



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Pakistan greatly values relations with Kazakhstan

Detailed News On Page-01

CM Punjab invites Iranian investors to invest in Punjab

Detailed News On Page-08



Pak to boost trade relations with Kazakhstan

Detailed News On Page-07



Briefs

UK PM says Mandelson has to clarify his links with Epstein

NEWS DESK

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has publicly stated that Lord Peter Mandelson "lied repeatedly" about the extent and depth of his relationship with the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Starmer expressed regret over appointing Mandelson as the UK's Ambassador to the United States in late 2024, describing the situation as a betrayal of the country. This came during exchanges in Parliament (likely at Prime Minister's Questions), where Starmer faced pressure from the Conservative opposition (led by Kemi Badenoch) and some Labour MPs over the handling of the scandal. Mandelson was appointed UK Ambassador to the US under Starmer's government but was fired in September 2025 (after about seven months) following earlier revelations of his continued ties to Epstein post-2008 conviction. Recent document releases (including from the US Department of Justice) have intensified scrutiny, showing deeper contacts than previously admitted.

Details of Epstein post-mortem released

DNA

NEW YORK: Previously unseen photos showing Jeffrey Epstein's body lying on a stretcher and being attended to by medics in the immediate aftermath of his death have been released by the US government. Twenty images, many of which are too graphic to show, were published as part of a declassified FBI report into Epstein's death in custody, as well as a post-mortem examination and internal prison documents. They are among millions of documents published on Friday by the US Department of Justice (DoJ) in the latest Epstein files release. Epstein was found dead in his prison cell on 10 August 2019. He had been held at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York on sex trafficking and conspiracy charges ahead of trial. The newly released FBI report, titled "Jeffrey Epstein death investigation", appears to be a probe into his death by the agency's field office in New York. The 23-page report has an "unclassified" note stamped on each page.

Washington Post starts massive layoff

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The Washington Post informed its staff on Wednesday that it was starting a widespread layoff that would gut its sports department and shrink its international footprint, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters. The job cuts were announced by Executive Editor Matt Murray on a call with employees, the source said, requesting anonymity as the matter was private. "We will be closing the sports department in its current form," Murray said in a company-wide call that began at 6:30 pm PKT (8:30 am ET). The call transcript was shared with Reuters by the source. "All departments are impacted. Politics and government will remain our largest desk and will remain central to our engagement and subscriber growth."

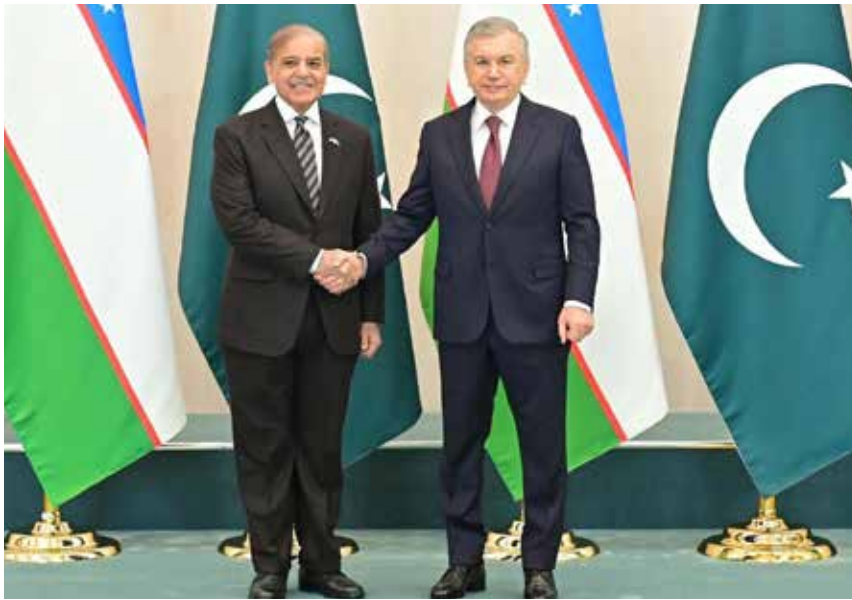
President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's visit to usher in new era

Uzbekistan, Pakistan relations poised to touch new horizons

As Prime Minister Sharif once noted in praise of Uzbekistan's reforms, "miracles are possible only through a clear vision, high dynamism, hard work, and a resolute pursuit of a common goal." The February 2026 summit holds the promise of realizing that vision, forging a partnership that benefits not only the two nations but the broader region

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The state visit of Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Islamabad on February 05, 2026 is poised to usher in a new era of deepened strategic partnership between Uzbekistan and Pakistan. Scheduled amid accelerating bilateral momentum, the trip will coincide with high-level engagements, including the Uzbekistan-Pakistan Business Forum and a "Made in Uzbekistan" exhibition in the Pakistani capital. This visit comes at a pivotal juncture when both nations are actively converting historical goodwill, shared cultural heritage, and geographic proximity into concrete economic and connectivity gains. Under President Mirziyoyev's dynamic leadership, Uzbekistan has pursued bold reforms that have opened doors for regional integration, while Pakistan, guided by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's vision of geo-economics, seeks to strengthen links with Central Asia. The upcoming summit is expected to build



on the High-Level Strategic Partnership Council established following Sharif's visit to Tashkent in February 2025, institutionalizing cooperation across multiple domains. At the heart of the agenda lies the ambitious Trans-Afghan Railway project, a

flagship initiative that promises to bridge Central and South Asia. The proposed corridor, linking Termez in Uzbekistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan's ports (including Karachi and potentially Gwadar), could slash transit times to 3-5 days and reduce transport costs by over 40%.

For landlocked Uzbekistan, this means reliable access to the Arabian Sea and global markets; for Pakistan, it positions the country as a vital transit hub for Eurasian trade. Progress has been steady: In 2025, feasibility studies advanced significantly, with trilateral talks involving Afghanistan yielding key agreements on routing and financing. Stakeholders view the railway not merely as infrastructure but as a geo-economic game-changer that could transport up to 20 million tonnes of cargo annually, fostering regional integration and unlocking untapped potential in trade, energy, and industry. Trade Surge and Economic Momentum Economic ties have shown remarkable growth. Bilateral trade exceeded \$440 million in 2025—twelve times higher

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan eyes \$1bn trade volume with Kazakhstan: PM

Islamabad, Astana's \$250m trade volume does not reflect potential of both countries, says premier

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday urged an increase in trade volume between Pakistan and Kazakhstan to \$1 billion as both countries signed over 30 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in several sectors, including petroleum, mining, and maritime affairs. "Unfortunately, our trade volume, as suggested, is meager \$250 million, which does not reflect not only strength of our friends and potential of both countries. Let us commit to take up our trade volume to \$1 billion in next 1 year," the premier said while addressing a joint press conference after MoU signing ceremony. Earlier, Kazak President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev was accorded a warm reception and a guard of honour as he arrived at the Prime Minister's House to hold one-on-one meeting with PM Shehbaz. Accompanied by a high-level delegation, comprising senior cabinet ministers and other high-ranking officials, the Kazakhstan president arrived in Islamabad for his first two-day state visit, at the invitation of Prime Minister Shehbaz. As the visiting dignitary arrived, the prime minister received him at the entrance of the PM House, where the formal reception took place.

