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NCSW seeks swift police action against gender-based violence

ISLAMABAD: The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) has sought immediate and effective police action to curb surge in violence and rape against women and girls.

The commission had a meeting with senior police officials from across Pakistan to review the alarming rise in violence, rape, murder, harassment and other forms of gender-based violence against women and girls.

NCSW Chairperson Ms Noureen Bano Lehri while chairing the meeting expressed grave concern over the increasing incidents and took strict notice of cases including the Hina Javed, Ayat Noor and Asma Jattak cases, as well as recent cases in Sindh, including the tragic deaths of three-year-old Kulsoom Mohammed Qasim and 18-month-old Aizal in Karachi.

The Commission also expressed concern over the recently reported sexual assault of a nine-year-old girl in Shikarpur, whose identity has not been disclosed. Ms. Lehri directed the police authorities to ensure swift, transparent and merit-based investigations, effective prosecution and timely justice in every case involving violence against women and girls.

She stressed that every case must be pursued to its logical conclusion and that negligence, delay or failure in investigation will not be tolerated. The Commission called for special courts or dedicated judicial mechanisms to ensure speedy disposal of cases and prevent prolonged delays in justice in such cases.

The NCSW further directed enhanced police patrolling, surveillance and preventive measures in areas where women and girls face threats, both inside and outside their homes.

Women across Pakistan should be made fully aware of available police services, complaint mechanisms and emergency avenues for seeking protection and immediate relief.

The Commission called for effective monitoring of madaris, schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions to prevent harassment, abuse and violence. Particular emphasis was placed on educating and sensitising boys and young men so that they grow as responsible citizens and protectors of women and girls rather than perpetrators or harassers.

The Chairperson directed specialised training and capacity building of police officers, investigation officers, doctors, prosecutors, judicial officers and prison staff for gender-sensitive handling of cases and survivors.

The Commission also called for strict action against illegal jirgas and enhanced surveillance to prevent parallel or unlawful mechanisms from undermining women's rights, due process and access to justice.

The NCSW directed that case-to-case data be shared and reviewed every month, with all Inspector Generals of Police required to provide updates on investigations, prosecution, pending cases, challenges, capacity-building measures and concrete actions being taken to control the surge in violence against women and girls.

The Commission further directed that the NCSW Complaint Management System (CMS) be effectively linked with police leadership to facilitate timely referral, response and follow-up of complaints.

All IGPs were urged to maintain direct coordination with Women Development Departments and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women to strengthen protection, referral and response mechanisms. With regard to women in prisons, the Commission directed special monitoring of their welfare, protection and rehabilitation.

Women prisoners engaged in productive or vocational labour must be fairly compensated for their work and must not be paid less than male prisoners for comparable work. They should also receive education, vocational and skills training, financial literacy and rehabilitation support to enable them to rebuild dignified and independent lives after release and reintegrate positively into society.

The meeting was attended by SSP Investigations Punjab Khurram Shehzad, DIG Crimes Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Hussain, SSP Kamar Rizvi from Sindh, and Additional Inspector General (Operations) Balochistan Shahzad Akbar, along with relevant senior police representatives from federal entities.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2026

Sexual crimes against women, kids: 80pc of offenders are people known to victims, says Punjab IGP



Punjab Inspector General of Police Abdul Kareem speaking at a press conference at the Central Police Office, Lahore on August 25, 2026.

LAHORE: Punjab Inspector General of Police (IGP) Abdul Kareem has said that immediate action is being taken to curb sexual crimes against women and children on the chief minister's directives and that 80 per cent of such crimes are committed by the relatives or people known to the victims.

The IGP said this at a 'Meet the Press' programme organised by the Lahore Press Club, flanked by Lahore DIG Investigation Zeeshan Raza, DIG Operations Faisal Kamran and other police officers.

The Punjab police chief said that crime reporters play a vital role in identifying crime, guiding law enforcement agencies and helping improve the policing system, describing them as the "eyes, ears and helpers" of the Punjab Police.

He said there were 800 police stations in Punjab, which are the basic service-delivery mechanism of the police.

Listing the reforms introduced in policing, he cited automated systems, Safe City cameras, virtual women police stations and centres for child safety, body cameras and panic (pink) buttons as examples.

“The purpose of the police is to provide justice to people,” he said, adding that measures are being taken to ensure greater relief to the citizens visiting police stations.

Regarding the Crime Control Department (CCD), the IG said its scope is limited and that serious crimes have “declined significantly because of effective measures.”

Only the cases falling within the CCD’s jurisdiction are being referred to the department, he added.

The IGP said departmental proceedings have already been initiated against police personnel, from constable to senior ranks, over corruption and irregularities. He warned that there would be no leniency in the complaints of corruption, misconduct or abuse of authority by police officials.

He claimed that property-related crimes in Punjab have “almost been eliminated” and that the traffic system has also improved.

He announced that a board for promotion from the rank of sub-inspector to inspector would be convened soon. He said the Elite Orientation Course was meant for officers up to the ASP rank.

On the use of body cameras, Mr Kareem said the chief minister had allocated Rs12 billion for the initiative and that a consignment comprising 1,000 body cameras had arrived, with around 500 expected to be received on Tuesday, while more were on the way.

“Now every police officer deployed at a checkpoint will have a body camera,” he said.

The IG attributed the restoration of peace in the Katcha areas to effective police action and government measures.

He further stated that legislation against illegal weapons is being introduced, and a summary in this regard is in process.

At the conclusion of the programme, the press club president presented a shield to the IGP, who reciprocated the gesture by presenting police souvenirs to the club office-bearers.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 2ND, 2026

The EU Commission's GSP+ review found some progress in Pakistan's reform journey but much remains to be done



The European Union's latest assessment of Pakistan under its Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) framework offers observations that merit careful consideration in Islamabad. It also deserves to be read in full.

Published in July, the European Commission's assessment of Pakistan's performance during 2023–2025 is not an unqualified endorsement. It draws attention to several areas that would benefit from continued focus, including the implementation of labour laws, safeguards for freedom of expression, issues relating to enforced disappearances, minority rights, judicial independence and mechanisms for addressing human rights concerns. While progress in several areas deserves recognition, these matters also merit careful consideration and sustained institutional attention.

But the opposite mistake is equally possible: to read the report as if Pakistan made little or no progress during the monitoring period. That would also be an incomplete account of what the European Commission actually found.

Why it matters

The purpose of GSP+ is to give developing countries preferential access to the European market in return for commitments to implement 27 international conventions covering human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and good governance. Pakistan has benefited from the arrangement since 2014 and remains its largest beneficiary. In 2024, EU imports from Pakistan amounted to €8.3 billion, of which around €7.5 billion were eligible for GSP+ preferences. Pakistan received an estimated €732 million in tariff exemptions that year.

That commercial relationship matters. But GSP+ is not simply a tariff concession, nor should it be viewed as a pass-or-fail examination in which every institutional challenge is treated as evidence of non-compliance. Its underlying logic is to encourage countries to improve their governance over time.

The European Commission notes that Pakistan maintained ratification of all 27 relevant conventions and made no new reservations. It also largely complied with reporting obligations to the relevant international monitoring bodies and continued to engage with the EU's own GSP+ monitoring process.

More importantly, there were concrete changes.

An ongoing reform process

Pakistan's continued engagement with the GSP+ monitoring framework, maintenance of all 27 convention ratifications and broad compliance with reporting obligations reflect a sustained commitment to the scheme. The legislative and institutional measures undertaken at the federal and provincial levels deserve recognition as meaningful contributions to Pakistan's continuing reform process.

The country narrowed the scope of the death penalty by removing four offences. No executions have taken place since December 2019. A National Prison Reform Action Plan and dedicated task force were established, alongside training programmes and a grievance mechanism. These measures do not, by themselves, resolve every challenge facing Pakistan's prisons and criminal justice system. They nevertheless represent constructive steps towards gradual improvement.

Then there were advances concerning women's rights. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill for Islamabad Capital Territory filled an important legislative gap, while a first conviction for marital rape in Sindh in 2024 represented a significant development with wider symbolic value. Pakistan also launched a national strategy addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

The record on children reflects areas of progress alongside continuing challenges. Pakistan abolished child marriage for Christian communities through the Christian Marriage (Amendment) Act 2024, while Islamabad and Balochistan subsequently adopted legislation criminalising child marriage. A nationwide education emergency was announced in 2024, followed by an education action plan, with provincial authorities reporting the reopening of schools, teacher recruitment and expanded infrastructure.

Labour rights offer perhaps the clearest illustration of the importance of translating legislative and policy commitments into effective implementation. Pakistan ratified the 2014 Protocol to the ILO Forced Labour Convention in March 2025. Provinces adopted action plans to eliminate child labour, while most also improved their evidence base through child-labour surveys using ILO methodology. Pakistan also published a gender pay-gap study and developed a wage-reform action plan.

The European assessment nevertheless underscores that effective implementation remains essential. Forced labour and child labour continue to require sustained attention, even as progress has been recorded in some respects. The assessment also points to practical and financial difficulties that can affect workers' access to mechanisms for enforcing rights already guaranteed under law.

A similarly balanced approach is needed when considering the broader human rights situation. The Commission's assessment identifies issues relating to enforced disappearances, media freedoms and freedom of expression, minority rights and judicial independence as areas that would benefit from continued attention, improved safeguards and further institutional strengthening.

These findings merit a considered policy response and sustained institutional attention.

Acknowledging areas requiring improvement does not require overlooking reform. Indeed, the most useful way to read the EU assessment is to recognise that both things can be true at once: Pakistan can make meaningful institutional and legislative progress even as implementation remains uneven and further work is required in other areas.

That is precisely why the distinction between legislation, institutions and implementation matters.

What next for Pakistan

Establishing a human rights institution is an important step, although its effectiveness ultimately depends on implementation. At the same time, sustained improvement is difficult without institutions, laws, monitoring mechanisms and administrative capacity.

