Commissioner Malikwal Chaudhry Sohail Riaz Chheena carried out an early morning visit to the city following heavy rainfall to oversee rainwater drainage operations.

The Assistant Commissioner inspected waterlogged roads and low-lying areas and directed the concerned departments to ensure the immediate drainage of rainwater to



facilitate residents and maintain smooth traffic flow. He also instructed field staff to remain on high alert and provide prompt assistance wherever

needed. Later, he visited the Jhelum River near Malikwal to review the water situation and monitor conditions after the recent rains.