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US mulls action against Iran amid heightened tensions

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UK PM secures visa free entry of British people

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Govt committed to utilization of all resources

Detailed News On Page-07



Meets EU ambassador

Shehbaz reaffirms resolve to deepen Pakistan-EU ties

The Ambassador transmitted best wishes from EU leadership and emphasized the EU's continued engagement with Pakistan to enhance trade opportunities under GSP+ and through proactive initiatives, including the inaugural High-Level EU-Pakistan Business Forum scheduled for 28-29 April 2026 in Islamabad

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Mr. Raimundas Karoblis, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister's House. The Prime Minister was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr. Syed Tauqir Shah, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi, and Foreign Secretary Anma Baloch. Welcoming the EU Ambassador, who assumed his duties in Pakistan in September 2025 after presenting credentials to the President, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif extended warm greetings and reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to further strengthening multifaceted cooperation with the European Union.

He highlighted key areas of mutual interest, including trade and investment, development cooperation, security, migration management, and climate action. The Prime Minister underscored the vital importance of the EU's Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) in boosting bilateral trade and supporting Pakistan's export-oriented sectors. He stated that the Government of Pakistan remains fully committed to collaborating closely with the EU on mutually beneficial trade enhancement measures, particularly through sustained engagement under the GSP+ framework. Prime Minister Sharif also expressed satisfaction with the outcomes of the 7th round of the Pakistan-EU Strategic Dialogue, held in Brussels in November 2025 and led on the Pakistan side by

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Shehbaz Sharif talks to Iranian President

FIAZ CH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday spoke with Iranian President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian, with the two leaders exchanging views on the "evolving regional situation". According to a handout from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), PM Shehbaz "underscored the importance of sustained dialogue and diplomatic engagement for promoting peace, security and development in the region". "Reflecting the close and fraternal ties between Pakistan and Iran, rooted in shared history, culture, and faith, both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to maintain regular high-level engagements and consultations through bilateral institutional mechanisms, to further strengthen cooperation across the full spectrum of bilateral relations," the statement said. In a separate post on X, PM Shehbaz said the two exchanged views on the "evolving regional situation and agreed that sustained dialogue and diplomatic engagement are vital for peace, security, and development in our region". "We also reaffirmed our commitment to further strengthening Pakistan-Iran

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of European Union meeting the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

Pak will not join Abraham Accords

US travel advisory for Pakistan "update, not downgrade," says FO spokesperson Tahir Hussain Andrabi

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said on Thursday that Pakistan will not become a party to the Abraham Accords, reiterating that Islamabad's stance on the Palestinian issue remains unchanged. Addressing a weekly briefing in Islamabad, Andrabi dismissed reports linking Pakistan's participation in the Board of Peace to the Abraham Accords, calling such claims a misconception. "Joining the Board of Peace has no connection with the Abraham Accords and does not represent any deviation

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Pakistan beat Australia in T20 opener

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan opener Saim Ayub's all-round performance helped Green Shirts secure a 22-run victory over Australia in the first T20I of three-match series at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on Thursday. Ayub backed his blazing 40-run knock with two wickets to help the Green Shirts to defend a modest total 168. Set to chase 169, Australia's batting unit faltered and could accumulate 146/8 in 20 overs. The touring side got off to a briefly flamboyant start to the pursuit, with their opening pair of Matthew Short and stand-in captain raising 21 runs off

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Briefs

Iraqi PM slams Trump threat

NEWS DESK

BAGHDAD: A former Iraqi prime minister has denounced threats made by US President Donald Trump to end US support for Iraq if he were to return to power. Nouri Maliki, who has links to Iran, was selected at the weekend by the ruling coalition of Shia-led parties as its nominee for prime minister. The US president wrote on Truth Social that Maliki would be a "very bad choice", adding: "Last time Maliki was in power, the Country descended into poverty and total chaos." Maliki, whose time in office between 2006 and 2014 was marked by sectarian violence, stepped down after the Islamic State (IS) group seized large parts of the country.

EU to declare Iran Pasdaran a terrorist organization

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The European Union has decided to designate Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), known as Pasdaran-e Inqilab, as a terrorist organization. The decision comes amid mounting pressure from the United States, which has long urged Europe to take a tougher stance against Tehran. EU officials cited the IRGC's alleged involvement in widespread human rights violations, including violent crackdowns on protesters and the killing of Iranian citizens. The move marks a significant escalation in Europe's policy toward Iran, potentially deepening tensions between Tehran and Western powers while signaling solidarity with Washington's approach to the regime.

New beginning

UK secures visa free travel to China

Xi acknowledged past "twists and turns" in bilateral relations but stressed that engagement between the two nations is "unavoidable"

DNA

BEIJING: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced a major facilitation for UK citizens: visa-free entry to China for trips of up to 30 days. The landmark agreement, secured during his high-profile visit to Beijing—the first by a UK prime minister in eight years—aims to boost business ties and tourism between the two nations. Speaking after productive talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Starmer described the relationship as being in a "good, strong place." He highlighted that the visa waiver would enable easier access for British businesses eager to expand in the world's second-largest economy. "Businesses have been crying out for ways to grow their footprints in China," Starmer stated. "We'll make it easier for them to do so, including via relaxed visa rules for short-term travel, supporting them to expand abroad—all while boosting growth and jobs at home."

