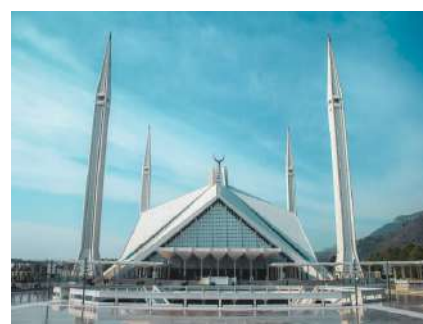


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Govt directs markets to close by 9pm, restaurants by 11pm under fresh austerity measures



ANI

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Thursday reintroduced austerity and fuel conservation measures, tightening business operating hours and restricting public events while reducing fuel allocations for official vehicles by 50 per cent for three months.

Under the measures, notified with immediate effect, shops, markets, shopping malls, bazaars, departmental stores, grocery stores, general stores and kiriyana shops will close by 9pm throughout the week, according to a notification issued by the Cabinet Division.

Marriage halls, marquees and

other commercial venues hosting festive events will close by 10pm, while restaurants, cafés, eateries, food outlets and standalone fruit and vegetable shops will be allowed to operate until 11pm. Takeaway and home delivery services will remain exempt from the timing restrictions.

Pharmacies, medical and medical supplies stores, laboratories, clinics and hospitals have been exempted from the fixed operating hours. The exemption also covers standalone bakeries, tandoors, milk and dairy shops, fuel and CNG pumps, electric vehicle charging stations, gyms, sports facilities, sports and padel courts, IT companies and call centres. The

government has also restricted food served at marriage-related functions and events to a single dish, according to the notification.

According to the notification, fuel allocations for official vehicles will be reduced by 50 per cent for three months.

Operational vehicles of the armed forces, civil armed forces, law enforcement agencies, essential services and the Federal Board of Revenue have been exempted from the measure.

However, the restriction will apply to vehicles used by the administrative and non-operational formations of these entities.

The fuel conservation measure will not apply to development

projects, according to the notification.

The measures also include a five per cent monthly reduction in non-employee-related expenditure for the current financial year. The reduction will also apply to foreign missions and officers and officials belonging to any occupational group or service posted at these missions.

The government has also imposed a complete ban on the purchase of vehicles of all types. The procurement of durable goods has likewise been prohibited, except for information technology-related purchases. Both restrictions will not apply to development projects.

UN mission finds grounds to believe US committed war crimes in Iran with strikes on school, sports centre

ANI

A United Nations fact-finding mission on Iran said on Thursday it had reasonable grounds to believe the United States was behind two military strikes on a school and sports facility in Iran in February, and that these constituted war crimes. It also said that Iranian authorities committed crimes against humanity during their deadly crackdown on anti-government protests before the war. The findings in a new report by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran, to be submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, examined the US's conduct during the Iran war that began in February and the Iranian government's response to nationwide unrest that began in late December. The Iranian and US permanent missions in Geneva did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment. US officials have previously said military operations are conducted in accordance with the law of armed conflict, while Iran has consistently rejected allegations of systematic rights violations. The UN experts said they found reasonable grounds to believe US forces were responsible for an attack on the Shahrejah Tayyeb Primary School in the city of Minab, where more than 150 people were killed, including around 120 schoolchildren, according to Iranian officials.

The indiscriminate attack caused civilian deaths and damage to civilian infrastructure, amounting to a war crime under international law, the mission concluded.

According to the report, the US failure to update information in relation to the school, which was adjacent to an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) naval complex, in its targeting databases and to confirm the building was a military objective amounted to more than mere negligence. According to the report, the US relied on intelligence suggesting a senior Iranian military commander was present at the site but failed to adequately verify the information before launching the



strike.

"Rather, the US directed the strikes at the building of the school while being aware of a substantial risk of striking a civilian object and acting recklessly as regards the possibility that this would happen."

In June, US President Donald Trump said that "nobody" purposefully attacked a girls' school in Iran in February, citing an investigation into the incident.

Reuters first reported that an initial internal US military investigation showed US forces were likely responsible for the fatal strike in Minab in southern Iran.

The Pentagon has since elevated the probe, but it has not published any preliminary findings.

UN experts said the school was a clearly identifiable civilian object and found no evidence that it was being used for military purposes.

The experts reached a similar conclusion over a strike on a sports centre in Lamerd. The report said the attack damaged nearby residential buildings and a school and killed and injured 22 civilians. It concluded that the strike was indiscriminate and therefore constituted a war crime.

US Central Command said in a statement in March that US forces did not launch any strikes into the city of Lamerd on that day.

The UN mission's probe found that Iranian authorities carried out a widespread suppression of civilians during protests that erupted in late December last year. Tehran blamed "terrorists and rioters" backed by exiled opponents and foreign foes — the US and Israel.

At least three terrorists killed in Balochistan's Awaran district: security forces

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Security forces killed three terrorists in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Badrang area of Balochistan's Awaran district, security sources said on Thursday. According to the security sources, the latest IBO was conducted as part of the ongoing series of intelligence-based operations under Rad-ul-Fitna-3, a sustained counterterrorism campaign aimed at eliminating Indian proxies.

A large quantity of weapons and ammunition was also recovered from the militants, they said. The latest IBO comes days after security forces killed at least three Fitna al-Hindustan terrorists, including a

commander, in Balochistan's Mastung. Three terrorists, including commander Nageeb, were killed and their vehicle was completely destroyed in the operation, security sources said. Pakistan witnessed a surge in terror activities, particularly in its Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, since 2021, when the Afghan Taliban came into power. According to a report by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), the two provinces remained the country's main hotspots for violence during the second quarter of 2026, with KP emerging as the worst-affected region. The report stated that KP and Balochistan together accounted for nearly 96% of all violence-related fatalities recorded during the quarter.

Hormuz will remain closed until Trump, Netanyahu are removed: Iran supreme leader's aide



ANI

Iranian Supreme Leader's political adviser Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr said on Thursday the Strait of Hormuz would not reopen until US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were removed from power.

In a message marking 200 days of what he described as the Iranian people's resistance and steadfastness, Zolghadr said Iran had endured decades of confrontation with what he called "imperialism" while defending its existence, identity, independence and ideals. The message was published by Iranian state-linked outlet Iran Online. "The enemies had come believing they would defeat this nation within three days," Zolghadr said. "What a vain delusion!" He said Iran was determined to defeat the "invading enemy", force the "arrogant powers" to their knees and prevent foreign powers from interfering in Iranian territory.

Zolghadr also referred to Iranian casualties, saying "Tehran would avenge the deaths of its 'martyred leader', children in Minab, youth in Lamerd, soldiers in Bampur and sailors aboard the Dena, as well as thousands of other victims. "Until the criminal Trump and bloodthirsty Netanyahu are brought down from power, our fighters will not open the Strait of Hormuz," he said, describing the reopening of the strategic waterway as the "first

stage of the Iranian nation's revenge". The statement comes amid continued tensions over the status of the Strait of Hormuz, a key maritime route for global energy shipments. Iranian officials have previously linked its reopening to conditions concerning the conflict and US

actions.