Pakistan therefore has an important implementation agenda ahead. The European Commission has identified priorities including stronger enforcement of labour laws, continued efforts to address forced and child labour, improved protection of minorities, better safeguards for freedom of expression, further prison and capital-punishment reform, more effective accountability mechanisms for human rights concerns and continued strengthening of anti-corruption institutions.

This agenda need not be viewed as an external checklist imposed on Pakistan. It broadly corresponds to Pakistan's own stated interests. Better access to justice benefits businesses and workers alike. Protecting journalists and civil society strengthens the information available to policymakers. Improving schools and vocational training expands the productive capacity of the economy. Strong institutions also make decision-making more consistent and predictable for citizens and investors alike.

This is also where the economic logic of GSP+ deserves more attention.

Pakistan's preferential access to the European market has created an important commercial stake in maintaining and improving standards. The EU remains Pakistan's largest export market, accounting for 28 per cent of its total exports in 2024. GSP+ utilisation reached 95.1pc that year. Textiles and clothing dominate the relationship, making the scheme particularly important to Pakistan's labour-intensive manufacturing economy.

The broader lesson is that preferential access and principled scrutiny need not be viewed as opposing objectives. Trade and institutional reform can reinforce one another.

That is the opportunity Pakistan and the EU should preserve.

The forthcoming evolution of the GSP framework makes continued engagement particularly important. Pakistan should use the period ahead to consolidate legislative commitments and translate them into measurable progress, particularly in areas where the European assessment calls for sustained attention. The EU, for its part, should continue to use the GSP+ as an instrument of constructive engagement, combining scrutiny with dialogue and technical cooperation while maintaining a broader view of Pakistan's reform trajectory.

A serious assessment should therefore consider legislative and policy commitments alongside their implementation, while also recognising that unresolved challenges do not negate the reforms already undertaken.

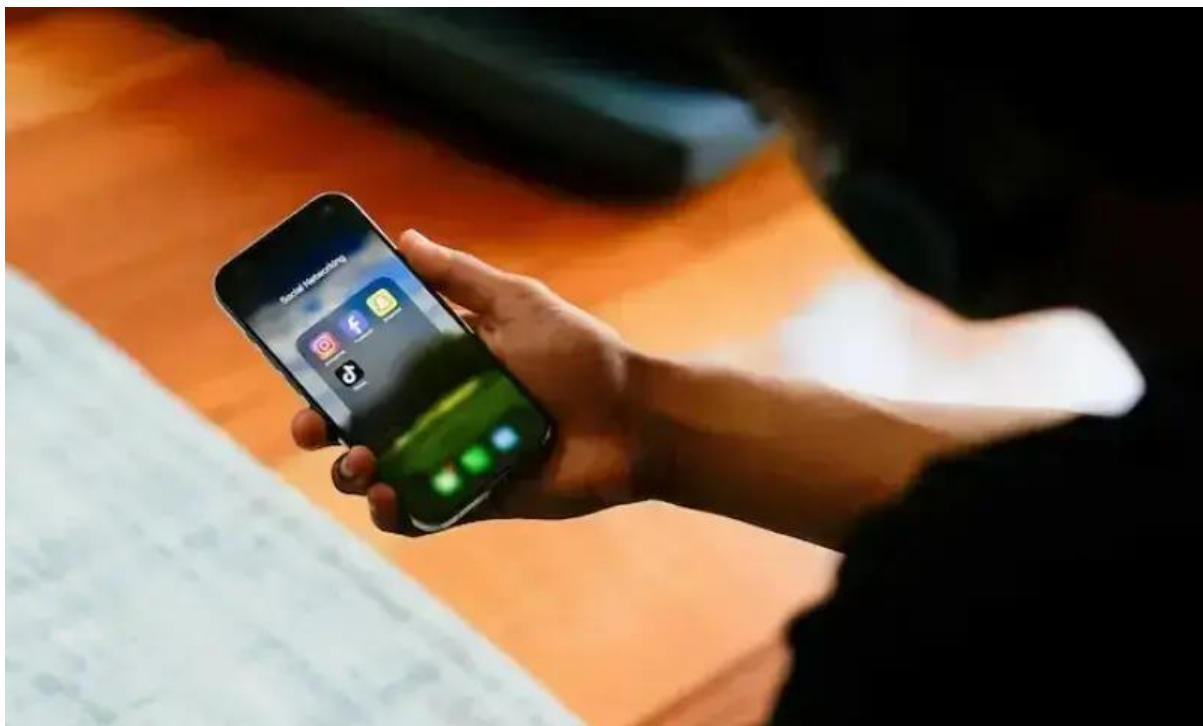
That is ultimately what the GSP+ should be about: supporting the translation of legislation into effective practice, recognising that institutional reform requires time, and creating incentives for sustained improvement.

For Pakistan, the priority now is to consolidate the reforms recorded during the last monitoring period and translate them into sustained improvements in everyday governance. For the European Union, the priority is to ensure that its trade policy remains capable of encouraging that process.

Both sides have an interest in getting that balance right.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 03, 2026

UNICEF estimates 20 million children suffered online sexual abuse in one year



About 20 million internet-using children across 21 countries were subjected to sexual exploitation or abuse on digital platforms in a single year, with most cases occurring on social media platforms, a new report by the UN children's charity said.

More than one in five children aged 12 to 17 across Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe experienced at least one form of sexual abuse or exploitation on online platforms in the year before being surveyed, the Unicef report estimated.

Roughly 15m children in the countries surveyed were exposed to unwanted sexual content, 9m were pressured into sexual conversations or sharing sexual images, and 4m had sexual images shared without their consent, the report found.

The number of children subjected to this abuse globally is certain to run into many tens of millions, it said.

The research, which Unicef described as one of the largest studies of its kind, was based on national representative surveys collected between 2020 and 2025 of around 21,000 internet-using children in the 21 countries, which included Pakistan, Kenya, Brazil and Serbia.

Social media focus

Almost 60 per cent of reported abuse occurred on social media platforms, led by Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok, while 14pc took place in online gaming, the report found.

A spokesperson for Meta, which owns Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram, said the surveys go as far back as 2020, before the company introduced protections Unicef recommends such as automatically defaulting teens into private accounts and preventing adults from messaging teens they are not connected to. It added that it defines WhatsApp as a private messaging app and not a social media platform.

“While the report doesn’t provide any specific evidence of abuse, we’ll continue to fight child exploitation aggressively across our apps and support law enforcement in prosecuting the criminals behind it,” the Meta spokesperson said.

Snapchat pointed Reuters to a blog post by Global Head of Platform Safety Jacqueline Beauchere, who said the company was actively combating online sexual extortion through proactive detection, account removals, user reporting tools and safety features designed to protect vulnerable users.

TikTok said it has built a range of safeguards to protect minors, including restricting certain features for younger users, making accounts for under-18s private by default, and using technology to detect potentially predatory behaviour.

The Unicef report said more than half the cases involved someone the child already knew, including friends, relatives or romantic partners, while 38pc of children first encountered the perpetrator online.

Fewer than 1pc of cases involving children were reported to the police, a social worker or a helpline, according to the research.

The report also highlighted growing concerns over artificial intelligence. Across nine countries where data was collected, an estimated 1.1m children reported having AI-generated sexual images or videos created depicting them.

Children who experienced tech-facilitated sexual exploitation were around four times more likely to report suicidal thoughts or self-harm and reported significantly higher levels of anxiety than their peers, the research said.

“These experiences cause profound emotional and mental distress. Many children suffer in silence, unsure where to turn for help,” Unicef Executive Director Catherine Russell said in a statement.

Unicef urged governments and technology companies to strengthen safety measures on digital platforms, update laws to address evolving forms of abuse including AI-generated content, and improve child protection and reporting systems.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 03, 2026

Pakistan faces uphill GSP+ battle



Raimundas Karoblis, the European Union's ambassador to Pakistan.

- As Islamabad negotiates its reapplication for critical trading scheme, EU envoy says GSP+ benefits 'can't be taken for granted'
- Country may continue to receive benefits until 2028-end, but this doesn't mean automatic rollover into new scheme
- Islamabad remains engaged with bloc on 'effective implementation of international conventions'; FO says EU assessment didn't offer 'sufficiently balanced picture' of Pakistan's performance

ISLAMABAD: Amid an ongoing intense engagement between Islamabad and Brussels over a trading scheme and its future, the European Union's ambassador has cautioned that GSP+ benefits cannot be taken for granted.

The cautionary note comes as the current EU Generalised Scheme of Preferences framework is set to expire at the end of this year, and Pakistan is required to seek inclusion in the successor regime, which would carry more stringent requirements.

"The government will need to take steps towards improving the situation, which will also be very important in the reapplication process," EU Ambassador Raimundas Karoblis told Dawn.

“The situation is not certain. And, of course, GSP+ preferences cannot be taken for granted.”

Though the new trading framework will take effect with the turn of the year, Pakistan and other existing beneficiaries will continue to receive preferences during a two-year transition period ending on Dec 31, 2028.

But the transition does not amount to an automatic continuation of the facility for the two-year period, or a roll over into the new scheme.

A European Commission assessment covering the years 2023-25, released in July this year, concluded that Pakistan had faced compliance issues with its obligations, regressed in a number of areas and made limited positive change.

Moreover, while acknowledging legislative and administrative measures, it noted that much of the progress had yet to translate into improvements on the ground.

The report had identified significant concerns relating to enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, freedom of expression, journalists’ and minority rights, judicial independence, access to justice and forced labour.

“There are areas of regression, and of course, this means that the government needs to address them,” Mr Karoblis said, adding that this applied both to the implementation of the current GSP+ convention, and its reapplication for the new scheme.

Diplomatic discussions between Pakistan and the EU suggest that Islamabad is aware of the gravity of the situation, though questions remain over whether it has yet moved decisively towards addressing the concerns that Brussels has repeatedly raised.

At last week’s press briefing, Dawn asked outgoing Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahir Andrabi about how that dialogue is progressing, and how he viewed the EU’s assessment of Pakistan compliance.