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China says Canada deal does not target the US

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: Chinese officials said a recent trade agreement with Canada is not meant to undercut other countries, after Donald Trump threatened to impose 100% tariffs on Canadian products if Canada finalises the "deal" with Beijing. "It does not target any third party," China's foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said on Monday of the new "strategic partnership" between Canada and China. Trump threatened the tariffs in a Truth Social post over the weekend, and warned in subsequent posts that China is "successfully and completely

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Armed forces fully prepared to safeguard country's sovereignty

Field Marshal stresses importance of maintaining optimal preparedness to meet security challenges

DNA



RAWALPINDI: DChief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), Field Marshal Asim Munir, on Thursday reaffirmed Pakistan Armed Forces' preparedness to safeguard the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity against all threats. He made this affirmation during a visit to Baha-walpur Garrison, where he was briefed on key operational, training and administrative matters of the Corps, with particular emphasis on preparations for multi-domain warfare, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. During the visit, the ISPR said, COAS Munir observed a high-intensity field exercise, Steadfast Resolve, conducted at Khairpur Tamewali (KPT). The exercise demonstrated the integration of niche and

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Briefs

Gilani for locally manufactured Pak-brand vehicle

DNA
ISLAMABAD – Chief Executive Officer of the Engineering Development Board (EDB), Mr. Hamad Ali Mansoor, called on Acting President of Pakistan, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, at the Aiwan-e-Sadr today, Mr. Hamad Ali Mansoor briefed Mr. Gilani on the role and mandate of the Engineering Development Board, an apex body under the Ministry of Industries and Production, established in 1995 to strengthen Pakistan's engineering sector. He outlined EDB's key initiatives to promote industrial growth, enhance exports, support research and development, improve technical skills and align the sector with international standards. The CEO also apprised the Acting President of ongoing policy measures, including long-term strategic planning, tariff rationalisation, industrial development frameworks, automobile and electric vehicle policies, as well as efforts to foster innovation, technology adoption and human resource development in the engineering industry. Mr. Gilani appreciated the proactive role of Engineering Development Board in advancing Pakistan's engineering sector. He emphasised the importance of transitioning to electric vehicles in view of environmental concerns and the need to support sustainable economic growth. The Acting President said that a locally manufactured made-in-Pakistan vehicle under a Pakistani brand, as well as economical electric bikes, may be introduced to promote affordable mobility and strengthen domestic manufacturing.—APP

Superior consulting global hosts 64th immigration seminar Dubai

ISLAMABAD: Superior Consulting Global is set to hold its 64th immigration seminar on Saturday, January 31, 2026 at the Conrad Hotel on Sheikh Zayed Road, marking the firm's 20th one-to-one immigration engagement in Dubai, as the demand continues to grow for tailored guidance on international mobility, education, and settlement options. The seminar will feature personalized, pre-scheduled meetings designed to provide in-depth consultations on immigration planning, study-abroad opportunities, visit visas, and long-term settlement pathways. Participants will also receive the latest updates on evolving immigration programmes and eligibility criteria across major destination countries. A key focus of the Dubai sessions will be talent-based immigration routes, which have gained prominence globally as countries seek highly skilled professionals. Among the pathways to be discussed are the United States EB-2 National Interest Waiver (NIW).—APP

Pak, Rwanda keen to further expand avenues for mutual investment

DNA
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Rwanda reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening bilateral co-operation, enhancing trade linkages, and expanding avenues for mutual investment between Pakistan and Rwanda. The commitment was expressed during a dinner hosted in honour of Honorable Prudence Sebahizi, Minister of Trade and Industry of Rwanda by Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhary, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs of Pakistan late on Wednesday. The engagement was also graced by H.E. Haremana Fitou, High Commissioner of Rwanda to Pakistan; Mr. Claude Bizimana, CEO, NABE; and Ms. Doreen Ntawabasa, Director General (Trade & Investment), MINICOM Rwanda.

American Snowboarding entrepreneur visits Pakistan

This series offers a unique platform to showcase American expertise and build lasting partnerships as we commemorate 250 years of American independence

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DNA
ISLAMABAD: The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad launched its Freedom 250 lecture series to engage the Pakistani public on key priorities such as entrepreneurship, the digital economy, and critical minerals. As part of this series, Donna Carpenter, co-founder and chair of the Board of Directors of U.S. company Burton Snowboards, and Samar Khan, a Pakistani professional athlete and alumna of the U.S. Department of State espnW Global Sports Mentoring Program, connected with sports professionals, youth, and business leaders. On January 28, at an event at the newly constructed United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan headquarters, they highlighted the role of sports entrepreneurship in youth development, innovation, and cross-cultural exchange. They emphasized that sports foster essential life skills such as leadership, teamwork, and resilience, and create opportunities for young people to contribute to their communities to drive positive change both locally and globally. The U.S. Embassy's Minister Counselor for Public Diplomacy Andy Halus said, "Pakistan has a young, energetic population and untapped potential in sports and entrepreneurship. By engaging

with students, athletes, and professionals, we not only exchange ideas and explore ways sports can empower communities but also foster partnerships that make both our countries more prosperous. These connections help create new opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and economic growth, advancing shared interests and deepening the ties between the United States and Pakistan." The Freedom 250 lecture series will engage the Pakistani public through lectures by distinguished alumni of U.S.-sponsored exchanges, American business leaders, and other U.S. experts. This series offers a unique platform to showcase American expertise

and build lasting partnerships as we commemorate 250 years of American independence.

ISLAMABAD: A speedy trailer truck on Thursday hit two motorcycles and killed five student riding the two wheelers on MM Road, Tehsil, Chowk Sarwar Shaheed in District, Kot Addu. The Rescue 1122 sources said that the bodies had been identified as Abdullah 19 years, Abdul Rehman 6 years, Muhammad Adil 15 years, Basit 17 years and Dua Fatima 9 years old. The Rescue 1122 sources said that the bodies to Tehsil Headquarter Hospital (TIHQ), Chowk Sarwar Shaheed for legal formalities. Basit and Dua Fatima were sibling, they added.—APP

5 students die in road accident, Chowk Sarwar Shaheed

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Zong partners with Pak-EPA for major tree plantation drive

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's leading information services and technology innovation company, has signed an agreement with the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) to launch a comprehensive Tree Plantation Drive across Islamabad, driven by its Green and Low Carbon Initiatives. The agreement was formally signed during a ceremony held at Zong Headquarters. The initiative was inaugurated with the plantation of the first sapling by Syed Abrar Hussain, Director General Pak-EPA; Dr. Mo-hsina Zubair, Director Pak-EPA; Nabila Yazzani, Head of Corporate Communications, Brand and Sustainability at Zong. The drive aims to address pressing environmental challenges, including climate change, air pollution, and biodiversity loss, by enhancing Islamabad's green spaces.