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'There should be no politics in sports'

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Commenting on the decision to boycott the match against India in the T20 World Cup, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that there "should be no politics in sports". He made the remarks while addressing the federal cabinet in Islamabad. The remarks were televised. "We have taken a clear stand regarding the T20 World Cup that we will not play the match against India," he said. "There should be no politics in sports," he said. "We have taken this stand after deliberating on it carefully," he said, calling it an "appropriate decision". At the start of his address, PM Shehbaz began by talking about the attacks in Balochistan. "Within three to four days, 180 terrorists were sent to hell," he said. "As a result, 17 personnel embraced martyrdom."

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PTI KP leadership 'at odds' over protest plan

MNAs Shahid Khattak and Atif Khan oppose road closures, citing public hardship

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa leadership remains divided over the party's February 8 protest plan, with some parliamentarians opposing road closures and a proposed lockdown, sources said. The Tehreek-e-Tahaffuz-e-Ayeen-Pakistan (TTAP) has announced a countrywide shutdown strike on February 8, marking the second anniversary of the 2024 general elections, which PTI has described as "rigged". The sources added that the PTI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) parliamentary party held a meeting on Monday to finalise its strategy for the protest, during which sharp differences emerged. According to the insiders, MNA Shahid Khattak argued that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had given the party a mandate and that there is no justification for holding protests in the province.

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UNSC calls for accountability after Balochistan attacks

Members of the Security Council expressed their deepest condolences to the families of the victims, as well as to the government and people of Pakistan, and wished a swift and complete recovery to those injured"

CENTRELINE REPORT

NEW YORK: The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has strongly condemned the terrorist attacks carried out across multiple locations in Balochistan, urging all states to actively cooperate with Pakistan, in line with international law, to counter terrorism. In a statement issued on Tuesday, the UNSC termed the attacks as "heinous and cowardly" and stressed the

Continued on Page 06

US, Iran seek easing of tensions

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: The United States and Iran are due to hold talks in Oman on Friday after Tehran requested a change of venue to limit negotiations to its nuclear programme, a regional official said, with a build-up of US forces in the Middle East raising fears of a confrontation. Iran wanted the meeting to take place in Oman as a continuation of previous rounds of talks held in the Gulf Arab country on its nuclear programme, asking for a change of location from Turkey to avoid any expansion of the discussions to issues such as Tehran's ballistic missiles, the regional official said. Iran has said it will not make concessions on its formidable ballistic missile programme — one of the biggest in the Middle East — calling that a red line in negotiations. Tehran, which says it replenished its stockpile of ballistic missiles since coming under attack from Israel last year, has warned that it will unleash its missiles to defend the itself if its security is under threat.

UN experts alarmed over Imaan conviction

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Five United Nations (UN) experts on Wednesday expressed alarm over the conviction of lawyers Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and her husband, Hadi Ali Chatta. Last month, an Islamabad sessions court had sentenced Imaan and Hadi to a total of 17 years in prison on multiple charges in a case pertaining to controversial social media posts. In a joint statement on Wednesday, UN special rapporteurs Margaret Satterthwaite, Ben Saul, Mary Lawlor, Irene Khan and Gina Romero noted that the two were convicted on multiple criminal charges,

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No terrorist will be spared, resolves CDF Asim Munir

The COAS & CDF remarked that no terrorist and its facilitator will be spared and all will be dealt strictly as per law and that no one can rationalise violence and terrorism on any pretext

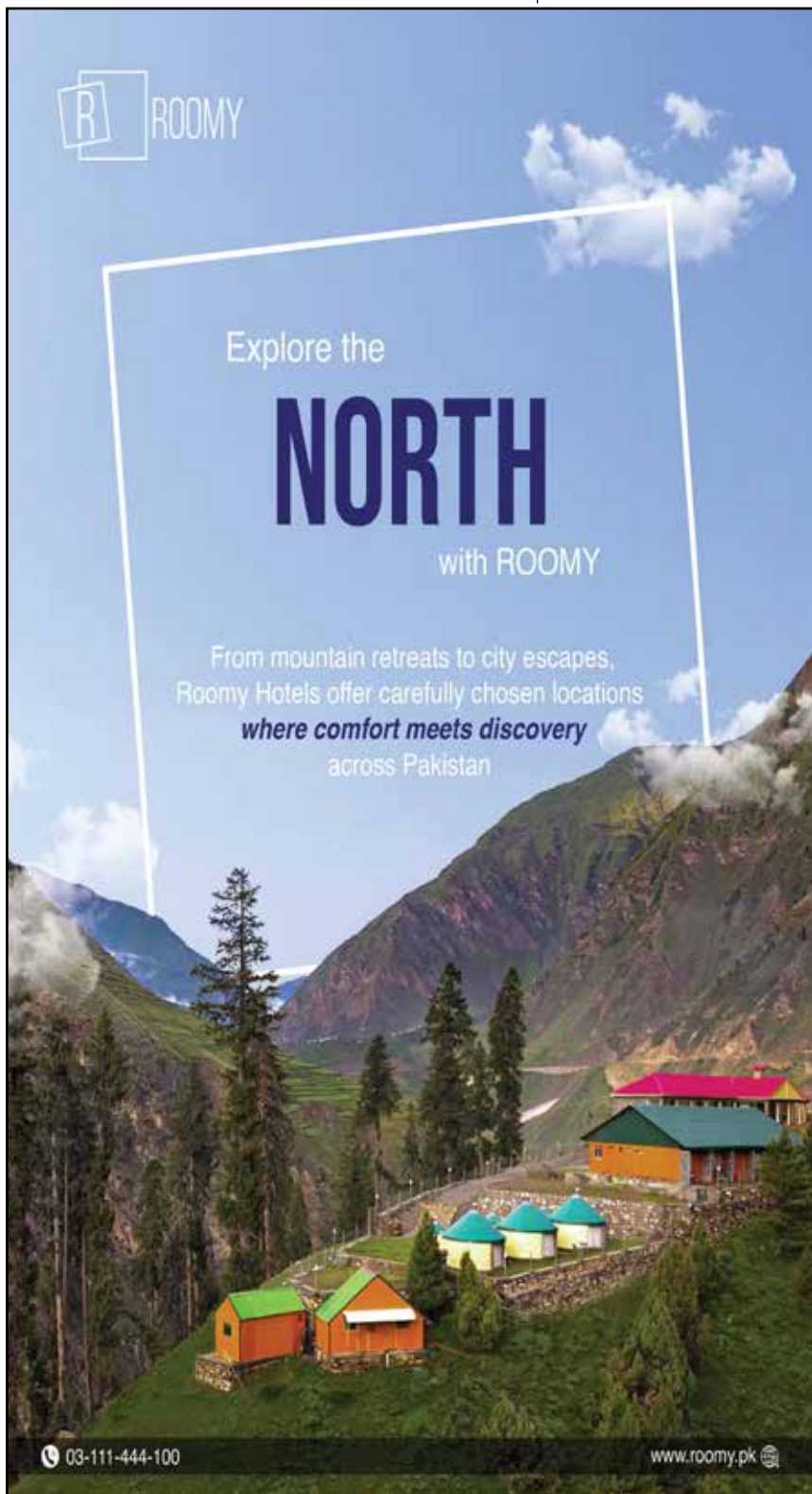
DNA

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, visited Quetta today. Field Marshal received a comprehensive operational briefing on the prevailing



ing security environment and internal security operations. The briefing covered recent terrorist attacks orchestrated by Indian backed internationally-designated terrorists of Fitna al Hindustan and the prompt aggressive response of security forces which failed their ulterior motive of compromising peace, stability, and development in Balochistan. Measures being undertaken to further strengthen the writ of the state and ensure protection of the populace and critical infrastructure were also discussed.