In response, the spokesperson said that while Pakistan appreciated the commission’s recognition of its continued compliance under 27 international conventions, he maintained that the report’s overall narrative did not present “a sufficiently balanced picture of Pakistan’s performance”.

“GSP+ remains central to Pakistan’s economic relationship with the European Union, and we will remain constructively engaged with the EU and remain committed to the effective implementation of the international conventions underpinning the GSP framework,” he said.

Since GSP+ commitments straddle a wide array of sectors, Dawn sent written queries to the federal ministers for information, law and commerce last week to gain holistic perspective on how Pakistan is approaching the matter with the EU.

However, neither the ministers nor their ministries responded to Dawn’s requests for comment.

Challenge

Pakistan's challenge is twofold. It will have to demonstrate that it qualifies for the new framework while also ensuring that the deteriorations identified in the latest report do not jeopardise its existing status during the transition period.

Talking to Dawn, the European envoy acknowledged serious unease within the European Commission, which plays an influential role in monitoring compliance and decisions concerning the execution of the scheme.

"Indeed, both from reading the report and from discussions with experts, there are serious doubts within the European Commission about the effective implementation of these conventions," he said.

The EU's GSP+ regime is tied to compliance with international conventions on human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and good governance, which Islamabad has already signed up. Pakistan has remained a beneficiary since 2014 and is the scheme's largest beneficiary.

The stakes for Pakistan are, therefore, considerably high.

In 2024, the country received nearly €732 million in tariff exemptions under GSP+, while €7.115 billion worth of its exports utilised the preferential access. Of Pakistan's total €8.275bn exports to the EU that year, €7.482bn were eligible for GSP+ preferences.

The EU accounts for about 28 per cent of Pakistan's total exports and nearly 90pc of its exports to the bloc are GSP+ eligible.

The dependence on the trading scheme is particularly high in the textile and clothing sector, which accounts for between 70pc and 76pc of Pakistan's exports to the European market. Clothing, textiles, leather products, prepared foods and beverages are among the major beneficiaries.

Loss of preferential access would, therefore, have consequences beyond the immediate value of tariff exemptions and products such as textiles and clothing could lose competitiveness in one of the country's most important export markets.

The fear of losing the preferential access is quite real, as the scheme provides for partial or full temporary withdrawal of preferences in cases of serious failure to comply with the underlying conventions. There are precedents at both ends of the spectrum, with Bolivia facing partial withdrawal and Sri Lanka previously losing its preferences altogether.

Mr Karoblis, however, said no determination had so far been made in Pakistan's case.

"So far, it requires further investigation as to whether the regression in these specific areas has already reached the threshold concerning the implementation of the regulation, and whether it has reached the level that could trigger a partial or full temporary suspension," he said.

The envoy nevertheless made clear that the absence of such a determination should not be construed as a free pass.

“If the government is ready for cooperation and to make progress, let’s expect that the current conditions, situation and findings will not trigger this mechanism,” he emphasised.

Benchmarks

The road ahead will become more demanding after the new framework takes effect. While the present GSP+ regime is linked to 27 international conventions, the successor arrangement will cover 32. The compliance requirements under the new framework are even tighter.

Mr Karoblis said Pakistan had already ratified the five additional conventions required under the new scheme and therefore would technically face no legal difficulty on that count. The real test, he stressed, was implementation.

“As far as the benchmark is concerned both the current GSP regulation and the new one sets two substantive conditions that a country needs to meet,” he said.

“One is the vulnerability of the country. We are speaking about the level of economic development, which unfortunately is not very high. But, on the other hand, because of that, Pakistan is eligible for the system.”

The other condition is the increased number of international conventions. “But the main emphasis is on implementation. Both under the present regulation and in the future, the important condition is the absence of serious failure to implement the United Nations conventions in these areas. That is the benchmark, actually,” the envoy said.

Therefore, Pakistan’s reapplication will also require more than a general political commitment.

“There is also a procedural requirement. For the reapplication, there should be an action plan of the country,” the ambassador said.

“This means that the emphasis is first of all on implementation, not only on reapplication, with very concrete measures, timelines and performance indicators.”

Problem areas

Among the issues likely to figure prominently in the EU’s engagement with Islamabad are enforced disappearances, restrictions on freedom of expression, blasphemy related concerns and the broader rule of law situation.

The latest assessment was particularly critical of the human rights situation, noting that enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings had increased without accountability for perpetrators. It also expressed concern over legislative measures that could affect judicial independence and access to fair trial.

The ambassador said Brussels was also continuing its dialogue with Islamabad on improving the rule of law situation more broadly.

On freedom of expression, Mr Karoblis specifically referred to serious concerns over specific pieces of legislation, and how they may hamper the effective implementation of international conventions,” he said.

“Looking at the mechanisms, it is indeed the laws we have mentioned, including the recent amendments to the PECA law and the Punjab Defamation Act, among others... It is about the right to freedom of expression,” he said.

The issue of blasphemy also remains on Brussels’ agenda, despite the government’s recent assertions that it has acted against elements exploiting allegations for harassment and persecution.

Mr Karoblis acknowledged that the number of cases had declined from the peak witnessed several years ago and referred to the release on bail of more than 100 people in Islamabad who had been arrested in cases linked to so called ‘blasphemy gangs’.

“But there are still issues and concerns for us,” he said, noting that hundreds of people remained imprisoned in Punjab.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 7TH, 2026

Situationer: From jammers to drones – KP's fight against terrorists 'takes flight'

BY UMER FAROOQ



FROM handheld jammers to anti-drone systems, and now a specialised human division trained for Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) combat, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) police department is waging a high-tech war against terrorists as their threat evolves from quadcopter surveillance and ammunition drops to swarm attacks.

The UAV division, initially floated as an idea, was established following technological advancements in terrorist capabilities and their shifting preference from conventional street fighting to aerial warfare.

Trained in modern drone flying, aerial surveillance, intelligence gathering, counterterrorism, protection of sensitive installations, and the effective use of UAV technology in high-risk operations, the division is the first of its kind established by a police department in the country.

Ambushes and attacks on police installations are still reported from across the province, but terrorists are also using quadcopters for surveillance before moving towards their targets, enabling them to avoid ambushes by law enforcement agencies.

“This is a fact that they fly surveillance drones before targeting any installation of the law enforcement agencies,” a senior official said.

Changing tactics, external backing

Senior officials also believe that the situation has completely changed from what it was two years ago, as terrorists’ tactics have evolved, compelling the police force to devise a fresh strategy to stay one step ahead.

They said that with drones being deployed and law enforcement facilities being targeted, the war had expanded to the skies, forcing them into a technological arms race, particularly in high-risk zones.

“It is a fact that the terrorists are more equipped than police since they got hold of the leftover [modern gadgets left behind by the US and its allies in Afghanistan],” a senior security official said while talking to Dawn.

He said the local threat was previously underdeveloped and pointed to continued ‘external’ support in the form of manpower, finances and technology. He added that the use of quadcopters for surveillance followed by explosive delivery required financial resources, training and, above all, technology.

The department responded immediately, but the handheld anti-drone guns could neutralise only one drone at a time. This gave the police an edge, but it was soon the terrorists’ turn to adapt. After realising the weakness, they turned to swarm tactics, deploying multiple drones simultaneously.

Again, the department took another step by upgrading its defensive capabilities and investing in anti-drone systems capable of detecting and jamming multiple quadcopters at the same time.

With anti-drone systems deployed in multiple areas across the province, quadcopter attacks dropped sharply. The department did not give militants the opportunity to gain another advantage and moved to establish an entire division specialising in aerial warfare.

Data centre, skills training

Officials said the KP police realised that technology alone could not help and took a crucial step by establishing a specialised division of personnel trained for UAV operations. These personnel are not only trained to operate drones for surveillance but are also capable of conducting electronic warfare against hostile UAVs.

They said a data centre based in Peshawar would receive real-time information on quadcopters and, at the same time, coordinate the response of law enforcement agencies.

“The war is escalating and the threat has changed. What we see today is completely different from what we saw two years ago,” KP police chief Zulfiqar Hameed told Dawn, explaining why, beyond technological development, trained human operators were equally critical.

Mr Hameed said the specialised unit was the need of the hour and that, besides deploying it in the provincial capital, the department had approved similar units at the district level, initially in high-risk districts.

He said the department had deployed drones across the province and that not only the regular police but also the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) would be equipped with more advanced drones – long-range models capable of flying at higher altitudes than the existing ones. These would be used against terrorists.

“There is no other option for the future but technological advancement,” the KP police chief said.

Other security officials claimed that the threat level had dropped sharply, particularly in the southern districts, including Dera Ismail Khan, Lakki Marwat, Tank and Bannu, as militant tashkeels [groups] were being targeted before they could reach their targets.

“I assure you that there would be no militants had there not been external support, as 70pc of them are outsiders, being supported morally, financially and technically by hostile countries,” a senior police officer said while talking to Dawn.

He said the department’s analysis had indicated that beyond modern war gadgets, drone technology was being provided to terror groups by “external sources”.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 7TH, 2026

Interpol Pakistan issues 286 red notices in 7 months, 53 fugitives repatriated



ISLAMABAD: Interpol's National Central Bureau (NCB) in Pakistan issued 286 Red Notices in the last seven months as part of efforts to track fugitives involved in murder, fraud, terrorism and human trafficking, according to Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Director General Dr Usman Anwar.

A Red Notice is a request to law enforcement agencies by Interpol to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender or similar legal action.

Anwar, who also heads NCB-Interpol Pakistan, reaffirmed the agency's resolve on World Day of International Police Cooperation, adding that Islamabad would continue to strengthen collaboration with Interpol and global partners.

NCBs serve as each country's focal point for all Interpol activities. They connect national law enforcement agencies with those in other countries and with the Interpol General Secretariat through a secure global police communications network known as I-24/7, allowing real-time access to databases and services.

Anwar said NCB-Interpol Pakistan issued a total of 290 Interpol notices during the period, including two Blue Notices and two Yellow Notices.



