



'We never gave up': Naqvi highlights Pakistan's peace...



Balochistan Gives Local Communities Key Role in Climate...

CDF Munir, new Saudi envoy express satisfaction at progress made under Makkah defence pact: ISPR

NEWS DESK:

The new Saudi envoy in Pakistan, Dr. Rajeh Tami Albugamy, met with Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir on Monday, with both sides expressing satisfaction over the progress made under the trilateral Makkah defence agreement, according to the military's media wing.

Albugamy assumed his diplomatic responsibilities in Islamabad last Thursday, reaffirming the commitment to strengthening the strategic and fraternal ties between the two countries.

Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement on Monday that the ambassador called on CDF Munir at General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi.

According to the statement, matters of mutual interest and regional security dynamics were discussed.

"Both the dignitaries expressed satisfaction over the progress made under the framework of the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement and underscored the importance of strengthening defence collaboration, institutional linkages and strategic coordination," the statement read.

CDF Munir congratulated the ambassador on his appointment and expressed confidence that his tenure would further strengthen the longstanding fra-



Photos of Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Rajeh Tami Albugamy meets Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir at General Headquarters

tional ties between Islamabad and Riyadh, which are "rooted in shared faith, mutual trust and strategic partnership".

Last week, Albugamy met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. PM Shehbaz reaffirmed Pakistan's support for Saudi Arabia in safeguarding its "sovereignty, security and territorial integrity" amid a recent escalation in Houthi attacks during their meeting.

DPM Dar, meanwhile, underscored longstanding fraternal and strategic ties between Islamabad and Riyadh when he

met Albugamy. He also reaffirmed Islamabad and Riyadh's "shared commitment to further strengthen bilateral cooperation for mutual progress and prosperity".

Islamabad and Riyadh have signed two defence pacts aimed at collective deterrence, the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement between the two and the Makkah Joint Defence Alliance that also includes Turkey.

Earlier this month, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey convened an emergency meeting under the Makkah alliance to agree to deploy military forces and capabilities rapidly in the kingdom.

While the statement did not specifically name any threat, the development came against the backdrop of Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia.

The Makkah defence pact, signed on Aug. 7, aims to strengthen collective deterrence and empower its signatory states to treat an attack against one of them as an attack against all of them.

In an interview aired on Sunday, the military's spokesman said Pakistan is providing "whatever support is needed" to defend Saudi Arabia amid attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels against the kingdom.

NATIONAL Page No 4



IHC takes up Imaan, Hadi's appeals against framing of charges in security...

NATIONAL Page No 4



Pakistan providing 'whatever support' Saudi Arabia needs for its defence...

'We never gave up': Naqvi highlights Pakistan's peace efforts in US-Iran war at Qatar forum

NEWS DESK:

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday highlighted Pakistan's mediation efforts between the United States and Iran, affirming that Islamabad "never gave up".



He made the remarks while addressing the 8th Global Security Forum being held in Qatar's capital, Doha. Convened under the title "The Future of Alliances", the forum brings together high-ranking officials and dignitaries from over 100 nations, according to Qatar News Agency.

"The last few months have been very difficult for our region. The conflict involving Iran and the United States created serious risks not only for the Middle East, but for the entire world," Naqvi

noted. He added that at such a critical time, Pakistan chose the path of peace and made "every possible effort to reduce tensions".

Naqvi, who has been involved in Islamabad's peace efforts and has made several trips to Iran since the war began, said:

"There were moments when the situation was extremely tense, but we never gave up. We continued talking, listening and working to build trust. And I can tell you from my experience: peace is not achieved in one meeting; it requires patience, trust and continuous efforts."

He particularly highlighted the "remarkable role" of Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir in Pakistan's efforts to reduce tensions.

Balochistan Home Minister Takes Notice of Hindu Minor's Alleged Conversion, to Approach Sindh Government

NEWS DESK:

QUETTA: Balochistan Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langau has taken notice of the alleged religious conversion and marriage of a 14-year-old Hindu girl and said he would raise the matter with the Sindh government.

The issue was discussed during a session of the Balochistan Assembly, where lawmakers expressed concern over reports that the minor girl had been taken to Sindh, where she allegedly converted to Islam and married.

Members of the provincial assembly urged the Balochistan government to contact the Sindh authorities to obtain details of the case and ensure that the girl's rights were protected under the law.

