



# Islamabad POST

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## Pakistani scholars return after their higher education

Detailed News On Page-03

## Atta Tarar chairs high level meeting

Detailed News On Page-02



## Aurangzeb for stronger FX, fiscal stability

Detailed News On Page-08



### Law and Order

# PM urges KP govt to fulfill its responsibilities

Says federal and provincial governments would continue joint efforts to eliminate terrorism, urging the provincial government to fulfill its responsibilities for establishing law and order in the province as well as for public welfare

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday assuring the federal government's support for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's uplift, urged the provincial government to fulfill its responsibilities to establish law and order in the province, besides providing education and health facilities to its people. The prime minister, in a meeting with Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sohail Afridi here, emphasized cooperation between the federal and provincial government for the development and prosperity of the KP's people, calling it essential for provincial law and order too.

The prime minister stressed the need to further intensify the provincial government's efforts to establish peace and security and strengthen its institutions to combat terrorism. He said that the federal and provincial governments would continue joint efforts to eliminate terrorism, urging the provincial government to fulfill its responsibilities for establishing law and order in the province as well as for public welfare. The prime minister said that as the KP government was empowered to ensure the uplift of the education and health sectors, it should take the required measures.

Calling the KP province an important unit of the federation, he said the federal government had always been striving for the betterment of the KP's people and would continue similar within its jurisdiction. Emphasising close relations and effective coordination between the federation and the provinces as key to national progress and public service, Prime Minister Shehbaz also assured cooperation within the

Continued on Page 06

## PM acknowledges WB's valuable support

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday acknowledged the World Bank Group's valuable support which had been instrumental in advancing Pakistan's economic development and reforms. He was talking to President, World Bank Group (WBG) Ajay Banga who called on him at the PM House. The prime minister welcomed Ajay Banga at his first official visit as President of the World Bank Group. The prime minister appreciated the World Bank Group for its long-standing partnership with Pakistan and its commitment to supporting the development priorities of the country especially through the 10-year World Bank Group Country Partnership Framework (CPF).

The premier also appreciated Mr. Banga's leadership in transforming the World Bank Group into more impactful development partner. He stated that the government was vigorously working on economic reform agenda with multi-pronged comprehensive

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister KP Sohail Afridi called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. — DNA

## Pak, Uzbek FMs discuss strengthening bilateral ties

FIAZ CH

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a telephone conversation with the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Bakhtiyor Saidov. During the discussion, both leaders reviewed the state of bilateral relations and explored avenues to further enhance cooperation across multiple sectors. They expressed satisfaction at the continued momentum of high-level engagement between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, underscoring the importance of sustained dialogue and collaboration for regional connectivity and prosperity.

## TTAP condemns attacks

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The opposition alliance Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP) on Monday condemned the spate of attacks in Balochistan last week, and called it "a security failure on the part of the provincial government and law enforcement agencies". On Saturday, the military's media affairs wing said terrorists of Fitna-al-Hindustan carried out a spate of attacks across Balochistan. 18 civilians and 15 personnel of security forces were martyred in the attacks on Saturday. In a statement, posted on X, the TTAP condemned the attacks and expressed sorrow with the martyrs.

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### Hunt for outlaws continues

## 22 more terrorists of Fitna al Hindustan killed in Balochistan

The sources said that security forces, including intelligence agencies and police, are tightening the noose around terrorists and their facilitators at various locations

### No talks with terrorists, says govt

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In the wake of renewed militant attacks in Balochistan, the ruling party lawmakers have called for unequivocal condemnation of terrorists, saying that the issue of terrorism in the province is not linked to deprivation or rights issue. Terrorists affiliated with India-sponsored Fitna al-Hindustan carried out coordinated attacks across 12 towns in Balochistan, targeting civilians in Quetta, Mastung, Nushki, Dalbandin, Kharan, Panjgur, Tump, Gwadar, and Pasni on weekend. During the attacks, carried out by

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## Briefs

### Militant violence surges in January

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: After a noticeable decline in violence in December 2025, the first month of the new year witnessed a renewed surge in anti-state violence, leading to higher fatalities among militants, civilians and security personnel, according to official statistics. Data released by the Islamabad-based Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) shows that combat-related deaths in January 2026 rose by 43 per cent compared to December 2025. During the month, 242 militants were killed, while 73 civilians and 46 security force personnel lost their lives. Twelve militants were injured, while at least 71 civilians and 52 security personnel were also wounded.

### KP Police dismantles militant camps

LAKKI MARWAT: On the clear directives of RPO Bannu Region Sajid Khan and special instructions of DPO Lakkhi Marwat Nazeer Khan, Lakkhi Marwat Police carried out a large-scale search and strike operation against Fitna-ul-Khawarij in various areas here, including Nasr Khel Dargah. According to details, a heavy police contingent led jointly by DSP Naurang Circle Saeed Khan and DSP Lakkhi Shahi Bakht conducted effective search operations in Nasr Khel Dargah, Karam Dargah, border areas of Bannu, Wanda Akhundan, Wanda Sher Dil, Atshi Machan Khel, Ghati Machan Khel, and other surrounding localities. During the operation, multiple hideouts of Fitna-ul-Khawarij were demolished. — APP

## Maiden visit Kazakh president due in Islamabad today

The visit will provide the two sides an important and timely opportunity to undertake a comprehensive review of bilateral relations, discuss new avenues for broadening cooperation, particularly in trade, logistics, regional connectivity, people-to-people contacts, and explore collaboration at regional and international forums

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev will undertake his first state visit to Pakistan on February 03-04, 2026, at the invitation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. He will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, comprising senior cabinet ministers and other high-ranking officials, according to a Foreign Office statement.