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BJP using census to stoke sectarian divisions in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has said that the Indian BJP-led government is once again attempting to divide occupied Jammu and Kashmir on sectarian lines under its Hindutva-RSS agenda. APHC spokesman Advocate Abdul Kashid Minhas, in a statement issued in Srinagar, said that several private, communal, illogical and unnecessary questions reflecting anti-Kashmiri and sectarian agendas have been introduced in the new census format by the BJP and other like-minded leaders and parties. He said these questions have the potential to fragment Kashmiri society along sectarian lines. The APHC said that after illegally dividing occupied Jammu and Kashmir at gunpoint in August 2019, the BJP-led Indian government is now seeking further division through the census exercise. Sources said the census includes questions such as "Which sect of religion does the family belong to? Who are the relatives inside and outside Kashmir. What properties, particularly those of in-laws, does a family own? Does the family have any links or relations with any militant (mujahid) or Hurriyat camp." The APHC said the exercise amounts to intelligence gathering under the guise of a census. It added that the inclusion of such questions and suspicious questions, coupled with recent statements by the BJP and other like-minded parties, has reinforced fears of a deliberate attempt to foment sectarian discord in Jammu and Kashmir, where Muslims have historically lived in harmony as brothers and sisters. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference said that the BJP-appointed Lieutenant Governor regime imposed by New Delhi is brazenly violating international laws in IIOJK, especially after the illegal abrogation of the territory's special status in August 2019.—APP

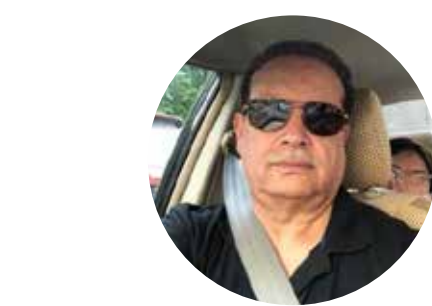
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has invited China to invest in copper, gold, rare earth elements, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro, quoting Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal. Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong said Pakistan is "rich in mineral resources" and stressed the importance of enterprise-led cooperation for sustainable development. Referring to the new phase of CPEC 2.0, he encouraged Chinese companies to take a leading role in bilateral projects while helping strengthen local technical capacity. Citing the Saindak project as an example, he noted that more than 5,200 Pakistani professionals have been trained, gaining valuable technical and managerial skills, reflecting China's commitment to human resource development along side mineral cooperation. With the slogan "Our Shared Prosperity Empowered by Minerals," the Pak-China Mineral Cooperation Forum was officially launched here at Jinnah Convention Center, in the facilities and mineral-based industrial clusters linked with projects from both countries, marking a new chapter in bilateral collaboration in Pakistan's mineral sector. "It is a great honour and privileged for me to launch Pak-China mineral cooperation forum," said the Minister who was chief guest of the occasion. "Pakistan invites China to invest in copper, gold, rare earth elements and other critical minerals so that our mineral wealth can be transformed into industrial strength, export competitiveness and shared prosperity," Iqbal said. "The mineral sector holds a central place in Uraan Pakistan for achieving our export targets. Pakistan's mineral resources are valued at nearly six to seven trillion dollars, yet our current mineral exports stand at only about two billion dollars annually," he said. Ahsan Iqbal said that it was time to take Pak-China mineral cooperation beyond extraction to value addition, processing, smelting and refining. Projects such as Saindak copper-gold, Duddar lead-zinc and Thar coal are successful examples of this collaboration. He said, "More than 90 percent of Pakistan's mineral exports are currently raw or semi-processed, which means value, jobs and technology leave the country with the raw material. Under Uraan Pakistan, this situation must and will change." According to Ahsan Iqbal their goal was to "establish mineral processing plants, smelters, refining facilities and mineral-based industrial clusters linked with special economic zones, moving decisively from extraction to value addition," he said. "China's role is pivotal in transforming Pakistan's mineral economy, as Chinese companies possess advanced expertise across the entire mineral value chain, from geological surveys to processing, smelting, refining and project financing.—APP

Trump: a blessing in disguise for global self-reliance?

In an era defined by Donald Trump's "America First" agenda during his second term, the world is witnessing a profound shift. Trump's policies—marked by tariffs, demands for higher defense contributions from allies, and a transactional approach to diplomacy—have inadvertently compelled nations to reassess their dependencies on the United States. While critics decry this as isolationism, proponents argue it fosters self-reliance among countries long accustomed to leaning on U.S. support. From Europe's push for military autonomy to India's diversification of partnerships and Pakistan's precarious balancing act, Trump's influence is reshaping global dynamics. This evolution, though challenging, may ultimately strengthen international resilience by encouraging nations and individuals to stand on their own feet. Europe stands as the most prominent example of this transformation. Historically, the continent has relied heavily on the U.S. for security through NATO, with American troops and funding underpinning collective defense. However, Trump's insistence on allies contributing more—escalating demands to 5% of GDP on defense—has sparked a reevaluation. The 2025 National Security Strategy explicitly calls for Europe to assume primary responsibility for its own defense, signaling an end to the U.S. "propping up the world order." This pressure has revived discussions on European military independence. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has openly stated that the "decades of Pax Americana are largely over," urging Europe to pursue its own interests vigorously. The EU, already an economic powerhouse, is now facing growing calls to develop its own military might. Past ideas like the EU Rapid Reaction Force faltered due to NATO's dominance and U.S. resistance to a rival structure. But Trump's threats to reduce U.S. commitments, including potential troop withdrawals, have galvanized action. The EU has mandated that at least 60% of increased defense spending go toward European-made weapons, reducing reliance on American suppliers. Initiatives like the inaugural EU-Pakistan Business Forum in 2026 highlight broader efforts to diversify partnerships beyond the U.S. While tensions, such as Trump's bizarre threats over Greenland, have strained transatlantic ties, they have also prompted Europe to build structures that can operate independently of U.S. support. In this sense, Trump's approach is forcing the EU to develop a more self-sufficient global player, potentially enhancing long-term stability. India, once a close U.S. ally under frameworks like the Quad, is also pivoting toward greater autonomy. Trump's