Taking notice of the matter, Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langau said he would approach the Sindh government to discuss the case and seek appropriate action. Lawmakers stressed the need for a transparent investigation to establish the facts surrounding the reported conversion and marriage, particularly in view of the girl's reported age.

They also called for the authorities to ensure her safety and welfare and to handle the matter in accordance with applicable



File Photo: Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langau

laws.

The assembly discussion also highlighted concerns about the protection of religious minorities and children in Pakistan. Members emphasised that all citizens, irrespective of their religious affiliation, were entitled to equal protection under the law.

Lawmakers called for effective coordination between the Balochistan and Sindh governments to investigate the allegations and ensure that any necessary legal action was taken on the basis of verified findings.

The matter has once again drawn attention to the need for stronger safeguards for religious minorities and the effective protection of children's rights.

Lawmakers called for effective coordination between the Balochistan and Sindh governments to investigate the allegations and ensure that any necessary legal action was taken on the basis of verified findings.

The matter has once again drawn attention to the need for stronger safeguards for religious minorities and the effective protection of children's rights.

Lawmakers called for effective coordination between the Balochistan and Sindh governments to investigate the allegations and ensure that any necessary legal action was taken on the basis of verified findings.

The matter has once again drawn attention to the need for stronger safeguards for religious minorities and the effective protection of children's rights.

UNHCR Appoints Noriko Takagi as New Representative in Pakistan

NEWS DESK:

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has appointed Ms. Noriko Takagi as its new Representative in Pakistan, bringing nearly three decades of experience in humanitarian assistance, refugee protection and international development to the role.

Takagi arrived in Pakistan earlier this month to assume her new responsibilities, succeeding Ms. Philippa Candler, according to a UNHCR press release issued on Monday.

Noriko Takagi Brings Nearly 30 Years of Humanitarian Experience



Takagi has almost 30 years of professional experience in humanitarian and protection responses, programme manage-

ment and partnership development across Asia, Africa and Europe. Her career has also included assignments at UNHCR headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

Before her appointment in Pakistan, she served as UNHCR Representative in Myanmar from 2023 to 2026.

Her previous positions include Senior Programme Coordinator at UNHCR's Regional Bureau in Bangkok, Deputy Representative in Myanmar and Senior Regional Programme Officer in Budapest.

She has also served in field positions in Tanzania and Nepal. Before joining UNHCR in 1997, Takagi worked with development organisations in Uganda.

New UNHCR Representative

UNHCR's Role in Supporting Refugees in Pakistan

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, works with governments and humanitarian partners to protect refugees, asylum-seekers and other people in need of international protection.

Takagi's appointment comes as the agency continues its work with Pakistani authorities and partner organisations to support refugee protection and identify solutions for displaced populations.

Her extensive international experience in programme coordination, humanitarian operations and partnership-building is expected to contribute to UNHCR's ongoing engagement with the government and humanitarian stakeholders in Pakistan.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Balochistan Gives Local Communities Key Role in Climate Change Response

Sameera Rajput
QUETTA: Balochistan has decided to place local communities at the centre of efforts to tackle climate change, restore degraded ecosystems, protect natural resources and create sustainable livelihood opportunities across vulnerable areas of the province.

The decision was taken at a joint consultative meeting chaired by the Secretary of the Balochistan Forests and Wildlife Department.

A team from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Islamabad office and senior officials from relevant provincial departments attended the meeting.

Officials discussed two major project concepts focused on climate change adaptation, environmental restoration, natural resource management and sustainable livelihoods.

Representatives from the offices of the Chief Conservators of Forests, the Livestock Department, the Climate Change and Environment Department and the Irrigation Department also participated.

Community-Based Approach Proposed
The meeting



agreed in principle that the climate adaptation initiative should be implemented through community-based organizations (CBOs), with financial assistance reaching local communities through these organizations.

Officials emphasized that target areas should not be selected solely on the basis of predetermined lists. Instead, provincial

departments, local representatives and communities should be consulted before finalizing project locations.

The meeting also proposed involving the Revenue Department in identifying target areas by reviewing Wajib-ul-Arz records to identify community-owned or community-used grazing lands.

Officials stressed that the projects should

go beyond conventional infrastructure development. Improving local employment, household incomes and sustainable livelihoods should remain a key priority.

Restoration of up to 40,000 Hectares Planned
The second project will focus on restoring degraded watershed areas and ecosystems across

Balochistan. The proposed project aims to restore approximately 35,000 to 40,000 hectares of land,

with an estimated 65,000 to 70,000 people expected to benefit directly.