During the visit, President Tokayev is expected to meet with the President Asif Ali Zardari, hold talks with the prime minister, and address the Pakistan-Kazakhstan Business Forum. "The visit will provide the two sides an important and timely opportunity to undertake a comprehensive review of bilateral relations, discuss new avenues for broadening cooperation, particularly in trade, logistics, regional connectivity, people-to-people contacts, and explore collaboration at regional and international forums," according to the statement.

The forthcoming visit reflects the strengthening bonds between Pakistan and Kazakhstan, their mutual commitment to transforming historic and cultural affinities into robust cooperation, and their common desire for peace and progress in the region, it added.

## Iranian President orders start of talks with the US

Iran said earlier on Monday it was working on a method and framework for negotiations that would be ready in the coming days, with messages between the two sides relayed through regional players

NEWS DESK / DNA

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian ordered the start of nuclear talks with the United States, the news agency Fars reported on Monday. Following the Iranian authorities' response to anti-government protests that peaked last month, Trump has threatened military action and ordered the dispatch of an aircraft carrier group to the Middle East. While piling pressure on Iran, Trump has maintained he is hopeful of making a deal and Tehran has also insisted it wants diplomacy while vowing an unbridled response to any aggression. "President Pezeshkian has ordered the initiation of nuclear negotiations with the United States," the agency reported, citing an unnamed government source. "The source said Iran and the US will hold talks strictly within the framework of the nuclear issue," Fars added, without specifying a date. The report was also carried by the government newspaper Iran and the reformist daily Shargh. Iran said earlier on Monday it was working on a method and framework for negotiations that would be ready in the coming days, with messages between the two sides relayed through regional players

## Israel warns to attack Hezbollah targets

NEWS DESK

JERUSALEM: Israel's military warned on Monday it would soon strike Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon, issuing evacuation warnings for buildings in two villages. The army "will, in the near future, strike military infrastructure belonging to the Hezbollah terrorist organization, in response to its prohibited attempts to rebuild its activities in the area," its Arabic-language spokesman Avichay Adraee wrote on X, telling residents of certain buildings in Kfar Tibbin and Ain Qana "to evacuate them immediately." A convoy of Syrian government security forces moved toward the Kurdish-controlled city of Hasakah in the northeast on Monday, Reuters witnesses said.

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## Tarar reviews progress on central monitoring project, NCF setup

Tarar emphasized the timely completion of the project, noting that the Central Monitoring Unit is aligned with modern requirements and will assist in compiling narrative-related reports and formulating effective strategies

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar chaired a review meeting on projects being undertaken by the Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications (DEMP).

The minister was briefed on the progress of the Central Monitoring Project and the establishment of the National Centre of Films (NCF). Officials informed the meeting that the Central Monitoring Project, launched in January 2023, is scheduled for completion by June 2026, with its scope being expanded and technology graded. Tarar emphasized the timely completion of the project, noting that the Central Monitoring Unit is aligned with modern requirements and will assist in compiling narrative-related

## Terrorists only enemies of Pakistan, not angry elements

PESHAWAR: The opposition leader in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Dr Ibad Khan, reacting to Chief Minister Sohail Afridi's meeting with the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz, said here Monday that not discussing political matters during the meeting was a positive move, and added that the Chief Minister played the role of a "good child". In a message, Dr Ibad said that he has always maintained that sitting face to face is the only effective forum for resolving KP issues. For the solution of provincial problems, he said the Chief Minister should go and sit with the Prime Minister so that public issues can be addressed. He said that by not discussing matters such as Adala jail and street development during the meeting, the Chief Minister showed wisdom and political maturity.

"If the CM continues to demonstrate the same seriousness and sense of responsibility, the province's problems can be resolved."

Dr Ibad said "climbing onto a vehicle with a group of four people, which sometimes in one district, sometimes another, sometimes at one intersection and sometimes another will either solve problems nor produce any positive outcome."

He said that going among the public is meant to obtain a mandate, and when the mandate already exists, there is no need to take to the streets. Relevant forums for resolving issues already exist and should be utilized.

He further said that at this time, there is a need not for mobilization but for effective delivery, so that real relief can be provided to the public.—APP

## WB President lauds Punjab govt's efforts

The World Bank President commended the heritage-friendly vision of the Punjab government under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, describing the approach of safeguarding historic sites as development assets as a 'model worthy of emulation'. He also paid tribute to Senior Minister Punjab Maryam Aurangzeb for her active role and personal interest in promoting culture and heritage

DNA

RAWALPINDI: World Bank Group President Ajay Pal Singh Banga, accompanied by Federal Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb, visited the historical Taxila Museum on Monday. Provincial Minister for Local Government and Community Development Punjab Zeeshan Rafiq warmly received these distinguished guests on behalf of the Punjab government. During the visit, the delegation was given a detailed tour of the mu-



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan along with others cutting the ribbon to inaugurate paintings exhibition at Islamabad Art Gallery.

### Kundi urges incentives to retain investment in province

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Khan Kundi

urged the provincial

government to offer effective

incentives to the business

sector so that the

private sector can be

attracted to invest in

the province.

Officials highlighted that the NCF, as custodian of the National Film Pol-

## Kanysh Satbayev Scientific, Educational Center launched at NUST

ISLAMABAD: The Kanysh Satbayev Scientific and Educational Center was formally inaugurated on Monday at the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), mark-

ing a significant milestone in

strengthening international academic co-

operation.

The facility will host joint

research projects, academic

and educational activities,

alongside initiatives to promote

Kazakh culture and scientific

heritage.