NATO distances itself from Trump's Iran strategy

Qamar Bashir



This divergence marks a notable inflection point in the post-Cold War history of the transatlantic alliance. For decades, the United States and its European partners moved in near lockstep through Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria—conflicts justified in the language of security, democracy, and humanitarian intervention. This time, however, the line was drawn. The European Union's position, echoed in NATO's clarification, suggested a deeper calculation: if Europe were to endorse a unilateral American strike on Iran, it would forfeit any moral and legal standing to resist similar assertions of power elsewhere, even in regions closer to home. Sovereignty, once surrendered as a principle, becomes difficult to reclaim as a shield. Washington's strategic calculus, meanwhile, appeared to follow a familiar framework of pressure. The first instrument is financial: the architecture of global lending, credit, and currency flows, dominated by institutions and mechanisms where American influence remains formidable. The second is economic: sanctions that can choke trade, freeze assets, and isolate entire economies. The third is military: a vast and technologically unmatched force, often deployed against states that lack comparable power. Critics argue that this triad has been used not merely to deter aggression but to compel compliance, especially among smaller or more vulnerable nations. Iran, however, presents a different kind of challenge. Despite years of economic pressure, political isolation, and internal strain, Tehran has demonstrated a capacity for strategic endurance. Reports—unconfirmed yet persistent—circulate about advances in uranium enrichment and potential weaponization. Whether or not Iran has crossed the nuclear threshold remains a matter

of intelligence assessments and diplomatic dispute, but the mere perception of such capability reshapes the balance of deterrence. Nuclear ambiguity, as history has shown, can be as powerful as nuclear certainty. Geography, too, complicates the equation. The United States, separated by oceans, may be beyond the immediate reach of Iranian ballistic capabilities, but Israel lies within a far more proximate are. Any regional escalation, yet alone therefore carry implications not only for Washington's strategic interests but for the security of its closest Middle Eastern ally. This proximity amplifies the stakes, turning any potential confrontation into a regional, if not global, concern. At home, the American political landscape adds another layer of tension. As debates rage over immigration enforcement, economic pressures and civil liberties, large-scale demonstrations have filled streets and campuses. Critics point to what they describe as a striking contrast: a federal government deeply concerned with protests and political movements abroad, yet confronting widespread dissent within its own borders. The optics of prioritizing external regime narratives over domestic unrest have not gone unnoticed by the public or by opinion leaders across the political spectrum. The moral dimension of the debate is equally charged. Advocates of non-intervention argue that international law, however imperfect, rests on the foundational principle of sovereignty. No state, they contend, possesses an inherent right to reshape another's political order through force. This argument is often cited when juxtaposed with the humanitarian toll of past interventions—civilian casualties, displacement, and long-term instability that linger long after the last troops withdraw. In this context, the comparison often drawn by critics is stark. If powerful states claim the authority to intervene in the name of peace or security, where does that authority end? Who are some leaders shielded by alliances and vetoes, while others are pursued across borders under the banner of international law? Such questions, increasingly voiced by journalists, academics, and civil society figures in both Europe and the United States, reflect a broader unease with what is perceived as a double standard in the application of global norms. NATO's decision to distance itself from any intervention in Iran can thus be read as more than a tactical choice. It signals a potential recalibration of Europe's role in a world where power is no longer unipolar and

moments of hardship, illness, or widowhood. Bangles and necklaces were not mere decorations; they represented foresight, care, and dignity. This tradition endured even among families of modest means, who saved patiently to fulfill what was considered both a social and emotional obligation. Today, however, that delicate balance between tradition and affordability has been deeply disturbed. The extraordinary expense of gold prices has placed even modest jewellery beyond the reach of the middle class. Where once a bridal trousseau included substantial ornaments, many families now struggle to afford even the most basic pieces. Religious teachings impose no requirement for such displays, yet parental love and social expectation continue to exert pressure. As a result, many settle for symbolic gestures—a single ring or small ornament—offered not as a measure of wealth, but as an expression of affection and continuity. Alongside this economic strain, a new social dynamic has emerged, intensified by the age of digital display. Lavish weddings hosted by the affluent, widely circulated on social media, have transformed private celebrations into public exhibitions of prosperity. These spectacles, while harmless in intent, often deepen feelings of inferiority among those who cannot compete with such extravagance. The comparison is relentless and unavoidable, fostering dissatisfaction and, at times, unhealthy financial decisions. In this way, gold has become a silent participant in widening social divides, highlighting disparities rather than bridging them. Beyond social customs, the current surge in gold prices reflects deeper global anxieties. In late January 2026, gold climbed to unprecedented levels, a clear signal of widespread economic and geopolitical unease. History shows that gold's value tends to rise when confidence in political stability, currencies, and financial systems

Gold and the silent burden on ordinary families

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Soon after, ancient Egypt raised gold to near-divine status, associating it with immortality and the gods, while other great civilisations across Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, China, and later the Mediterranean world incorporated gold into ritual, trade, and governance. When the first gold coins were minted in Lydia around 600 BC, gold moved decisively from ornament to economic anchor