The COAS & CDF remarked that no terrorist and its facilitator will be spared and all will be dealt strictly as per law and that no one can rationalise violence and terrorism on any pretext. He appreciated the professionalism, valour, and sacrifices of officers and troops of all law enforcement agencies in thwarting nefarious anti-Pakistan designs and maintaining law and order. Later, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir along with CM Balochistan visited Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Quetta, where he met the injured personal of Army, FC Balochistan and Police. He lauded their high morale and commended their bravery and steadfastness in protecting the motherland from foreign-sponsored terrorists. Earlier on his arrival he was received by Commander Quetta Corps.



"Kashmir Pakistan Ki Sheh Rag Hai"

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah



Asif Ali Zardari

The President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan



Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan



Mohammad Ishaq Dar

Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister



Amir Muqam

Minister of Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan, States and Frontier Regions



Rana Muhammad Qasim Noon

Federal Minister and Chairman, Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir

The people of Pakistan across the globe observe Kashmir Solidarity Day to reaffirm our unwavering moral, diplomatic and political support for our Kashmiri brothers and sisters in their just cause to achieve the right to self-determination as enshrined in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. It was Shaheed Mohd. Benazir Bhutto who began the observance of this day 36 years ago, following the historic uprising of the Kashmiri people in 1989, a struggle that continues to this day.

For nearly eight decades, the valiant Kashmiri people have stood tall against the illegal Indian occupation and have rendered countless sacrifices. On this day, we pay solemn tribute to their indomitable spirit and resilience.

The situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) remains a matter of grave concern for global conscience. Since the illegal and unilateral actions of 5th August 2019, India has intensified its efforts to consolidate its occupation through administrative and legislative manipulation. By muzzling the media, incarcerating the Kashmiri leadership and attempting to dilute the Muslim majority through demographic changes, India seeks to disempower the Kashmiri people in their own land.

Indian occupation forces also continue to commit countless human rights violations in IIOJK. The findings of recent international reports highlight the alarming rise in arbitrary detentions and collective punishment. The use of punitive house demolitions and the ongoing suppression of digital freedoms, including the blocking of thousands of social media accounts, are clear attempts to hide the reality in IIOJK.

The recent profiling of mosques and mosque management committees in IIOJK constitutes deliberate intimidation by the Indian authorities, aimed to obstruct the free exercise of religion by the Muslim majority population. Such actions form part of a broader pattern of religious persecution under the extremist Hindutva framework. The Kashmiri people have the inalienable right to practice their religion without fear, coercion or discrimination.

The dangerous military escalation initiated by India in May 2025 serves as a stark reminder that true and durable peace in South Asia remains impossible unless the core dispute of Jammu and Kashmir is resolved.

I urge the international community to move beyond mere expressions of concern for the Kashmiri people and persuade India to stop the human rights violations in IIOJK, allow unfettered access to international human rights observers and grant the Kashmiri people their promised right to self-determination.

On this day, I reiterate that we will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Kashmiri people until they realize their right to decide their own future through a free and impartial plebiscite.

Every year, 5th February is observed as Kashmir Solidarity Day, an occasion where the people and the Government of Pakistan reaffirm their principled and unwavering support for their Kashmiri brothers and sisters in their just struggle for the realization of their right to self-determination.

The Jammu and Kashmir dispute remains one of the oldest unresolved disputes on the agenda of the United Nations. Over the years, several United Nations Security Council resolutions have established, beyond doubt, the disputed status of the territory of Jammu and Kashmir, while prescribing that its final disposition must be made in accordance with the will of the Kashmiri people, expressed through a fair and impartial plebiscite. However, for nearly eight decades, the Kashmiri people have been denied this fundamental right, due to India's intransigence.

Even after decades of bloodshed, brutality and barbarity, the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) remains a hostile environment, marked by heavy militarization, total repression and egregious human rights violations. Arbitrary political detentions, suppression of genuine political activity and severe restrictions on media, have become India's routine instruments to silence dissent in IIOJK.

On 5th August 2019, India took a host of illegal and unilateral administrative and legal measures, in an attempt to consolidate its forcible occupation of IIOJK. These measures not only contravene the UN Charter, but completely defy the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Such hollow attempts by India to carry out demographic re-engineering, or to alter the legal and administrative status of Kashmir, cannot absolve it from its international commitments and obligations, nor could they diminish the inalienable rights of the Kashmiri people.

India's illegal actions in IIOJK, are driven by Hindutva ideology that seeks to normalize discrimination, curtail religious freedoms and criminalize dissent. The ongoing profiling of mosques and their management committees in IIOJK represents a grave violation of the right to freedom of religion and highlights the discrimination faced by the Muslim population. Regrettably, the Indian occupation has moved beyond military repression to ideological coercion, aimed at silencing and disempowering an entire people.

Despite enduring decades of oppression, the brave and valiant Kashmiri people, refuse to surrender their legitimate aspirations. Pakistan salutes their heroic resilience, courage, and sacrifices.

As Prime Minister of Pakistan, I have been a strong advocate for the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people at every international forum including the United Nations General Assembly.

On this Kashmir Solidarity Day, I reassure my Kashmiri brothers and sisters that Pakistan will continue to extend its complete moral, diplomatic, and political support to the Kashmiri freedom struggle, until the Kashmiri people succeed in attaining their right to self-determination through a free and impartial plebiscite, as promised to them under the auspices of the United Nations.

Inshallah, the days of darkness shall give way to the dawn of freedom, and that day is not far, when the people of Jammu and Kashmir shall break the shackles of Indian occupation and live their lives in a future free from fear.

As we observe the Kashmir Solidarity Day today, Pakistan reiterates its firm and unwavering support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their just struggle for the right to self-determination. Under illegal Indian occupation, the Kashmiri people remain deprived of their fundamental rights. Yet, their resilience testifies the legitimacy of their just cause.

At the heart of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute lies India's failure to implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions guaranteeing the Kashmiri people a free and impartial plebiscite. India's persistent defiance undermines the United Nations Charter, the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The situation on the ground in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) has moved beyond episodic violations to a sustained system of repression. Since the unilateral and illegal actions of 5 August 2019, India has dismantled legal safeguards, weakened local institutions, and imposed measures aimed at consolidating its permanent occupation of the disputed territory, including artificially altering the demographic composition to change Muslim majority into minority, forcing media to follow the official line, and criminalizing any form of dissent. Under the Hindutva-driven framework, people in IIOJK face constant discrimination. The recent profiling of mosques in IIOJK where religious functionaries are forced to give their personal details, photographs and sectarian affiliations show the extent of institutionalized Islamophobia.