Earlier, Iran urged caution over claims that a drone had been intercepted while heading towards Makkah, saying such an allegation alone could not serve as grounds for accusing any specific party. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said any aggression against Islamic holy sites, particularly Makkah Mukarramah, Madinah Munawwarah and Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as threats to pilgrims and neighbouring countries, was condemnable. "However, a mere claim of intercepting a drone en route to Makkah Mukarramah cannot constitute grounds for accusing a specific party," Baghaei said on X. He pointed out that Yemen's government of Change and Construction had explicitly denied the claim.

Baghaei stressed the need to prevent the issue of Islamic holy sites and their security from being politicised or used to incite discord and escalate tensions in the region.

The Iranian spokesperson also cautioned against drawing conclusions before establishing the facts, citing what he described as numerous instances of "false flag" operations in the region, particularly in recent months.

Such operations, he alleged, were aimed at diverting public attention from the actions of Israel and the United States in the region and creating divisions among Islamic countries.

Pakistan remains committed to Makkah accord, but operational details cannot be disclosed: FO

ANI

The Foreign Office (FO) on Thursday said Pakistan remained committed to the Makkah accord but declined to disclose operational details, saying "operational confidentiality" required discretion over when and how any response would be carried out. "Pakistan is committed to the intent and spirit of implementing the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) and the Makkah accord. However, details regarding when and how, where, what force would be used, against which objectives, and through which means cannot be disclosed at this stage. Operational confidentiality requires some discretion at this time," said FO spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan during a weekly press briefing while responding to questions about how Pakistan would ensure that Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia were thwarted and the kingdom's territorial integrity remained intact. The statement came amid a widening



Middle East crisis, as Yemen's Houthi group began targeting Saudi Arabia and its energy

facilities.

A day earlier, Saudi air defences intercepted and destroyed a drone near Makkah. The Houthis, however, denied responsibility for the attack, rejecting Saudi Arabia's accusation that they had launched the drone. The incident drew condemnation around the world.

Responding to questions about diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the situation, Khan said Pakistan had long advocated peace and stability in the region. "The situation in Bab al-Mandeb is exceptional; we can say that it's a serious matter of concern. We need to bring peace in the entire region, and Houthis must stop their activities also," Khan said. He added that Pakistan's discussions were focused on "bringing peace and stability through dialogue and diplomacy and not through coercive measures". Khan said Islamabad wanted peace and stability to prevail across the region. "This is in the interest of not only Pakistan and Iran, but the entire region and beyond our region also," he said.

PTI's Salman Akram Raja released after 4 hours of police detention

ANI

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General Salman Akram Raja said that he was released by the police after four hours of detention on Thursday, after being taken into custody while travelling to Kotli Sattian to attend the funeral prayers of party worker Ijaz Satti. The party claimed earlier today that Raja and several other party workers were detained. "PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja, MNA-elect from Murree-Kotli Sattian, Latasub Satti and others were allegedly abducted and taken to Nilore Police Station in Islamabad while travelling to Kotli Sattian to attend the funeral prayers of PTI worker Ijaz Satti," the PTI said in a statement on X. The PTI alleged that the detentions were intended to prevent party workers and supporters from attending Satti's funeral. "First our worker was martyred, and now people are being abducted and arrested to stop them from attending his funeral," the statement said. The party further alleged that the detentions reflected the authorities' disregard for political and religious norms.

Pakistan warns of self-defence response to terror threats from Afghan soil

ANI

Pakistan has told the United Nations Security Council that it will take measures in self-defence against terrorist threats originating from Afghanistan whenever necessary, while remaining within the bounds of international law.

Speaking at a Security Council session on Afghanistan on Wednesday, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, said Islamabad could not remain passive in the face of continuing terrorist threat.



"Pakistan cannot sit idle in the face of this terrorist onslaught," Ahmad said, adding that the country would respond when required to protect its citizens and national security. The Pakistani envoy said more than

4,700 Pakistanis had been killed in terrorism linked to Afghanistan over the past three years. He also accused the authorities in Kabul of failing to take "concrete and verifiable" measures against militant groups operating from Afghan territory.

Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said that Afghanistan had once again become a haven for several militant organisations, including the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Baloch Liberation Army and its Majeed Brigade, Islamic State-Khorasan and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, along with their affiliated groups.



Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb delivers the keynote address at the Pakistan InvCestment Roundtable, hosted by the Pakistan High Commission in London.

NA body seeks enforcement of minimum wages

ANI

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Government Assurances on Thursday directed the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination to ensure enforcement of minimum wages for paramedical staff employed in private hospitals and other health establishments in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) through the available legal framework. The Committee expressed serious concern over reports of non-payment of minimum wages to paramedical staff working in private hospitals and other health establishments. The committee met under the chairpersonship of Ms. Nuzhat Sadiq, Member National Assembly (MNA), here at Parliament House, and discussed an assurance given on the floor of the House by the Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination in response to a starred question regarding wages paid to paramedical staff in private hospitals in Islamabad.

The Ministry of National Health Services contended that the matter did not fall within the purview of the Ministry or the Islamabad Healthcare Regulatory Authority (IHRA),



and that it came under the jurisdiction of the ICT Labour Welfare Department. The ICT Labour Welfare Department apprised the Committee that it was responsible for implementing the Minimum Wages Ordinance and the West Pakistan Shops and Establishments Ordinance to the extent of Islamabad. However, under the existing legal framework, there were no clear enabling provisions for prescribing and enforcing minimum wages specifically for paramedics employed in private hospitals.

The department further informed the Committee that establishments engaged in the treatment or care of sick and infirm persons were excluded from the operation of

both the laws. A representative of the Ministry of National Health Services apprised the Committee that the process of registration of hospitals and health establishments by the Islamabad Healthcare Regulatory Authority would begin within a week, after which the issue of payment of minimum wages could be addressed accordingly. The Committee also took up an assurance regarding payment of boarding and lodging charges by members of the Pakistan Hockey Squad participating in the Asian Champions Trophy 2024 from their own pockets.

It asked the Ministry and the Pakistan Sports Board to ensure that sports federations extended all-out support to players represent-

ing Pakistan.

The Committee was informed that the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) and the Pakistan Sports Board regularly provide grants to sports federations to facilitate participation of Pakistani teams in international sports competitions.

In the instant case, the Ministry and the Pakistan Sports Board had provided grants of Rs 59 million and Rs 37 million, respectively, to the Pakistan Hockey Federation during the financial year 2023-24. In addition to the collective amount of Rs 96 million, the Ministry provided Rs 23 million specifically to cover participation expenses for the Asian Champions Trophy 2024. The Secretary IPC contended that, in view of the financial resources provided, the issue of payment of boarding and lodging charges by players did not arise and termed the media reports as ill-founded and lacking merit. The Committee, after hearing the reply, disposed of the assurance. The Committee also considered an assurance regarding the poor condition of roads in rural areas of Islamabad, particularly Jagiot Road and Sikander-e-Azam Road, and expressed concern over the non-completion of rehabilitation and construction work on the two roads.

