

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

Editor: JAVED SIDDIQ

Islamabad

Vol: 14 Issue: 331 Pages: 4 Price: 20 Wednesday August 12 2026

The Newspaper of ANI Media Group

US, Iran close to some sort of 'peace arrangement': Asif



ANI

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on Tuesday that the United States and Iran were moving closer to a possible agreement, as Qatar reported progress in talks over managing the Strait of Hormuz despite fresh attacks on shipping in the region.

The comments offered some hope that Iran and the US can end a stalemate that has in effect blocked the vital waterway, through which a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas flowed before the war. Prospects for a deal had appeared to dim on Monday after the sides' latest remarks and demands.

In an interview with Bloomberg

News, Asif said: "Things are shaping up again in favour of a peace arrangement or a deal."

"The signals in the last two, three days are that we are close to some sort of an arrangement."

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met Pakistani Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Tehran on Tuesday, Araghchi's Telegram channel said on Tuesday, without providing further details. Qatar's Foreign Ministry spokesperson told a briefing earlier on Tuesday that separate discussions between Oman and Iran over management of the Strait of Hormuz were at an advanced stage.

Iran's Foreign Ministry's Public Relations Office did not immediately respond to a call for comment.

Pakistan and Qatar have been the main mediators in the conflict in which thousands have been killed — mainly in Iran and Lebanon — since US and Israeli attacks on Iran on February 28.

Iran has hit back by striking US assets and infrastructure in countries including Oman, Jordan, Kuwait, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

Oil pares gains on deal hopes

Oil fell back on Tuesday after hitting a one-week high earlier in trading, although it remains much higher than before the war. Iran said on Sunday it was nearing a final pact with Oman defining new shipping lanes in the Strait of Hormuz, which runs between them, but said that in

itself would not open the waterway unless the US met certain conditions. Those conditions were largely in line with a memorandum of understanding to end the conflict that was reached between Washington and Tehran in June and included compensation and an end to sanctions and military threats. Iranian FM Araghchi said on Sunday that Tehran and Washington were not holding direct talks, but that messages were being exchanged through intermediaries.

US President Donald Trump responded on Monday night, making new demands, saying he was seeking his own reparations from Tehran, seemingly leaving the two sides deadlocked.

PM Lauds Minorities' Role in Pakistan's Progress



ANI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said the country's minority communities had played a significant and commendable role in the creation, development and progress of the country in its journey from creation to national development, and underlined that all citizens, regardless of religion, must work together for the country's growth and prosperity. Addressing a ceremony held here at the Prime Minister's Office to mark National Minorities Day, the Prime Minister said, in line with Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's August 11 address, the Constitution of Pakistan guaranteed equal rights to all Pakistanis. He said Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis and members of other minority communities had played a constructive role in the Pakistan Movement and in the country's development.

The Prime Minister particularly appreciated the contributions of the Christian community in education, recalling the educational services of Christian schools and his own and his siblings' early education at Christian educational institutions.

He also mentioned prominent national figures from minority communities, including Cecil Chaudhry, Justice A.R. Cornelius, Jogendra Nath Mandal, S.L. Gibbs and S.P. Singha, and said minorities had rendered valuable services in national defence and other fields. He said the sacrifices of minority citizens in the country's wars and the fight against terrorism were unforgettable.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said all Pakistanis needed to work together for the country's development and prosperity, while the younger generation should be equipped with modern knowledge to enable Pakistan to attain a prominent position in the world.

He said the country should move forward while keeping in view the objectives of

Pakistan and strive to secure its rightful place among the comity of nations.

Referring to the Makkah Defence Agreement among Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye, the Prime Minister said the agreement was not directed against any country but was aimed at promoting peace, development and prosperity. He also reiterated Pakistan's commitment to peace, stability and development in the region.

During the ceremony, Prime Minister, Shehbaz presented awards and honours to members of minority communities in recognition of their services to the country.

Earlier, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf said minorities enjoyed protection in Pakistan and that the government was taking measures for their welfare.

He said the Constitution fully guaranteed minority rights and that, in line with Quaid-e-Azam's vision, protection of minority rights was a priority of the government. He said places of worship had been provided security, educational scholarships and financial assistance were being extended to minorities, while 10 religious festivals were observed at the official level.

Minister of State for Religious and Interfaith Harmony, Khel Das Kohistani said National Minorities Day was being observed across the country and described the Prime Minister's participation in the ceremony as a matter of honour for minority communities.

He said the Sikh Marriage Act and Hindu Marriage Act were important developments for minorities, while work was also under way on the Christian Marriage Act. He said minorities in Pakistan enjoyed religious freedom and protection.

Senator Khalil Tahir Sindhu said the National Commission for Minorities Act was a welcome step towards protecting the rights of minorities and noted that minority communities had consistently contributed to Pakistan's development.

Mohsin arrives in Tehran as Pakistan pushes for US-Iran talks on Hormuz

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi arrived in Tehran for an official visit on Tuesday, as Islamabad continues diplomatic efforts aimed at facilitating dialogue between Iran and the United States amid tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz.

Naqvi is scheduled to meet senior Iranian officials during his stay, with discussions expected to include the situation in the strategic waterway, bilateral relations and other matters of mutual interest. Iranian media reports confirmed his arrival but did not immediately provide full details of his meeting schedule.

The visit comes as Pakistan continues to maintain contact with both Tehran and Washington as part of its efforts to support diplomatic engagement over the conflict and the wider regional crisis.

The Strait of Hormuz is expected to feature prominently in discussions during Naqvi's meetings in Tehran. The strategic waterway is a crucial route for global energy shipments, and its security has remained one of the key issues in discussions between Iran and the US.

Pakistan has emerged as an important intermediary in diplomatic contacts between the two sides. Islamabad has hosted negotiations and has continued communicating with Tehran and Washington as efforts continue to address outstanding issues and prevent further escalation.

Naqvi has travelled to Iran several times in recent months as part of Pakistan's diplomatic engagement. Reports indicate that his latest visit is his sixth trip to Tehran since the conflict began, underlining the frequency of



Islamabad's contacts with Iranian officials.

During earlier visits, Naqvi held meetings with senior Iranian figures, including President Masoud Pezeshkian, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqir Qalibaf, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni.

His latest trip comes as diplomatic activity around the US-Iran dispute has intensified, with Pakistan continuing to position itself as a channel for communication between the two sides.