Grave human rights violations including take encounters, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and restrictions on fundamental freedoms continue unabated. UN experts have recently noted the arbitrary detention of nearly 2,800 individuals, including journalists, students, and human rights defenders.

We urge the international community to take decisive actions to address the worsening human rights situation in IIOJK, ensure accountability for India's illegal and unilateral actions, persuade India to implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions and allow the Kashmiri people their promised right to self-determination.

Pakistan will continue to stand with our Kashmiri brothers and sisters politically, morally and diplomatically. Our efforts will remain focused on securing a peaceful and lasting resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

On 5th February every year, the people of Pakistan come together to stand firmly in solidarity with our Kashmiri brothers and sisters. We renew our unwavering support for their legitimate struggle to achieve the right to self-determination, as enshrined in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The Jammu and Kashmir dispute is one of the oldest disputes in the world and has been on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council since 1948. The dispute remains unresolved due to India's stubbornness to implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions and give the Kashmiri people their promised right to self-determination.

Life in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) remains extremely difficult and the Kashmiri people have suffered immense hardships because of the draconian Indian regime. True representatives of the Kashmiri people remain behind bars and thousands of Kashmiri political activists are detained arbitrarily.

Freedom of expression also remain restricted as the local media has been forced to tow the official line. In particular, India attempted to consolidate its illegal occupation on 5th August 2019 through illegal and unilateral actions, which aimed to alter the region's demographic landscape and disempower the Kashmiri people.

Yet, no amount of repression by the Indian occupation forces has managed to break the Kashmiri people's indomitable spirit or weaken their determination to achieve their right to self-determination. Pakistan honours their spirit and pays tribute to their countless sacrifices for the Kashmir cause.

On this day, we remind the international community, especially the United Nations that the people of Kashmir still await the free and impartial plebiscite that was promised to them under the United Nations Security Council resolutions. We also urge the international community to take decisive action in IIOJK to stop the human rights violations, force India to reverse its illegal actions and implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

To our Kashmiri brothers and sisters, Pakistan will always stand shoulder-to-shoulder by your side. Pakistan will continue to raise your voice on every platform, supporting you morally, politically, and diplomatically until justice is done and you achieve your promised right to self-determination.

On this day, the entire Pakistani nation expresses its unwavering solidarity with its Kashmiri brothers and sisters.

Kashmir Solidarity Day is a reaffirmation of our pledge that Pakistan stands shoulder to shoulder with the Kashmiri people in their just and legitimate struggle.

For decades, the Kashmiri people have endured illegal Indian occupation, oppression, violence, and grave human rights violations; yet their courage, resilience, and determination remain unshaken.

The sacrifices of the Kashmiri people constitute a bright chapter in history, and their steadfastness is an example for the world.

Pakistan fully supports the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination, which is their recognized and inalienable right under the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

India's illegal and unilateral actions, particularly the atrocities being committed in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir since 5th August 2019, pose a serious challenge to the conscience of the international community.

I urge the international community to take immediate notice of the ongoing human rights violations in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, ensure justice for the Kashmiri people, and enable them to exercise their right to decide their own future.

Lasting regional and global peace is contingent upon a just and durable resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the United Nations resolutions.

On this day, on behalf of the Government of Pakistan and the people of Pakistan, I pay tribute to the Kashmiri martyrs and express complete solidarity with their families.

The Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir will continue to be the voice of the Kashmiri people at every diplomatic, political, and moral forum.

May Allah Almighty grant the Kashmiri people freedom, peace, and dignity, and bestow upon Pakistan the resolve and strength to continue supporting the oppressed.

Ameen.

#79YearsOfIllegalOccupation
February
5
Kashmir Solidarity Day

Pakistan stands with Kashmiris in their struggle for freedom.

Our relationship with Kashmir is not for just one day, but a soul-and-heart relationship.

National Days and Armed Forces Days	
Feb 04/Sri Lanka	National Day
Feb 06/N. Zealand	National Day
Feb 06/Uganda	Army Day
Feb 11/Iran	Revolution day
Feb 16/DPR Korea	National Day
Feb 16/Lithuania	National Day
Feb 18/Gambia	National Day
Feb 19/Nepal	Democracy Day
Feb 23/Uzbekistan	National Day
Feb 23/Brunei	National Day
Feb 23/Guyana	National Day
Feb 23/Russia	National Army Day
Feb 23/Tajikistan	Armed Forces Day
Feb 25/Kuwait	National Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....	1122
& Rescue Services.....	4451122
Motorway Police.....	9266044
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Rawalpindi.....	9270601-20



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Hospitals	
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MH.....	561116
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DHQ.....	5556311-4
RGH.....	9290301-7
Holy Family.....	9290322-7
PIMS.....	9261170-79
Polyclinic.....	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666



Departments	
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CDA.....	9208301-04
Met Office.....	9250360-6
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TMA.....	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan	
Corporation.....	9209224
Potohar Town.....	9209224
Rawal Town.....	5773343
Water Tank	
Islamabad.....	0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev witnessing the exchange of MOUs between Pakistan and Kazakhstan

NAB distributes Rs 600m to 3,400 victims in ISMMart case

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Islamabad and Rawalpindi has recovered Rs1 billion in the ISM-Mart Group scam and, in the first phase of relief, distributed Rs600 million among 3,400 victims on Wednesday. According to NAB spokesman, the affectedes had reported collective losses of Rs3.5 billion. The prime accused has remained in NAB custody since July 2024, with the investigation proceeding on a fast track in line with legal requirements. The prime accused in the ISMMart Group case allegedly

swindled the public out of billions of rupees by luring them with unrealistically high returns through fictitious ventures in e-commerce, restaurants, and real estate. Cheques were handed over at a ceremony held at NAB Headquarters, presided over by Chairman Lt Gen (Retd) Nazir Ahmed. Senior officials including Deputy Chairman Sohail Nasir, Prosecutor General Ihtesham Qadir Shah, DG NAB Waqar Ahmed Chohan, and a large number of victims attended. The Bureau termed the disbursement a major

step in providing relief to victims of financial fraud. The investigation team had traced funds transferred abroad through hundi, hawala, and cryptocurrency channels, with efforts underway in coordination with UAE authorities to ensure full repatriation of defrauded money. NAB described the payout as its second major achievement of 2026, following relief extended to Banker City victims in January. DG NAB Islamabad and Rawalpindi called the distribution the "second gift" of the year, reflecting the Bureau's resolve to protect

public interest. Speaking on the occasion, the NAB Chairman praised the performance of the investigation teams, noting that public trust remained the Bureau's greatest strength. He announced a nationwide awareness campaign to prevent fraudulent schemes and said future payments would be made through online transfers to facilitate victims. In recognition of the teams' efforts, shields were distributed among officials, while Umrah packages were also announced.—APP