Following government endorsement and regional technical approval by UNDP, the project concept is expected to be submitted

to the Adaptation Fund in February 2027 for financial support.

Baseline Assessment of Water Resources Proposed
Participants also

proposed conducting a baseline assessment of surface and groundwater resources in the targeted watershed areas.

projects after implementation.

Projects to Undergo Further Review

The meeting gave in-principle approval to both project concepts.

However, the proposals will first be submitted to the Balochistan Planning and Development Department for review.

Following its approval, the projects will require formal endorsement by the Government of Balochistan.

A No Objection Certificate (NOC) will also be sought from the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination,

which serves as the national focal institution for the Adaptation Fund.

Balochistan faces growing challenges linked to climate change,

water scarcity, land degradation, declining soil fertility and rangeland degradation.

Officials and experts believe that involving local communities in decision-making and implementation could strengthen environmental protection while creating sustainable economic opportunities for thousands of families.

Officials said scientific baseline data would also make it possible to assess the effectiveness of the

Pakistan's Missing Democratic Institution

ZIA-UD-DIN:

Every five years, a citizen walks to the polling station, casts his vote, and walks out with a satisfaction of having participated in the democratic process.

A month later, the same citizen sees his street filled with a pile of garbage, observes that the road has deteriorated, and discovers that the school is falling apart.

He wants to complain but lacks access to his representative.

This is the paradox of Pakistan's democracy: it has transferred power from the center to the provinces but has yet to devolve it effectively to the third tier of government.

Since the creation of Pakistan, democracy reaches the ballot box but never reaches the doorstep of the citizen. In other words, the local government system has not evolved in letter and spirit.

Despite insertion of Article 140A, local governments in Pakistan face a deep-rooted structural problem: constitutional, political, fiscal, and administrative constraints.

The biggest problem faced by local government systems in Pakistan is constitutional weakness.

Although Article 140A stated the formation of local governments, it is six-to-seven-line provision.

It leaves detailed institutional design, powers, functions, and fiscal dimensions to provincial legislation.

Apart from the constitutional weaknesses,



local government systems are also politically marginalized. They are victims of the centralization of power at the provincial level.

Strong political elites view empowered local governments as a threat to their political power.

Moreover, the development funds of MPAs and MNAs create a parallel political structure, undermining the effectiveness of local governments.

Thus, the local government structure

becomes largely ceremonial rather than an independent tier of government.

Local governments remain financially dependent on provincial governments, limiting their ability to function effectively.

Under the 7th NFC Award, the provinces' share of the divisible pool was increased to 57.5 percent.

However, the NFC framework does not require the provincial governments to allocate a specific share of these transfer to local govern-

ments. According to a World Bank report of 2026, the share of total government spending on local bodies declined from 10 percent in 2005 to less than 5 percent in 2024.

As a result, local governments are unable to perform basic services such as water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, primary education, and other basic local needs.

In addition to constitutional, political, and fiscal challenges, the local government system also faces deep admin-

istrative constraints that dilute its operational effectiveness.

The civil servant continues to perform the tasks of local representatives through their daily administrative functions.

As a result, the overlapping roles create a major impediment that prevents the development of a stable local administrative system.

Consequently, it leads to limited adminis-

trative autonomy, reducing its efficiency and responsiveness.

India's experience of local government provides a useful case study for Pakistan.

The landmark 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of 1992 established Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies.

They list 29 subjects for Panchayats and 18 subjects for municipalities.

Furthermore, the amendments ensure regular elections and reserve seats for women

ernments.

Political elites must change their mindset of centralization. Local governments need to derive their powers and functions from the Constitution rather than provincial or federal governments.

Without financial empowerment, local governments cannot ensure effective governance.

Therefore, Provincial Finance Commissions must be activated to ensure the transfer of sufficient funds to local governments.

Lastly, institutional building and administrative autonomy are necessary steps to ensure effective local administration.

On the whole, democracy is not merely about elections or representation, rather, it is a practice of participation, transparency, inclusivity, and accountability.

It can only be achieved when governance is brought closer to the voters.

Central and provincial governments cannot provide local services as effectively as local governments can.

Local government not only brings about effective governance but also deepens democratic participation.

Ultimately, democracy becomes meaningful when it reaches the doorstep of the citizen.

The author holds a BS in Political Science and hails from Zhob, Balochistan.

His areas of interest include governance, public administration, democratic institutions and public policy.