Yellow Notices are meant to help locate missing persons, often minors, or identify people who are unable to identify themselves, while Blue Notices are issued to collect additional information.

Of the 286 Red Notices, 225 were issued for suspects wanted in murder and attempted murder cases, while another 33 were issued for individuals wanted in kidnapping, corruption, robbery and cybercrime cases.

The bureau also issued 19 Red Notices for financial fraud and deception, six for human trafficking and three for terrorism.

Through international cooperation, 53 fugitives wanted in Pakistan for serious crimes were arrested in different countries and extradited to Pakistan during the same seven-month period.

“Today’s crimes are increasingly international. Cybercrime, fugitives and stolen goods driven by organised groups — none of these respect borders,” Anwar told Dawn.

“We seek information from other NCBs to help investigations in Pakistan, and we share our criminal data to assist other countries.”

He added that NCBs were critical because they could trigger law enforcement action in their respective countries and work directly with counterparts, even between states without diplomatic relations.

“When a crime goes beyond our national jurisdiction, we need international support to solve it. Interpol provides that platform,” he stated.

According to Interpol’s framework, NCBs contribute national crime data to global databases in accordance with national laws. Red Notices, for example, alert police in all 196 member countries to wanted persons.

NCB Pakistan works with domestic law enforcement agencies, other NCBs and sub-bureaus worldwide, as well as the General Secretariat’s offices, to coordinate cross-border investigations, operations and arrests. The FIA director general noted that regional cooperation was growing as countries combined resources to tackle shared threats.

“We are also building capacity at home. NCBs develop training programmes for national police to raise awareness of Interpol’s tools and databases so that our officers can use them effectively on the ground,” Anwar said.

“FIA NCB-Interpol Pakistan remains committed to ensuring that no fugitive finds safe haven abroad. Through I-24/7 and our network of partners, we will keep pursuing criminals and bringing them to justice.”

In April this year, Interpol issued Red Notices against Bahria Town owner Malik Riaz and his son Ali Riaz, Nat-i-onal Accountability Bur-eau (NAB) Chairman Lt General (retired) Nazir Ahmed said.

Last month, the National Cybercrime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) arrested two suspects and initiated the process for obtaining Red Notices for the remaining four alleged members of the “Tycoon2FA Cybercrime Network”.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 07, 2026

Pakistanis lose Rs8.32b to cyber fraud



ISLAMABAD: Cyber fraudsters have deprived more than 227,000 Pakistanis of Rs8.32 billion over the past three years, with senators, MNAs and MPAs also among the victims.

The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) has received a large number of complaints as cyber fraud continues to target citizens across the country.

According to the documents seen by The Express Tribune, a total of 227,757 people reported being victims of cyber fraud during the three years.

Of these, 83,080 people lodged complaints in 2024, followed by 76,646 in 2025 and 68,031 in the subsequent year, stating that they had been defrauded. Collectively, victims in these 227,000-plus cases lost Rs8.32 billion to cyber fraudsters, according to the documents.

The victims also include eight parliamentarians, both serving and former lawmakers. The documents show that former MNA Sahibzada Hamid Raza lodged a case after Rs490,000 was fraudulently taken from him.

Senator Falak Naz Chitrali lost Rs485,000, Senator Bilal Ahmed Mandokhail Rs403,500 and Senator Niaz Ahmed Rs30,000. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa MPA Shehla Bano lost Rs370,800, while a former MPA was defrauded of Rs970,000.

The six parliamentarians named in the documents collectively lost Rs2.749 million to cyber fraud. Of this amount, the NCCIA managed to recover money for only three parliamentarians - Senators Falak Naz Chitrali, Bilal Ahmed Mandokhail and Niaz Ahmed.

Thus, out of the Rs2.749 million defrauded from the six parliamentarians, more than Rs918,000 could be recovered through the NCCIA, according to the documents.

Cyber fraud involving PML-N Senator Nasir Butt has also surfaced, while PML-N MNA from Vehari, Syed Sajid Mehdi, is among the parliamentarians who have fallen victim to cyber fraud.

The documents show that these parliamentarians were among more than 227,000 citizens who reported cyber fraud incidents in which they were deprived of their money through various fraudulent schemes.

Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee on the Ministry of Interior, Raja Khurram Nawaz, has also told a committee meeting that he regularly receives fraudulent calls.

NCCIA sources said most of the fraud cases involved WhatsApp hacking or calls made by fraudsters posing as representatives of banks or other institutions.

Sources further said that, apart from the more than 227,000 people who lodged complaints, thousands of others are defrauded of amounts ranging from Rs2,000 to Rs20,000 every day but do not report the incidents to the police or any other institution, either because the amount is relatively small or for other reasons, and simply remain silent.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, SEPTEMBER 11, 2026

When organized crime gets inside the institutions meant to stop it

BY MARK SHAW – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GI-TOC

There are few things more damaging in the fight against organized crime than discovering that the institutions you rely on to confront it have become vulnerable to criminal influence themselves. Last week, in very different ways, events in South Africa and Malta prompted us to think about this problem once again.

First, a belated hello to everyone who has subscribed to GI-TOC Analysis. It's good to be writing to you here, in a space where we hope to explore some of the issues the GI-TOC works on every day from a slightly different perspective.

Last Wednesday brought two events, thousands of kilometres apart, that highlighted why this Substack channel – and the GI-TOC as a whole – is necessary, and why we urgently need a more strategic global response to organized crime.

I spent half a day before South Africa's Madlanga Commission, giving evidence on the infiltration of the country's criminal justice system by organized crime, a subject that has occupied much of my professional life. Then came the surprising news from Malta: a jury had acquitted businessman Yorgen Fenech, whom prosecutors accused of commissioning the 2017 assassination of investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.

These are very different situations, and I would want to be careful about drawing a straight line between them. An acquittal cannot simply be presented as evidence that a justice system has failed, still less as proof of corruption or criminal infiltration.

Even so, the connections were hard to put out of my mind. Not because either suddenly revealed something we didn't know about organized crime. Far from it. For years, the GI-TOC's work across the world has documented the relationships criminal actors can build with political, security and business interests, and the damage those relationships can inflict on institutions.

What last Wednesday did was bring the urgency of our work into unusually sharp focus.

In South Africa, certainly, the boundary between criminal interests and parts of the state has become increasingly difficult to draw. As I told the Madlanga Commission, none of this appeared overnight. Organized crime has spent more than three decades adapting and diversifying, moving between criminal markets and legitimate economies, and building relationships with people and structures inside the state.

Much has now been exposed, including through the Commission. I doubt we have seen all of it. What is already known may be just one part of a wider web of criminal relationships, protection and influence built up over many years.

The name we give to this form of crime is also important.

Corruption and criminal infiltration overlap, but they are not interchangeable. An official who takes a bribe has committed an act of corruption. Infiltration goes further. It implies an ongoing relationship in which a criminal group can draw on protection, information, resources or influence to help it operate or evade detection.

At that point, the division between criminal and state begins to break down. Some of the people or institutions expected to disrupt organized crime may instead be helping to sustain it.

South Africa is hardly alone in confronting this problem. Far more unusual is the response now unfolding through the Madlanga Commission. There are relatively few occasions when a country puts alleged criminal infiltration of its own justice system under this kind of sustained public scrutiny. Whatever ultimately comes from the process, that makes it important far beyond South Africa.

And there is plenty in the global picture to suggest we should be paying attention. The 2025 Global Organized Crime Index places South Africa seventh among 193 countries for criminality, with a score of 8 out of 10 for state-embedded criminal actors. Across all 193 countries covered by the Index, state-embedded actors are the most influential type of criminal actor. They are particularly closely associated with weaker resilience to organized crime. The latest findings suggest that strengthening the integrity of the state is central to reversing that relationship. A one-point increase in resilience corresponds to an average 1.8-point decline in state-embedded actors, while targeted improvements in areas including governance, transparency and accountability, and the judicial system can help weaken their influence. And as criminal penetration of the state declines, the data indicates that criminal markets decline too. In other words, strengthening the state's integrity does more than make its institutions more resilient; it helps push organized crime back.

So no, this phenomenon is not new, nor is it unique to South Africa. Madlanga is interesting for almost the opposite reason. Here is a country putting these relationships under a microscope and asking, in considerable detail and in public, what has happened to the institutions involved and what it will take to repair them.

One aspect of the South African picture has been especially difficult to escape this week: assassination.

The GI-TOC recorded 2 458 assassinations, attempted assassinations and assassination plots in South Africa between 2000 and 2025. State officials, councillors, investigators and whistleblowers have all been among the targets. Too often, however, an investigation reaches the hitman and stops there.

We have encountered versions of that problem elsewhere in our work on targeted killings. Finding the person who planted a bomb or pulled a trigger is one thing. Establishing who commissioned the killing, who enabled it and what interests lay behind it can be considerably harder.

Which brings me back to Malta.

The murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia has been part of the GI-TOC's work for a long time. Our Global Assassination Monitor has documented more than 2 700 cases of assassination and attempted assassination around the world, while our Faces of Assassination project brings those cases to life through the stories of the people behind them. Daphne is one of 50 people profiled who were murdered for confronting criminal interests, corruption and abuses of power.

Daphne was killed by a car bomb outside her home in October 2017. Three men have since been convicted of carrying out the crime, and two others of supplying the bomb. Achieving this was a monumental feat. It took years of persistence from her family and sustained pressure from civil society and the international community. It also took the efforts of determined people operating within a justice system that has itself been the subject of intense scrutiny.

The case against Fenech was expected to go further. Prosecutors alleged that he had commissioned her assassination. After a two-month trial, however, the jury acquitted him.

That verdict has to be respected. Fenech denied the allegations, and the prosecution did not persuade the jury of its case. But almost nine years after Daphne's death, it is difficult to overlook the fact that nobody has been held accountable for ordering her murder.

For those of us who have followed this case for years, the outcome is particularly troubling. The trial offered something that is vanishingly rare in assassinations of this kind: the possibility of getting beyond those who carried out the killing to establish who commissioned it.