Early detection, timely treatment key to fighting cancer: Gilani

ISLAMABAD : Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani Wednesday said that cancer is a life-threatening yet treatable disease, and effective prevention requires early diagnosis, timely treatment, public awareness, and collective efforts. In his special message on World Cancer Day, he said that World Cancer Day provides an important opportunity to renew our commitment to stand alongside cancer patients and their families, while also taking practical steps towards building a healthier society, said a news release. Cancer, he noted, affects not only the patient but also families and communities at large, making a coordinated national strategy essential to combat the disease. The Chairman Senate emphasized that preventive measures, including a healthy lifestyle, balanced diet, avoidance of tobacco use, and regular medical check-ups, play a vital role in cancer prevention. He highlighted that early detection not only saves precious lives but also significantly reduces treatment costs. Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani reaffirmed that the Government of Pakistan is committed to strengthening the healthcare sector, expanding cancer treatment and research facilities, and ensuring access to quality medical services for the public. He stressed that the government, private sector, medical institutions, civil society, and media must work together to promote awareness and fight cancer effectively. He paid tribute to doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, and charitable organizations working tirelessly for the treatment, rehabilitation, and psychological support of cancer patients—particularly children and women.—APP

Day of Condemnation on Friday over Balochistan attack

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) has announced that Friday, February 6, will be observed as a Day of Condemnation in response to the recent terrorist incident in Balochistan. According to a statement issued by the council on Wednesday, tributes will be paid on the day to the martyrs and veterans, as well as to the Pakistan Army, Balochistan Police and other security institutions. The council said expressions of solidarity would also be made with the families of the victims and security personnel. The statement added that the public would be informed about what it described as the hostile designs of India, Israel and other anti-Pakistan forces. It further strongly condemned the use of Afghan soil by "Fitna-al-Hindustan" and "Fitna-al-Khawarij" for activities aimed at destabilising Pakistan. Separately, the Pakistan Ulema Council appealed for the observance of Kashmir Solidarity Day across the country on February 5. The council said prayers, seminars and conferences would be held in mosques and religious seminaries nationwide.—APP

PEC Chairman reaffirms solidarity with Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD:Chairman Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) Engr Waseem Nazir on Wednesday reaffirmed the unwavering solidarity of the entire engineering community of Pakistan with the people of Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), paying tribute to their decades-long struggle for the right to self-determination. In his message on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, Engr. Waseem Nazir said the Kashmiri people have faced systematic oppression, denial of fundamental rights, and grave human rights violations for years, while their legitimate demand for self-determination, guaranteed under United Nations Security Council resolutions, remains unfulfilled. Highlighting the role of engineers as nation-builders and promoters of sustainable development.—APP

#79YearsOfIllegalOccupation

Our Promise, Our Faith
Kashmir Will Become Pakistan

RAISING THE EMBLEM OF FREEDOM
A SALUTE TO THE KASHMIRIS

February 5th is not just a date, but a vow of loyalty to those mothers, sisters, and warriors who have been holding the Emblem of Freedom for decades.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING
GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

URAAN PAKISTAN

February 5

Kashmir Solidarity Day

PID(I) 6456-D/25

Briefs

Expert calls for immediate action on World Cancer Day

ISLAMABAD: On World Cancer Day, health experts emphasized that awareness campaigns must prioritize early diagnosis and prompt medical consultation rather than hiding the disease, warning of the urgent need to strengthen outreach in rural areas where millions of patients continue to die due to late detection and lack of timely treatment. Talking to a private news channel, Oncologist Dr. Muhammad Ali highlighted the rising concern of blood cancer in children, stressing the importance of awareness among parents and caregivers. He explained that early signs are often overlooked, leading to late diagnosis, which significantly reduces treatment effectiveness. Dr. Ali championed early cancer detection and emphasized the role of crucial lifestyle changes in prevention, adding that communities should prioritize regular screenings and adopt healthy habits, noting that proactive measures can save countless lives. He also drew attention to breast cancer in women and prostate cancer in men, highlighting that delayed checkups often allow these cancers to progress to advanced stages. He stressed that awareness, early consultation, and routine examinations are critical to reducing mortality rates. The oncologist warned that smoking, poor diet, lack of exercise, and other unhealthy habits significantly increase cancer risk. He emphasized that combining healthy living with timely medical attention is the most effective strategy, as many deaths occur due to late diagnosis that could have been prevented with early detection and lifestyle interventions. Dr. Ali advised parents and individuals to stay vigilant for any unusual symptoms such as persistent fatigue, unexplained lumps, or changes in body functions, and to seek medical attention immediately. He emphasized that early consultation with a doctor, even for minor concerns, can make a life-saving difference.—APP

ITP launches Phase-II crackdown on lane violations

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on Tuesday launched Phase-II of its lane-violation enforcement plan, issuing a stern warning to heavy vehicle drivers to strictly follow lane discipline or face vehicle impoundment and heavy fines. An ITP official told APP that the new phase focuses specifically on ensuring compliance by heavy traffic, which has been repeatedly found violating designated lanes and causing congestion and safety hazards on major arteries of the federal capital. Under the enforcement plan, traffic police teams have been directed to take strict legal action against heavy vehicles found travelling outside the extreme left lane, including fines, challans and seizure of vehicles in case of repeated violations. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Islamabad Captain (R) Hamzah Humayun said that lane discipline is essential for smooth traffic flow and prevention of accidents, particularly on high-speed corridors. He made it clear that heavy vehicles must remain in the leftmost lane at all times and warned that no leniency would be shown to violators. He said the purpose of Phase-II is not punishment alone but creating awareness and ensuring safer roads for all commuters. "Heavy traffic moving in the wrong lanes endangers lives and disrupts traffic. Strict enforcement will continue until full compliance is achieved," the CTO Hamzah added. The CTO Hamzah urged transporters and drivers to cooperate with traffic police, follow lane markings and traffic rules, and avoid unnecessary inconvenience and legal action. ITP officers will remain deployed at key roads and entry points to monitor compliance, while citizens have been advised to report traffic violations through the ITP helpline 1915 or emergency helpline Pucar-15.—APP



ISLAMABAD: President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev planting a sapling at Prime Minister's House.

A reframing of trade policy needed in South Asia

Amid the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the EU, Sri Lankan Security and geopolitical expert, Mr. Asanga Abeyagoonasekera highlighted that trade agreements are intertwined with strategic goals. The agreement would disrupt trade

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Trade has been used as a tool for economic protectionism globally. The competitive pressures in trade not only overlap but highlight South Asia's enduring trade paradox, i.e., irregular regional trade and contesting regional integration. In an event organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), titled "FTA Strategies in Key South Asian Countries: Implications for Pakistan", Ambassador Jauhar Saleem emphasized Pakistan's vigilant policies to

create a stable trade environment through partnerships with friendly countries and key initiatives for investment and market expansion. Dr. Ishrat Husain, former Advisor to the Prime Minister on Institutional Reforms and Austerity, in his Keynote address, emphasized that Asia benefited from globalization compared to the US and Western countries. Despite US tariffs, China and other Asian countries gained economic stimulus. Dr. Ishrat stressed that Pakistan needs to emerge from an inward-looking economic approach.

Dr. Nadeem ul Haque, former Vice Chancellor of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), stressed on diversifying exports and overcoming over-regulation to create a favorable business environment amid rising regional trade competition, exposing asymmetrical trade capacities between Pakistan and India. Amid the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the EU, Sri Lankan Security and geopolitical expert, Mr. Asanga Abeyagoonasekera highlighted that trade agreements are intertwined with strategic goals. The

agreement would disrupt trade. For South Asia to reclaim trade and economic security, it is important to convert its monopolies into assets. Mr. Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, CEO of the Asian Institute of Eco-civilization Research and Development (AIRE), suggested establishing large-scale companies pertinent to development. He pointed out that certain domestic structural barriers are preventing trade opportunities. Therefore, the broadening of trading partners is crucial as the economic structures grow. Pakistan should be prudent in weighing FTA opportunities.