Quetta Deputy Commissioner Reviews Construction of Modern E-Commerce and IT Lab at Balochistan University



QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehruallah Badini has inspected the progress of the construction modern E-Commerce and Information Technology (IT) Lab at the University of Balochistan, reviewing the progress of construction and finishing work as the project approaches completion.

During the visit,

Badini examined the ongoing work, planned facilities and overall progress of the project.

He stressed the importance of ensuring that all facilities meet the required quality standards and that construction is completed in accordance with the approved specifications. The project has

entered its final stages, and its completion is expected to provide students with improved opportunities to learn modern digital technologies and gain practical training.

The proposed E-Commerce and IT Lab aims to equip students with skills relevant to the demands of the digital era, in-

cluding information technology, digital commerce and contemporary business practices.

The facility is expected to help students translate their academic knowledge into practical skills, understand digital platforms and become familiar with modern e-commerce methods.

Badini empha-

sized the importance of continued monitoring of the project to ensure the timely completion and quality.

He said that once operational, the lab would provide students with opportunities to strengthen their capabilities in modern technology and e-commerce through educational and practical activities.

B-TEVTA and BRSP Join Hands to Train 25,000 Balochistan Youth Annually for Employment

QUETTA: The Balochistan Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (B-TEVTA) and the Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) have agreed to work together to equip 25,000 young people across the province with market-relevant technical and vocational skills every year, aiming to expand employment opportunities and promote economic self-reliance.

The initiative follows special directives from Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti to empower young people by improving their access to skills training and sustainable livelihoods through coordinated training programmes.

The decision was reached during a high-level meeting between BRSP Chief Executive Officer Dr. Tahir Rashid and B-TEVTA



Managing Director Abdul Kabir. During the meeting, both organizations agreed to develop a joint strategy to support young people and create sustainable employment opportunities through coordinated training programmes.

Under the proposed initiative, 25,000 young people will receive modern

technical and vocational training annually, with courses tailored to current market demands to improve their prospects of securing decent employment.

The meeting emphasized that training should prepare young people not only for local employment but also for opportunities in national and international markets.

The initiative is intended to help participants contribute to economic growth in Balochistan and Pakistan.

To expand access, B-TEVTA's technical and training resources will be combined with BRSP's extensive community network, enabling both organizations to reach talented and deserving

young people, particularly those living in remote areas.

The heads of both institutions reaffirmed their commitment to the partnership, expressing confidence that the collaboration would support Balochistan's economic development and help build a brighter future for its younger generation.

Shahzad and Shao Farm Launched in Gwadar Free Zone to Boost Investment, Agriculture and Jobs

GWADAR: The foundation stone of Shahzad and Shao Farm was laid in Gwadar Free Zone through a joint venture between Pakistani and

Yu Bo, Gwadar District Council Chairman Shay Mukhtar Baloch, business representatives, lawyers, journalists, female students, teachers

many objective of Gwadar Free Zone was to promote industrial and productive activities near the port and provide investors with business



Chinese investors, marking a significant step towards attracting investment, developing the agricultural and food sectors, and creating employment opportunities for local youth.

The ceremony was attended by Secretary of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs Captain (Retd.) Muhammad Khurram Agha, Gwadar Port Authority Chairman Noor-ul-Haq Baloch, Parliamentary Secretary to the Chief Minister of Balochistan Naseem-ul-Haq Malik, Punjab Assembly Member Tahseen Fawad, China Overseas Port Holding Company Chairman Mr.

and Chinese nationals. Addressing the ceremony, Secretary Maritime Affairs Captain (Retd.) Muhammad Khurram Agha congratulated the management of Shahzad and Shao Farm, describing the partnership between the Pakistani and Chinese

investors as a practical manifestation of the longstanding friendship between the two countries. He expressed hope that the project would generate employment, improve the technical skills of local people and help bring new products to international markets.

Agha said the pri-

opportunities, including tax and customs incentives in accordance with applicable law. He highlighted the considerable potential for investment in agricultural and food processing, packaging and storage facilities could generate significant economic

benefits. Emphasizing the importance of inclusive growth, the secretary urged the project management to prioritize local recruitment, vocational training and business partnerships.

Sibi Commissioner Reviews College Performance, Highlights Staff Shortages and Challenges in BS Programmes

SIBI: Commissioner Sibi Division Irfanullah Khan has emphasized the need for effective measures to address staffing shortages and other educational challenges across colleges.