Federal govt imposes fresh austerity measures, cuts official fuel by 50pc

ANI

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Thursday announced a fresh set of austerity and fuel conservation measures with immediate effect, including a 50 per cent cut in fuel provision for official vehicles, a five per cent reduction in the non-ERE budget and a three-month ban on foreign visits and travel. According to a notification issued by the Cabinet Division, the measures were approved on the recommendations of the Committee for Monitoring and Implementation of Fuel Conservation and Additional Austerity Measures. Under the measures, fuel provision for official vehicles will be reduced by 50 per cent for three months. Federal govt imposes fresh austerity measures, cuts official fuel by 50pc The reduction will not apply to operational vehicles of the Armed Forces, Civil Armed Forces, law enforcement agencies, essential services and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). However, the measure will apply to vehicles of administrative or non-operational formations of these entities. Development projects have also been excluded from the measure. The government has also ordered a five per cent reduction in the Non-ERE Budget for the entire financial year 2026-27, with deductions to be made on a monthly basis. The measure will also apply to foreign missions and officers/officials posted there, while their obligations relating to rent, educational fees and medical care will continue to be met. A complete ban has been imposed on the purchase of vehicles of all types, while procurement of all durables has also been prohibited, except IT-related procurements.

Jurisdiction of FCC, Supreme Court clearly defined in Constitution: Law Minister

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday said the powers and jurisdiction of the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) and the Supreme Court were clearly defined in the Constitution and there should be no ambiguity regarding their respective jurisdictions.

Addressing a ceremony at the Lahore High Court (LHC) Bar Association, Rawalpindi Bench, the minister said establishment of the Federal Constitutional Court under the 27th Constitutional Amendment was aimed at concentrating constitutional interpretation before a dedicated forum and ensuring uniformity in judicial interpretation.

He said the constitutional framework concerning the establishment and juris-

diction of the Federal Constitutional Court had been clearly laid down.

Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar said the principle of equal representation of provinces had been adopted in the Federal Constitutional Court, while the constitutional framework also clearly defined constitutional cases falling within its jurisdiction and their interpretation. He said making FCC decisions enforceable by all relevant courts was aimed at maintaining the rule of law and judicial consistency.

The minister observed that Pakistan



was a federation comprising provinces with distinct social, cultural and regional circumstances, therefore appropriate representation of federating units was important in the judicial system as well.

He said amendments to the law had

brought bar associations alongside bar councils within the scope of government support. The federal government had also increased grants allocated for bar councils and bar associations, he added.

The minister appreciated the Punjab government for increasing grants for bar councils and bar associations.

Referring to the Lawyers Protection Act, Senator Tarar said rules under the law had also been framed and effective implementation of the legislation remained among his priorities, with significant progress having been made in this regard.

The minister said the rapid expansion of private law colleges had created challenges and stressed the need to improve the quality of legal education and introduce an effective assessment system for entry into the legal profession.

Musadik calls for greater youth participation in country's progress

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik on Thursday stressed the need to provide greater opportunities to the youth to enable them to play an active and meaningful role in the country's development. Addressing the Leaders in Islamabad Summit - Sixth Session, titled from Strategic Relevance to National Advantage," the minister said Pakistan's future depended on creating an environment where young people could contribute their ideas, skills and energy to national progress. He said the country needed to focus on people-centric development and ensure that citizens had access to basic facilities necessary for a dignified life. Dr Musadik Malik emphasized that improving the quality of life of the people should remain at the centre of development policies, adding that the provision of basic amenities could bring meaningful and lasting improvements to communities. He said greater opportunities should be created for the younger generation in education, skills development, employment and other areas so that they could become productive contributors to society.

PEIRA launches digital services for private schools

ANI

ISLAMABAD: The Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority (ICT-PEIRA) on Thursday launched its "PEIRA Digital Services" initiative in Islamabad to digitise regulatory services for private schools, improve transparency and efficiency, reduce paperwork and facilitate citizens and educational institutions through online access to key services.

The launching ceremony was held at the auditorium of the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE), with Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui as chief guest.

Senior government officials, educationists, representatives of private educational institutions and other stakeholders attended the event. PEIRA launches digital services for private schools

Addressing the ceremony, the federal minister appreciated ICT-PEIRA for introducing comprehensive digital services and said technology is an effective

means of promoting transparency, accountability and public confidence in government institutions.

He said transparency is a fundamental pillar of good governance and democracy, adding that digital transformation could make regulatory processes more accessible, efficient and citizen-friendly.

Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui emphasised that services such as online registration and renewal, e-licensing, complaint redressal, attestation and migration were necessities of a modern regulatory system rather than optional facilities.

He said citizens and educational institutions should be able to access essential regulatory services conveniently without unnecessary paperwork, delays and repeated visits to government offices.

Chairman ICT-PEIRA Dr Ghulam Ali Mallah appreciated the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training for its continued support, guidance and encouragement for the Authority's reform and digital transformation agenda.

IGP Sohail reviews Safe City systems, orders greater use of technology in policing

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry reviewed the Safe City's technology-based systems and directed officers to make greater use of modern technology and digital solutions for crime prevention and effective policing in the federal capital. An official told APP on Thursday that the IGP Sohail chaired an important meeting at the Safe City Command and Control Centre, attended by SSP Safe City Shehzada Umar Babar, Director IT Atif Abbas and other Safe City officers. The meeting reviewed the Safe City's modern technology-based systems, command and control mechanism, surveillance system, ongoing initiatives and measures for providing timely and effective police services to citizens. Sohail directed officers to further improve the Safe City's technology-based systems and make full use of modern tools to strengthen coordination and policing across Islamabad.

Markets to Close at 9pm Under New Austerity Measures

BY: ANI Correspondent:

ISLAMABAD-- The federal government on Thursday reintroduced austerity and fuel-conservation measures, directing markets and commercial establishments to close by 9pm as part of efforts to conserve fuel amid renewed regional tensions.

According to a Cabinet Division notification, the measures will take effect immediately and remain in force for three months.

Shops, markets, shopping malls, bazaars, departmental stores, grocery stores, general stores and other



retail establishments have been directed to close by 9pm throughout the week.

The government has also reduced fuel allocations for official vehicles by 50 per cent for the three-month period. The measures are aimed at reducing fuel consumption and limiting government expenditure amid pressure from higher energy costs and uncertainty in international oil

supplies.

The notification also includes restrictions concerning government spending and official activities as part of the broader austerity drive.

The government has urged relevant authorities and departments to ensure implementation of the measures.

The move comes as Pakistan remains vulnerable to fluctuations in international oil prices because of its dependence on imported energy.

The new restrictions are expected to affect business operating hours across the country, particularly retail markets and shopping centres.

IAEA Safeguards Agreement Signed for Chashma-5

BY: ANI :

ISLAMABAD -- Pakistan and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have signed a safeguards agreement for the 1,200-megawatt Chashma-5 nuclear power plant, marking an important step towards the implementation of international safeguards at the facility.

The agreement was signed in Vienna by IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi and Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Raja Ali Raza Anwar on the sidelines of the 70th IAEA General Conference.