ICT Police tighten grip in January

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police recorded a significant improvement in law and order during January 2026, with overall crime declining by 31 percent and heinous crimes dropping by 50 percent compared to the corresponding period last year, reflecting the impact of sustained crackdowns against criminal elements in the federal capital. A police spokesperson told APP on Wednesday that during the month, ICT Police arrested 2,161 accused persons involved in various criminal activities and recovered over Rs17.8 million worth of stolen property. As part of focused operations against organized crime, police busted 40 gangs involved in dacoity, robbery, car and motorcycle theft, arresting 99 gang members. The arrested suspects led police to the recovery of 31 cars, 47 motorcycles, and looted cash and valuables worth millions of rupees. The spokesperson said Islamabad Police also intensified action against proclaimed offenders and habitual criminals, resulting in the arrest of 483 absconders and repeat offenders during the month. In a major drive against land-grabbing, police arrested seven accused and registered 10 cases against members of the qabza mafia, ensuring protection of public and private property. Under the "Weapon-Free Islamabad" campaign, indiscriminate action was taken against illegal arms possession and display. Police arrested 205 accused and recovered 28 rifles, nine guns, 155 pistols, 18 daggers and 1,376 rounds of ammunition from their possession. Similarly, under the anti-narcotics campaign "Nasha Ab Nahi," Islamabad Police registered 151 cases and arrested 153 drug peddlers, recovering 29 kilograms of hashish, over 18 kilograms of heroin, more than 14 kilograms of ice (crystal meth) and 719 bottles of liquor. To ensure public facilitation and quick redressal of grievances, police officers organized over 70 open courts across the city during January, while 538 professional beggars were arrested as part of efforts to curb organized begging. For crime prevention and area domination, police conducted more than 137 search and combing operations across different sectors and rural areas of Islamabad. Commenting on the performance, Muhammad Jawad Tariq, DIG Islamabad, said that protection of citizens' lives and property remained the top priority of Islamabad Police. —DNA

Haji 2026 preparations progressing on time

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, on Wednesday expressed confidence in the timely completion of Hajj 2026 preparations, highlighting the implementation of a fully digitalized system and improved facilities for pilgrims. In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, Religious Minister Sardar Muhammad Yousaf reflected on last year's Hajj, noting that pilgrims received excellent services, which earned awards and shields in recognition of the team's efforts. He assured that Hajj 2026 preparations have already been completed on schedule, with a strong focus on modern and efficient services for pilgrims, adding that the arrangements include expanded medical support, featuring additional dispensaries and a fully equipped hospital, alongside professional training programs for staff. Pilgrims will benefit from convenient accommodations near holy sites, nutritious and high-quality food and improved transport services, minister said, adding that the implementation of a fully digitalized visa and travel system, aimed at simplifying processes and ensuring a seamless experience. Additionally, he emphasized the extension of the "Road to Makkah" project with rail connectivity, which will facilitate easier and faster travel for pilgrims.—APP

Shaza arrives in Kuwait on two-day visit

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja arrived in Kuwait on Wednesday on a two-day official visit. During the visit, she will hold several high-level meetings with global leaders and counterparts from member countries. According to a news release, the minister will attend the General Assembly of the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) and meet representatives of member states. She will also participate in the opening ceremony of the DCO's fifth General Assembly, where she is scheduled to interact with global leaders and deliver a keynote address. Shaza Fatima will take part in the DCO's thematic ministerial roundtable and hold meetings with ministers from member countries. Discussions during the visit will focus on artificial intelligence and its related risks. She will also engage with global policy-makers on emerging digital challenges.—APP

IRS—MoIB host reception for Kazakhstan media delegation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MoIB), jointly hosted a reception in honour of a Kazakhstan Media Delegation at the Pak-China Friendship Centre, Islamabad. The reception featured addresses by Mr. Ataullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting; H.E. Mr. Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan; Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS; Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed; and Mr. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Tourism. The event provided a valuable platform for exchanging perspectives on deepening bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation between the media communities of Pakistan and Kazakhstan. Prominent voices from academia and the media fraternity, including Dr. Adam Saud, Professor, Bahria University Islamabad; Dr. Taraq Waheed, Head of Department, SZABIST; senior anchors and journalists Mr. Shaukat Paracha and Mr. Farooq Hassan; as well as Mr. Yargali, a journalist from Kazakhstan, highlighted the growing importance of Pakistan-Kazakhstan relations at a time of renewed bilateral momentum. The reception was also attended by a number of distinguished guests, including Ms. Farah Naz Akbar (Parliamentary Secretary Federal Education & Professional Training), Ms. Shamaila Rana (MNA), Mr. Ashfaq Ahmad Khalid, Secretary Information; and Ms. Raisa Adil, Executive Director General, External Publicity Wing, MoIB, among others.

The event drew a diverse audience comprising media professionals, academics, diplomats, and senior government

officials, reflecting broad-based interest in Pakistan's expanding engagement with Central Asia. In his address, Mr. Ataullah Tarar emphasized the strategic importance of Pakistan-Kazakhstan relations and called for broader, sustained, and meaningful cooperation across key sectors, including energy, culture, tourism, trade, education, science and technology, media, and people-to-people exchanges. He further noted that the recent visit of the President of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, underscored the growing importance both countries attach to high-level bilateral engagement and strategic dialogue. Mr. Tarar stated that the governments of Pakistan and Kazakhstan are entering into several agreements and memoranda of understanding aimed at materializing broader cooperation and translating shared intent into tangible outcomes. He expressed confidence that these initiatives would significantly deepen collaboration across multiple sectors and elevate Pakistan-Kazakhstan relations to new heights, reflecting a shared vision for long-term partnership and regional connectivity. In his remarks, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed described Pakistan-Kazakhstan relations as a vital pillar of Pakistan's broader engagement with Central Asia, rooted in shared history, mutual respect, and converging strategic interests. He underscored Kazakhstan's pivotal role in regional stability, connectivity, and economic cooperation, and highlighted Pakistan's geo-strategic position as a natural gateway linking Central Asia with South Asia and beyond. Senator Sayed also commended the exemplary role played by H.E. Mr. Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, in strengthening bilateral ties through proactive diplomacy and sustained engagement, which he noted had significantly contributed to deepening mutual trust and cooperation.