The establishment of the

Kanysh Satbayev Scientific

and Educational Center is

expected to open new ave-

nues for joint degree pro-

grams, faculty and student

exchanges, and support for

startups and innovative pro-

jects, further strengthening

academic and cultural ties

between Pakistan and Kazakh-

stan.—APP

Levies. He said the 33

civilians were also martyred

after terrorists stormed their

homes and residential areas.

He went on to say that

criminal and terrorist activi-

ties could be carried out by

any group, even in relatively

safe areas, but the pattern of

violence witnessed in Bal-

ochistan reflected organised

terrorism rather than isolat-

ed criminal acts.

He said the terrorists were

acting as operatives of a

hostile country, seeking to

avenge the defeat suffered

by enemy forces in Opera-

tion Sindoor and earlier con-

frontations, particularly after

Pakistan's armed forces had

democratised their strength

and professionalism, earning

pride for the entire nation.

He said security forces had

thwarted attempts by terro-

rists to breach the Quetta Red

Zone and neutralised them

wherever they attempted to

operate. —APP

being to justify," he said,

questioning the nature of

such groups were merely

"disgruntled."

The SPAM said that after

recent terroristic oper-

ations, the bodies of kilo-

metres were easily taken

from hospitals in Quetta,

raising serious questions

about the motives and nar-

atives of those claiming to

speak for "rights."

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Briefs  
IGP chairs operations division meeting

## Spanish envoy leaves Pakistan prematurely after controversial tenure

A senior representative of one of Pakistan's leading daily newspapers approached him with a name card, a customary gesture of introduction. The ambassador glanced at the card and returned it to the journalist without acknowledgment. The act was seen as humiliating, and those nearby who had intended to introduce themselves quietly withdrew. That moment set the tone for his reputation in Islamabad, where many found him distant and unwelcoming

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Spanish ambassador to Pakistan José Antonio de Ory Peral departed nearly a year before his planned two-year tenure, leaving after just under two years in office. His early exit has raised eyebrows within diplomatic circles, though many in Islamabad's media and political community have expressed relief at his departure. Traditionally, Spanish ambas-

dors in Pakistan have been regarded as approachable, warm, and popular figures, but this envoy proved to be an exception. From the beginning of his tenure, he was perceived as unusually cynical and aloof. One incident at a reception early in his posting left a lasting impression. A senior representative of one of Pakistan's leading daily newspapers approached him with a name card, a customary gesture of introduction. The ambassador glanced at the card and returned it to the journalist without acknowledgment. The act

was seen as humiliating, and those nearby who had intended to introduce themselves quietly withdrew. That moment set the tone for his reputation in Islamabad, where many found him distant and unwelcoming. Rumors circulated early on that he would not remain in Pakistan for long, and his premature departure appears to confirm those predictions. Interestingly, news of his exit has been met with sighs of relief among journalists and officials who had struggled to connect with him. While the reason for his early departure remain unclear, his tenure will likely be remembered as one of the most unusual and strained in the history of Spanish diplomacy in Pakistan.

## 50 garbage containers handed over to GMC

Sealed garbage containers would be placed in public and residential areas. Door-to-door waste collection will be arranged by solid waste management personnel, he explained

ISLAMABAD: In order to keep Gwadar city neat and clean, the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) has handed over 50 large-sized garbage containers to the Gwadar Municipal Committee (GMC). These garbage containers will be placed in the area of the newly renovated Gwadar old city, known as "Mullah Fazal Chowk." The containers were handed over by GDA Superintendent Engineer Nadir Baloch and Gwadar Municipal Committee Chairman Majid Johar, according to a Gwadar Pro's report on Monday. A GDA official told Gwadar Pro that provision of these 50 large-sized garbage containers aims to prevent the vicinity of "Mullah Fazal Chowk" from getting littered. They will help enhance the beauty of city, he added. Later, Gwadar Smart Environment Sanitation System and Landfill Project will also yield a positive impact. It will help lift, recycle and dump all kinds of residential and commercial waste through state-of-the-art SOPs and modern machinery. A GMC official told Gwadar Pro that solely Gwadar city generates more than 20 tons of waste per day. In 2025, it is expected to 50 tons per day. In the last drop of steep up tick in commercial activities and an increasing number of housing units. "Currently, the majority of solid waste is dumped in the open at undeclared landfills or open grounds in Gwadar. Although most of the components of solid waste are inert yet useful for reuse and recycling, others may prove highly hazardous and fatal to the general public," he added. The project aims to establish a smart sanitation and solid waste management system to ensure sustainable development in Gwadar City. The project includes mechanical cleaning and manual cleaning services for which sprinkler trucks and sweeper trucks would be deployed. It also includes a container collection system, a manual collection system, and transportation system. Sealed garbage containers would be placed in public and residential areas. Door-to-door waste collection will be arranged by solid waste management personnel, he explained. —APP



ISLAMABAD: President, World Bank Group (WBG) Ajay Banga called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## ICT admin launches 1st polio drive of 2026