Beyond the regional crisis, Naqvi's meetings are expected to cover Pakistan-Iran relations and issues affecting the two neighbouring countries.

Pakistan and Iran share a long border and maintain longstanding historical, cultural and economic links. Their governments have also been working to improve coordination on border management and other matters affecting communities along the frontier. High-level contacts between Islamabad and Tehran have provided opportunities to review bilateral cooperation, address outstanding concerns and discuss developments with implications for both countries.

sion was taken after a meeting of dealers from across the country.

The chairman said, "The association has given the government a 72-hour ultimatum and warned that dealers will not be able to continue operating petrol pumps if their demands are not accepted." "The dealers are demanding an 8% margin on petrol. Our patience has run out," Baksh said, adding that the association was under pressure from its 14,000 members. He said petrol pumps would remain closed until the dealers' demands were met. The chairman said the government had been given two weeks to address their demands and that the deadline had expired. He said the association had subsequently informed the government through a letter that it was facing pressure from 14,000 dealers. "We withdrew the strike 15 days ago on ethical grounds because we believed the government was serious," he said.

Petroleum dealers announce closure of pumps nationwide from Aug 15

ANI

KARACHI: Petroleum dealers in Pakistan on Tuesday announced a shutdown of petrol pumps nationwide from Aug 15 for an indefinite period, following a wheel-jam strike by goods transporters across the country.

A day earlier, negotiations between the government and goods transporters failed to yield a breakthrough, with the All Pakistan Goods Transport Alliance announcing that the ongoing strike would continue. Alliance President Malik Shehzad Awan said that despite detailed talks with representatives of the federal and Sindh governments, a deadlock persists and no concrete progress has been made on the transporters' demands. Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association Chairman Malik Khuda Baksh, during a press conference today alongside other association office-bearers, said the deci-

President confers Nishan-e-Imtiaz (Military) upon CNSC General Aamer Raza

ANI

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday conferred Nishan-e-Imtiaz (Military) upon Commander National Strategic Command (CNSC), General Syed Aamer Raza amid a Special Investiture Ceremony held here at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The prestigious award was conferred in recognition of his meritorious contributions, outstanding professional acumen and distinguished services towards the defence and security of Pakistan.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces (COAS & CDF), Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, members of the Federal Cabinet, Parliament and members of the diplomatic



community attended the ceremony.

Later, the CNSC paid a courtesy call on the

president. The president conveyed his best wishes to him in his future responsibilities.

Bahrain FM congratulates Dar on Makkah defence pact

ANI

Bahrain's Foreign Minister Dr Abdullah bin Rashid Al Zayani congratulated Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on the signing of the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye during a telephone call, the Foreign Office said on Tuesday.

The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement was signed by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye on Friday, establishing a framework for collective security and defence cooperation under which an armed attack on any one of the three countries would be considered an attack on all. The pact was built on a Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement signed by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in September 2025, which contained a similar mutual-defence commitment. According to a post on X by the FO, Al Zayani called Dar on Monday night and congratulated him on the agreement. He also expressed his intention to visit Pakistan in the near future. Dar "warmly welcomed" Al Zayani's desire to visit Pakistan and thanked him for his "kind sentiments", the FO said.

5 terrorists neutralised in Balochistan's Panjgur: ISPR

ANI

Security forces neutralised five terrorists belonging to the proscribed Fitna al-Hindustan during a "high-tempo, intelligence-driven operation" conducted in Balochistan's Panjgur district, the military's media wing said on Tuesday.

The federal government last year officially designated all terrorist groups operating in Balochistan as 'Fitna al-Hindustan', accusing India of sponsoring a proxy war through these outfits. "In addition to neutralising the five hostile elements, operational teams recovered and destroyed a significant cache of



weapons, ammunition, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on site, followed immediately by sanitisation operations to clear any remaining threats in the area," said a statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). It added that the operation was executed as part of

a "relentless, ongoing counter-terrorism campaign dedicated to eliminating Indian-sponsored proxies and restoring enduring peace in the region", referring to Operation Shaban. The ISPR further stated that the relentless counterterrorism campaign under the vision "Azm e Istehkam", as approved by the Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan, by security forces and law enforcement agencies would continue at "full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country". Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to the security forces for the successful operation.



Federal Minister for Defence Production Muhammad Raza Hayat Harraj calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

Chinese Delegation Visits CPEC Secretariat for Industrial Cooperation

ANI

ISLAMABAD: A high-level Chinese delegation led by Sun Dongsheng, Senior Advisor, Economic Affairs Press, visited the CPEC Secretariat here on Tuesday for consultations on expanding business-to-business (B2B) and industrial cooperation under the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC 2.0).

The delegation held detailed consultations with Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal, senior policymakers and development experts on advancing practical economic cooperation and strengthening the implementation of CPEC 2.0, a news release said.

The visit marked an important engagement aimed at translating CPEC 2.0 from a predominantly infrastructure-focused framework into a platform for industrialization, productivity, innovation and deeper enterprise-to-enterprise partnerships. During the consultations, Ahsan Iqbal apprised the Chinese delegation of Pakistan's national economic transformation agenda under URAAN Pakistan and proposed active collaboration with



Chinese counterparts of the National Center of New Manufacturing to benefit from China's experience in innovation, automation and robotics for Industrial Revolution 4.0 and 5.0. The minister said Pakistan's biggest economic challenge was its narrow export base, which had caused several economic take-offs to lose momentum. He said the government's top priority was to transform Pakistan's productive sectors into engines of exports, adding that China had helped Pakistan overcome its energy deficit under CPEC Phase I and Pakistan now looked towards CPEC 2.0 to help overcome its export defi-

cit. The minister emphasized the need to facilitate greater Pakistani exports to China, which imports nearly \$2.6 trillion annually, while Pakistan's share remained around \$3 billion. He said CPEC 2.0 was geared towards B2B cooperation and noted that Pakistani and Chinese enterprises had recently entered into regional agreements in industrial, agricultural and mining sectors.

He expressed the hope that greater B2B cooperation would help achieve the objectives of CPEC 2.0 for modernization of Pakistan's agriculture and industrial sectors.

Sun Dongsheng appreciated the warm welcome and reaffirmed the importance of the enduring China-Pakistan friendship.

He spoke positively of the achievements made under CPEC Phase I and emphasized the need to deepen cooperation in industry and agriculture, strengthen productive capacity, encourage greater participation of small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises, and expand enterprise-to-enterprise exchanges and mutually beneficial partnerships.