FGP hosts session on leveraging AI

ISLAMABAD: Freedom Gate Prosperity (FGP) has organized a focused professional learning session titled "The AI Advantage 2026: Practical Applications for the Development Sector" at its Islamabad office, bringing together development practitioners to explore how artificial intelligence can be responsibly and effectively integrated into development programming. The session was designed to build practical understanding of AI tools, their relevance for development organizations, and their potential role in improving research, communication, programme design, monitoring, and decision-making processes. Rather than promoting technology for its own sake, the discussion emphasized context-appropriate, ethical, and impact-oriented use of AI, particularly in resource-constrained development settings. The interactive session was facilitated by Asad Rafi, a digital innovation expert, who provided a structured overview of how AI is already influencing global development practice. He demonstrated real-world use cases relevant to NGOs, research organizations, and policy

institutions, including data analysis, content development, stakeholder engagement, and operational efficiency. Participants also discussed the limitations, risks, and governance considerations associated with AI adoption. The event was coordinated by Sabrina Shahzad, who ensured effective engagement and flow of discussions, while Muhammad Anwar, CEO of Freedom Gate Prosperity, welcomed participants and highlighted the need for development professionals to proactively understand emerging technologies. He

stressed that AI should be viewed as a supporting tool for human judgment, not a replacement, and must be aligned with community needs, ethical standards, and institutional accountability. The session attracted professionals from the development sector who actively shared perspectives on capacity gaps, data challenges, and opportunities for responsible innovation. Participants noted the importance of continuous learning to keep pace with technological change while safeguarding development values.—APP

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The power of passive resistance

HASSAN BIN YOUSSEF YASSIN

FOR some years now, we have been coming to the realization that the multilateral institutions we set up at the close of the Second World War, such as the UN, have lost their effectiveness in a world of escalating hard power and great power rivalry. Where we could once count on cooperation and a rules-based international order, much of the world is now at the mercy of the narrow self-interest and bullying of a few great powers. Their power is expressed today through bluster, propaganda, a loss of transparency and predictability, and the constant threat of economic or military conflict. We are left decidedly in a world we no longer recognize and in which we appear subservient. The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, whose 2026 edition took place last month, has become somewhat of a caricature of itself over the past few years. A group of overprivileged, elitist politicians and businessmen pat each other on the back, give a series of boring speeches and put on a somewhat comical display. This year, however, thanks to US President Donald Trump's threats over Greenland, was different, prompting a reaction in particular from Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney. He summarized the reality we face in the world today in a clear and succinct 15-minute speech. The prime minister stated that it need not follow that, in a world where the strong can do what they want, the rest of the world has no choice but to submit. He called upon Czech dissident, and later president, Vaclav Havel's example of the greengrocer from his 1978 essay "The Power of the Powerless." A greengrocer who every day puts up a sign reading "Workers of the World Unite" in his shop window to signal his assumed support for the communist regime one day decides to remove the sign. The illusion of support for the regime begins to crack as a result, as everyone else follows suit and discards their assumed public support for their private opposition. The bottom line of Havel's essay is that "the power of the powerless lies in their unity" and can overcome even the most powerful behemoths. The power of truth, decency and the unity of ordinary people can overcome even the greatest power. In the 1930s, another man exemplified this model of passive resistance based on universal values: Mohandas Gandhi. Faced with 200 years of British occupation (counting the period of the British Raj and the East India Company), backed with 600,000 British soldiers and hundreds of

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thousands of British-led Indian police, a simple act of passive resistance, of expressing human dignity, brought the entire empire crumbling down. Nelson Mandela is another example of the power of the powerless. He brought people together by expressing dignity and decency and the immorality of discrimination, thereby dismantling South Africa's long-standing system of apartheid and opening a hopeful new chapter for all South Africans. When all hope appears lost, the power of truth, decency and the unity of ordinary people can overcome even the greatest power. Where once there was silence, a whisper turns into the resounding voice of the people, challenging domination and injustice.

Carney admitted that the fiction of a rules-based international order and American hegemony had been a useful one and, as a result, we all gladly placed our signs in the window. Today, however, our eyes are open and we must "actively take on the world as it is, not wait around for a world we wish to be." Most countries still have good reason to work together and cooperate, building coalitions issue by issue to address major global problems and staying true to our values.

I believe many of us had already been thinking, subconsciously, what Carney expressed so eloquently Carney concluded: "Nostalgia is not a strategy, but we believe that from the fracture, we can build something bigger, better, stronger, more just. This is the task of the middle powers, the countries that have the most to lose from a world of fortresses and most to gain from genuine cooperation."

I believe many of us had already been thinking, subconsciously, what Carney expressed so eloquently. I concluded my previous article with a quote from American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead and I think it takes on even more meaning here: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." We refuse to be bullied by the simpletons of power and their threats, and I believe that many Americans share our opinion. Israel, which has also based its power on force and arrogance, will not succeed in subduing the dignity of real people either; again, many Israelis hold the same thoughts. We all know that the real issues sensible people and nations must address most urgently concern the ongoing degradation of our environment and the growing injustices and incitement of hatred around the world. As Havel's greengrocer, Gandhi, Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. all did, it is up to us to stand up for humanity, for peace and for the mutual benefits that can be achieved for all if we work together, with honesty, integrity and shared human values.

The old world order is no more, but that certainly does not mean that we cannot build a new one – even a better one – together. Hassan bin Youssef Yassin worked closely with Saudi petroleum ministers Abdullah Tariki and Ahmed Zaki Yamani from 1959 to 1967.

How Uzbekistan is transforming its youth into an engine of national progress

Adam Saud

Uzbekistan is constantly increasing its annual budget for educational reforms. Modernization of school infrastructure, with availability of state of the art modern laboratories alongwith availability of high tech computers and fast internet connectivity, has been prioritized. To achieve the ultimate objective of economically productive and socially responsible students, a new educational architecture is being materialised at all the levels. It has integrated the schools, colleges, and universities into a single eco system

FUTURE of any country lies in the destiny of its youth. There are few nations which have youngest population. Uzbekistan also has on the youngest populations in the world. Out of total 38 million, one million people enters into the adulthood every year, bringing with them new hopes, creativity, and ideas. Uzbekistan is on the right path to transform this strength into the powerful engine of national progress. On the directives of the President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, a substantial chunk of annual budget is spent on the youth development. For this purpose, education and sports have been given immense importance in state's policy. These policies have resulted in the global recognition of Uzbek players particularly in the fields of soccer, athletics, chess, wrestling, and many more. Uzbekistan's soccer team has qualified for the FIFA World Cup for the first time. This is a marvelous achievement, which other Central Asian counterparts are still awaiting. Another important area which has been given prime importance in state's policy is the digitilisation and technological innovations in an age of Artificial Intelligence. Uzbekistan is constantly increasing its annual budget for educational reforms. Modernization of school infrastructure, with availability of state of the art modern laboratories alongwith availability of high tech computers and fast internet connectivity, has been prioritized. To achieve the ultimate objective of

economically productive and socially responsible students, a new educational architecture is being materialised at all the levels. It has integrated the schools, colleges, and universities into a single eco system. Students at 9th grade are assessed and according to their aptitude and interests, they are either sent to the traditional educational system or modernized technical education. In order to facilitate students in technical colleges and universities, a process of upgradation has been started. From 2026, every year, around one hundred technical and vocational institutes will be renovated and modernized with the help of international partners especially, European states, USA, and China. Under the new youth policy, students and young people are encouraged for startups and entrepreneurship. For the startups and incubation, they are provided interest free loans in this regard as well. The Policy also integrates theory with practice by providing the students with paid internship opportunities. Besides teaching in the classes, the students have to complete internships in the relevant industry for practical knowledge and gaining skills. Recently, Uzbek government has permitted to open the private universities. It has resulted into the establishment of few good private universities. Moreover, under the educational policy, foreign universities from selected countries have also been allowed to open their campuses in Uzbekistan. Cur-

rently there are few British and Russian universities educating the young people of Uzbekistan. In order to equip Uzbek youth with international learning, dedicated foreign languages universities have been established. Besides education, promotion of sports and culture are other domains where state is investing a lot. Reading and research culture is being enhanced through multiple methods. Mahallah (neighborhood) structure is vital for the preservation and promotion of culture and sports activities. Young people are provided with space in this structure to learn solidarity, mutual respect, and civic engagement. As a frequent visitor to Uzbekistan, I personally have seen dreams, hope, and urge for a brighter future in the eyes of Uzbek youth. Their social behavior is matchless. Under state initiatives, they have been groomed in a way where will not only be productive citizens but good human beings as well. Whenever, visitors pass through mahallahs, young people will greet you with Assalam-o-Alykum, and elders will offer you chai (tea) and Plov. This friendly behavior reflects the great Uzbek hospitality. Investing in youth and education is not an expense; it is the most reliable investment in national security, economic growth, and social stability. A country that educates its youth well does not fear the future—it shapes it.