During the briefing, vacant teaching positions were highlighted as a major challenge af-

fecting academic activities. The monitoring officer explained that shortages of teachers and other essential staff at various colleges were disrupting educational activities and creating difficulties in student enrolment.

The shortage of personnel was also affecting the launch and continuity of Bachelor of Studies (BS) degree programmes at colleges.

other educational challenges as an important step towards improving college performance.

He stressed the need for coordination with the relevant authorities and effective measures to address the issues, improve teaching standards and ensure better access to higher education for male and female students.

The commissioner emphasized that resolving staffing shortages



the prevailing educational situation and the key issues faced by these institutions.

During the briefing, vacant teaching positions were highlighted as a major challenge af-

across the division, limiting opportunities for students seeking higher education.

Commissioner Irfanullah Khan described the identification of vacant posts and

and strengthening educational facilities were essential to improving academic standards and ensuring that colleges across Sibi Division could provide quality education.

Balochistan High Court Seeks Revised Report on Disability Rights, Welfare Funding and Legal Benefits

QUETTA: The Balochistan High Court has sought a comprehensive report from relevant authorities on the implementation of legal rights and benefits for persons with disabilities, including financial and educational assistance, healthcare facilities, employment quotas and other statutory concessions.

The court reviewed the policies and fund-distribution mechanism of the Balochistan Permanent Support Fund, commonly known as the KUMAK Fund, and directed officials to submit practical recommendations in light of the provisions of the Disabled Persons Act, 2007.

The report stated that a KUMAK Council had been established to oversee the programme and manage its administrative affairs. The provincial minister for social welfare serves as the council's chairperson, while the council may comprise up to eight members. Under the programme, persons with disabilities below the age of 18 receive monthly financial assistance of Rs6,000, while those aged 18 and above receive Rs8,000. Fund allocation and assistance programmes The report outlined the allocation

of funds across different categories: "38 per cent: Regular monthly financial assistance; 7 per cent: Educational scholarships; 25 per cent: Assistive devices; 5 per cent: Technical and vocational training; 20 per cent: Interest-free loans for livelihood and business activities."

The assistive devices covered by the programme include electric wheelchairs, three-wheeled motorcycles, scooters, walkers, crutches, hearing aids, artificial limbs, white canes and other essential equipment. Petitioners raise concerns over funding and healthcare benefits The petitioners' counsel, Advocate Anam Khair, and Advocate Muhammad Akram Shah, representing the petitioner in Constitutional Petition No. 1647/2025, raised objections to the report.

They argued that allocating only seven per cent of the fund to educational assistance was insufficient. They also pointed out that the report did not adequately address healthcare facilities, the 50 per cent concession for persons with disabilities at private hospitals, or other rights provided under the law.

Quetta Commissioner Reviews Education Sector, Calls for Revival of 155 Non-Functional Schools

QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Zeshan Lashari has directed education officials to accelerate efforts to improve school functionality, strengthen monitoring, expand educational facilities and reduce student dropout rates across the division.

He issued the directives while chairing an online meeting to review the overall education situation, school operations, ongoing development schemes and the availability of educational facilities in Quetta Division.

The meeting was attended online by Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehruallah Badini, Deputy Commissioner Quetta West Munir Ahmed Durrani, Divisional Director of Education Rubina and Quetta Executive District Officer Dr. Naseer Ali Shah. Assistant Commissioner Political Quetta Division Syed Kaleemullah and other relevant officials also participated.

The Divisional Director of Education briefed the commissioner on the number of schools, teacher and student statistics, ongoing development projects, educational programmes and challenges facing educational institutions.



According to the briefing, Quetta has a total of 667 schools enrolling 9,830 teachers, with more than 217,000 students enrolled. Development work is progressing on 25 schemes in Quetta and 10 in Mastung. The meeting was also informed that primary schoolchildren in Quetta were receiving food under the World Food Programme, while special measures were being taken to in-

crease enrolment in primary schools. School infrastructure challenges Officials highlighted several issues affecting educational institutions. Encroachments had been reported at nine schools in Quetta, while a shortage of vehicles, accommodation problems for relevant officers and insufficient numbers of security guards and sanitation workers were creating difficulties in school management, cleanliness and security.

The briefing also identified 155 non-functional schools across Quetta Division, with special attention being given to restoring their operations.

Officials said the monitoring system for teachers' attendance and performance was being strengthened to improve accountability and educational standards.

The meeting emphasized that, rather than focusing solely on constructing new schools, existing primary schools should be upgraded to middle and high school levels wherever required.