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Monday started its first anti-polio campaign of 2026, with a four-day drive running from February 2 to February 5. Health teams aim to vaccinate 466,000 children across the federal capital, as authorities call on citizens to support the effort and ensure access to every child. The campaign was formally inaugurated a day earlier by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad at the 27 Number Bus Station. During the launch event, the DC administered polio drops to children traveling with their families. The inauguration highlighted the focus on reaching children in transit and at busy public locations. Additional Deputy Commissioner East, along with other senior officials, took part in the ceremony. They administered polio drops to children at the bus station and interacted with parents to assess the performance. Officials said the campaign will be launched across all public locations. The campaign, a target of 466,000 children has been set for Islamabad. Polio workers have been assigned to visit houses across urban and rural areas to ensure that no child is missed. According to the district administration, teams have been instructed to cover all sectors, settlements, and underserved areas during the four-day period. To strengthen outreach, assistant commissioners across Islamabad participated in polio morning assemblies alongside polio workers. These assemblies were organized to review plans, address field challenges, and motivate frontline staff before the start of daily activities. Officials said coordination at the local level is key to meeting vaccination targets. In addition to door-to-door visits, special polio camps have been set up at hospitals, schools, and public places. These camps are aimed at vaccinating children who may not be available at home during routine visits. Transport hubs, health facilities, and educational institutions are among the key locations where these camps are operating. The Deputy Commissioner Islamabad said that polio workers will make every effort to reach each household during the campaign. He emphasized that the success of the drive depends on full access to children and timely cooperation from families. He added that district teams are working to ensure smooth operations and proper monitoring throughout the campaign. DC Islamabad Irfan Memon appealed to citizens to cooperate with polio workers and allow them to administer drops to their children. He said public support is essential to protect children and to achieve long-term goals against polio. Officials stated that with the cooperation of citizens, Islamabad can play its role in eliminating polio. They urged parents to ensure that children under five receive polio drops during the campaign, whether at home or at designated camps, to help secure a polio-free future. —APP

## Pakistan will leave no stone unturned for Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, Engineer Amir Muqam on Monday invited all stakeholders and citizens to show solidarity with the Kashmiri people, reaffirming that Pakistan will continue to raise the Kashmir issue at every forum until the Kashmiris are granted their rightful rights. Ahead of February 5, the Minister, in a special video message on PTI, underscored that the abrogation of Article 370, which forcibly removed Jammu and Kashmir's special status, was a violation of international law and made it imperative for the nation to stand united in defending their rights. Amir Muqam urged everyone to actively participate in initiatives and demonstrations expressing solidarity with Kashmiris. He called on the nation to stand together, reinforcing that Pakistan will continue to raise the Kashmir issue at every forum until the Kashmiris are granted their rightful rights. —APP

## Gilani arrives in Cambodia on official visit

The warm reception accorded to the Chairman Senate reflects the cordial relations between Pakistan and Cambodia and the importance attached to parliamentary engagement between the two countries

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Senate Syed Naeem Gilani arrived in Phnom Penh on Monday on an official visit to the Kingdom of Cambodia. Upon arrival, he was received at the airport by senior Cambodian parliamentary and government dignitaries, including Dr Thun Vathana, Second Vice President of the Senate; Ngy Chanphal, Chairman of the 1st Commission of the Senate and Chairman of the Cambodia-Pakistan Senate Friendship Group; Dr Chhiv Yiseang, Chairman of the 5th Commission of the Senate; Nguon Sokeng, Director General of Protocol and International Relations; and Zaeeruddin Babar Thaeem, Ambassador of Pakistan to Cambodia. As a gesture of courtesy, Ambassador Zaeeruddin Babar Thaeem and Nguon Sokeng boarded the aircraft to personally welcome the Chairman of the Senate and his delegation. The warm reception accorded to the Chairman of the Senate reflects the cordial relations between Pakistan and Cambodia and the importance attached to parliamentary engagement between the two countries. —APP

Spousal dispute case  
SC allows father to meet daughter

ISLAMABAD

The Supreme Court, while hearing a case relating to a dispute between husband and wife, on Monday directed that the father be allowed to meet his daughter, giving priority to the welfare of the child. During the hearing, the child's father informed the court that his daughter was present in the courtroom and that he wished to meet her. Responding to the father's request, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail remarked that such cruelty should not be inflicted. Justice Mandokhail observed that children suffer the most in disputes between spouses and that this issue frequently arises in such cases. The court directed that the father be allowed to meet his daughter inside the courtroom. Following the court's remarks, the meeting between the father and the daughter was arranged in the courtroom. Subsequently, the Supreme Court adjourned further hearing of the case. —APP

## PEC launches structural health assessment system

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), in collaboration with KnK Japan-Pakistan, the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF), and GIZ Pakistan, has launched a pioneering Structural Health Assessment (SHA) system at the Capacity Development for Climate-Resilient Infrastructure (CDCRI) event in Islamabad.

The digital platform will support engineers in assessing and strengthening public infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and other essential infrastructure, particularly those vulnerable to climate change impacts and disaster risks. The SHA system enables data-driven decision-making to reduce structural vulnerabilities and enhance resilience against climate-induced hazards and disasters. By transitioning from reactive to proactive resilience, the initiative represents a significant step toward safer infrastructure and sustainable development across Pakistan.

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## Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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It is no coincidence that as Turkish-Israeli relations have worsened due to the Gaza war, Israel has been using its lobbying power in the West to influence Balkan states that need Western backing. Israel's outreach continues at a time when it faces international isolation due to the Gaza conflict. Although the Balkan region might be seen as Europe's periphery, Israel aims to build legitimacy by showcasing to the world that its leaders can still travel abroad and receive other leaders in their offices. Despite being peripheral, the Balkans have become an arena where several actors seek to expand their sphere of influence.