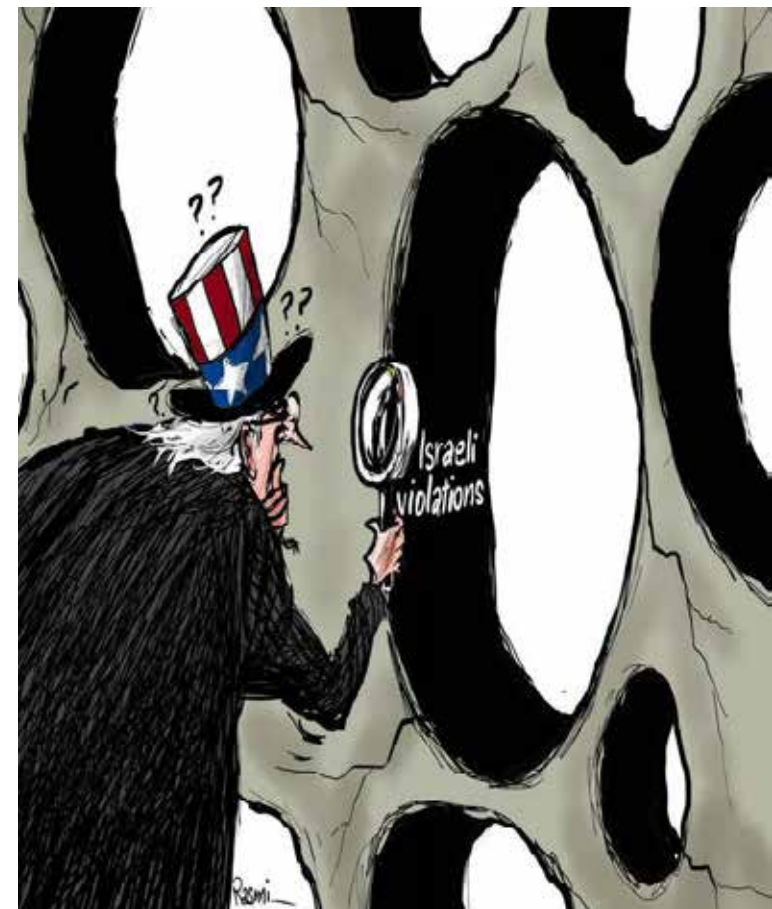
Gold has occupied a place of reverence in human history that few substances can rival. From the earliest stirrings of civilisation, mankind has been irresistibly drawn to its soft glow and enduring purity. Unlike other metals that demanded fire, technique, and labour to reveal their usefulness, gold appeared in nature in a ready and welcoming form—shining nuggets resting in riverbeds, untouched by rust or decay. It was perhaps for this reason that gold became the first metal known to humankind and the earliest symbol of wealth, permanence, and aspiration. Over thousands of years, its meaning has evolved, yet its power over the human imagination has remained remarkably unchanged. Archaeology confirms that humans were not merely collecting gold as a curiosity but shaping it into ornaments and symbols of status more than six and a half millennia ago. The remarkable discoveries at the Varna Necropolis in present-day Bulgaria reveal that prehistoric societies were already crafting gold jewellery with surprising sophistication during the fifth millennium before Christ. These artefacts—beads, bracelets, and ceremonial adornments—suggest that gold was linked not only with beauty but also with authority and reverence. Soon after, ancient Egypt raised gold to near-divine status, associating it with immortality and the gods, while other great civilisations across Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, China, and later the Mediterranean world incorporated gold into ritual, trade, and governance. When the first gold coins were minted in Lydia around 600 BC, gold moved decisively from ornament to economic anchor, shaping commerce for centuries to come. In South Asian societies, gold acquired an additional layer of meaning rooted in family structure and social responsibility. It became inseparable from marriage traditions, particularly for daughters. For generations, parents regarded gold jewellery as a form of long-term security—an asset that could be relied upon in

moments of hardship, illness, or widowhood. Bangles and necklaces were not mere decorations; they represented foresight, care, and dignity. This tradition endured even among families of modest means, who saved patiently to fulfill what was considered both a social and emotional obligation. Today, however, that delicate balance between tradition and affordability has been deeply disturbed. The extraordinary expense of gold prices has placed even modest jewellery beyond the reach of the middle class. Where once a bridal trousseau included substantial ornaments, many families now struggle to afford even the most basic pieces. Religious teachings impose no requirement for such displays, yet parental love and social expectation continue to exert pressure. As a result, many settle for symbolic gestures—a single ring or small ornament—offered not as a measure of wealth, but as an expression of affection and continuity. Alongside this economic strain, a new social dynamic has emerged, intensified by the age of digital display. Lavish weddings hosted by the affluent, widely circulated on social media, have transformed private celebrations into public exhibitions of prosperity. These spectacles, while harmless in intent, often deepen feelings of inferiority among those who cannot compete with such extravagance. The comparison is relentless and unavoidable, fostering dissatisfaction and, at times, unhealthy financial decisions. In this way, gold has become a silent participant in widening social divides, highlighting disparities rather than bridging them. Beyond social customs, the current surge in gold prices reflects deeper global anxieties. In late January 2026, gold climbed to unprecedented levels, a clear signal of widespread economic and geopolitical unease. History shows that gold's value tends to rise when confidence in political stability, currencies, and financial systems

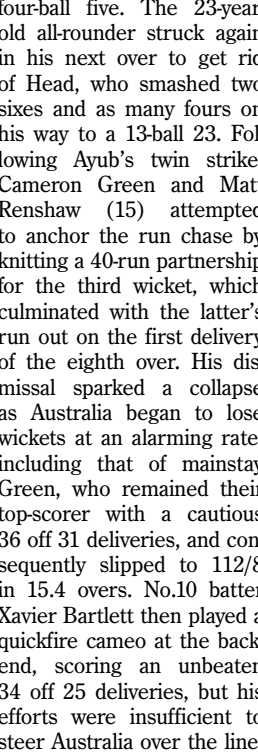
falters. Wars, trade disputes, inflationary pressures, and political uncertainty all drive investors toward assets perceived as safe. Gold, unlike paper currency or government bonds, carries no promise dependent on institutions; its value rests on collective trust forged over millennia. Modern examples reaffirm this pattern. From the oil shocks and geopolitical turmoil of the 1970s to more recent conflicts in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, gold has repeatedly surged during times of crisis. Wars disrupt trade routes, inflate energy prices, and compel governments to increase spending, often at the cost of currency stability. In such conditions, gold emerges as a hedge against inflation and devaluation. In the present era, this traditional role is reinforced by aggressive purchasing by central banks seeking to diversify reserves, as well as expectations of lower interest rates that reduce the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding assets like gold. Yet it would be simplistic to view gold's ascent solely through the lens of profit. Its enduring appeal lies in the reassurance it offers during uncertainty. For individuals, institutions, and even nations, gold represents continuity in a rapidly changing world. Its weight in the vaults of central banks and its presence in family heirlooms speak to the same instinct: the desire for something that outlasts turmoil. Thus, gold today stands as both a blessing and a burden. It remains a symbol of beauty, security, and historical continuity, yet its soaring price has strained cherished traditions and exposed social inequalities. For families, it prompts difficult choices between custom and capacity. For societies, it serves as a quiet commentary on economic imbalance and global instability. And for the world at large, gold continues to perform its ancient role—as a mirror reflecting human fears, hopes, and the timeless search for certainty in uncertain times.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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FROM PAGE 01
from Pakistan's principal
position on Palestine," the
FO spokesperson added. He
said that Pakistan's decision
to join the Board of Peace
was taken collectively by the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs in
consultation with all relevant
stakeholders, after complet-
ing all procedural require-
ments. Andrabi said that
Pakistan's primary objective
in joining the Board of Peace
is to help consolidate and
sustain the ceasefire in Gaza.