The agreement governs the application of IAEA safeguards to Unit-5 of the Chashma nuclear power complex and was unanimously approved by the IAEA Board of Governors in



March.

The Chashma-5 project is currently under construction and is scheduled for commissioning in 2028. The facility is expected to contribute a substantial amount of low-carbon electricity to Pakistan's national grid. Officials said the safeguards agreement reflects Pakistan's commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and compliance with international non-proliferation obli-

gations.

Pakistan currently operates six nuclear power plants with a combined installed capacity of 3,530 megawatts. According to the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, the country's nuclear plants have maintained an average capacity factor of more than 90 per cent. The signing ceremony was witnessed by Shan Zhongde, chairman of the China Atomic Energy Authority. Pakistani and Chinese delegations also held discussions on ongoing and future cooperation in the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology.

The Chashma-5 project is expected to strengthen Pakistan's electricity supply while supporting the country's efforts to expand low-carbon energy generation.

New provinces, administrative units need of hour: Aleem Khan

ANI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications and President Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), Abdul Aleem Khan, on Thursday said creation of new provinces and administrative units was needed to improve governance and ensure provision of basic facilities and public services to citizens at their doorsteps. He expressed these views during a meeting with Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, who called on him here and discussed the formation of new provinces and administrative units, as well as the prevailing national and political situation, said a press release. Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf thanked Abdul Aleem Khan for his support for the formation of Hazara Province in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and appreciated his stance on the creation of new provinces in the country.

During the meeting, Abdul Aleem Khan said that the issue of new provinces was not about dividing existing provinces but improving their administrative organization. He said that the creation of new administrative units in all four provinces was the need of the hour so that basic facilities and public services could be provided to citizens at their doorsteps. He said that the focus should not be limited to politics; rather, efforts must be made to find better solutions to public problems. He emphasized that ensuring access to education, healthcare and other basic necessities of life for every citizen is the responsibility of the state. The minister said that the existing provincial system had totally failed to extend public services at the required level. While the world was progressing rapidly, he said, Pakistan was still holding on to an administrative structure that was several decades old. Therefore, he stressed, serious consideration must

be given to reforms and a more effective administrative system in accordance with the needs of the present time.

Abdul Aleem Khan said there was nothing wrong with having healthy and serious discussions on the issue of new provinces and administrative units. All political forces should move forward through dialogue on this important national issue and avoid any kind of deadlock.

He said that the identification of the need for new provinces and better administrative distribution by various political parties was a welcome development. "This is not the issue of any one political party or leader; rather, it concerns the future of the country and its people," he added. The two federal ministers expressed hope that the ongoing positive debate on the creation of new provinces and administrative units would lead to a practical and constructive development in the future.

Federal, KP energy ministers agree to strengthen cooperation for public welfare



ANI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Energy and Power Nazir Ahmed Abbasi on Thursday agreed to strengthen coordination on strategic energy issues, oil and

gas supplies, security of exploration and production (E&P) activities and energy challenges faced by the province. During a meeting, Ali Pervaiz Malik briefed the KP minister on the prevailing oil supply situation and volatility in international petroleum markets. He highlighted the pressures faced by the domestic energy

sector due to developments in international markets and reiterated the federal government's commitment to ensuring stable and uninterrupted energy supplies. The federal minister said the government, in coordination with security forces, was working on a comprehensive plan to ensure the security of E&P activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He emphasised that a secure operating environment was essential for sustaining and expanding exploration activities in the province. KP Minister Nazir Ahmed Abbasi acknowledged that the security issue needed to be addressed to facilitate E&P operations and assured full support and cooperation from the provincial government in this regard. Both sides agreed that enhanced coordination among the federal government, security forces and the provincial government was essential for creating a secure environment for E&P activities.

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Opinion

3

Oil, Power and the New Geopolitics of Global Energy



BY: Rana Farooq Ashraf
: Published by ANI News Agency

For decades, oil has been much more than a source

of energy. It has been a foundation of industrial power, a pillar of national security and, increasingly, an instrument of geopolitical influence. The latest developments involving Venezuela, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the major maritime routes of the Middle East suggest that the global oil market is entering a new and highly contested phase.

The United States has taken a significant strategic position in Venezuela's oil sector. President Donald Trump has said that the United States has secured majority control over more than 65 billion barrels of Venezuela's proven oil reserves through a partnership involving private companies. The arrangement is intended to revive Venezuela's oil industry and increase crude supplies to the United States, although questions remain over its legal structure, investment requirements and long-term implementation. The significance of Venezuela goes far beyond its immediate relationship with Washington. The country possesses one of the world's largest proven oil reserves, much of it concentrated in the Orinoco Belt. Reuters has also reported that ExxonMobil is advancing discussions about returning to Venezuela's oil-rich Orinoco region, while other international companies are expanding their presence.

At the same time, the Middle East has demonstrated how vulnerable the global energy system remains to disruption. The Strait of Hormuz and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait are among the most important maritime chokepoints for international energy trade. Recent fighting has sharply reduced shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, while the advance of Iran-aligned Houthi forces along Yemen's Red Sea coast has increased the risks surrounding the Bab el-Mandeb route.

Saudi Arabia has faced a particularly serious challenge. Its East-West oil pipeline, which provides an alternative route for transporting crude away from the Gulf, was temporarily shut following a drone attack. Reuters reported that the pipeline normally carries around four to five million barrels of oil per day, while



disruptions at Saudi Arabia's Red Sea export facilities have raised concerns about a possible reduction in global supplies.

It is important, however, not to confuse these developments with evidence that Washington has established control over the Houthis. Available reporting describes the Houthis as an Iran-aligned movement and shows that their recent escalation has directly threatened Saudi interests. In fact, Saudi Arabia has sought assistance from both Washington and Beijing as it confronts the changing security environment around the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb.

Iran represents another major part of this emerging energy contest. American pressure on Tehran has increasingly extended beyond conventional sanctions toward the broader question of who is permitted to buy Iranian energy and under what conditions. The objective is not simply to reduce Iranian oil revenues; it also affects the choices available to countries seeking affordable energy in an increasingly fragmented global market.

Russia presents a similar challenge. On September 16, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation that would give the president authority to impose tariffs of up to 100 percent on countries purchasing Russian oil and gas. The measure has particular significance for major energy consumers such as India and China. The legislation still requires the next stages of the U.S. legislative and executive process before such tariffs would actually take effect.

This is where the real transformation of the global energy system can be seen. The struggle is no longer simply about who produces the most oil. It is increasingly about who controls access to markets, shipping

routes, financial channels, investment and technology. A country may possess enormous reserves, but its ability to convert those reserves into economic and political power depends on whether it can sell them, transport them and receive payment without facing prohibitive external pressure.

For countries such as Pakistan, this transformation carries serious consequences. Pakistan remains highly sensitive to international energy prices, shipping costs and disruptions in global supply. Any prolonged instability around Hormuz or Bab el-Mandeb, or any major change in the availability of Russian, Iranian or Gulf oil, can affect the import bill, inflation, currency stability and industrial costs.