The consultations highlighted that CPEC 2.0 marked a transition from infrastructure to industrialization, from connectivity to competitiveness, from investment to productivity and increasingly from government-to-government cooperation to deeper business-to-business partnerships.

The participants also discussed the strategic alignment between the five corridors of CPEC 2.0 and Pakistan's URAAN Pakistan 5Es framework, stressing the importance of translating this alignment into enterprises, technology and innovation, jobs and skills, exports, investment

17th national convention on youth agency in education 2026 concluded

ANI

ISLAMABAD: The 17th National Convention on Youth Agency in Education 2026 on Tuesday concluded focusing on empowering the role of young-people in shaping educational policies and system. The convention was organised by the Society for Access to Quality Education (SAQE). The two-day convention brought together young people, policymakers, education officials, civil society and development partners to explore how youth agency in education can move beyond participation towards meaningful influence and action, said a press release.

A major milestone of the convention was the launch of the Pakistan Youth Agency Study, which identifies a youth-agency paradox in which the education system continues to treat young people as passive recipients, with limited engagement in the policy process. Building on the study's findings, young people presented a Youth Policy Statement, placing their perspectives directly into the policy conversation and calling for stronger mechanisms for youth participation in education decision-making. These priorities were taken into a Grand Dialogue with provincial education officials, creating a platform to amplify youth voices and connect their recommendations with education policy and planning. Zehra Arshad, Executive Director, SAQE, underscored that youth agency cannot be separated from the systems that shape young people's opportunities. Meaningful participation requires responsive policies, equitable financing and inclusive, resilient education systems that enable every young person to learn, participate and shape their future.

Bharath call for integrated weather & disaster alert system to advance preparedness measures in health sector

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Health Dr Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath on Tuesday called for integrating weather and disaster alerts issued by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) with advance preparedness measures in the health sector. While addressing a conference on National Health Emergency Preparedness and Response, he said that upon issuance of an alert, health teams, medicines, essential medical equipment and other necessary resources should be made available in the affected districts without delay. He stressed that climate change had become a permanent reality in Pakistan, directly affecting the population and putting additional pressure on the health system. "Looking at climate trends over the past several decades, it is clear that climate change has become a permanent reality in Pakistan," he said, adding that the country was increasingly experiencing extreme weather events, including severe monsoons, abnormal rainfall, cloud-bursts, floods and other climate-related disasters.

Youth must lead Pakistan towards vision 2047: Rana Mashhood

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Youth Programme Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan on Tuesday urged Pakistani youth to prepare themselves for national leadership under Vision 2047, stressing that collective action, volunteerism and greater preparedness are essential to confront climate change and natural disasters as Pakistan seeks to build a resilient and prosperous future.

Addressing a ceremony at the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), he said Pakistan would celebrate its 79th Independence Day on Aug 14 and had faced numerous challenges during its 79 years, but the country possessed immense potential, particularly among its young population.

He said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would soon announce Vision 2047, setting out where Pakistan should stand when it completes 100 years as an independent country.

He added that the views of young people are being given special importance in shaping the vision.

Rana Mashhood said the National Youth Council is functioning as the Prime Minister's Youth Advisory Board, while consultations are being held with Pakistani youth across the country and overseas to shape a strategy for the future. "Today's youth will be leading Pakistan in different professional and practical fields by 2047," he said, urging them to prepare themselves for that responsibility. Highlighting climate change as one of Pakistan's major challenges, he said the



country is increasingly exposed to floods, heatwaves and other natural disasters.

He appreciated the NDMA's use of modern technology and scientific methods for early identification of disaster risks and preparedness.

The chairman noted that Pakistan is

suffering the consequences of climate change despite having a limited role in causing the problem.

The country therefore needed to enhance its preparedness and response capacity, while the international community must also fulfil its responsibilities towards climate vulnerable countries.

Rana Mashhood said the Green Youth Movement is being expanded on the Prime Minister's directives and had so far brought 137 universities into the programme.

The government aimed to add another 50 to 60 universities this year and subsequently extend the initiative to affiliated colleges and schools.

He said the National Volunteer Corps would train young people to respond to natural disasters and emergencies.

CUI hosts international workshop on Solar Radiation Modification research, policy dialogue

ANI

ISLAMABAD: COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) on Tuesday hosted an international workshop on "Dissemination of SRM Research Findings and Sensitization of Policymakers in Pakistan," bringing together policymakers, government officials, researchers, academics, international partners and young researchers to promote informed dialogue on Solar Radiation Modification (SRM).

The workshop held at a local hotel focused on the scientific uncertainties, potential risks, governance, ethical considerations and policy implications of SRM, particularly in the context of Pakistan and the wider Global South.

Pakistan remains highly vulnerable to climate change, facing increasing risks from extreme temperatures, floods, droughts, changing rainfall patterns, water stress and their impacts on agriculture, public health, ecosystems and liveli-

hoods. The workshop highlighted the importance of strengthening national research capacity and promoting evidence-based understanding of emerging climate responses.

Organized by the Department of Meteorology, CUI, in collaboration with The Degrees Initiative, United Kingdom, the workshop aimed to strengthen scientific capacity, research collaboration and science-policy engagement on emerging climate intervention technologies.

Speaking on the occasion, CUI Rector Prof. Dr. Raheel Qamar, T.I., highlighted the university's commitment to scientific excellence, interdisciplinary research and international collaboration.

He emphasized the need to strengthen Pakistan's research capacity and ensure that the perspectives of Pakistan and other countries in the Global South are meaningfully represented in international discussions on climate research and governance.

PBC backs govt's rightsizing drive

ANI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Business Council (PBC) here on Tuesday endorsed the government's rightsizing agenda, calling for a leaner, more efficient and focused public sector while offering to provide detailed recommendations on privatization, restructuring of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and expanding private-sector participation. During a meeting with Advisor to Finance Minister, Khurram Schehzad, Chairman PBC, Ziad Bashir, and Chief Executive Officer, Javed Kureishi emphasized that a streamlined public sector can improve economic efficiency and create greater space for private investment and market-led growth.

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss key areas of economic reform, including the government's ongoing privatization programme, restructuring of SOEs and measures to reduce the government's footprint in commercial activities. The participants discussed the proposed privatization of power distribution companies (DISCOs), banks, and airports, with emphasis on improving efficiency, attracting investment, and enhancing service delivery through greater private-sector participation.