ISLAMABAD: Amir Mazar, Muhammad Yahya and Muhammad Junaid continued their winning run by defeating their respective opponents in the final matches at the Punjab Tennis Championship 2026 at the Punjab Tennis Academy courts. The event is being organised by the Punjab Lawn Tennis Organisation (PLTA).

The first day's action commenced as one of the most intense contests of the day, Amir Mazar of Aitchison College displayed clinical precision to defeat his opponent, Gull Shafiq, in straight sets.

Muzammas Raza also secured a place in the semifinals while Muham-

In the most grueling match of the series, Amir Mazar emerged victorious after a remarkable comeback against Mr Umar Ali. After losing the opening set 0-6, Junaid fought back strongly to claim the next two sets 6-4, 7-5. Rubah ul Rehman was defeated by Ghulam Mustafa Mushtaq 6-4, 6-3.

The boys' U-14 quarterfinals highlighted the technical skills of the participants. In a closely contested encounter, Muhammad Ayaz won over Haider Khan 6-4, 7-6(8), securing his winning streak with a 5-3, 4-2 victory over Oshad-Mustafa.

Muhammad Ayaz and Muhammad Muazzab also progressed comfortably.

Gill Shafiq

Rubah ul
Rehan

Noor Maqsood

Sher Shahid

Ahsan Ali

Hadi Khan

Fatima Zahara

Haroon Akhtar Khatun stated that, in line with the vision of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the government is actively promoting regional economic cooperation to ensure sustainable growth and create employment opportunities. He emphasized that Pakistan and Sri Lanka enjoy historic and brotherly relations rooted in mutual respect and trust, highlighting Pakistan's strong economic outlook. Haroon Akhtar said that Pakistan aspires to strengthen its long-standing relationship with Sri Lanka into a comprehensive strategic economic partnership. He added that the decades-old friendship between the two countries is now evolving into deeper economic collaboration, including in the digital economy and modern technologies. Sri Lanka's Minister of Trade noted that the friendship between Pakistan and Sri Lanka spans decades—APP

He said, would significantly enhance efficiency, accountability, and reliability of the government. The government's targets of the current five-year plan have been aligned with the URAAN-Pakistan framework. The review will assess which targets have been achieved with the least expenditure, which require additional effort. Based on these assessments, strategies will be further refined, and a comprehensive performance-based report of ministerial performance will be submitted to the Minister. During the meeting, Chief Economist Dr. Imtiaz Ahmad briefed participants on key economic and development progress and challenges during the first half-year review. He highlighted the severe socio-economic impact of recent floods, which affected approximately 6.5 million people and resulted in over one thousand fatalities. The floods caused significant losses in acres of cropped land, led to significant livestock losses, and caused extensive destruction to infrastructure including roads, bridges, public buildings, educational institutions, and health facilities. Preliminary estimates place total economic losses at approximately Rs. 822 billion.—DNA

RYADH: Syria's tourism sector posted a sharp recovery in 2025, with Arab and foreign arrivals rising 80% from 2024, according to the Ministry of Tourism. The government's tourism and policy shifts helped reduce pre-war cross-border travel and investment friction, and the sector showed a strong recovery. Total visitor numbers, including 18 million on year to date, rose 18 percent year on year to 35.56 million between January and November, according to the Ministry of Tourism. This comes after a period of conflict, damaged infrastructure, and security concerns hollowed out what had been a major pre-war Syrian tourism revenue source. With Syria's tourism rebound, the shifting regional and policy backdrop. Tourism Minister Mazen Al-Salhani said the increase reflects recovery from the reaction of tourism flows, but a deeper strategic recovery extending beyond the economic domain." He added that renewed interest in Syria as a safe, attractive, and culturally rich destination from a foreign market "signals a transition to organized, civilian-driven mobility and a restored pre-war tourism sector." Syria drew 20 million visitors in 2025, marking the country as seeking to rebound as arrivals from the region, particularly from the UN Tourism said. The Middle East remained the strongest performer in 2025 relative to other regions, with tourism levels, and recovering the region and airline capacity in the region. —APP

NEW YORK CITY: Palestine's ambassador to the UN, Riyad al-Murayrikh, said on Wednesday that the core principles upon which the UN was founded are under grave threat in the occupied Palestinian territories. He said that although thousands of people have been killed in the territories since the occupation began, at least 500 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since the start of Israel's continuing obstruction of humanitarian aid efforts, which is worsening what he described as the unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe in the territory. Speaking at a packed, highly charged meeting of the UN Security Council, the ambassador said that the UN's role is to self-determination, the prohibition of the acquisition of territory by force, and respect for international law are abandoned in relation to events in Palestine, it would endanger those principles worldwide. "Asserting them there (in Palestinian territories) is upheld everywhere," he told council members. He welcomed the ceasefire deal agreed last year under a US-backed plan praising the role of President Donald Trump's administration and other international mediators, and said Palestinians have supported the truce in good faith despite repeated breaches by Israel. He said the UN must continue to work to end the occupation of the territories through the resumption of humanitarian aid, and welcomed the release of all Israeli hostages and prisoners. —APP

Ahsan chairs mid-year review meeting of annual plan

Practical steps needed for Kinnow sector: SCCI president

Pak latest Asian country to step checks for deadly Nipah virus



HAIPHONG, HANOI. Authorities in Hanoi have ordered a nationwide screening of people entering the country for signs of infectious diseases, including Singapore, after India confirmed two cases, according to the Vietnamese newspaper, *Thanh Nien*. The newspaper said that the screening of people entering the country has also been strengthened at airports. The newspaper said that the screening of people entering the country has also been strengthened at airports. The newspaper said that the screening of people entering the country has also been strengthened at airports. The newspaper said that the screening of people entering the country has also been strengthened at airports.

allows for timely isolation, epidemiological investigation," the department said in a statement. That follows measures by authorities in Ho Chi Minh City, where the first case was reported, and in Hanoi, where the second case was reported.