Therefore, saying that the United States has completely taken control of global oil supplies would be an overstatement. Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Venezuela and other producers continue to possess enormous resources and influence. What is changing, however, is the ability of major powers to influence the routes, markets, financing and commercial conditions through which those resources reach consumers.

The future of oil politics may consequently be determined less by the size of an oilfield and more by the network surrounding it. Pipelines, ports, shipping lanes, sanctions, tariffs, investment agreements and financial systems are becoming as important as the crude beneath the ground.

The global energy contest is therefore entering a new era—one in which oil is not merely a commodity but an instrument through which economic interests, national security and international power are increasingly connected.



By:Dr. Nasser Hussyn Bukhari
Published By:ANI News Agency

Once again, clouds of grief, pain and uncertainty have gathered over the Middle East. The war is no longer confined to Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen or Iran; its repercussions are now reaching deep into the economic, energy and security systems of the Arab world. The central question is this: after decades of relying on the United States as their security guarantor, where do the Arab states look when the danger reaches their own doorstep?

The foundations of the Saudi-American relationship were consolidated in 1945 following the meeting between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Abdulaziz. From the beginning, the core interests were clear: Saudi oil for the United States and political and defence support for Saudi Arabia. Over time, this relationship evolved into a comprehensive security partnership. American arms, military training, intelligence cooperation and the US military presence in the Gulf strengthened Saudi Arabia's security architecture, while Saudi oil assumed a crucial role in the global economy. Yet the real test of this arrangement, which has lasted for more than seven decades, has always been whether American security guarantees would remain equally effective when Saudi and American interests move in different directions.

When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, Saudi Arabia allowed the deployment of American forces on its soil. A broad international coalition was formed under US leadership, and in 1991 Operation Desert Storm expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait. According to the historical record of the US Department of State, Saudi Arabia permitted the deployment of American forces to protect the Arabian Peninsula from the Iraqi threat. The war demonstrated the importance of American military power to Saudi security, but it also reinforced a security model in which external powers assumed the central role rather than regional states developing a genuinely collective defence capacity.

Then came the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Saddam Hussein's government was removed, but the subsequent collapse of state institutions, sectarian conflict and proliferation of armed groups transformed the regional balance of power. Iran's regional influence expanded, while a complex competition emerged through various armed groups and political networks in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. The Iraq war highlighted an important distinction: defeating a state militarily and creating a stable regional order afterwards are two entirely different tasks. The consequences of Iraq demonstrated this distinction with particular force.

Yemen provides an even more complicated example. When a revolution against the monarchy broke out in Yemen in 1962, Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser sent troops to support the new republican government, while Saudi Arabia backed the royalist forces. Yemen consequently became not merely the scene of an internal political conflict but also an arena for regional rivalry. After years of fighting, Egypt eventually withdrew its forces. Yemen's mountainous geography and complex local political structures once again demonstrated how difficult it is for an external power to impose a military solution.

The same historical lesson emerged in a different form after 2015. Following the Houthi takeover of Sana'a and the weakening of Yemen's internationally recognised government, a Saudi-led coalition intervened militarily. Its stated objective was to push back the Houthis and restore the government. Yet almost a decade later, the Houthi movement has not disappeared. It retains control and influence over large parts of Yemen and has acquired the capacity to affect international maritime commerce through its position near the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb. Recent developments have further demonstrated the strategic importance of the area, with Houthi advances near Bab el-

Arab World: Where Are the Protectors?

Mandeb raising concerns for both Saudi security and international shipping.

The most important lesson for Saudi policy is that superiority in modern weapons does not necessarily translate into political victory. Saudi Arabia and its allies possessed sophisticated aircraft, missile-defence systems and substantial military resources. Yet Yemen's geography, local political realities and the Houthis' military strategy prevented that military superiority from producing a decisive political outcome. The 2022 truce reduced fighting for a period, but it did not resolve the underlying conflict. The renewed escalation is another indication that the political process remains incomplete.

The current crisis has also raised another fundamental issue for Saudi Arabia: energy security. Amid tensions around the Strait of Hormuz, the Saudi East-West pipeline has acquired even greater strategic importance because it provides an alternative route for transporting crude oil from eastern Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea port of Yanbu. But this infrastructure has also faced attacks, disrupting its operations. The implication is clear: for Saudi Arabia, the threat is no longer confined to oil fields. The routes through which oil reaches international markets can themselves become targets. The Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz are now strategically interconnected, and disruption at one point can increase both the importance and vulnerability of the others.

The attacks on Abqaiq and Khurais in 2019 cannot be ignored either. They severely disrupted Saudi oil production for a period and demonstrated how a relatively limited drone and missile attack could strike critical infrastructure belonging to one of the world's largest oil companies and send shockwaves through global energy markets. The episode should have made one reality increasingly clear: future wars will not necessarily be fought along conventional battlefronts. Drones, cruise missiles, cyberattacks, proxy forces and attempts to disrupt maritime routes have become central elements of modern security challenges.

The present crisis in Yemen represents another manifestation of this transformation. Reports that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman sought direct American military assistance from President Donald Trump against the Houthis, while Washington refrained from launching direct attacks, illustrate the practical limits of the US-Saudi security partnership. Washington has been prepared to provide intelligence and targeting support, but has avoided entering the conflict directly.

This is precisely where Saudi Arabia needs to reconsider its long-term concept of security. Ending defence ties with the United States would neither be realistic nor necessary. But treating a single external power as the ultimate guarantor of national security also carries risks. The Gulf War of 1991 demonstrated how American military power could help liberate Kuwait; the Iraq war of 2003, however, showed how external military intervention could produce far-reaching and unpredictable regional consequences. Yemen demonstrated that even overwhelming air power cannot produce a lasting settlement when local political realities are ignored.

Against this backdrop, the Saudi-Iran rapprochement of 2023 assumes particular significance. Following talks hosted by China, the two countries agreed to restore diplomatic relations, reopen embassies and pursue dialogue to address their differences. The most important aspect of this development was that Saudi Arabia chose a direct diplomatic channel with its principal regional rival. In the present crisis, keeping that channel open, and perhaps making it more active, has become even more important. China has also recently engaged with Iran following a Saudi request to restrain the Houthis, highlighting Beijing's growing diplomatic relevance in the region.

Another recurring problem in the history of the Arab world is that regional states often begin to regard one another as threats and consequently become more dependent on external powers. As a result, relations with outside powers grow stronger while regional cooperation remains weak. The Iran-Iraq war

from 1980 to 1988 pushed Gulf states to look increasingly towards external powers for their security. The 1990 Kuwait crisis further entrenched the American military presence in the Gulf. The 2003 Iraq war, the devastating civil war in Syria after 2011, the conflict in Libya following the collapse of the Gaddafi regime, and the prolonged war in Yemen have all contributed to persistent instability. Each conflict had its own causes and dynamics, but collectively they reinforced one fundamental reality: instability in one Middle Eastern country inevitably affects the security of others.