This would allow students to continue their education after completing primary school and help reduce dropout rates. Measures were also being taken to rehabilitate 34 shelterless schools and educational

institutions damaged by floods.

To address teacher shortages, the meeting discussed recruitment of Secondary School Teachers (SSTs) on a contract basis, improvements to monitoring mechanisms and proposals to provide essential facilities in schools. Commissioner directed action to reduce dropout rates. The relevant officials to reduce the number of children leaving school and lower the overall dropout rate, ensuring that more students remain enrolled in educational institutions.

Qalat Deputy Commissioner Pledges School Repairs, New Classrooms at Girls' Higher Secondary School

QALAT: Deputy Commissioner Qalat Engineer Ayesha Zahri, accompanied by District Education Officer Nisar Ahmed Noorzi, visited Government Girls' Higher Secondary School Qalat to review educational facilities, assess infrastructure issues and discuss measures to improve the learning environment for students.

During the visit, Headmistress Yasmin Shahwani briefed the officials on the educational facilities available at the school, the challenges faced by the institution and other administrative matters.



The deputy commissioner inspected classrooms in poor condition and reviewed the facilities available at the Education Department's bookstore established on the school premises. Engineer Ayesha Zahri assured the school administration that con-

crete steps would be taken to repair dilapidated classrooms, expand the bookstore and construct additional classrooms in line with the educational needs of female students. She said improving

the education sector and resolving problems faced by educational institutions remained among the district administration's key priorities. The deputy commissioner added that the district administration

and the Education Department were working together to provide students with a better learning environment and essential facilities, helping make the teaching and learning process more effective.

Pakistan providing 'whatever support' Saudi Arabia needs for its defence: DG ISPR

NEWS DESK: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has said Pakistan is providing "whatever support is needed" to defend Saudi Arabia amid attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels against the kingdom.

The military spokesperson's remarks — made during an interview with Independent Arabia aired on Sunday — come as Saudi Arabia has been facing deadly attacks by Houthis in recent weeks.

Islamabad and Riyadh have signed two defence pacts aimed at collective deterrence, the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement between the two and the Makah Joint Defence Alliance that also includes Turkey.

Responding to a query about the military support Pakistan was providing to the kingdom amid attacks by Houthis, the DG ISPR said Saudi Arabia's "sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the security, and foremost the security of the Two Holy Mosques, is paramount."

"It's non-negotiable," he said.



table, it's absolute as far as Pakistan is concerned [...] So whatever support is needed to do that is being provided and will be provided," he affirmed, adding that no alliance makes public the specifics and the quantification of the support provided.

Commenting on Pakistan's reaction to the Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia, the military spokesman said, "Our reaction in Pakistan, on the streets, from a young boy and girl up to our political and military leadership, is one of anger."

He remarked, "Our reaction is that why would anyone in his

right mind attack or threaten Saudi Arabia or the holy places or even give an impression of threatening the holy places."

On whether Pakistan's support to Saudi Arabia will strictly remain defensive if the Houthi attacks continue, the military spokesman said all three members of the alliance were "absolutely clear [...] that this alliance has no offensive intent; it is purely defensive."

Citing Article 51 of the United Nations Charter,

that provides collective deterrence, he said such a mechanism "gives a very strong and clear message to those elements of instability, of chaos, in the region that if you directly or indirectly wage this war against any of these three countries, then the response will be collective."

If that deterrence doesn't work, then that deterrence has to be re-established by all means that are available to the three countries," he added.

Asked whether Islamabad had issued any "warning" to Tehran regarding Houthis as the Saudi,

IHC takes up Imaan, Hadi's appeals against framing of charges in security breach case

NEWS DESK: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday took up appeals filed by human rights lawyer Imaan Mazari and her husband, Hadi Ali Chattha, against an anti-terrorism court (ATC) order rejecting their petitions challenging the framing of charges and the inclusion of terrorism-related provisions in the security breach case.

A division bench comprising Justice Imaan Anwar Minhas and Justice Shahrukh Arjumand heard the matter, with Riasat Ali Azad, Zainab Janjua and other lawyers appearing before the court.

At the outset, Justice Minhas asked whether the accused had received copies of the relevant documents. Counsel Riasat Ali Azad replied in the negative and said he wanted to examine how the charges had been framed.

The counsel argued that the ATC had passed the impugned order without the requisite authority to do so. He said the case had remained pending before the Judge Abul Hasanat Mohammad Zulkarnain from March 12, 2025,



until recently. Citing the precedent in the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto case, Azad argued that the court in which the challan was submitted was the one authorised to hear the case.