[illegible]

Briefs

Judicial inquiry ordered in plaza fire case

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon on Thursday announced that a judicial inquiry will be conducted into the Gul Plaza fire. "To further probe this and to promote departmental transparency, the sub-committee decided ... a letter is being penned to the honourable Sindh High Court chief justice," Memon told a press conference in Karachi. He added that the SHC top judge will be requested to appoint a serving judge to "review everything and decide on it". A cabinet sub-committee — chaired by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah and including ministers Memon, Nasir Hussain Shah, Saeed Ghani, and Ziaul Hassan Janjari — reviewed a report submitted by a two-member team. "The meeting with the chief minister went on for four to five hours and important decisions were made in light of the commissioner and additional IG's report," Memon noted. Providing details of January 17, when the blaze erupted, Memon said there were between 2,000 and 2,500 people present in the building, including workers and visitors.

10-month-old infant's body recovered from Lahore manhole

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif grieved

DNA

LAHORE: The rescuers on Thursday found the body of 10-month-old Rida Fatima, who, along with her mother Sadia, fell into a manhole near Bhati Gate in Lahore. The child's body was recovered — after nearly 17 hours — from a sewer line on Outfall Road, said the Rescue 1122. The development comes after DIG Operations Faisal Kamran said that the mother's body was found from the sewerage line at Outfall Road, three kilometres from the said manhole, adding the flow of sewage was so intense that it took the body away. The DIG said that a high-level committee has been formed to probe the incident, adding that the probing body will soon submit its findings. Expressing grief over the unfortunate incident, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has ordered strict action against "negligence and carelessness" of the administration. The CM, on her way back from Bakhar, convened an emergency meeting at the airport and ordered immediate submission of an impartial fact-finding report over the incident.

PSX sheds over 6,000 points

THE Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index settled at 182,338.12 points, down 6,042.26 points, or 3.21%, from 188,380.38. The index touched a high of 188,923.39, up 543.01 points, or 0.29%, before falling to a low of 181,961.14, down 6,419.24 points, or 3.41%, for the session. "The market was jittering owing to potential Iran and US conflict and tensions heating up seriously," said AAH Soomro, an independent investment and economic analyst. He added: "A lesser-than-expected earnings result in FFC [Fauji Fertiliser Company] led to the stock hit lower lock and the market erased 3,500 points in a go." "A good and timely correction as earnings season isn't exciting and a good consolidation point," he added. Adding to the uncertainty, US President Donald Trump warned Iran that time was running out to avert American military action, citing a naval strike group in regional waters and urging talks over Tehran's nuclear programme, further stoking regional risk premiums. — APP

Rwanda keen to strengthen ties with Pakistan, says minister

Pakistan's Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, also addressed the gathering and echoed similar sentiments, expressing enthusiasm for enhanced economic cooperation between the two nations



DNA

RWANDA Keen to Strengthen Bilateral Ties with Pakistan Through Coffee Trade Islamabad, January 29, 2026 — Rwanda's Minister of Trade and Industry, Prudence Sebahizi, emphasized his country's strong interest in expanding relations with Pakistan during his address at the inauguration of the first-ever Rwanda Coffee Festival in Islamabad today. The two-day event, held at the Mövenpick Hotel, featured various stalls showcasing premium brands of Rwandan coffee, allowing attendees—including importers, roasters, business leaders, and government officials—to sample and explore the East African nation's renowned specialty brews. Organized by

the High Commission of the Republic of Rwanda in Pakistan in collaboration with Rwanda's National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB), the festival aims to introduce Rwanda's high-quality coffee to the Pakistani market and foster direct business partnerships. In his speech, Minister Sebahizi highlighted Rwanda's global reputation as a leading coffee exporter, drawing a parallel to Pakistan's prominence in rice production. "Rwanda is famous for its exceptional coffee exports, just as Pakistan is celebrated worldwide for its quality rice," he stated. "In Rwanda, Pakistan is well-known as a producer of premium rice. Likewise, we aspire for Rwanda to become recognized in Pakistan—and beyond—as a source of top-tier coffee exports." The minister described his recent meetings with Pakistani government



officials as highly fruitful, expressing optimism about future collaborations. He noted that these interactions have laid a solid foundation for deeper trade, investment, and bilateral engagement. Pakistan's Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, also addressed the gathering and echoed similar sentiments, expressing enthusiasm for enhanced economic cooperation between the two nations. He underscored the mutual benefits of diversifying trade partnerships, noting Pakistan's interest in importing high-quality specialty coffees while highlighting opportunities for Rwandan businesses to explore Pakistan's robust rice and other agricultural exports. Minister Khan praised the initiative as a practical step toward building stronger commercial links and pledged continued support from his ministry to fa-

cilitate smoother market access and joint ventures. Rwanda's coffee sector supports hundreds of thousands of smallholder farmers and has seen export growth in recent years, with the country eager to diversify markets like Pakistan, which already imports Rwandan tea and shows growing interest in coffee and other products. This initiative aligns with ongoing efforts to boost Rwanda-Pakistan ties, including discussions on trade agreements and mutual market access. The festival includes panel discussions on coffee industry opportunities, B2B meetings, and networking sessions to connect exporters and importers directly. Both ministers concluded by looking forward to more interactions, stating that enhanced cooperation would deliver economic benefits to both nations.