The Palestinian question remains the clearest example of this interconnected regional crisis. The war in Gaza has exposed political differences among Arab governments, Western powers and international institutions. It is difficult to imagine lasting stability in the Middle East without addressing the Palestinian issue, because it is directly connected with Arab public opinion, Iran's regional policy, Israel's security concerns and American strategy in the Middle East.

For Saudi Arabia, therefore, the central question is not whether America is a friend or an adversary. In foreign policy, permanent emotional labels matter less than national interests. The real question is whether Saudi Arabia can move from dependence on a single external security provider towards a more diversified, multilateral regional security strategy. Its relationship with the United States can remain important; its economic partnership with China can develop further; defence cooperation with Pakistan can continue; and diplomatic engagement with Iran can remain open. Together, these relationships can form elements of a more balanced security architecture.

The defence agreement between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia should also be viewed in this broader context. Yet no defence agreement should be treated as a military solution to every regional problem. Yemen demonstrates that military power cannot substitute for political strategy. Similarly, making confrontation with Iran a permanent policy could create additional difficulties for Saudi Arabia over the long term.

The wars of the past half-century in the Middle East offer a consistent lesson: the balance of power has repeatedly shifted, governments have changed, alliances have been reconfigured and new armed organisations have emerged, but the underlying causes of conflict have rarely disappeared completely. Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and Palestine represent different manifestations of this reality.

For the Arab world, therefore, the most urgent requirement is not simply to purchase more weapons but to rethink its collective strategic approach. Secure energy corridors, stronger regional diplomacy, economic diversification, joint defence planning and sustained dialogue with all major neighbouring states, including Iran, could provide the foundations for a new regional security framework.

History teaches us that great powers ultimately make decisions according to their own interests. In 1991, the United States assembled a broad coalition to defend Kuwait, while in 2003 its invasion of Iraq transformed the regional balance of power. In Yemen, Saudi Arabia relied on military power, yet a political settlement remains indispensable. In 2023, Saudi Arabia opened a diplomatic channel with Iran, with China emerging as an important mediator. These examples point to one fundamental conclusion: lasting security cannot depend on a single protector. It requires a balance of power, active diplomacy and greater regional self-reliance.

The Arab world must now decide whether it will continue to bear the consequences of wars shaped by others or seek to build a regional security system in which war becomes the last resort rather than the first response. Geography does not allow Saudi Arabia, Iran, Yemen, the Gulf states and Pakistan to exist in isolation from one another. External powers will come and go, alliances will change, but the region will remain where it is. The future of the Middle East may therefore depend on when its states recognise that their security must ultimately be rooted less in the promises of others and more in their shared interests.

Gulf countries can win the global talent war

ARNAB NEIL SENGUPTA

For decades, the world's most ambitious young professionals have made a beeline for a familiar set of destinations: New York, London, Silicon Valley, Boston, Research Triangle Park in North Carolina and a handful of other global hubs. These places promised opportunity, job satisfaction and high-growth careers. Today, that promise is fading. A slowdown in white-collar hiring across the West, being felt most acutely by tech industry executives in the US, has opened a rare window of opportunity for Gulf Arab states. This is the moment the Gulf Cooperation Council can win the global talent war. Recent reports in The Wall Street Journal paint a grim picture. Even graduates from elite US business schools — the traditional providers of executives, consultants and financiers — are taking months to land job offers. At Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, 21 percent of master's graduates were still unemployed three months after graduation. At the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, the figure stood at 15 percent, compared with just 4 percent in 2019. Georgetown University reported that fully a quarter of its MBA class was still searching for work after three months. These are sobering numbers for institutions that once served as launchpads for lucrative careers.

Thereasonsare manifold. Companies are cutting back on white-collar hiring amid economic uncertainty, geopolitical risk and the rapid adoption of generative artificial intelligence, which threatens to automate many entry- and mid-level professional tasks. Layoffs in technology, finance and consulting have flooded the US market with experienced candidates competing for a shrinking pool of jobs. As one Wall Street Journal report noted, the US added just 49,000 jobs per month in 2025 — the slowest pace in more than two decades outside major recessions — and most of those jobs were in healthcare, not business or technology.

This crisis for Western graduates represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the Gulf. At precisely the moment when hydrocarbon prices are softening and fiscal pressures are rising, countries hitherto reliant on energy exports need fresh thinking, new business models and the best managerial capacity.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain all have strategies in place aimed at economic diversification. Significant investments are already flowing into AI, advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, life sciences, logistics and fintech. But capital alone may not be enough to guarantee the

anticipated return on such investments. That depends on skilled engineers, product designers, data scientists, business strategists, venture capital professionals and industrial managers.

Time is also of the essence. AI data centers, advanced manufacturing projects and tech ventures will take perhaps years to mature and produce stable returns, assuming all goes well. But Gulf states facing fiscal pressures from lower oil revenues do not have the luxury of sitting back and hoping for the best. One way to bridge this gap is to aggressively attract world-class human capital that can help create entirely new revenue streams and industries, while looking forward to seeing their investments in electronics, advanced industrials, clean energy and AI pay off in the fullness of time.

To be sure, the Gulf already attracts a tremendous amount of talent. Since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, Riyadh and Dubai, for instance, have drawn tens of thousands of new expatriates every year. Their booming populations testify to their international appeal. However, a substantial part of this inflow ends up in real estate, hospitality, retail, basic services and mid-level corporate roles. What remains limited is the recruitment of innovation-driving talent from top business schools, engineering institutes, medical schools and research universities — the kind of graduates that powered the rise of Silicon Valley, Boston's biotech ecosystem and London's financial sector.

It is no secret that the US owes much of its technological leadership to generations of first-generation immigrants who arrived with talent and ambition. From Silicon Valley to Wall Street, foreign-born talent has powered the engines that drive entire sectors of the American economy. Fortunately, the GCC countries have the financial resources, infrastructure, lifestyle advantages and geopolitical stability to bet on that strategy — provided they act decisively. Several forces work in the regional bloc's favor. First, world-class healthcare, international schools, modern housing, cultural openness and physical safety make cities like Riyadh, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha highly attractive to cosmopolitan professionals. Second, taxation levels here remain competitive, allowing professionals to retain far more of their income than in the West. Third, governments are increasingly generous when it comes to visas, work permits, property ownership and long-term residency — a crucial factor for young talents who prioritize families and careers. To attract the brightest minds, Gulf countries must offer something intellectually compelling: the chance to build new institu-

tions, industries and ecosystems from the ground up. This is where the region holds a significant advantage over Western economies that are burdened with high-tax regimes, bureaucratic inertia, regulatory inflexibility and policy rigidity.