Minority Community's Contributions to Pakistan's Progress Are Commendable: Ayaz Sadiq

By ANI Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, in his message on National Minorities Day, paid tribute to the valuable contributions of minority communities to Pakistan's development and progress.

He said minority communities were making significant contributions in education, healthcare, defence, trade and other fields of national life. The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights and complete religious freedom to all citizens without discrimination.

Ayaz Sadiq said Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's August 11,



1947 address was a clear expression of the principles of religious freedom, equality and tolerance. He said every Pakistani had the right to live according to their faith in line with

the Quaid's vision.

The Speaker said National Minorities Day provided an opportunity to reaffirm the commitment to mutual respect, tolerance and national unity. Parliament remained committed to protecting the constitutional rights of minorities through effective legislation.

He also appreciated the role of minority parliamentarians in legislation and parliamentary affairs, saying the national services of non-Muslim Pakistani personalities were a proud part of the country's history.

Ayaz Sadiq stressed that equality, justice and religious freedom were the foundations of a strong, prosperous and united Pakistan.

PBM, NTC agree to strengthen digital connectivity for vulnerable communities

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) and the National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC) on Tuesday agreed to strengthen institutional cooperation to improve PBM's nationwide digital connectivity and ensure reliable and sustainable communication services for its programmes serving vulnerable and underprivileged communities. The agreement was formalised through the signing of a Document of Intent (DoI) at PBM headquarters, paving the way for a formal memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two organisations.

Managing Director PBM, Senator Capt. Shaheen Khalid Butt and Managing Director NTC Maj. Gen. (retd) Ali Farhan signed the document at a ceremony attended by officials from both organisations. The framework aimed to strengthen PBM's connectivity infrastructure and ensure uninterrupted technical support and operational sustainability for its nationwide services. Speaking on the occasion,



Senator Shaheen Khalid Butt said reliable technology and communication services had become essential for the effective delivery of PBM's programmes across the country. He said PBM was a mission-driven public-sector organisation serving widows, orphans, patients, students, persons with disabilities and other deserving segments of society.

"Every rupee we save on operational costs goes directly to a beneficiary; a widow, an orphan, a patient or a student," he said, adding that favourable terms from NTC would ultimately ben-

efit the people relying on PBM's programmes. The PBM managing director requested NTC to consider subsidised or concessional rates for internet connectivity, point-to-point links, email and web hosting, and cloud services, describing these facilities as essential operational infrastructure for PBM rather than administrative conveniences.

He said uninterrupted digital services were vital for ensuring continuous delivery of assistance to beneficiaries across the country.

14 Balochistan Students Leave for Islamabad for Higher Education

By ANI Correspondent :

SIBI: Fourteen students from Sibi have departed for Islamabad after completing the testing phase for higher education opportunities under the initiatives of Advocate Fareed Afghan, Member Board of Governance, University of Cambridge Schools and Colleges Balochistan.

The testing process was conducted by Sibi Focal Person Saleem Bugti, while Sibi and Koh-e-Suleman Divisions Coordinator Munir Ahmed Bugti supervised the students' departure and other arrangements.

Munir Ahmed Bugti said the efforts of Fareed Afghan had helped



create higher education opportunities in Punjab for around 200 students from Balochistan. He said the province's youth were talented but needed access to quality education and proper guidance.

He appreciated the efforts of Fareed Afghan and Saleem Bugti in facilitating the students and said further initiatives would be undertaken to provide educational opportunities to deserving and talented students from other districts and divisions of Balochistan.

Malik Khuda Bakhsh Dhapal also appreciated the joint efforts of Fareed Afghan, Munir Ahmed Bugti and Saleem Bugti, saying such initiatives could help build a brighter future for the youth of Balochistan.

VC FUUAST participates in COMSATS digital governance demonstration

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor (VC) Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), Prof. Dr Zabta Khan Shinwari, participated in a demonstration of an integrated digital governance system developed by COMSATS University here on Tuesday.

The demonstration was presented by Rector COMSATS University Islamabad, Prof. Raheel Qamar, along with his team. The presentation highlighted COMSATS' in-house digital governance solutions aimed at modernizing and streamlining university operations. The system covers major areas of university administration, including the student lifecycle, electronic

filing, financial operations, recruitment and statutory governance. The integrated digital solutions have significantly improved administrative efficiency while reducing processing time, operational costs and paper usage across the university's campuses. Chairperson Higher Education Commission (HEC), Prof. Dr Niaz Ahmad Akhtar, also graced the demonstration at the Principal Seat, Islamabad. Dr. Shinwari appreciated the initiative of COMSATS University and its Rector for developing practical digital solutions for higher education institutions. He said that such knowledge-sharing initiatives provided universities with valuable opportunities to learn from each other and move towards more efficient, transparent and technology-driven governance.

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.

Opinion

3

At Islamabad’s Doorstep: Bilawal Bhutto and the Next Test for the PPP



Written By
:Rana Farooq
Ashraf
Published
By:ANI News
Agency

The completion of the third phase of the Azad Kashmir elections has brought the electoral process closer to its conclusion, but it has also opened a new political chapter. What began as a contest for political influence in Muzaffarabad is increasingly acquiring significance for the broader political arrangement in Islamabad.

At the centre of this developing situation is Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, whose recent statements have reflected a noticeably more assertive posture towards the federal government and its handling of political and electoral matters.

During the Azad Kashmir campaign, Bhutto warned that any attempt to undermine the people’s mandate would have consequences for the federal government. His reference to a “countdown” was clearly intended as a political warning. Following the completion of the election’s third phase, the question now is whether that warning will remain part of electoral rhetoric or evolve into a broader political strategy.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has emerged as the strongest party in the Azad Kashmir elections, while the PPP has raised objections concerning aspects of the electoral process and the conduct of polling. The postponement of polling in some constituencies during the third phase, citing security concerns, added another layer of sensitivity to an already closely watched election.

The political significance of the contest, however, extends beyond the formation of a government in Muzaffarabad. The PPP and PML-N are partners in the federal political arrangement, yet they have been competing directly against each other in Azad Kashmir. The resulting tensions have inevitably raised questions about the durability of their cooperation in Islamabad.

One of the most discussed possibilities in political circles is whether the PPP could reconsider the nature of its support for the federal government. There has been speculation that the party may review its position, increase parliamentary pressure on the government or, under certain circumstances, even consider moving to the opposition benches. At present, however, this should be treated as a political possibility rather than a settled decision. The PPP has not formally announced that it is withdrawing from the federal arrangement or ending its parliamentary support. That distinction is important. In a coalition based political system, speculation about a party’s future position can itself become a source of political pressure, but it does not necessarily mean that a final decision has been taken.