For leaders of small and fragile Balkan states, hosting international dignitaries or participating in global treaties can be seen as an opportunity to enhance their international standing. However, it is also important for them to align with the "right side of history," since it is clear that, with so few leaders — even in Europe — willing to meet Netanyahu, receiving or visiting him will bring no tangible gain. The Balkan states' stance toward Israel and its war in Gaza has been varied. Albania established diplomatic relations with Israel only after the fall of its communist regime in 1991. Before that, Tirana supported the Palestine Liberation Organization. However, as US influence in Albania increased after 1991, political support for the Palestinians diminished. Today, Albania is strongly allied with Israel, believing that closer relations can boost its influence with the White House. While Serbia has provided humanitarian aid to Gaza, it also supplied arms to Israel — deliveries that President Aleksandar Vučić halted after Israel attacked Iran last year. Since then, Serbia has been pursuing a cautious policy, concerned over a potential spillover of the Israel-Israel conflict to the Balkans. Meanwhile, Montenegro and North Macedonia have adopted a low-profile diplomatic stance.

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Turkey already enjoys strong political ties with Balkan states, built on shared culture and history, and can further deepen these partnerships. The Balkan Peace Platform is an excellent initiative in this regard. Ankara can also leverage its position within NATO, especially with Balkan members of the alliance, to encourage regional states to pursue balanced foreign policies regarding Middle East issues and reduce Israel's leverage in this area.



## Balkan states crucial to Türkiye

DR. SINEM CENGIZ

SINCE the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, the Balkan region has been a priority for Turkey because of its geopolitical proximity and historical and cultural ties. Through its economic and political influence, Turkey has placed the region within its area of particular interest. As a result, relations with Balkan states have begun to occupy an important place in Ankara's foreign policy agenda. Since this region's history has been marked by conflict, fragmentation and chronic instability, Turkey maintains a calculated and balanced policy toward each Balkan country. As part of this policy, Turkey has launched a diplomatic initiative, the Balkan Peace Platform, which held its second meeting in Istanbul last month. The meeting brought together the foreign ministers of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said that the platform has quickly become an important mechanism for deepening dialogue, emphasizing Turkey's role as a unifying actor. While global attention is often focused on regional developments from Gaza to Iran and from Sudan to Yemen, the Balkan region may not appear to be a priority for many. However, despite being a peripheral region, the Balkans has become an arena where several actors, including Turkey, Israel, Iran, Russia and the Western powers, seek to expand their sphere of influence. Each of these actors has different motivations toward the region, which connects Europe, the Middle East, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. In recent years, with increasing tensions due to the Gaza war and Iran-Israel conflict, the Balkan states have been gaining prominence. For instance, Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani was among the leaders of 20 countries who signed up to the US-led Board of Peace. Meanwhile, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama was last month received at the Israeli Knesset, meeting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. A few days later, Netanyahu received Republika Srpska President Ana Trifunovic and former President Milorad Dodik. Since the Gaza war erupted, Israel has been trying to forge closer ties with the Balkan states. Israeli President Isaac Herzog has paid historic visits to Albania and Serbia. Israel is particularly trying to gain impetus in the Balkans by expanding its military and economic ties. Tel Aviv's defense partnership with Serbia has paved the way for Israel's growing footprint in the region. In addition to defense ties, Israel sees the Balkans as a space useful for intelligence purposes against its opponents in the region, particularly Turkey.

## How Iran Dismantled Mossad's Hidden Network

Qamar Bashir



Iranian authorities claimed that, working with Russian and Chinese technical expertise, they eventually traced the signal pathways behind these systems. Uplinks and downlinks were identified. Devices were seized. The digital bridge between alleged external coordinators and internal operatives was disrupted. As a result, Tehran argued, the momentum of street-level unrest declined, and the information battlefield tilted back in favor of the state. Overlaying these tactical maneuvers was a deeper ideological framing articulated by Iran's leadership. In speeches delivered by the country's supreme authority portrayed confrontation not merely...

THE confrontation that reshaped the intelligence and military balance in the Middle East unfolded between June 3 and June 15, 2025, when Israel and the United States launched a coordinated campaign against Iran that combined external strikes with what Tehran later described as a deeply deployed internal operation. It was not merely a clash of aircraft, missiles, and naval deployments. Iranian officials and regional analysts argued that it was a war prepared from within, built on years of covert penetration by Mossad, Israel's world-renowned intelligence service. According to these accounts, networks of cultivated insiders had facilitated the smuggling of drones, communications equipment, and light weapons into Iranian territory. The aftermath, now firmly in the past, triggered what Tehran called its largest counter-intelligence operation in its modern history, marked by mass arrests, the exposure of alleged cells, the seizure of weapons depots, and the dismantling of clandestine communication networks. By mid-June, the guns fell silent, but the intelligence war had merely shifted into a deeper and more complex phase.

That next phase began after the Davos meetings concluded on January 23, when President Donald Trump ordered the movement of a US army and flotilla of warships toward the Persian Gulf, positioning them to encircle Iran. The global and military circles immediately framed the deployment as the prelude to an imminent strike.

Aircraft carriers, submarines, and long-range bombers dominated headlines. Markets trembled. Regional capitals braced. Yet, at the moment when an attack was most widely anticipated, it did not come. Instead, Washington paused.

According to defense analysts, this postponement was not hesitation, but calculation.