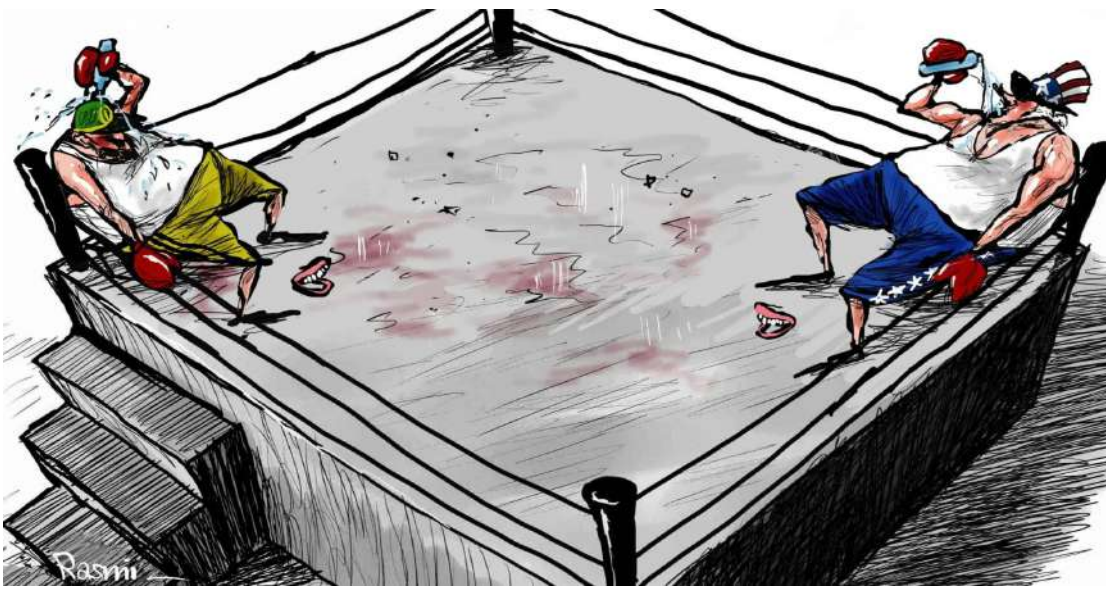
Talented tech and business professionals can speed up the implementation of the GCC states' national AI strategies, design green industrial corridors, build fintech platforms and set up sprawling logistics networks.

Gulf governments and sovereign wealth funds can initiate the process by launching targeted global recruitment drives. Just as universities and corporations scour the world for academic talent, GCC institutions should actively court graduating master's students and postdoctoral researchers from campuses from Michigan to Oxford. Fellowships, leadership programs, startup visas and venture funding can potentially convert uncertainty in Western job markets into opportunity for Gulf economies.

Historically, global talent has thrived where ideas matter more than connections and where failure is treated as something to learn from rather than an embarrassment. Therefore, reforms in corporate governance, regulatory transparency and institutional accountability across the Gulf region will be essential to motivate and retain elite professionals once they arrive.

The timing could hardly be better. As one Wall Street Journal analysis noted, even Harvard Business School graduates — long accustomed to near-total employment — are now facing delays and uncertainty. Companies themselves admit that AI-driven organizational restructuring could take years to stabilize. By contrast, despite a tightening job market, white-collar employees in the Gulf have so far not felt any pressure to consider blue-collar roles with pay cuts. There is no reason why thousands of high-caliber professionals who are currently underutilized and anxious in the West would be reluctant to move to a region that is eager to absorb them. After the Second World War, the US attracted displaced European scientists and engineers, laying the foundations for its postwar technological dominance. In the 1990s, Silicon Valley's rise was turbocharged by immigrant company founders, programmers and venture capitalists. Today, as Western economies struggle with stagnation, geopolitical frictions and technological disruption, the Gulf region is well placed to become the next magnet for global human capital. It can position itself as one of the world's great centers of innovation, entrepreneurship and intellectual leadership.

—Arab News



Speaker Ayaz Sadiq-Led Pakistan Parliament Wins First Green Mess Award

Report: ANI Correspondent:

ISLAMABAD -- Pakistan's Parliament has won the first Green Mess Award at the main programme of the 69th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq received the award on behalf of the Parliament of Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq said it was an honour to receive the award and described it as recognition of Parliament's commitment to providing a cleaner and better environment for future generations. He said the journey towards a Green Parliament was not undertaken for awards but out of a sense of responsibility to ensure a clean and sustainable environment for future generations. Pakistan's Parliament received the award in recognition of its transition to 100 percent solar energy, introduction of a paperless parliamentary system and other



environment-friendly initiatives. Conference participants also appreciated the use of electronic tablets to digitize parliamentary proceedings in the National Assembly. The rainwater conservation project at Parliament House was also highlighted as part of the Parliament's green initiatives. Participants of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference described Pakistan's Green Parliament initiative as a model for other parliaments across the Commonwealth.

Commissioner Salman Ghani Reviews MDCAT Arrangements, Shuttle Service Announced for Students

Report: Irum Shehzadi/ANI

RAWALPINDI-- Commissioner Rawalpindi Salman Ghani, accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Captain (Retd.) Nadeem Nasir, visited designated MDCAT examination centers and reviewed arrangements for the test scheduled for September 20.

A total of 6,240 candidates will appear in the examination. The Commissioner announced that a shuttle service will operate from Sixth Road to the examination centers to facilitate students.

Salman Ghani visited Arid Agriculture University, Government Graduate College Satellite Town and Siddique Public School Satellite Town and directed officials to install banners to guide students and parents. He said comprehensive security arrangements had been finalized, with Section 144 to remain in force inside and around the examination



centers. Surveillance will be carried out through drones and cameras, while candidates will undergo verification through identity cards, admission letters and biometric systems. Arrangements for seating, drinking water and parking have also been made for parents. Medical teams will remain on alert at BBH, Holy Family, DHQ and RIUT hospitals. Deputy Commissioner Nadeem Nasir said police, traffic police, Rescue 1122, NADRA and other departments would work under a coordinated strategy to ensure security of examination papers and other materials.

Sumblina Hassan Calls for Transparency in New Provinces Debate

BY: ANI Correspondent :

Islamabad/Uk -- Secretary to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and former Consultant Foreign Office, Islamabad, Sumblina Hassan has welcomed the call for parliamentary debate on governance reforms and the proposed creation of new administrative units.

She said the people are entitled to know the source and rationale behind initiating such an important national debate, including who raised the question, why it was raised



at this stage and what specific governance problems are being addressed. Sumblina Hassan said Parliament is the appropriate forum for such a discussion, where elected representatives can openly examine the proposal, its constitutional implications and its potential impact on the provinces. She appreciated PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's call for parliamentary debate, saying that major decisions concerning the country's administrative structure should be discussed transparently through democratic and constitutional forums. She added that meaningful consultation with political parties, elected representatives and the public is essential before moving forward on any major administrative

Sip & Paint for a Cause Brings Lahore Together in Support of Voiceless Animals

Report: ANI Correspondent:

LAHORE -- Aagosh e Bezubaan (Lap of Voiceless) hosted a "Sip & Paint" fundraising event in DHA Lahore, bringing together families, animal lovers, artists and members of the community to support abandoned and injured animals.

The event aimed to raise funds for the shelter and ongoing animal welfare activities of Aagosh e Bezubaan. Contributions from participants will help provide food, medical treatment, shelter and other essential care to animals in need.