What is less speculative is the change in Bilawal Bhutto’s political tone.

The PPP chairman has increasingly focused on electoral credibility, political rights and the protection of public mandates. His approach suggests that the party may be preparing to assert itself more forcefully whether from within the existing political arrangement or, if circumstances change, from the opposition.

The central question, therefore, is not simply whether the PPP will leave the government. It is whether the party can translate its current political position into a coherent national narrative.

In Azad Kashmir, Bhutto has emphasised themes including the right to governance, ownership and employment. These issues have a wider resonance in Pakistan. The country’s young population is concerned about employment and economic opportunity. Farmers continue to face questions about input costs, crop prices and market access. Workers are struggling with inflationary pressures, while the provinces continue to debate their constitutional and financial entitlements.

If the PPP succeeds in connecting these concerns within a single political framework, Bilawal Bhutto could attempt to broaden the party’s appeal beyond its traditional electoral constituencies.

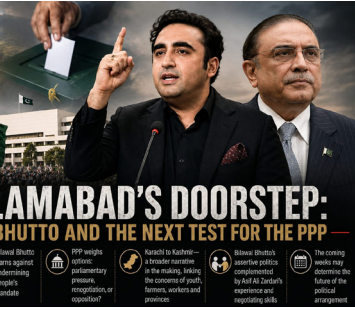
This would also explain the political importance of Karachi.

Karachi is not simply the capital of Sindh. It is Pakistan’s principal commercial and financial centre. Any major political campaign originating there would have the potential to acquire national significance, particularly if it were linked to concerns in Punjab, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir.

There has been considerable speculation about whether the PPP could eventually opt for more visible public mobilisation, including a possible long march or nationwide campaign. But no such final decision should be assumed until the party formally announces its strategy.

The PPP also has another option: parliamentary pressure.

It can remain within the existing political arrangement while demanding changes in policy, electoral administration and governance. Such an approach would allow the party to maintain influence while keeping negotiations with the government open. This is where the contrasting political styles of Bilawal Bhutto and President Asif Ali Zardari become significant. Bhutto has increasingly adopted a direct and public political approach, particularly on issues concerning electoral politics and the PPP’s political mandate. Zardari, by contrast, has traditionally relied more heavily on negotiation, political accommodation and maintaining communication across party lines.



The combination could give the PPP considerable flexibility. It can publicly articulate its grievances while retaining room for political negotiations behind the scenes.

For the PML-N government, the challenge is equally significant. Its ability to maintain a stable working relationship with the PPP remains important to the functioning of the existing political arrangement. If differences are addressed through dialogue, the current tensions may remain manageable. If they deepen, however, the government could face a more difficult parliamentary and political environment.

For the PPP, an eventual move into opposition would also carry responsibilities. It would need to offer more than criticism of the government. It would have to present a credible economic and governance agenda and persuade voters that it has practical answers to the problems it identifies.

This may ultimately be the real test for Bilawal Bhutto.

Political confrontation can generate headlines, but sustainable political influence requires an organised narrative, credible policy proposals and the ability to build alliances beyond traditional party boundaries.

The third phase of the Azad Kashmir elections is now complete. The electoral contest may soon give way to a larger political debate.

Will the PPP continue its present cooperation with the federal government? Will it seek a renegotiation of that relationship? Could it eventually move to the opposition? Or will the two major parties once again find a political compromise?

None of these questions has been conclusively answered.

What is clear is that the political equation has changed. Bilawal Bhutto is signalling that the PPP is prepared to adopt a more assertive role, while the federal government faces the task of deciding how it will respond.

The coming weeks may therefore prove more consequential for Islamabad than the political contest in Muzaffarabad itself.

The real issue is no longer simply who governs Azad Kashmir.

It is whether the political understanding that has shaped Islamabad since the last general elections can withstand another round of disagreement and whether Bilawal Bhutto’s latest political challenge will end at the negotiating table or become the beginning of a much broader realignment in Pakistan’s politics.

From Climate Challenge to Green Competitiveness: Pakistan’s Sustainability Agenda



Written By:Babar
Akhtar
Published By:ANI News
Agency

Every challenge carries within it the seed of an opportunity. For Pakistan, climate change has long been viewed as a relentless crisis bringing devastating floods, scorching heatwaves, shrinking water resources, and billions of rupees in economic losses. Yet beneath these challenges lies an opportunity to redefine the country’s economic future. The global race toward sustainability is no longer about saving the planet alone; it is about shaping the next era of economic growth. Nations investing in cleaner industries, green technologies, and climate-smart solutions will lead tomorrow’s markets, and Pakistan has every reason to be among them. Despite contributing less than one percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan remains one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. Even more commendable is that it has pursued climate action despite limited financial resources and climate finance that falls well below its actual needs. Through renewable energy initiatives, large-scale reforestation, stronger climate policies, and commitments under the Paris Agreement, Pakistan has shown that environmental responsibility is driven not by wealth but by vision and determination.

However, commitment alone cannot finance transformation. Pakistan’s industries continue to face rising energy costs, outdated technologies, and growing international competition. At the same time, a new challenge is emerging. Around the world, consumers, investors, and governments are demanding products with lower carbon footprints, making environmental standards an essential part of global trade. Carbon emissions are becoming as important as price and quality in determining market access. This shift should not

be viewed merely as an environmental obligation but as an opportunity to modernize industries, improve productivity, and strengthen Pakistan’s position in the global economy.

This is where carbon leakage becomes critically important. Traditionally, it referred to industries relocating production to countries with weaker environmental regulations. Today, it also reflects the loss of exports and investment when industries fail to meet international sustainability standards. For Pakistan, whose exports rely heavily on textiles, cement, leather, fertilizers, and manufacturing, ignoring this transition could prove costly. The real question is no longer whether sustainability matters but whether our industries can remain competitive without embracing it. Fortunately, Pakistan possesses abundant sunshine, strong wind corridors, hydropower potential, and a young workforce capable of driving innovation. These strengths provide a solid foundation for building a competitive low-carbon economy.