Melvin Theuma, the intermediary in the assassination, who was granted immunity in exchange for information and testimony, became central to the prosecution. However, other leads were inadequately pursued, contradictions remained unresolved and the initial diversions in the investigation raised difficult questions about political protection.

There is, plainly, unfinished business here.

But the institutional questions surrounding Daphne's murder did not begin with this verdict. In 2021, Malta's independent public inquiry concluded that the state bore responsibility for creating a climate of impunity that contributed to the circumstances of her death. Five years later, the Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation says most of the inquiry's recommendations remain unimplemented.

Of course, the circumstances in Malta and South Africa are different. Put them beside one another, though, and then look beyond both countries, and a larger problem starts to take shape.

How well equipped are our institutions to deal with organized crime when powerful criminal interests can exploit their weaknesses, cultivate relationships within them or frustrate attempts to establish accountability?

There is a reason this question feels especially pertinent now.

Next month, states will gather in Vienna for the 13th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. More than a quarter of a century since the UNTOC was adopted, it remains the central global legal framework for international cooperation against organized crime. However, the mechanism created to assess how states are actually implementing it is in serious trouble.

The GI-TOC looked closely at the state of that mechanism in August. Six years after its establishment, only four states have completed reviews of the first cluster. The process is so far behind schedule that, on its present trajectory, there is no realistic prospect of it finishing anywhere near its intended time limit. International cooperation – one of the central purposes of the Convention – sits in a later cluster that the review process has yet to reach.

Money is part of the problem. So too is the absence of political will.

The review mechanism was designed to give states considerable control over the process, limiting the role of independent evidence and civil society. At a time when organized crime is increasingly entangled with state actors and institutions, this weakness has particularly serious consequences. The countries in greatest need of scrutiny may also have the strongest reasons to resist it.

This also points to a larger strategic problem. Organized crime does not organize itself neatly within national borders, individual criminal markets or the dividing line between the state and the underworld. A global response cannot afford to do so either. It needs better evidence about how these connections are changing, credible scrutiny of institutional vulnerabilities and, crucially, the political willingness to act on what we find.

Which makes the contrast with South Africa hard to miss. Through Madlanga, a country facing serious allegations about criminal infiltration of its justice system is doing something uncomfortable: examining those allegations publicly.

And then there is Malta, where extraordinary efforts by a family, civil society, journalists, international actors and people within the justice system have kept the pursuit of justice moving for almost nine years – yet there is still no answer to the most fundamental question: who ordered Daphne's murder? These experiences leave us with a rather difficult question about scrutiny. Who is willing to look seriously at the vulnerabilities inside institutions? Who gets to provide the evidence? And when weaknesses are exposed, is there enough political commitment to do anything about them?

Think about what we ask of the people inside these systems. An investigator has to be able to follow evidence even when it leads somewhere uncomfortable. A prosecutor must be able to pursue powerful people. Witnesses need confidence that giving evidence will not cost them their lives. Journalists need to be able to uncover relationships that others have a considerable interest in concealing.

None of that works particularly well if the surrounding institutions cannot protect those people, or if criminal networks have access to information, protection or influence within the system itself.

This was part of the reason my evidence to the Madlanga Commission did not propose one grand fix for South Africa. A new law will not do it. Nor will one agency or a handful of successful prosecutions. Weaknesses interact. Strengthen one institution while leaving another compromised and the problem simply finds somewhere else to go.

Some things can and should be remedied quickly: enhancing investigative capacity, improving the way intelligence is shared and reassessing officials in sensitive positions. Other changes require considerably more work. Our proposals include the establishment of an anti-organized crime agency whose structural and operational independence would be constitutionally protected.

There will be debate about the institutional design, as there should be. Countries have different legal systems, histories and political constraints. There is no template that can simply be lifted from one jurisdiction and dropped into another.

I also think this is where the GI-TOC has something distinctive to contribute. We occupy a somewhat unusual position. Our researchers are close enough to individual criminal markets and local contexts to understand their particularities, yet our global network of experts enables us to take a step back. We can consider what is happening within the South African justice system in light of what our years of work on assassinations have taught us about impunity elsewhere. We can compare these experiences with evidence from 193 countries. And we are present in international conversations, including around the UNTOC, where governments are deciding what the global response should be.

Sometimes, it is the space between these various levels that matters. A local case can expose a weakness that has global relevance; an international framework can look very different when held against the experiences of researchers and communities on the ground.

With the GI-TOC marking its 13th anniversary this month, now feels like an appropriate time to open up more of that thinking. This Substack will give us room to make those connections in public, outside the constraints of a formal report. We can respond to events as they unfold, hear directly from the people doing the work and, occasionally, sit with a question that does not yet have a comfortable answer. Last Wednesday gave us several.

Different places, different institutions and very different circumstances. Yet they raise the same question: are our institutions still capable of tackling organized crime when powerful interests are seeking to undermine them from within?

Pakistan urges UN to close gaps in fight against evolving terror threat



Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad addresses the UN Security Council on September 12, 2026.

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan urged the UN Security Council to strengthen its counter-terrorism mechanisms and close gaps in sanctions regimes as a new UN assessment warned that terrorist groups were rapidly adapting their propaganda, recruitment and financing methods.

The UN report specifically highlights the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as an example of how terrorist groups increasingly use propaganda to reinforce their operations, exploit local grievances, build legitimacy, facilitate fundraising and shape perceptions of authority.

Meanwhile, more than 30 independent UN human-rights experts warned that the 25-year campaign against terrorism had also taken a heavy toll on human rights and fundamental freedoms, while stretching the boundaries of international law.

The two concerns the rapidly evolving terrorist threat and the consequences of the international response to it dominated a Security Council discussion marking 25 years since the Sept 11 attacks.

A new report by the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) said terrorist propaganda had moved far beyond messaging and had become embedded in the operational structure of terrorist groups, helping them recruit fighters, raise funds, plan operations and, in some cases, govern territory.

The report specifically identified the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), along with Al Qaeda affiliate JNIM, Al-Shabaab and ISIL-K, among terrorist groups active in and around Pakistan and Afghanistan.

It said terrorist groups were adapting their propaganda strategies faster than governments could respond, creating what it called an "acceleration gap" between terrorist tactics and the legislation and policies of member states.

The report identified artificial intelligence, gaming platforms and alternative online spaces as among the emerging tools being exploited by terrorist organisations. It warned that young people were increasingly being targeted through social media, gaming platforms and online communities, while violent extremist groups were using graphic material and online subcultures to facilitate radicalisation.

Against this backdrop, Pakistan's Permanent Representative Asim Iftikhar Ahmad told the Council that the terrorist threat had "evolved and mutated" since the 9/11 attacks and called for stronger international cooperation to counter it.

He said the Council's existing sanctions regimes also needed to be strengthened to address gaps in the global counter-terrorism framework.

Asim highlighted the growing use of artificial intelligence, drones, the dark web, virtual assets and cryptocurrencies by terrorist groups for propaganda, radicalisation, recruitment, networking, attack planning and financing.

He pointed to continuing terrorist threats in Africa, the Middle East and Afghanistan, warning that extremist groups were exploiting modern technologies and cross-border networks to expand their reach.

Expressing particular concern over terrorism emanating from Afghanistan, Islamabad's envoy said more than 4,700 Pakistanis had lost their lives to terrorism over the past three years.

He called for effective international action against groups including the TTP, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and the so-called Islamic State.

Pakistan, he said, had played a frontline role in the international campaign against Al Qaeda and had paid an enormous price, with more than 90,000 Pakistanis, including civilians and security and law-enforcement personnel, killed in terrorist violence since the turn of the century.



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Pakistan Calls for Renewed and Comprehensive Global Action Against Terrorism 25 Years After 9/11

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The Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations
(Information Section)

Press Release

Pakistan Calls for Renewed and Comprehensive Global Action Against Terrorism 25 Years After 9/11

United Nations, 13 September 2026: Pakistan has called for a renewed, comprehensive and forward-looking international response to terrorism, urging the UN Security Council to strengthen its counter-terrorism architecture and address gaps in existing sanctions regimes to meet evolving terrorist threats.

Speaking at the Security Council briefing on "Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts: Twenty-five years after 9/11: Renew the Security Council's Fight Against Terrorism," Ambassador Asim Bhikhar Ahmed, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, paid tribute to the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, including seven Pakistanis, and expressed solidarity with the Government and people of the United States.

Recalling the global response to 9/11, Ambassador Ahmed noted that the attacks led to UN Security Council action, including the adoption of Resolution 1373, which remains a key component of the UN counter-terrorism framework.

He highlighted Pakistan's frontline role in the global fight against terrorism, noting that its counter-terrorism efforts, intelligence cooperation and security coordination with international partners significantly degraded Al-Qaeda's capabilities.

"Most notable successes in the international campaign against Al-Qaeda were achieved through Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts and active cooperation," he said.

Ambassador Ahmed stressed that Pakistan had paid an enormous price in the fight, with over 80,000 fatalities, including security and law enforcement personnel and civilians, losing their lives to terrorist violence since the turn of the century, alongside sustained economic losses.

He observed that while the Security Council had responded with "urgency, unity, and resolve" 25 years ago, the terrorist threat had since evolved.

"The terrorism landscape has since evolved and mutated. New threats have emerged," he said, stressing that existing sanctions regimes needed to be strengthened to address gaps in the international counter-terrorism framework.

The Ambassador highlighted the rise of far-right extremism, the continuing terrorist threat in Africa, the Middle East and Afghanistan, and the exploitation of modern technologies for terrorist propaganda, radicalization, recruitment, networking and financing.

Expressing particular concern over terrorism emanating from Afghanistan, he stated that more than 4,700 Pakistanis had lost their lives to terrorism over the past three years, and called for effective international action against terrorist groups including the TTP, BKA, ETIM and IS.