He further contended that the accused had not been provided with copies of the relevant documents and that the charges had not been read out in their presence, as they were not physically present in the courtroom at the time.

"Legal proceedings cannot move forward in the absence of the ac-

cused," the counsel argued, adding that the charge must be framed in the presence of the accused. He also alleged a violation of a decision of the National Judicial Policy Committee. Describing the charge as the foundation of a trial, Azad maintained that any defect in its framing would undermine the legality of the subsequent proceedings.

Justice Minhas asked whether the trial was being conducted through a video link. The counsel replied that the proceedings had initially taken place through a video link but had shifted to a jail trial at the most recent hearing. The judge also inquired whose signatures appeared on the charge document. Azad said the document bore his signature, but lacked those of the accused, which, according to him, were legally required.

Justice Minhas questioned whether the proceedings could not be conducted through a video link, observing that the accused had been connected through the facility and that their attendance had been recorded when the charges were framed.

Ex-lawmaker from Bajaur declines to be part of KP ARDC

N E W S DESK: Shahabuddin Khan, former lawmaker and a notable political and influential figure of Bajaur district, has refused to be part of the proposed 48-member Area Representative and Development Council (ARDC) for 12 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where an emergency has been declared.

Mr Khan, who is also senior vice-president of the ruling PML-N's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter, made the announcement in a statement after the list of 48 ARDC members appeared on media outlets and social media on Saturday night.

"If anyone has suggested my name for the tribal council (ARDC), I am grateful to them, but I don't want to be a member of the proposed council."

Mr Khan, whose name was included in the four-member list from Bajaur, said in a post shared on his social media account.

Mr Khan, who remained a two-time MNA from Bajaur, however, did not cite the reason for refusing to be part of the planned council, which will be headed by former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governor Eng Shaukatullah Khan, who also belongs to Bajaur district.

Development Council members from Khyber express ignorance about their role.

Meanwhile, Itehad-i-Malkanan Bajaur, an alliance of elders, on Sunday rejected the ARDC, saying the alliance wasn't consulted on the council's formation.

A statement issued by its spokesperson, Malik Shaeen Khan, said, "We, Itehad-i-Malkanan Bajaur, reject the council (ARDC) as we were not consulted on its formation."

The statement alleged that instead of

citation of elders of the Umankhel tribe, claimed the tribe was not represented in the council from Bajaur.

Roles not defined With limited clarity about the role and responsibilities of the newly-formed ARDC after the imposition of emergency in the designated 12 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, members of the council in Khyber district expressed their ignorance about their role and responsibilities.

The five members of the council, including Malik Zar Ahmad Shah, a Shinwari elder who refused to become a member of the council, told that he did not want to become a rubber stamp, as no information about the powers and functions of the council was shared with those who were approached by the authorities.

He said that looking at the composition of these councils in the designated districts, especially merged districts, the council was shared with those who were approached by the authorities.



genuine tribal elders, people having political affiliations had been included in the council. Also, in a statement, Muhammad Shah, patron-in-chief of Qaumi Tareen, an asso-

selected from Khyber also expressed their lack of knowledge about the selection criteria for council members, with some of the local elders declining the offer when they were approached by the district administration.

most members were opposed to the merger of erstwhile Fata with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while now they had become part of the system which they had been opposing since 2018.

DPM Dar arrives in Tajikistan for high-level SCO moot

NEWS DESK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar arrived in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe on Monday to lead Pakistan's delegation at a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting.

Upon arrival, he received by Tajikistan's Minister of Energy and Water Resources Daler Juma, Pakistan's Ambassador to Tajikistan Irfan Ahmed and Pakistan's national coordinator for the SCO, Khalil Hashmi, along with senior Tajik government officials.

Dar is visiting Dushanbe at the invitation of Tajik Prime Minister Qohir Rasulzoda to attend the SCO's Council of Heads of Government (CHG) meeting being held from Oct 19-20, according to the Foreign Office (FO).

The CHG is the SCO's second-highest decision-making body and provides guidance on economic, financial,



trade, connectivity and socio-economic cooperation, as well as the organisation's budgetary matters, FO noted. "The prime ministers of Belarus, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Iran's vice president and India's external affairs minister will also represent their respective countries at the meeting."