What Pakistan needs now is strategic investment, and climate finance can become the bridge between ambition and achievement. Rather than treating climate finance as foreign aid, it should be viewed as productive capital that strengthens industries, creates jobs, and improves national competitiveness. Investments in renewable energy, energy-efficient manufacturing, cleaner transport, smart electricity grids, and industrial decarbonization will reduce emissions while lowering production costs, improving energy security, and enhancing export resilience. Every energy-efficient factory becomes more productive, every renewable energy project reduces dependence on imported fuels, and every green investment strengthens Pakistan’s economic future. As the world accelerates its transition toward green growth, Pakistan cannot afford to remain on the sidelines.

The responsibility, however, extends beyond government. The private sector must recognize that sustainability is no longer a marketing slogan but a business imperative.

Financial institutions are increasingly supporting environmentally responsible businesses, while global buyers prefer suppliers that can demonstrate sustainable production. Investors now evaluate companies not only on profitability but also on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance. Businesses that adapt early will gain stronger investor confidence, better financing opportunities, and greater access to international markets. Meanwhile, policymakers must create an enabling environment through stable climate policies, incentives for green technologies, transparent governance, carbon accounting frameworks, and stronger collaboration between industry, academia, and financial institutions to accelerate innovation and sustainable industrial development.

The transition to a green economy must also be fair and inclusive. Workers in carbon-intensive industries should see sustainability not as a threat but as an opportunity through skills development, green entrepreneurship, and employment in emerging clean-energy sectors. The misconception that sustainability is a luxury for developed nations no longer holds true. For countries like Pakistan, it has become essential for economic resilience, stronger exports, greater energy independence, improved public health, and long-term prosperity. Pakistan has already demonstrated remarkable commitment despite limited resources. The next step is to transform that commitment into competitiveness. By mobilizing climate finance, accelerating industrial decarbonization, embracing innovation, and preventing carbon leakage, Pakistan can move from being a climate-vulnerable nation to becoming a competitive player in the global green economy. The future will belong not to those who produce the most, but to those who produce the smartest, the cleanest, and the most sustainably. For Pakistan, the journey from carbon leakage to green competitiveness is no longer an environmental choice, it is an economic imperative.

Demolishing UNRWA headquarters an act of folly and weakness

YOSSI MEKELBERG

In every sphere of activity in which Israel’s government operates, it does so in a thuggish and mindless manner. Nuance, subtlety, restraint, consideration, and weighing options are just not in its vocabulary. The immorality of this approach is obvious and in the long term self-defeating, leaving the country living by the sword, with fewer friends, and constantly losing public sympathy. The latest episode in this long-running series of acts of sheer folly took place last week when the government sent its enforcers, accompanied by security forces, to demolish the headquarters of UNRWA, the UN agency that since 1949 has been in charge of providing services for the well-being and protection of Palestinian refugees until a just resolution of the question of Palestine is found. This is an Israeli government that tries to conceal its true intentions and incompetence with performative politics. Does it really believe that if UNRWA ceases to exist, the Palestinian refugees will disappear with it, and that their political, human, and civil rights will no longer exist? Israel blames UNRWA for perpetuating the Palestinian right of return by granting refugee status to successive generations. However, it is not UNRWA that perpetuates the right of return; it is their legal right in line with international law and UN General Assembly Resolution 194, for instance, which states that “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return.” Mistakenly, negotiations over the issue of refugees were framed as addressing the right of return rather than how to translate this right into practical terms that would avoid a mass return leading to new difficulties. The right of return is recognized under international law, and hence not negotiable as such. UNRWA is not the custodian of this right – international law is. Years of negotiations to translate this right into practice have yielded a number of plans for workable solutions, including trade-offs for

those who will not return, such as becoming citizens of a Palestinian state, becoming citizens of their current host countries, and compensation for their loss and suffering.

Destroying the UNRWA headquarters in East Jerusalem will not make the Palestinian refugees and their rights go away. It is a mere act of vandalism, which activated a piece of legislation passed in the Knesset in October 2024, barring the agency from operating in Israeli territory and curtailing its activities in Gaza and the West Bank by banning state authorities from having any contact with it. In addition, late last year, in another act of harassment, a law prohibiting the provision of electricity or water to facilities owned by or operated on behalf of UNRWA passed its third and final reading in the Knesset. This was another Pyrrhic victory, which appeals to the current government’s electoral base that has been fed endless lies about the objectives and operations of this UN agency, leading the base to believe that it is hostile to Israel. Awareness among Israelis of the humanitarian nature of the organization and its contribution to the well-being of millions of Palestinians, to whose plight Israel has been a major contributor for so many decades, is almost nonexistent. By declaring all-out war on UNRWA, Israel gets closer to a moment of reckoning when it must demonstrate that it has found an alternative humanitarian instrument to the UN agency. Unquestionably, UNRWA is at a crossroads. However, the answer to whether it stays or goes should be given by the international community, not by Israel. In December last year, 151 countries supported renewing the agency’s mandate for three years. On the face of it, this was an overwhelming vote of confidence in the work of the organization – support that was earned not only by sweat but also by blood since the war in Gaza has cost the agency the lives of 382 of its personnel and others supporting its activities. Nevertheless, as important as extending the mandate is, it has not been matched by allocating adequate long-term funding to meet the growing needs of the 5.9 million Palestinian refugees eligible for

UNRWA’s services, which include health, education, protection, relief, and social services, as well as microfinance. Last year, the agency secured £1.4 billion. However, in light of the surge in humanitarian needs, it needs almost double this amount – a shortfall with grave consequences for refugees. Moreover, international political support is needed while Israel is harassing and bullying the agency and its staff, but this backing is half-hearted. Israel replaced the UN flag with the Israeli flag over the demolished headquarters in Jerusalem, but it has not come up with an alternative in terms of budget and a qualified workforce to supply the services that UNRWA has been providing, despite the fact that the UN did not create the refugee problem in the first place, and it is not the UN that has occupied Palestinian territories since 1967.

It is not beyond the current Israeli government to take actions that would deliberately cause the situation in the West Bank to explode, and then use that as an excuse for further oppression on its march to annexation. In this case Israel’s distorted logic would mean eliminating UNRWA and exacerbating the humanitarian situation. Consequently, armed resistance becomes more likely, resulting in a harsh response in terms of using military force, building more settlements, and taking further steps toward making the life of Palestinians even more unbearable.