Aagosh e Bezubaan CEO and Founder Hina Waseem has been running the shelter through personal resources and dedicating her time and



efforts to the protection and welfare of animals. The event was also supported by Sana Nadeem, Event Media Coordinator, Aagosh e Bezubaan, who worked alongside Hina Waseem to organize the gathering. Participants painted, interacted and contributed to the cause, turning the

Senate Committee Reviews Wheat, Rice, Tobacco and Livestock Issues



Report: Kiran Shehzadi/ANI

ISLAMABAD --A meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security & Research was held at Parliament House under the chairmanship of Senator Syed Masroor Ahsan.

The committee was briefed on declining wheat and rice yields. The Minister attributed the decline to uncertified seeds, inadequate fertilizer use and climate change, saying the government was introducing agricultural reforms and expanding financing and modern machinery facilities

for farmers. The committee was informed that wheat production declined in 2024 but improved in 2026, while around 90 percent of agricultural responsibilities had been devolved to the provinces. The Pakistan Tobacco Board briefed the committee on tobacco cultivation. Senator Aimal Wali Khan called for tobacco to be declared a crop rather than a commodity. The committee recommended a policy to protect tobacco growers and constituted a sub-committee to examine the matter. Concerns were also raised over the regulatory status of VRI cattle vaccine, with the committee informed that it was being sold and administered without the required licenses. The Minister said Pakistan had made significant progress in olive production and had become a permanent member of the International Olive Council. Balochistan was identified as the largest olive-producing province. The Chairman expressed concern over high palm oil imports and called for effective checks and balances on local vegetable oil and ghee producers to ensure fair competition.

LIIBS 2026 Concludes with Call for Decisive Action to Turn Pakistan's Economic Potential into Sustainable Growth

Report: Hurish Shah/FT

ISLAMABAD --The 9th edition of the Leaders in Islamabad Business Summit (LIIBS) 2026, themed "The Next Move," concluded in Islamabad with policymakers, global business leaders and thought leaders calling for decisive action to transform Pakistan's economic potential into sustainable and productive growth.



Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, in his keynote address, said Pakistan recorded around 3.7 percent GDP growth during the last fiscal year, with economic momentum continuing into the current fiscal year. He said large-scale manufacturing had shown improvement, while strong remittances and IT exports were supporting the external account.

He stressed the need to move beyond a consumption-led growth model and build an economy based on sustainable and productive growth.

Federal Minister and Adviser to the Prime Minister on Privatisation Muhammad Ali said Pakistan must move from being merely a consumer of technology to becoming a creator. He emphasized the need for productive businesses capable of competing globally, stronger education, greater workforce participation and skills development for young people in manufacturing, defence and emerging technologies.

Minister of State for Finance and Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani highlighted the importance of structural reforms, better governance and coordination between federal and provincial governments. He also called for increased exports, greater private-sector participation in policymaking and improved access to finance for agriculture and small and medium enterprises.

Former Caretaker Prime Minister Senator Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar said Pakistan's security challenges must be addressed, but emphasized that the deeper issue was structural. He called for greater focus on the underlying economic constraints rather than attributing weak growth solely to terrorism.

Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Senator Dr Musadik Malik stressed the importance of policy continuity, merit and a level playing field. He said talented young people should be given opportunities to contribute without unnecessary hurdles.

The summit featured six sessions covering geopolitics and geoeconomics, business and technology, artificial intelligence and digital transformation, capital and finance, and Pakistan's future economic strategy. The sessions brought together senior representatives from international institutions and leading companies, including ACCA, Coca-Cola, Jazz, IFC, UNDP, BASE, InfraZamin, Acumen, VEON, Telenor, TCS, ABACUS, Systems Limited, SAP, PTCL and S&P Global, among others.

All distinguished speakers were presented with a copy of "Syed Babar Ali: A Centennial Tribute," authored by Muhammad Azfar Ahsan, Founder and Chairman of Nutshell Group and Pakistan's former Minister for Investment.

The closing session, titled "Pakistan's Moment of Choice," brought together perspectives from political leadership, government, business, strategic communication and the private sector to discuss Pakistan's choices at a critical stage in global affairs. LIIBS 2026 concluded with a shared emphasis on taking practical action on reforms, capital, technology and partnerships to unlock Pakistan's economic opportunities.

Senator Farooq Hamid Naek Chairs Senate Law and Justice Committee Meeting, Reviews LJCP Reforms



Report: Ahmed Shamsur Rehman/ANI :

ISLAMABAD --A meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice, chaired by Senator Farooq Hamid Naek, was held to review the working of the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP), including implementation of law reform and judicial policy recommendations, case management, institutional capacity and access to justice.

The committee was informed that the LJCP has approved 143 Law Reform Reports, of which 46 recommendations have been implemented,

33 partly implemented, while 58 remain unimplemented. Senator Farooq Hamid Naek expressed concern over the pending recommendations and sought a comprehensive report on their implementation status, including reasons for delays or non-implementation. The committee also reviewed LJCP staff strength, service matters and reportedly pending promotions. The chairman sought details of the cases and reasons for delays. Case management and prolonged pendency of cases were also discussed. The committee emphasized that judicial policies must translate into effective implementation and

timely relief for litigants. The committee was further briefed on e-filing reforms in the Supreme Court and High Courts and the Access to Justice Development Fund. It was informed that the fund had an initial endowment of Rs. 1,421 million in 2005 and generated cumulative investment income of Rs. 4,057.14 million up to June 30, 2026. The committee decided to hold consultations with provinces and relevant stakeholders on case management and directed the LJCP to provide detailed information regarding its recommendations, staff matters and judicial policy implementation.

Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch Retires from Government Service

BY: Hurish Shah FT :

ISLAMABAD -- Foreign Secretary Ambassador Amna Baloch called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on the occasion of her retirement from government service.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister appreciated Ambassador Baloch's dedicated service to Pakistan and her leadership as Foreign Secretary for two years during a period of significant diplomatic activity.

He conveyed his best wishes to Ambassador Baloch for continued success in her new role as Pakistan's Ambassador to Türkiye.



Ambassador Baloch thanked the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister for his support and guidance and expressed appreciation for the

opportunity to serve Pakistan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Senator Ishaq Dar wished Ambassador Balo

Political Leadership's True Greatness Lies in Public Trust and Service: Balochistan Governor



Report: Dr Raza khan/ANI

QUETTA -- Balochistan Governor Jaffer Khan Mandokhail has said that the true greatness of political leadership lies not in power but in public trust and service, adding that public welfare, education and healthcare have remained the focus of his political career.

Speaking during meetings with various delegations at Governor

House Quetta, he said that numerous projects in education, health and public welfare were completed during his 40-year political career, benefiting millions of people across different districts. The Governor said the real success of a development project was not its building but the human benefits it generated. He expressed hope that the benefits of such projects would continue to serve generations to come. He said education was his

top priority and a key pillar of his political vision. Roads, buildings and bridges could provide facilities, he added, but education gave people the power to change their destiny. Jaffer Khan Mandokhail said that in view of rapidly changing economic and political conditions, Pakistan needed to develop human potential and nurture minds capable of taking Balochistan towards educational advancement and a modern economy.