No survivors found in Colombia plane crash with 15 aboard

Aircraft, carrying 13 passengers and two crew members, took off from border city of Cucuta

DNA

BOGOTA: Colombian authorities on Wednesday located a missing plane carrying 15 people in the northeast of the country, with no survivors found, an Air Force source and local media said. The aircraft carrying one lawmaker among the passengers, went missing near Colombia's troubled border with Venezuela on Wednesday, state airline Satena and aerospace authorities said. The aircraft, carrying 13 passengers and two crew members, took off from the border city of Cucuta and lost contact with control towers shortly before it was due to land in nearby Ocaña. The area is mountainous with highly changeable weather and swaths are controlled by Colombia's largest guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army, better known by its Spanish acronym ELN. It was scheduled to land around 12:05 pm, the airline said in a statement. Security and search protocols have been activated, according to the air authority. One lawmaker and one legislative candidate are feared to have been aboard. "We have received with concern the information about the air accident ... where my colleague Diogenes Quintero, Carlos Salcedo and their teams were travelling," local parliamentarian Wilmer Carrillo said. Quintero is a member of Colombia's chamber of deputies and Salcedo is a candidate for the upcoming elections. "We call for calm and await the official statement from the competent authorities," Carrillo said. The aircraft is a Beechcraft 1900 twin-propeller plane, operated by private charter firm SEARCA.

Petrol price 'likely to drop', diesel rate to go up from Feb 1

Ministry of Finance to decide petroleum prices via consultation with PM Shehbaz Sharif

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As part of the fortnightly fuel price announcement, the government is likely to reduce the rates for petrol from February 1, industry sources said on Thursday. Initial estimates indicate that, they added, petrol price will be slashed by Rs0.36 per litre, the sources said. Contrastingly, the rate for high-speed diesel is likely to be hiked by Rs9.47 per litre along with an Rs3.69 per litre increase for kerosene oil. Meanwhile, the price of light diesel is expected to surge by Rs6.95 per litre. The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) will submit its working on petroleum prices to the Petroleum Division on January 30 (tomorrow), whereas the Ministry of Finance will decide the prices after consultation with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. In the previous review, the government, on January 15, had decided to keep the petrol price and high-speed diesel prices unchanged at Rs253.17 and Rs257.08 per litre, respectively, until end-January. The unchanged prices were due to the increase in petroleum levy (PL) on petrol by Rs4.62 per litre and Re0.80 on high-speed diesel — which left consumers without any relief. Petrol is mainly used by commuters in small vehicles, rickshaws and two-wheelers. Higher fuel prices significantly impact the budgets of middle and lower-middle class households, who rely on petrol for daily travel. On the other hand, a significant portion of the transport sector relies on high-speed diesel. Its price is considered inflationary since it is predominantly used in heavy goods transport vehicles, trucks, buses, trains, and agricultural machinery such as tractors, tube wells, and threshers. The consumption of high-speed diesel particularly contributes to the increased prices of vegetables and other food items.

Pak Navy takes over command of Combined Task Force-150



DNA

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Navy took over the command of Combined Task Force-150 (CTF-150) for the 14th time during a change of command ceremony held at the Headquarters of Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), Bahrain. Commodore Muhammad Yasir Tahir of Pakistan Navy assumed command from Commodore Fahad S. Al Joaid of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF). While addressing the audience, the incoming Commander CTF-150 assured that his team is fully prepared to shoulder this prestigious responsibility and contribute towards maritime security and stability across the region. Commodore Muhammad Yasir Tahir also reaffirmed Pakistan Navy's resolve to counter illicit maritime activities while ensuring the safety

and security of vital sea lines of communication.



CTF-150 is one of the five task forces operating under the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF). Its mission is to deter and disrupt non-state actors engaged in the trafficking of weapons, narcotics, and other illicit goods across the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, and the Gulf of Oman. Successful anti-narcotics operations conducted by Pakistan Navy ships during the RSNF's command of CTF-150 are a testament to Pakistan Navy's resolve and commitment to regional peace and security through collaborative maritime efforts. The change of command ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of Pakistan to Bahrain, Commander Combined Maritime Force, Commander Royal Bahrain Naval Forces, and representatives of several other navies operating under CMF.


Displacement of Tirah population: A saga of Ill-preparation by KP govt

PESHAWAR: As cold weather tightened its grip on the snow-clad peaks of Tirah Valley, thousands of families began a familiar yet painful journey downward carrying children, elderly relatives, and whatever belongings they could manage to avoid biting chill after it recently received heavy snowfall. For poor tribesmen of Maidan, Bagh and Rajgal valleys of Tirah consisting of Khyber and Orakzai tribal districts, seasonal migration is not new phenomena. What made this winter different for these populations was not only the heavy snowfall, but absence of timely KP Govt support too that added to their miseries. Nestled in the rugged Koh-e-Sufaid range near Pak-Afghan border, Tirah Valley becomes nearly inaccessible during harsh winters. Over the years, residents have learned to move early, often voluntarily, to safer and warmer places such as Bara, Peshawar, Hangu and surrounding areas. The current month was no exception as heavy snowfall blanketed these valleys mostly inhabited by Afridis, and Akakhel tribes whom began migrating towards Bara teshil of Khyber and Peshawar, hoping to find shelter, assistance and relief. But many found themselves stranded on icy roads and in makeshift camps, exposed to freezing temperatures, waiting for much needed help. What has angered residents of Tirah and opposition leaders alike is that this displacement was not sudden or unforeseen but the situation deteriorated due to the lackluster approach of KP Govt. On October 28 last, the Deputy Commissioner of Khyber had formally informed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government of an imminent voluntary displacement from Tirah's snow-bound valleys and requested advance arrangements for transportation, food supplies, cash assistance, and establishment of transit and registration points. The letter clearly stated that migration would take place with the consent of local communities and recommendations of a representative jirga, keeping in view seasonal realities and administrative preparedness. However, despite these early warnings, little was done on the ground. — DNA


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