Eliminating UNRWA’s capacity as a service provider is an act of brutality directed at Palestinians, but also an act of self-harm by Israel, especially given the lack of a viable alternative. It is morally bankrupt to deprive millions of people under your control access to the most basic needs; it is also a recipe for unrest that risks pushing the population, especially the young, into the hands of the radicals while alienating those who want to live in peace with Israel. Demolition of the agency’s headquarters is both a physical and symbolic manifestation that Benjamin Netanyahu and his government are simply not interested in peace, if anyone needed further evidence.

—Arab News

Fragile consensus as Africa heads to the polls

HAFED AL-GHWELL

Africa enters 2026 with elections scheduled in more than a dozen countries and with voter rolls that now exceed 600 million people across the continent. Elections have become the most common ritual of political life in Africa, more frequent than coups, civil wars, or constitutional rewrites. Yet frequency has not produced comfort. Voting has turned into a dual-use instrument: a tool for peaceful transfer of power in a minority of cases, and a method for laundering political capture in many others. It is a contradiction that now sits at the heart of what this year is likely to bring. Uganda offers a useful example. Yoweri Museveni, the country’s president, secured another term, extending a rule that began in 1986. Official results awarded him almost three-quarters of the vote, despite urban districts breaking heavily for the opposition and youth unemployment hovering around 60 percent. Turnout slipped below 60 percent as security forces ring-fenced the process, curtailed opposition rallies, and intermittently restricted digital platforms. Uganda demonstrated how elections now function in many entrenched systems: a choreographed exercise that delivers continuity while preserving the appearance of democracy.

Similar dynamics will likely shape several of the other headline contests this year. First, Benin is often cited as a reform success story of the 1990s. Today, it offers a perfect illustration of the “buy-in paradox.” President Patrice Talon is constitutionally barred from a third term, but the political field has been narrowed to the point where succession remains a controlled affair. Electoral laws

passed since 2019 require parties to meet high national thresholds before fielding candidates, a rule that has sidelined most opposition groups. Parliamentary races since then have produced legislatures with over 80 percent pro-government seats.

Yet voters are still asked to participate, foreign observers invited, and results tabulated in public view. Opposition leaders face a puzzle: boycott and concede legitimacy or compete and validate a contest structured against them. Many will choose the latter, because absence guarantees irrelevance.

Second, Ethiopia’s general elections will be the most complex event on the calendar. The country has more than 120 million people, dozens of armed factions, and federal regions that are still operating under emergency regulations since the Tigray war. The 2021 polls were held in stages because of insecurity and logistical failure. In 2026, similar obstacles remain. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali retains national visibility, but his coalition is thinner than when he took office in 2018. Ethnic parties control large regional blocs, and voter registration in contested areas remains incomplete. The result may still produce a government with a parliamentary majority, but one whose mandate is geographically uneven and politically fragile.

Third, Somalia plans indirect elections again, relying on clan delegates rather than universal suffrage. Roughly 14,000 elders select members of parliament, who then choose the president. The system is defended as pragmatic in a country where Al-Shabab is steadily increasing the territory it controls. Zambia and Gambia represent a rather different picture. Zambia’s 2021 election

removed an incumbent through the ballot box for the third time since 1991. President Hakainde Hichilema enters 2026 with approval ratings near 60 percent, buoyed by debt restructuring, and the return of International Monetary Fund support. Inflation remains high, and youth job creation lags behind population growth, but institutions showed resilience in the last transfer of power.

Gambia, after ousting Yahya Jammeh in 2017, held a competitive vote in 2021 and is preparing for another. Turnout exceeded 80 percent, among the highest on the continent. Media pluralism has expanded, and civil society monitoring is now routine. Neither country is immune to backsliding, yet both demonstrate that electoral credibility can still compound over time. Similarly, Cabo Verde, with a population under 600,000, continues to rank among Africa’s strongest performers on electoral integrity. Power has alternated peacefully multiple times since the 1990s, and voter turnout remains above 60 percent. Politics there is dull in the best sense, with arguments over budgets, ports, and tourism strategy rather than existential questions of who controls the state. Across these cases runs the same thread: Elections are cheaper than repression and more acceptable to donors than open autocracy. Authoritarian incumbents have learned to keep polling stations open while closing political space. Over the past 15 years, average turnout in competitive African elections has fallen. At the same time, margins of victory for long-serving presidents have widened. Citizens show up less often, but winners win by more.

—Arab News



No Power in the World Can Stop Pakistan’s Journey of Decisive Victory, Says CM Balochistan

BY: ANI Correspondent:

QUETTA--- Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has said that no power in the world can stop Pakistan’s journey towards Fatah-e-Mubeen (decisive victory), stressing that the defence cooperation among Pakistan, Turkiye and Saudi Arabia is aimed at self-defence and not aggression.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the “Rasool-e-Rehmat (PBUH)” calligraphy exhibition in Quetta, the Chief Minister announced that an international-level calligraphy exhibition titled “Bunyan Al-Marsous” will be held in Quetta on May 9 and 10 next year.

He said renowned calligraphers and artists from the Islamic world, Turkiye and other countries would participate in the event, which will be sponsored by the Government of Balochistan. He directed the relevant authorities to begin preparations immediately and turn the exhibition into a two-to-three-day international event.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said the exhibition would send a message to the world that the people of Quetta are peace-loving, appreciate fine arts and have a deep attachment to



Islamic calligraphy.

Commenting on Pakistan’s international standing, the Chief Minister said the country’s honour and prestige were increasing at the global level. He said the recent defence cooperation between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye reflected the changing regional situation and was intended purely for mutual defence.

The Chief Minister also criticized acts of violence and attacks on infrastructure in Balochistan, saying that the destruction of bridges, disruption of trade and damage to commercial vehicles ultimately harm the local population and their livelihoods.

He appreciated the services of

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, saying that the positive impact of Pakistan’s improved global standing was also being felt among overseas Pakistanis.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti thanked calligrapher Wasil Shahid and Serena Hotels for organizing the exhibition and said large-scale events would be held next year under the themes of “Bunyan Al-Marsous” and “Marka-e-Haq,” with calligraphy playing a prominent role.

He prayed for Pakistan’s continued progress, prosperity, honour and dignity in the international community.

PM Shehbaz Sharif Sends Felicitations to Turkish MP Ali Şahin on Son’s Wedding

BY: ANI Correspondent:

ANKARA. --- Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has extended his heartfelt felicitations to Turkish parliamentarian and Chairman of the Türkiye-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Group, Ali Şahin, on the wedding of his son, Ahmet Hakan.