He also warned against the growing use of the dark web, virtual assets and cryptocurrencies for terrorist financing, cautioning: "Absent regulation, this threat will definitely multiply."

He also warned against the growing use of the dark web, virtual assets and cryptocurrencies for terrorist financing, cautioning: "Absent regulation, this threat will definitely multiply."

Ambassador Ahmed underscored the need for a comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism, including balanced implementation of all four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and greater focus on addressing root causes and conditions conducive to terrorism.

He further stressed that accountability must also apply in situations of foreign occupation, stating that occupying powers should be held accountable and risk allowed to operate with impunity against peoples exercising their right to self-determination.

Concluding the statement, the Permanent Representative called for the international response to remain ahead of the rapidly evolving terrorist threat.

"The international response to terrorism must be up to speed, in fact ahead of the rapidly evolving threat," he said.

He urged the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility, ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice, and strengthen international cooperation and regional synergies to build "a united, collective front to this global threat."

7:55 PM · Sep 12, 2026

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The Council observed a minute of silence for the victims of the Sept 11 attacks before members renewed calls for international cooperation against terrorism.

US representative Michael Waltz recalled the 2,977 people killed in the Sept 11 attacks, including citizens from more than 90 countries, and paid tribute to the first responders who ran towards the burning World Trade Centre towers.

"After all, each of us has suffered," he said, referring to terrorist attacks carried out in different countries since 2001.

He called on the international community to cut off terrorist financing, deny terrorists safe havens, enforce Security Council resolutions, share intelligence and pursue those planning attacks.

British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Chris Elmore said the international response after 9/11 had strengthened cooperation, constrained terrorist financing, transformed border and aviation security and helped prevent attacks.

He called for closer cooperation with civil society and the technology and financial sectors, including efforts to harness artificial intelligence against terrorism.

But he stressed that counter-terrorism measures must comply with international law, including human-rights law.

France's UN ambassador Jérôme Bonafont said terrorist groups were increasingly using new technologies for propaganda, recruitment and financing, effectively turning innovations developed by others against their societies.

He said IS, Al Qaeda and their affiliates continued to carry out attacks across borders and called on the Security Council to renew the leadership role it had assumed after the 9/11 attacks, including by developing effective measures against terrorists' exploitation of new technologies.

Human-rights costs

The anniversary discussion, however, also brought a forceful warning that the international response to terrorism must not undermine the rights and freedoms it seeks to protect.

More than 30 independent UN human-rights experts said too many countries had adopted unnecessary and disproportionate responses after the Sept 11 attacks that seriously undermined human rights, civil society, civic space, democracy and the rule of law.

The experts, appointed through the UN Human Rights Council but independent of the UN and unpaid for their work, said the so-called "wars on terror" had stretched foundational rules of international law "beyond their breaking point".

Worldwide monitoring over the past quarter century had exposed some of the gravest violations of international law committed in the name of countering terrorism, they said, citing wars of aggression, unlawful occupations, "countless" war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as plausible allegations of genocide.

They also highlighted assassinations presented as "targeted killings", torture disguised as "interrogation", secret detention, enforced disappearances and unfair military trials and special courts, including at the US-operated Guantanamo Bay detention facility.

The experts urged states to review their counter-terrorism laws and practices to ensure compliance with international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law.

Their warning added a second dimension to the 25-year assessment of the global campaign against terrorism: while terrorist organisations have adapted rapidly to new technologies and methods, governments must ensure that their response does not erode the fundamental rights, democratic institutions and international legal protections that the counter-terrorism campaign is intended to defend.

'Assault on humanity'

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, in his anniversary message, described the Sept 11 attacks as "an assault on humanity itself" and paid tribute to the nearly 3,000 victims, survivors and first responders.

"As we mark this sombre occasion on 11 September, we remember the nearly 3,000 victims – from the United States and more than 90 countries – and stand with their families and loved ones," he said.

Guterres noted that 2026 also marked 20 years since member states adopted the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, describing the fight against terrorism as a shared and unfinished task.

“As we pay tribute to the victims, let us renew our shared commitment to build a future free from terrorism,” he said.

The Security Council’s discussion came 25 years after Resolution 1373 established the Council’s counter-terrorism machinery in response to the Sept 11 attacks.



SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 12TH, 2026

Justice Ayesha Malik honoured with 'international leader' award in Vienna



ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court’s Justice Ayesha Malik has been conferred the International Leader/Lifetime Award at the Justitia Awards 2026 held in Vienna, Austria.

The prestigious award recognised her distinguished contribution to the development of law and justice, as well as her sustained efforts to advance equality, human rights and the meaningful participation of women in the legal profession and institutions of justice.

Presented before judges, lawyers and legal professionals from different jurisdictions, the honour also acknowledged the wider significance of women occupying positions from which they can influence legal reasoning, institutional practices and the development of law.

During her visit to Vienna, Justice Malik also participated in the Women in Law Conference 2026, where she addressed the session titled “Roadmap to Equality and Women’s Rights in Practice”.

Reflecting on her professional journey — from her appointment to the Lahore High Court (LHC) in 2012 to becoming the first woman judge of the SC in 2022—she discussed the challenges and opportunities associated with serving as a woman judge and the importance of incorporating a gender perspective into legal reasoning and judicial practice.

Justice Malik emphasised that the pursuit of equality must extend beyond formal legal guarantees and take into account the contexts in which women experience and engage with the law.

She underscored the need for legal principles and judicial institutions to respond effectively to women's lived realities and also referred to aspects of her jurisprudence concerning dignity, equality and the treatment of women within the justice system.

The conferment of the award constitutes a proud recognition of Justice Malik's judicial contribution and reflects Pakistan's growing representation and distinction within the international legal community.

The Pakistan-based Women in Law initiative termed the award a "proud moment" for Pakistan. In a post on X, it pointed out that Justice Malik was the third Pakistani woman to receive a Justitia Award, with each woman awarded one in each category.

These included Justice Malik in the International Leader/Lifetime Award category, rights activist Jalila Haider in the International Game Changer category in 2023, and Advocate Nida Usman Chaudhry for the International Academia category.



SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 13, 2026

Lost in numbers

THE outrage against child abuse rages on. Sadly, state and society continue to bury their heads in the sand. All data points to the same bitter truths most victims know their predators; incidents remain underreported; laws are rendered lifeless.

Senator Sherry Rehman expressed deep concern over Pakistan's "serious child protection crisis", stressing "there can be no impunity for those who prey on children".

The scale is at an alarming level: 1,914 cases of violence and abuse against children were reported in the first half of 2026; 80pc occurred in Punjab. According to the data cited by the senator, 57pc were reported from urban centres with 43pc from rural regions. While 43pc of the accused were acquaintances of the victims, nearly 45pc of incidents took place within the child's home.

The volume of injustice is monumental, though it is not confirmed whether the crimes were surging, or more were being reported. What is indisputable is the fact that the state's response has exposed severe systemic failures.

Although Pakistan has enough laws to protect the young – the NCCIA Punjab ensures speedy registration, investigation and prosecution for cases involving women and children through its dedicated cell – proof of success is scarce.

Past debacles from the 2015 pornography scandal involving hundreds of boys and girls in Kasur to the rape and murder of little Zainab Ansari in 2018 – have also failed to elicit a review of national priorities.

An FIR is a recognition of harm, not protection. Statutes, including the Criminal Law Amendment in 2016 and the Anti-Rape Act, alerts and movements must lead to an overhaul.

Safeguards and psychosocial support for victims and their families, together with awareness and education, must be made central. Abuse is not just detrimental to our children's mental and physical well-being, it threatens their academic prospects, sets off self-destructive tendencies, and creates more abusers. Delayed justice is innocence lost.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 14TH, 2026

ATC convicts two facilitators of 2024 attack on Chinese nationals near Karachi airport

KARACHI: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) sentenced a bank officer and a trader of total 10 years and seven years in prison, respectively, for facilitating a terrorist attack targeting Chinese nationals near Karachi airport.

The court found trader Saeed Ali and bank officer Bilal guilty of facilitating and arranging funds through a private bank in Hub, Balochistan, to purchase a vehicle that was used in the October 2024 deadly attack on a Chinese convoy that claimed the lives of two foreigners and one Pakistani national.

The ATC-V Judge, who conducted the trial at the judicial complex inside the Karachi central prison, sentenced accused Bilal to 10- and three-year imprisonment, while Saeed was sentenced to seven- and two-year imprisonment.

The court ruled that all the sentences will run concurrently.

During the trial, the convicts denied the allegations, while Saeed deposed that he had no link with the outlawed Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) or any other such organisation.

Convict Bilal also denied his involvement and claimed that he was performing his duty at the bank and he had no knowledge about the suicide bomber's purpose of the transaction and alleged that he was implicated in this case as the suicide bomber was his university's fellow.

According to the prosecution, a vehicle was purchased for Rs7.1 million from a showroom and convicts Saeed and Bilal facilitated the transaction. The vehicle was later fitted with explosives and used in the bombing, it added.

A case was registered by the Counter Terrorism Department under Sections 11-F (membership, support and meetings relating to a proscribed organisation) 11-N (punishment for fund-raising and using money or other property for the purposes of terrorism) and 21-I (aid and abetment) of the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 15TH, 2026

Bilal, Natalie discuss digital asset regulation



US Chargé d’Affaires Natalie Baker (R) and Minister of State and Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority chief Bilal Bin Saqib.

ISLAMABAD: The US and Pakistan have stepped up engagement on digital asset regulation, reflecting a growing focus on developing a secure and sustainable framework for the virtual asset market.