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ern and regional calculations: Iran's steadily advancing missile and nuclear capabilities, whether acknowledged, denied, or deliberately left ambiguous. The June 2025 exchange also exposed the limits of Israel's and America's ability to achieve decisive results without risking serious retaliation. Iran was not an isolated state on the periphery of global politics. It stood at the intersection of major power interests. Russia and China openly opposed a war that could redraw the strategic map of the region. Turkey publicly accused Israel of pushing the United States toward a conflict that would destabilize the entire Middle East. Within NATO, enthusiasm for opening another major front appeared limited. Meanwhile, Washington faced pressures far beyond the Persian Gulf. From the Caribbean to South America, shifting alliances and growing resistance to U.S. influence demanded diplomatic and strategic attention. The prospect of managing simultaneous crises across multiple theaters introduced caution into decision-making circles, as military assets and political capital were stretched across competing priorities. Hovering over all these calculations was the narrow corridor of the Strait of Hormuz. Any disruption there would send shockwaves through global energy markets and supply chains, with consequences reaching far beyond the region. Iran's post-June and post-January campaign to loosen Mossad's alleged grip-through mass arrests, technological countermeasures, and strategic partnerships—which signaled Iran's determination to contest every layer of the intelligence battlefield, from the streets of its cities to the orbits above its skies. The United Nations, often dismissed as powerless, remained, in principle, the only forum capable of conferring collective legitimacy on any lasting settlement. Its strength lay not in its bureaucracy, but in the willingness of member states to honor its resolutions and arbitration. If that willingness continued to erode, the world risked sliding from a rules-based order into a raw contest of power. For now, June's firestorm belonged to history, and January's naval chessboard defined the present. Beneath the visible movements of fleets and leaders, the silent war of spies, signals, and counter-signals continued to shape the future—reminding the world that in the modern age, the most decisive battles are often fought far from the front lines, in the hidden spaces between information, perception, and power.

—Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)

Former Press Minister,

Embassy of Pakistan to France

Former Press Attaché to Malaysia

Former MD, SRBC

Macomb, Michigan

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Pakistan's assertions in this regard are grounded in evidence, not rhetoric. Detailed intelligence, material links, and operational trails pointing to Indian involvement and facilitation have repeatedly been placed before the international community. The use of Afghan territory by terrorist elements targeting Pakistan is equally well-documented

actors that aligned themselves with India during the events of May 2025, and whose technological capabilities were displayed before a global audience, cannot dissociate themselves from responsibility. Yet that same episode also reaffirmed a deeper and more enduring reality. Under the resolute command of Field Marshal Syed Aslam Munir, the Pakistan Army demonstrated not only operational superiority but also strategic maturity. Hostile designs were decisively crushed, deterrence was restored, and the nation's degraded and dangerous form of hostility that Pakistan was compelled to confront today.

Following its unmistakable setback in May 2025, India appears to have abandoned any remaining commitment to responsible statecraft. Unable to absorb defeat or recalibrate its approach, it has instead reverted to indirect warfare, employing subversive tactics designed to destabilize Pakistan from within.

Sponsorship of separatist violence in Balochistan, and the facilitation of terrorist infiltration across Pakistan's western borders are not isolated incidents, but elements of a coherent strategy rooted in frustration and desperation. Such conduct does not reflect strength; it betrays strategic exhaustion.

Pakistan's assertions in this regard are grounded in evidence, not rhetoric. Detailed intelligence, material links

## Briefs

**PM urges KP govt to fulfill its responsibilities**

From PAGE 01  
federal framework for development projects in KP, improvement of basic infrastructure, education, health and increasing employment opportunities. He said that the federal government was committed to taking all provinces along and acting on the vision of uniform development, saying that the goals of national unity, stability, and prosperity could only be achieved through mutual consultation and collaborative action.

**PM acknowledges WB's valuable support**

From PAGE 01  
structural home grown program aimed at sustainable economic stability. The prime minister appreciated the support of the World Bank Group in resilient infrastructure, agribusiness, digital development, energy, human capital, fiscal reforms, and increasing productive private investment for job creation and growth. PM Shehbaz and Mr. Banga reiterated the need to fast-track implementation and ensure strong oversight to deliver impact at speed and scale on CPEC-aligned priorities. These measures would duly assist the prime minister's initiative to address and resolve implementation bottlenecks in development projects. The prime minister expressed the government's commitment to structural reforms that would unlock job-rich growth and further strengthen investors' confidence. Ajay Banga expressed his gratitude to the prime minister for his reception and hospitality in Pakistan. Ajay Banga commended Pakistan's ongoing reform efforts and reaffirmed his commitment to deepening cooperation through a One World Bank Group approach.

**Iranian President orders start of talks...**

From PAGE 01

method and framework for negotiations that would be ready in the coming days, with messages between the two sides relayed through regional players. "Several points have been addressed and we are examining and finalising the details of each stage in the political process, which we hope to conclude in the coming days," foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqai said, without giving details on the content of any negotiations. Trump had warned "time is running out" for Iran to reach a deal on its nuclear programme, which the West believes is aimed at making an atomic bomb. But Baqai said Tehran "never accepts ultimatums" and that he could not confirm any such message was received. Regional players have pushed for diplomacy to defuse tensions. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was in Turkey last week and held further talks with his Egyptian, Saudi and Turkish counterparts, he said on Telegram.

**TTAP condemns attacks**

From PAGE 01

It noted that a terrorist attack in the province on such a large scale was a failure on the part of the provincial government and LEAs. The opposition alliance stated that the series of attacks showed the "extent to which the rule of law has become limited in the province and the lack of concern for the lives and property of citizens." "For how long will we turn a blind eye to the fact that the provincial government – which does not have the public's support – only thinks in prolonging its time in power?" TTAP said. The opposition alliance maintained that "only governments whose own moral standing was not under question were capable of combating terrorism."

# Australia backs Pakistan's future through girls' cricket

*Australia's HC to Pakistan, Timothy Kane, congratulated the players for their courage and determination to challenge barriers to women and girls' participation through sport*

DNA



ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commission (AHC), in partnership with Kinnaird College for Women and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), hosted the 7th AHC-Kinnaird Girls' Cricket Cup, supporting access, promoting teamwork, and creating opportunity for Pakistani girls through sport. The tournament brought together students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, fostering a sense of confidence, foster leadership, and promote inclusion. It also underscored the depth and value of people-to-people engagement between Australia and Pakistan.