In an official letter, the Prime Minister congratulated Ali Şahin and his family and expressed regret that he could not attend the wedding ceremony in person. He said Pakistan’s Ambassador to Türkiye, Dr. Yousaf Junaid, would represent him at the ceremony.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also prayed for a long, happy and prosperous married life for the newlyweds. The Prime Minister’s message was read out in Turkish during the wedding ceremony and was warmly received by the guests, who



responded with applause.

Ali Şahin expressed his and his family’s deep appreciation to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for the gracious gesture, saying that the message from the Prime Minister of Pakistan would remain a cherished

memory for years to come.

He also conveyed his heartfelt wishes for the health, well-being, prosperity and continued success of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, his family and the people of brotherly Pakistan

Senate Committee Questions Need for Climate Authority, Seeks Clear Justification



By ANI Correspondent :

ISLAMABAD --- Chairperson Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman, questioned the necessity of the Pakistan Climate Change Authority (PCCA), stating that its functions largely overlap with those of the Ministry of Climate Change.

During the committee meeting, Senator Rehman raised concerns over the creation of a separate

authority despite declining budget allocations for the Climate Ministry. She asked the government to explain the Authority’s distinct role, staffing, financial implications and ability to attract international climate funding.

The committee also reviewed the growing risks of glacial melting and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs). Officials informed members that Pakistan has over 30,000 glaciers and climate change is accel-

erating glacial melt.

Senator Rehman also expressed dissatisfaction over weak enforcement of the ban on plastic book covers in Islamabad and called for practical and affordable alternatives for citizens.

She directed officials to present a comprehensive report at the next meeting, warning that the Authority should be abolished if it fails to demonstrate a clear and measurable institutional value.

Seminar in Lahore Pays Tribute to Shaikh Abdul Aziz on Martyrdom Anniversary

By ANI Correspondent

LAHORE: Kashmir Centre Lahore and the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) jointly organized a seminar to commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of prominent Kashmiri leader Shaikh Abdul Aziz.

The seminar was addressed by APHC leader Engineer Mushtaq Mahmood, In-charge Kashmir Centre Lahore Inam-ul-Hassan, PML-N Lawyers Wing Senior Vice

President Syed Manzoor Gilani Advocate, Farooq Azad, Bilal Butt, Agha Rabnawaz, Nisar Baig, Nazeer Mir, Parwez Jaan and other speakers.

The speakers paid rich tribute to Shaikh Abdul Aziz, highlighting his lifelong struggle, sacrifice and steadfast commitment to the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people. They said his martyrdom remains an enduring chapter in the history of the Kashmir freedom movement.

They urged the international community to take serious notice of the human rights situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and play an effective role in protecting the fundamental rights of the Kashmiri people and supporting a just and lasting resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

The seminar concluded with prayers for the elevation of the ranks and forgiveness of Shaheed Shaikh Abdul Aziz and all martyrs of the Kashmir freedom movement.

Crackdown on Water Tax Defaulters, Illegal Connections in Sibi, Multiple Connections Disconnected

BY: GNN

SIBI -- The Public Health Engineering Department has launched a crackdown against consumers failing to pay water taxes and those using unauthorized water connections, disconnecting multiple connections in different areas of the city.

On the directives of XEN Public Health Engineering Sibi Shahzada Farrukh Baloch and SDO Gulab Soomro, a departmental team led by Supervisor Malik Asad Silachi inspected Allahabad, Hashmi Mosque, TV Poster Road and other areas, disconnecting connections of water tax defaulters.

Speaking to the media, Malik Asad Silachi said timely payment of water taxes was essential to ensure uninterrupted water supply and maintain the system. He urged citizens not to install unauthorized connections and to obtain new connec-



tions through the proper legal procedure.

He warned that departmental and legal action would be taken against those using illegal connections or

obtaining water unlawfully from government supply lines. The department said action against defaulters and illegal connections would continue.

“Administrative Reforms Must Precede Creation of New Provinces” Barrister Danyal Chaudhry

BY: Kiran Shehzadi/ ANI

ISLAMABAD - Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Barrister Danyal Chaudhry, has said that administrative reforms are essential before considering the creation of new provinces, stressing that the goal of governance reforms should be to deliver better, faster, and more accessible services to citizens at their doorstep.

He was speaking at a policy workshop organized by SDPI in Islamabad, which was attended by Member National Assembly Noor Alam Khan, Asiya Ishaq Siddiqui, Zahoor Dhareeja, senior journalist Muhammad Malik, and former Mayor of Lahore Mian Aamer Mahmood.

Barrister Danyal said that while population growth and urban expansion demand more effective governance, creating new provinces alone is not a solution to administrative problems. He said the focus must instead be on making government institutions more responsive, transparent, and efficient in delivering essential services such as education, health-care, policing, land records, and municipal facilities.

Referring to Article 140A of the Constitution, he said many govern-



ance challenges can be resolved by strengthening and empowering local governments, provided they are given adequate financial resources, administrative authority, and clear functional responsibilities.

The Parliamentary Secretary insisted that any proposal to create new provinces must be backed by a thorough financial impact assessment, as new provinces would require additional administrative structures and increase public expenditure. He called for a comprehensive five-to-ten-year financial review before making any such decision.

He added that changing provincial boundaries is a serious constitutional matter that requires both adherence to constitutional procedures and broad political consensus. He said all aspects

including public representation, resource distribution, water availability, natural resources, and government assets must be carefully weighed before moving forward.

Barrister Danyal outlined a three-pronged approach to administrative reforms: first, strengthen local governments with resources and authority; second, empower regional administrations within large provinces with clear performance targets; and third, consider new provinces only through proper constitutional channels and where evidence supports better governance outcomes.

He concluded that Pakistan’s real need is stronger institutions, improved governance, and better service delivery — not just redrawing maps without meaningful reform.

FBR Briefs Jhelum Business Community on Small Retailers’ Tax Scheme



By ANI Correspondent:

JHELUM: Deputy Commissioner FBR Ms. Madia Batool held a meeting with representatives of the Jhelum business community at the FBR office and briefed them on the new tax scheme for small retailers.

Speaking at the meeting, Ms. Madia Batool said businesses with an annual turnover of up to Rs200 million, including those operating a single shop, could benefit from the scheme. She said eligible retailers would receive certain tax-related facilities, including exemption from

regular audits and a green plate. She urged the business community to take advantage of the scheme and contribute to the national exchequer.

The Deputy Commissioner also addressed questions raised by the business community and provided guidance on the scheme.