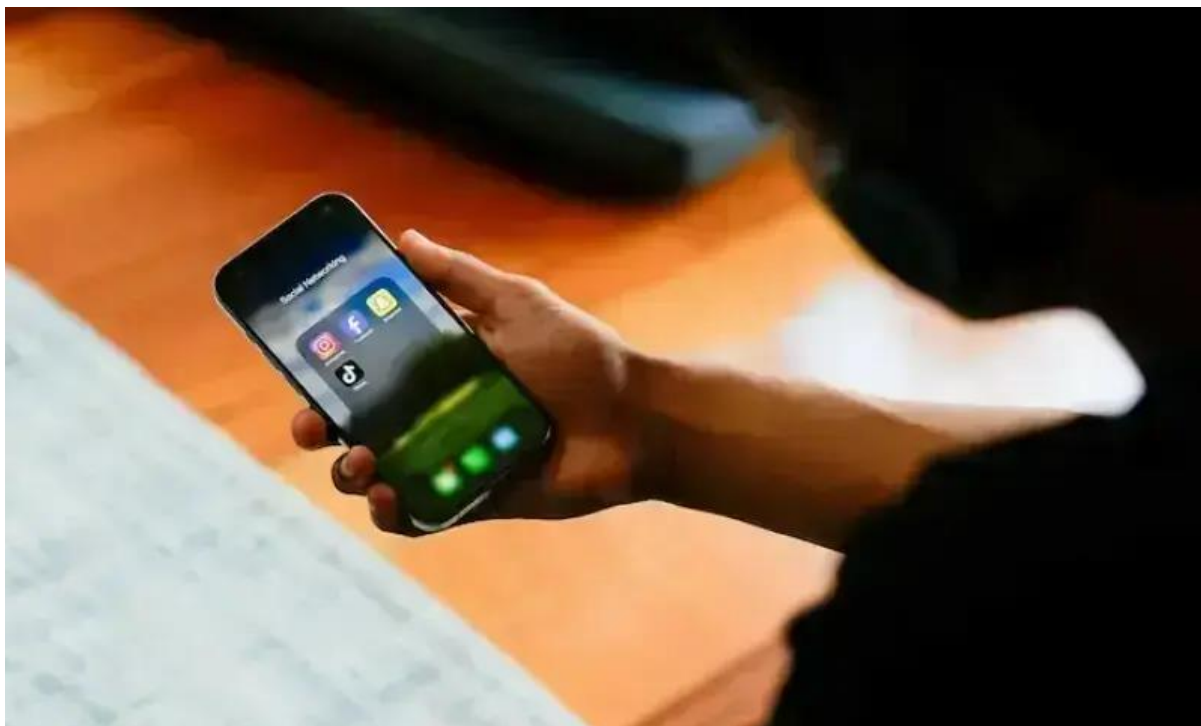
US Chargé d’Affaires Natalie Baker on Sunday met Minister of State and Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority chief Bilal Bin Saqib to discuss recent developments in the country’s digital asset regulatory environment.

Mr Saqib briefed the US envoy on developments in Pakistan’s digital assets sector and efforts to establish a modern, robust and transparent regulatory framework for the virtual asset market. The two sides also discussed the overall digital economy, with a focus on innovation and financial transparency.

The initiative is aimed at aligning Pakistan’s virtual asset market with international standards.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 21ST, 2026

'I live in fear': 1.5 million Pakistani children sexually exploited online



Pakistani teenager Zara Shah was targeted by a stranger while playing a computer game, drawn into a conversation that would expose her to terrifying online sexual exploitation.

Zara, whose name has been changed by AFP for safety reasons, is one of an estimated 1.5 million children in Pakistan who experienced online sexual abuse in one year, according to a report published by the UN children's agency this month.

"We started chatting while playing an online game, and he began acting like a friend. Later, he wanted to meet and, after, started asking me for nudes," 17-year-old Shah said.

"When I refused, he threatened to find my family online and tell them that we had been talking," she added. According to the Unicef report, around 85 per cent of perpetrators were known to the victims, aged between 12 and 17. "The abuse may start with a friendly conversation, a gaming interaction, a promise of gifts, money or romance," Daniel Kardefelt, lead author of the global Unicef report, told AFP.

"Perpetrators may spend months building trust using information that they find on social media," Kardefelt said.

In Muslim-majority Pakistan, 71pc of victims did not tell anyone, according to the Unicef report, while no child surveyed reported the abuse through formal channels — including police, helplines or social workers.

Their silence was mostly because of stigma, shame and fears over how their families or society may react.

“Around 44pc of reported abuse was entirely online, with Snapchat and WhatsApp among the most common settings,” said Mehek Naeem, director of Pahchaan, a children’s rights organisation based in Lahore.

Girls can face heightened risks of sexual extortion, which can lead to restrictions on their mobility or withdrawal from school. For Zara, the threat of being exposed to her family was enough to keep her silent.

“I could have been stopped from going to school or leaving the house altogether,” she said.

“Staying quiet felt like the better option than speaking up. But anxiety kills me every day.”

Loopholes, ‘no implementation’ With around 74pc of children aged 12 to 17 in Pakistan estimated by Unicef to be internet users, concerns over online safety are growing as their access to digital platforms expands.

Echoing other policies around the world, the provincial government in Punjab this month passed a resolution to bar children under 16 from using social media.

However, it has faced opposition.

“I disagree with the ban,” said Usama Khilji, a digital rights activist.

“It will be a challenge to implement, and children can circumvent the ban through VPNs. Children have the right of freedom of expression, and a ban takes that away,” he said.

Pakistan has a legal framework addressing tech-facilitated offences against children, but “there is no implementation”, said Tahira Afrasiyab, a spokesperson for non-profit organisation Muslim Hands.

And, according to experts, there are loopholes in existing laws.

Human rights lawyer Salman Afridi said this issue shows how “economic vulnerability can be weaponised” for amounts as small as Rs10,000 in exchange for the production of sexual content. “What we are seeing is the use of technology to facilitate an entire chain of grooming, inducement, coercion, blackmail, production, distribution and commercialisation,” he said.

“There is a strong basis for describing this as a commercial ecosystem of exploitation,” Afridi added. For Zara and many others like her, the consequences of an encounter that began with an online game remain difficult to escape.

“I was, and am, scared,” she said. “I live in fear.”

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 21, 2026

Pakistan, EU sign financing agreements worth €65m



Pakistan and the European Union signed €65 million in financing agreements.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the European Union (EU) signed €65 million (about \$75m) in financing agreements to support global gateway investments, strengthen the rule of law and business environment and enhance energy and environmental resilience.

The agreements were signed by the EU Ambassador to Pakistan Raimundas Karoblis and the secretary of the Economic Affairs Division (EAD), Muhammad Humair Karim, on behalf of their respective sides, the division said in a statement.

Under the agreements, the EU is to provide a total of €65m (about Rs20.64bn) to launch three separate programmes: Global Gateway Development Facilitation for Pakistan, Energy and Natural Environment Resilience in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and EU Support to the Rule of Law and Business Environment in Pakistan.

Funded under the EU's Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027, the initiatives focus on three main aspects of Pakistan's development.

The first, Global Gateway Development Facilitation for Pakistan, envisages investment management and financial enablement of environmental projects to attract more foreign

investment to the country by improving the tax system and strengthening the government's long-term financial planning.

The second project, Energy and Natural Environment Resilience in KP, is designed to expand renewable energy in rural communities that are not connected to the electricity grid. It will also provide training to help attract private investment and increase private sector involvement in KP's energy sector.

The third programme, building on previous EU assistance, covers EU support to the rule of law and business environment in Pakistan to help people access the police, prosecution, courts and legal aid in the provinces of KP and Balochistan.

The programme will also support Punjab and Sindh in expanding the use of alternative and commercial dispute resolution mechanisms in legal cases, in order to build interest from European and other companies in investing in these provinces.

The EAD said the EU's development cooperation with Pakistan remained focused on economic development, climate resilience, governance and the rule of law, as well as human rights and sustainable natural resources.

Speaking on the occasion, EAD Secretary Karim expressed his appreciation for the EU's continued support and partnership. He highlighted the timely nature of the interventions, highlighting its strong relevance to Pakistan's goals of increased foreign investment, improved access to electricity in off-grid rural areas in KP, and advanced standards in the rule of law and the resolution of commercial disputes.

Ambassador Karoblis said the agreements demonstrated the EU's commitment to supporting Pakistan's economic development and investment ambitions under the flagship Global Gateway initiative. He noted that they would also support the authorities in KP to build a stronger and resilient energy sector, while promoting the sustainable management of natural resources.

"The rule of law will further strengthen access to justice for citizens in KP and Balochistan," he said.

"In addition, Punjab and Sindh will benefit from our support to strengthen alternative and commercial dispute resolution through collaboration with the judiciary, legal professionals, universities and the business community."

SOURCE: SEPTEMBER 21, 2026

NCCIA arrests 212 individuals over alleged involvement in international fraud schemes

The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) raided three call centres in Islamabad over the past 24 hours, taking 212 individuals into custody for their alleged involvement in international fraud schemes, the agency's spokesperson said on Tuesday.

In a statement, the spokesperson said the NCCIA's Islamabad unit had launched a major crackdown on illegal call centres as part of efforts to curb organised cyber fraud.

"Raids were conducted on 3 call centres established in Sectors E-11 and G-10, resulting in a total of 212 individuals being taken into custody," according to the spokesperson.

He added that the detainees included Chinese and Pakistani men and women.

"During the operations, 306 mobile phones, 383 computers/CPUs and 299 monitors and laptops were recovered," he said.

The spokesperson said the suspects were allegedly involved in international fraud through Google scams and "low-dating" schemes, adding that the network was found to be linked to India and Brazil.

A case had been registered and an investigation was underway, he said.

Last week, the NCCIA arrested 27 suspects, including four Afghan nationals, during a major operation in Karachi, busting an international scam call centre.

Initial investigations had revealed that the suspects posed as "authorised representatives of financial institutions and contacted foreign nationals through spoofed and fraudulent calls to obtain their personal and financial information."

In August, the NCCIA arrested 114 foreign nationals, including 111 Chinese and three Vietnamese citizens, for allegedly running a cyber-romance and sextortion network from a registered IT business in the capital.