Australia's High Commission to Pakistan, Timothy Kane, congratulated the players for their courage and determination to challenge barriers to women and girls' participation through sport. "Sport is a powerful medium through which women and girls challenge societal perceptions and champion the economic and social value of equality. Supporting girls' cricket in Pakistan reflects our shared love of the game and commitment to creating opportunities to advance equality and inclusion for the current generation and generations to come."

## Shamyl to lead Pakistan Shaheens against England Lion in Abu Dhabi

LAHORE, Feb 02 (APP): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday announced the 16-member Pakistan Shaheens squad for the upcoming T20 and 50-over series against England Lions in Abu Dhabi. The three-match T20 series will begin on Friday, 20 February, while the five-match 50-over series will be played from 27 February to 3 March. All the matches are set to take place at the Stadium Oval in Abu Dhabi. The Pakistan Shaheens squad will take part in a seven-day training camp from 11-17 February in Karachi before departing for United Arab Emirates. Left-hand batter Shamyl Hussain is set to lead the Shaheens in both the T20 and 50-over series, while Rohail Nazir and Saad Baig will take up the wicket-keeping duties, while Arfaat, legspinner Saad Masood and left-arm wrist spinner Sufyan Moqim form the spin contingent for the Shaheens. Among the fast bowlers,

Shamyl will be joined by Abdul Samad, Hassan Nawaz, player of the tournament in ACC Men's Asia Cup Rising Stars, Maaz Sadat and left-hand batsman Saad Khan.

Pakistan U19 batter Sameer Minhas has also received the call-up for both the series along with his brother Arfaat Minhas as the duo make strong strides following their appearances in the ICC Men's U19 World Cup and ACC Men's Asia Cup Rising Stars, respectively.

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**Briefs**

**KP govt implements strict monitoring for Tirah funds**

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Information Shafi Jan on Monday shared details of the funds allocated by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for the relief and rehabilitation of families affected in Tirah Valley. He said the provincial government has earmarked Rs4 billion to facilitate the affected families.

Up to January 31 an amount of Rs920 million has been spent on transportation and food arrangements for the displaced families during their journey. Shafi Jan stated that the provincial government has compiled a fully auditable record of all expenditures.

The record includes verification by the district administration and local elders along with signatures and CNIC details of the beneficiaries.

He further informed that Rs2.40 billion has been allocated under the compensation package and monthly assistance for the affected families. Payments will be made through digital channels after NADRA registration and verification. The relief amounts will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of the affected families. - APP

**Dollar slide raises new risks for Pakistan**

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: As the US dollar risks weakening against other major currencies, Pakistan faces the prospect of higher external debt liabilities, with multilateral and bilateral loans accounting for 56% of its roughly \$92 billion external debt stock, The News reported. Pakistan's external debt and liabilities have hovered around \$130 billion in recent years, largely due to a stronger dollar versus currencies such as the euro, Japanese yen (JPY) and British pound (GBP).

In the last few days, the US dollar started weakening, raising the possibility that Pakistan's external debt-to-GDP ratio is likely to explode in this quarter if the recent trends in currencies persist.

However, the Ministry of Finance in the Debt Policy Statement, going to submit before the parliament, stated that external debt increased by 6% YoY to stand at \$91.8 billion as of the end June-25, reflecting an increase of \$5 billion. During Q1-FY-26, it declined slightly by 0.4% (\$0.35 billion) to stand at \$91.4 billion at the end of September 2025.

**Aurangzeb reaffirms stability, stronger FX**

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday reaffirmed the government's commitment to sustaining macroeconomic stability, strengthening foreign exchange buffers, and enhancing investor confidence. He reiterated this during a meeting with a delegation of Wafi Energy Pakistan Ltd, which signaled potential investment of up to USD 100 million in Pakistan over the next two to three years, a news release said. The delegation, led by Javid Akhtar Chief Finance Officer Asyad Group (Board Member), included Zulair Shaikh, Chief Executive Officer and Zarrar Mahmud Chief Finance Officer of Wafi Energy Pakistan Ltd. The interaction provided an opportunity to review the company's current operations, future investment outlook, and matters relevant to the oil marketing and energy sector. During the meeting, the Finance Minister emphasized that sustained macroeconomic stability remained the cornerstone of the government's economic strategy and was essential for maintaining investor confidence. He noted that improvements in foreign exchange availability were a direct outcome of broader macroeconomic discipline and reforms, and that strengthening external buffers will enable smoother facilitation of legitimate business transactions, including dividend repatriation and cross-border payments. The Finance Minister observed that improving macroeconomic indicators were already translating into greater confidence among both domestic and foreign investors, and underscored that such developments represent fundamental elements of a healthy investment climate. He highlighted that local investor participation played an important role in further encouraging foreign investment inflows.

# Thailand hands over the ASEAN Committee chairmanship to Indonesia

H.E. Lt. Gen. (Rtd.) Chandra Warsenanto Sukotjo, Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan, assumed the role of ACI Chair for the first half of 2026. The handover ceremony was witnessed by H.E. Mr. Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, Additional Secretary (Asia-Pacific), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan



**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan, in his capacity as Chair of the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI), presided over the ACI Heads of Mission Meeting No. 01/2026 at the Royal Thai Embassy. The meeting reviewed ACI's activities over the past six months and addressed organizational matters related to upcoming initiatives. Diplomats from ASEAN member states discussed ways to further strengthen cooperation and visibility of ASEAN in Pakistan. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Thai Ambassador formally handed over the chairmanship of ACI to Indonesia. H.E. Lt. Gen. (Rtd.) Chandra Warsenanto Sukotjo, Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan, assumed the role of ACI Chair for the first half of 2026. The handover ceremony was witnessed by H.E. Mr. Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, Additional Secretary (Asia-Pacific), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan. The transition marks Indonesia's leadership in coordinating ASEAN's diplomatic engagements in Islamabad, continuing the Committee's mission of fostering regional cooperation and strengthening ties with Pakistan.