During his visit, Dar will also call on Tajikistan's president and prime minister and hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from SCO member states on the sidelines of the meeting, the FO added. Pakistan assumed the chairmanship of the SCO Council of Heads of State (CHS) for 2027 during an annual summit held in Kyrgyzstan in September. On Oct 1,

Dar chaired a follow-up meeting to review preparations for the SCO CHS summit, which Islamabad is scheduled to host in 2027.

In July, Pakistan hosted the 12th meeting of the Heads of Border Services of the Competent Authorities of the SCO. Islamabad also chairs SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (SCO-RATS), a role it assumed last September.

Kidnapping, torture case registered against railway police officials amid dispute with KMC over road project

NEWS DESK: A kidnapping and torture case has been registered against Railway Police officials on the complaint of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) City Wardens Director Saim Imran, who accused them of abducting him and taking him to an undisclosed location, where he was allegedly tortured.

The development comes amid a dispute between Pakistan Railways (PR) police and KMC City Wardens over a road project aimed at easing traffic congestion in the city.

The confrontation threatens to disrupt construction works before its scheduled completion.

The controversy centres on a dual carriage linking Natha Khan Bridge with Pehlwan Goth and Habib University.

Running parallel to Chakor Nullah, valued at around Rs780 million, the project is expected to ease pressure on Sharea Faisal, Rashid Minhas Road, Dalmia Road and Gulistan-i-Jahangir.

According to the

FIR, Imran said a road construction from Natha Khan to Pehlwan Goth for the past four months and that he was on traffic management duty at the site on the day of the incident.

He alleged that Cant police station SHO Ahsan Rasheed arrived at the site with other police personnel and assaulted him.

The complainant further alleged that he was taken to an undisclosed location, where he was tortured. He claimed that he was

asked to hold the feet of senior officers and lick their shoes on their instructions.

He was subjected to further torture after refusing to comply, according to the FIR.

Imran added that he lost consciousness due to the alleged torture and regained consciousness at Abbasi Shaheed Hospital.

According to the information provided, the case was registered at Shahr-i-Faisal police station on the complaint of KMC's complaint.

The incident un-

folded on Sunday afternoon when railway police officials intervened at the construction site and stopped the work, prompting the chief of KMC City Wardens to arrive at the site.

The two sides initially engaged in a heated exchange over the construction, which soon escalated into a physical scuffle.

The KMC alleged that the railways police personnel severely beat the City Wardens director before taking him to a Pakistan Railways police station.

Covering Karachi's Nehr-i-Khayyam poses risk of urban flooding: experts

NEWS DESK: Expressing concern over construction at Nehr-i-Khayyam, an open drain in Clifton's Block 5, residents and environmentalists from across the city held an awareness walk on Sunday, fearing that covering the drain would reduce its width and pave the way for "commercial activity".

Holding placards with messages such as "Commercial use of Nehr-i-Khayyam not accepted" and "Stop concreting drains, restore Nehr-i-Khayyam", "Save Nehr-i-Khayyam", "Save Nehr-i-Khayyam and stop urban flooding", the participants gathered near the construction site and said trees had previously been present on both sides of the drain, but now remained on only one side, with just a few left along the stretch where construction was under way.

Dawn visited the site and observed that construction was under way on one side of the drain, where two columns had been built. Half of the columns had been plastered with cement, while T-shaped concrete blocks lay nearby.

Standing behind a



banner bearing the words "Save Nehr-i-Khayyam", Rashid Tarek, a protester and member of the Karachi Residents' Community (District South), questioned the practice of discharging sewage into the waterway and then using its pollution to justify covering more than half of it.

Who in the world do people discharge sewage into a waterway, then claim that its water is polluted and proceed to cover over half of it?" she asked.

She added that they had stood up for the city and urged everyone to unite to save

the waterway. She also demanded an environmental impact assessment (EIA) and said residents should be informed about the project.

Masood Lohar, founder and CEO of the Clifton Urban Forest and an environmentalist, claimed that the project had been approved by the Sindh cabinet in 2019 for "recreational purposes".

He alleged that the construction was intended for commercial activity.

He said that if an EIA hearing had been held, its details should be made public and the authorities should dis-

close which civil society representatives or residents had been invited to attend. Expressing concern, he said the authorities were blocking a major intertidal channel between two creeks, adding that the city had already been choked.

He termed the matter a "national security issue".

He warned that if Karachi received 250mm of rainfall, the port and important security installations could become dysfunctional.

Another environmentalist, Yasir Hussain, said he had joined the protest to show solidarity with the community.