The network was allegedly involved in luring foreign nationals into online sexual conversations, including video chats and explicit video calls, and subsequently exploiting the material for criminal and financial purposes.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

Countries adopt global blueprint to tackle fast-evolving crime in digital age



The Abu Dhabi Declaration was adopted by acclamation at the opening of the 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, bringing governments together around challenges ranging from cybercrime and fraud to the growing criminal exploitation of digital technology.

The Declaration highlights an increasingly complex landscape in which services, infrastructure and technology can be exploited by criminals, including emerging trends described as “crime as a service” and “violence as a service”.

At the same time, countries committed to making greater use of technology themselves, including by digitalizing justice systems and harnessing artificial intelligence in criminal justice responses.

The Declaration stresses that safeguards must accompany those changes, including human oversight, transparency, due process and data protection.

‘Justice cannot be a privilege’

In a video message to the Congress, UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said the meeting was taking place at a time of profound change.

“Justice cannot be a privilege. It must protect every person, uphold every person’s rights and leave no one behind,” said Ms. Mohamed. “This Congress is an opportunity to renew our

shared commitment to justice and the rule of law, and to translate that commitment into action.”

Countries are already being encouraged to put the Declaration into practice through the voluntary Pledge4Justice initiative, under which participating governments are announcing concrete, time-bound actions on crime prevention and criminal justice through 2031.

From Kyoto to Abu Dhabi

Opening the Congress, UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Executive Director Monica Juma framed the gathering as both a response to a changing criminal landscape and a test of international cooperation.

“Today, the world convenes in Abu Dhabi to reaffirm that the rule of law and criminal justice are essential to the safety and security of people and the planet,” said Ms. Juma. “At a time when confidence in multilateralism is faltering, let Abu Dhabi be a testament to international cooperation.”

Five years after the previous Congress in Kyoto, Japan, Ms. Juma said the world had reached another “inflection point”, with technology and artificial intelligence advancing at extraordinary speed.

The same platforms connecting billions of people can also connect criminals, she warned, while digital currencies can conceal illicit profits and digital tools can be used to deceive, manipulate and exploit.

Technology, she argued, is not simply accelerating crime but changing its character, while organized criminal networks increasingly exploit weaknesses across borders and institutions.

Protecting people as the ‘north star’

Behind those broad trends, Ms. Juma urged delegates to focus on the people most exposed to harm, including children recruited by gangs, women facing violence at home or online, people unable to obtain legal assistance and young people lured into scam networks with promises of a better future.

“Protecting these people must be the measure against which we judge our efforts over the coming week,” she said. “It must be our north star.”

She called for laws and institutions capable of keeping pace with changing threats, greater access to justice and legal aid, and technology that serves as “a force for good” rather than an accelerator of harm.

And while welcoming the Abu Dhabi Declaration as a starting point, Ms. Juma stressed that its impact would ultimately depend on implementation.

A week focused on justice

Hosted by the United Arab Emirates, the Congress runs through 1 October under the theme Protecting People and Planet in the Digital Age.

Some 119 countries are represented, alongside more than 40 justice ministers and other senior officials, with over 5,100 participants from governments, civil society, academia and the private sector.

Plenary meetings, workshops, side events and exhibitions will run throughout the session.

Organizers are also billing this as the most youth-inclusive Crime Congress yet. Young people are participating in workshops, contributing to follow-up efforts and taking part in a dedicated Youth Lab and art exhibition, following a Youth Forum held ahead of the Congress on 24 and 25 September.

UNODC serves as secretariat of the Congress and will support implementation of the Abu Dhabi Declaration.

SOURCE: [NEWS.UN.ORG](https://news.un.org)

Mohsin Naqvi orders intensified crackdown on cybercrime



Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visits NCCIA Central Zone Headquarters in Lahore.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi directed the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) to further intensify operations against online financial fraud, harassment, digital blackmail and organised cybercrime networks.

During his visit to the NCCIA Central Zone Headquarters in Lahore, the interior minister reviewed ongoing cybercrime operations and investigations in detail. He inspected the complaints cell, forensic laboratory and investigation wing and reviewed the entire process from registration of citizens' complaints to investigation and action against accused persons.



Chairing a special meeting, Naqvi directed that indiscriminate action be taken against organised groups involved in online financial fraud, fake accounts, digital blackmail and online harassment.

“Wherever a cybercriminal may be operating from, he must be brought within the ambit of law,” he said.

The interior minister directed authorities to strengthen the immediate response mechanism for financial fraud complaints so that timely coordination with relevant institutions could help secure victims’ funds and improve the chances of tracing the suspects.

“A citizen should not have to wait for months after filing a complaint. Timely progress should be visible on every complaint,” Naqvi said.



He ordered a case-by-case review of pending cases and complaints and directed officials to eliminate unnecessary delays. He also called for enhanced digital forensic capabilities, the use of modern forensic tools and specialised training for investigation officers.

“New methods of cybercrime cannot be countered through traditional investigations; modern technology and trained human resources are required,” Naqvi stated.

The interior minister said the NCCIA was to be developed into a modern cyber police force capable of protecting citizens in the digital world through advanced technology. He directed that complaints involving online harassment, blackmail and digital exploitation of women and children be accorded special priority.

Naqvi further underlined that protecting citizens’ data, privacy, and financial interests was a fundamental responsibility of the NCCIA, adding that the agency was being provided with modern technology, necessary resources, and training to fulfil this responsibility.

He also directed the NCCIA to make its public awareness campaign against cybercrime more effective and ensure that citizens were promptly informed about new methods of online fraud.

The Director General (DG) NCCIA briefed the interior minister on the performance of the central zone, cases under investigation, emerging cyber fraud trends and ongoing operations.

DG FIA, inspector general Islamabad Police, director FIA Lahore Zone and other relevant officials were also present.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, SEPTEMBER 28, 2026

Creating crypto's guardrails domestically

BY NADEEM HUSSAIN



Pakistan faces a question regulators worldwide are struggling with: how do you regulate a financial ecosystem that operates across national borders and can be accessed by anyone with a smartphone?

The scale of Pakistan's crypto economy makes the question particularly important.

The Chairman of the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA), Bilal Bin Saqib, recently told a Senate committee that approximately 40 million Pakistanis have crypto-linked accounts. He estimated Pakistanis hold between \$10 billion and \$20bn in crypto assets outside Pakistan. Chainalysis ranked Pakistan third globally in its 2025 Global Crypto Adoption Index, behind India and the United States. Pakistan ranked second for retail activity through centralised crypto services.

What is remarkable is that much of this ecosystem developed outside Pakistan's traditional financial system and clearly violates current State Bank of Pakistan regulations. However, Pakistanis can download an app like Binance, open a USDT account, and then make a rupee transfer via Raast or inter-bank fund transfer to local facilitators listed on the app, getting USDT credited to their offshore account through 'institutional' hawala.

They can acquire USDT, hold digital assets in offshore or self-custodied wallets, transfer them internationally and increasingly use those assets for payments. The arrival of stablecoin-

funded international cards makes the regulatory challenge even more interesting. Companies such as RedotPay and Fasset illustrate how quickly the distinction between cryptocurrency and conventional payments is disappearing. A consumer can hold USDT and use a card linked to those digital assets to make purchases through the international payments infrastructure in Pakistan.

The number of Pakistani customers using these services is not publicly disclosed. It would therefore be misleading to claim a specific figure. Nevertheless, if Pakistan really has tens of millions of crypto-linked accounts and \$10–20bn of Pakistani capital invested in virtual assets, the potential market for offshore crypto-linked financial services is clearly substantial.

A Pakistani consumer can acquire USDT from another individual, transfer it to a wallet operated by an international company and use a foreign-issued virtual card to purchase goods or services. The customer may be in Pakistan, but the crypto platform could be licensed in another jurisdiction. The digital asset exists on a global blockchain. The card programme could operate from another country, while the merchant could be somewhere else entirely or in Pakistan.

That raises the question: Which regulator controls that transaction? No single regulator completely does.

This does not mean governments are powerless. They can regulate domestic banks, payment companies, exchanges, fiat on-ramps and off-ramps. They can require locally operating businesses to identify customers, monitor transactions, maintain records and report suspicious activity. But controlling access to a global digital financial network is considerably more difficult.

Pakistan has responded by creating PVARA and establishing a formal licensing framework for Virtual Asset Service Providers. Companies wishing to offer virtual-asset services in Pakistan are required to enter the regulatory framework, establish the appropriate local presence and comply with requirements including know-your-customer (KYC), anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism, transaction monitoring and record-keeping.

This is an important development since it creates an opportunity for reputable international crypto companies to regularise their operations and participate legitimately in one of the world's largest crypto markets.

The more difficult question is why Pakistan's existing crypto users would move from offshore platforms into the regulated domestic ecosystem. For regulators, greater KYC, transaction monitoring and tax transparency are essential characteristics of a legitimate financial system.

For some existing crypto users, however, those same requirements may represent additional friction. This does not mean offshore crypto lacks KYC. However, they do not verify the primary document. This, plus the fact that their assets, accounts and transaction records sit outside Pakistan's immediate financial and tax-reporting infrastructure, is a key consideration.

That creates the central challenge for PVARA. Pakistan can require a company seeking to operate formally in the country to obtain regulatory approval. But preventing an individual from accessing an offshore wallet, exchange or blockchain application through the internet is much harder. And this phenomenon is not unique to Pakistan. It is inherent in the architecture of digital assets. The solution therefore cannot depend solely on enforcement.

Pakistan's regulated crypto ecosystem must become more attractive than the offshore alternative. That means easy conversion between rupees and digital assets, integration with banks and payment systems, competitive transaction costs, consumer protection, efficient dispute resolution and legitimate everyday applications. Most importantly, users need to see a benefit from becoming part of the regulated system.

PVARA has an opportunity to bring a huge existing digital-asset economy into Pakistan's formal financial architecture. But issuing licences may prove to be the easier part. The real test will be persuading millions of existing crypto users that moving into the regulated ecosystem is actually in their interest. That is perhaps the larger lesson for regulators everywhere.

In a borderless financial system, regulation cannot rely solely on control. It must also compete.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 28TH, 2026



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