## Gaza's Rafah crossing makes limited reopening

Israeli forces seized control of the crossing in May 2024 during the war with Hamas, and it has remained largely closed since. A partial resumption of operations began on Sunday in a tightly restricted pilot phase that did not involve travel of people, following months of appeals from aid groups

RAFAH: Gaza's key Rafah border crossing reopened to Palestinians on Monday, an Israeli security official said, though Egyptian state-linked media said only 50 people would be allowed to cross in each direction in the early days. The resumption of operations comes after Gaza's civil defence reported dozens killed in a wave of Israeli strikes over the weekend, in what the military said was retaliation for Palestinian fighters exiting a tunnel in Rafah city. The Rafah crossing with Egypt is Gaza's only gateway to the outside world that does not lead to Israel and is a key access point for both people and goods.

Israeli forces seized control of the crossing in May 2024 during the war with Hamas, and it has remained largely closed since. A partial resumption of operations began on Sunday in a tightly restricted pilot phase that did not involve travel of people, following months of appeals from aid groups. "As of this time, and following the arrival of the EUBAM teams on behalf of the European Union, the Rafah crossing has now opened to the movement of residents, for both entry and exit," the Israeli official said, referring to a European border assistance mission. Egyptian state-linked media reported that 50 people were expected to cross in each direction in the first days of the reopening.

AlQahera News, which is linked to Egypt's state intelligence service, reported citing an unnamed source that "fifty people will depart Egypt for Gaza and fifty people will come from Gaza, in the first days of the operation". A source at the border told AFP a few dozen people arrived on the Egyptian side on Monday awaiting entry into Gaza. Israeli state broadcaster Kan reported that the crossing would be open for about six hours daily. "The Rafah crossing is a lifeline," said Mohammed Nassir, a Palestinian who had his leg amputated after being injured early in the war. "I need to undergo surgery that is unavailable in Gaza but can be performed abroad." - DNA

## Pak-Italy trade witnesses over 23% surplus

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's goods and services trade with Italy witnessed a surplus of 23.54 percent during the first six months of the fiscal year (2025-26) as compared to the corresponding months of last year. Trade surplus during the months under review was recorded at \$352.814 million against \$285.585 million last year, showing 23.54 percent growth. The overall exports to Italy were recorded at US \$612.888 million during July-December (2025-26) year against exports of US \$570.082 million during the same months last year, showing an increase of 7.50 percent, SBP data revealed. Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, exports to Italy during December 2025 increased by 12.36 percent from US \$ 88.621 million to US \$ 99.576 million. Month-on-month exports to Italy also rose by 21.02 percent during November 2025 as compared with exports of US \$ 82.274 million in November 2025, the SBP data said.

Overall Pakistan's exports to all countries witnessed a decrease of 4.97 percent in six months, from US \$16.319 billion to US \$15.507 billion, the SBP data said.

On the other hand, imports from Italy during the months under review were recorded at US \$260.074 million against US \$284.497 million of last year, showing a decrease of 8.58 percent in July-December (2025-26).

Meanwhile, year-on-year imports from Italy during December 2025 increased by 145.97 percent from US \$32.387 million last year to US \$79.664 million.

On a month-on-month basis, the imports from Italy also increased by 163.44 percent during December 2025 as compared to the import of US \$30.239 million in November 2025, SBP data said.

The overall imports increased by 12.26 percent, from US \$27.902 billion to US \$31.325 billion during the period under review. - Agencies

## Kremlin confirms war talks in Abu Dhabi

MOSCOW: Russia has confirmed that a new round of talks with Ukraine and the United States in Abu Dhabi on ending the four-year war will start Wednesday, after they were postponed from this weekend. Moscow blamed scheduling issue for the delay, a day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky also said the negotiations would take place in the UAE capital on Wednesday and Thursday.

"They were indeed originally planned for this past Sunday. But additional coordination of the schedules of the three parties was needed," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "Now, on Wednesday-Thursday, the second round will indeed take place. It will be held in Abu Dhabi. We can confirm that," he added.

The talks will take place less than two weeks before the fourth anniversary of Moscow launching its full-scale offensive against Ukraine. They are expected to focus on the crucial issue of territory, with neither side so far showing any sign of a breakthrough. - APP

## Construction of guest house in diplomatic enclave: plea dismissed

The court observed that the determination of expenses incurred by the company fell within the jurisdiction of the trial court and that the Supreme Court would not interfere at this stage



present petition concerned the return of that guarantee. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail observed that the matter was already pending before the trial court for arbitration. He remarked that the government was not absconding and was very much present, adding that the bank guarantee was valid until June 30, 2026. The judge further noted that it was a caretaker government and it was possible that the relevant authorities had hurriedly installed the project's foundation plaque. He also remarked that large investors were usually involved in such projects. Justice Mandokhail recalled that the Islamabad High Court had also issued a stay order in the matter. The court observed that the determination of expenses incurred by the company fell within the jurisdiction of the trial court and that the Supreme Court would not interfere at this stage. Subsequently, the Supreme Court dismissed the petition of the private construction company and directed the trial court to decide the case independently, without being influenced by the Supreme Court proceedings.

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