– The writer is the Professor of International Relations at Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Kashmir Solidarity Day and an Unfulfilled Right

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The legal and moral foundation of the Kashmir dispute lies in the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan in 1948 and 1949. These resolutions affirmed a simple yet powerful democratic principle: the future of the State of Jammu and Kashmir was to be determined by the free and impartial will of its people, expressed through a plebiscite conducted under United Nations supervision. Both Pakistan and India accepted these resolutions...

CONFLICTS among human societies are as old as civilisation itself. Differences of belief, territory, power, and perception have repeatedly pushed nations and communities into confrontation. History shows that such disputes are resolved in only a few recognised ways: through the imposition of force, through reconciliation by mutual consent, or through impartial mediation supported by law and moral authority. Where none of these paths is followed with sincerity, conflicts harden with time, embedding themselves into collective memory and passing unresolved from one generation to the next. Since the middle of the twentieth century, the world has witnessed only a few disputes of such longevity, notably the division of the Korean Peninsula, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the unresolved dispute over Jammu and Kashmir between Pakistan and India. Among these, Kashmir remains one of the most morally troubling, for it is anchored in clear international commitments that have remained unfulfilled for more than seven decades. The legal and moral foundation of the Kashmir dispute lies in the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan in 1948 and 1949. These resolutions affirmed a simple yet powerful democratic principle: the future of the State of Jammu and Kashmir was to be determined by the free and impartial will of its people, expressed through a plebiscite conducted under United Nations supervision. Both Pakistan and India accepted these resolutions, which laid down detailed safeguards to ensure fairness, including demilitarisation, the withdrawal or neutralisation of armed forces, the appointment of an internationally respected Plebiscite Administrator, the release of political prisoners, the protection of minorities, freedom of expression and assembly, and the complete absence of coercion or intimidation. A ceasefire came into effect on 1 January 1949, raising hopes that a just settlement was within reach. Yet the plebiscite was never held. Disagreements over procedure, coupled with political reluctance and shifting strategic calculations, froze the process, while the promise itself remained outstanding. Despite the passage of time, Kashmir continues to figure on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council, a rare acknowledgment that the dispute has neither been resolved nor rendered obsolete. Meanwhile, realities on the ground have steadily deteriorated. In Indian-administered Kashmir, generations have grown up amid heavy militarisation, prolonged states of emergen-

cy, restrictions on political activity, and recurring cycles of unrest and repression. The revocation of the region's special status in 2019 further deepened Kashmiri anxieties, particularly fears of demographic engineering and the erosion of cultural and political identity. Allegations of human rights violations, curbs on religious practices, and restrictions on communication have reinforced the sense of collective grievance and alienation. For Pakistan, Kashmir has never been merely a territorial dispute. It occupies a central place in the country's ideological, historical, and strategic consciousness. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's description of Kashmir as the "jugalur vein of Pakistan" was not a rhetorical flourish but an articulation of an existential reality. The Muslim majority of Kashmir, its cultural and religious affinities with Pakistan, and the logic underpinning the Partition of 1947 made its unresolved status a profound anomaly. The Two-Nation Theory, which formed the basis of Pakistan's creation, rested on the recognition of distinct religious, cultural, and political identities. The continued denial of self-determination to the people of Kashmir stands in stark contradiction to that principle and remains a source of enduring instability in South Asia. Beyond ideology and history, Kashmir's importance is inseparable from Pakistan's economic and environmental security. The great rivers that sustain Pakistan's agriculture and economy—the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab—originate in the Himalayan region of Kashmir. These waters irrigate fields, generate electricity, and provide drinking water to millions. Control over their sources, therefore, carries implications far beyond cartography. Repeated disputes over water management and challenges to the Indus Waters Treaty have heightened fears that water, one of the most vital resources of life, could become a tool of political pressure. In this sense, Kashmir is not simply a contested territory; it is a lifeline whose stability directly affects Pakistan's survival and prosperity. The strategic dimension of Kashmir further complicates the dispute. Its geography places it at the crossroads of South and Central Asia, making it vital for regional trade, security, and defence. The Line of Control remains one of the most militarised and volatile borders in the world, where even minor incidents carry the risk of escalation between two nuclear-armed states. The continued instability of the region not only threatens bilateral relations but also undermines broader regional peace.

Every year on 5 February, observed in Pakistan as Kashmir Solidarity Day, the people of Pakistan, Kashmiris on both sides of the Line of Control, and members of the global diaspora reaffirm their support for the Kashmiri right to self-determination. Rallies, seminars, and official statements recall the unfulfilled United Nations resolutions and call upon the international community to honour its commitments. These expressions are peaceful and lawful, rooted in international norms. Yet a sobering question persists: can a people be expected to commemorate an unkept promise indefinitely, carrying the weight of unfulfilled justice from one generation to another? India maintains that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of its territory and that the matter is purely bilateral. Pakistan, supported by international law and United Nations resolutions, maintains that the dispute is international in character and that the right to self-determination is inalienable and cannot be nullified by the passage of time or unilateral actions. So long as this fundamental contradiction remains unresolved, peace in South Asia will continue to rest on fragile ground. Recent regional developments have subtly altered diplomatic perceptions. Pakistan's conduct during periods of heightened tension, particularly in 2025, demonstrated restraint and responsibility, reinforcing its image as a mature and credible state. Acknowledgements by major international actors regarding ceasefire facilitation underscored this shift. Emerging from internal challenges, Pakistan today speaks with greater confidence and dignity on the world stage. This renewed standing places an added responsibility upon its leadership to move beyond symbolic remembrance and to pursue a principled, sustained, and effective diplomatic campaign for Kashmir. Kashmir is not merely a political dispute, nor solely a strategic concern. It is a question of justice for a people denied the right to choose their destiny, a test of moral credibility for the international community, and an unfinished chapter of history that continues to shape the future of South Asia. Justice delayed for more than seventy-five years is not only justice denied; it is a continuing indictment of an international order that pledged fairness but failed to deliver it. Until the voices of the Kashmiri people are finally heard, the promise of peace in the region will remain incomplete, and the conscience of the world will remain unsettled.

Briefs

Uzbekistan, Pakistan relations poised to touch new horizons

FROM PAGE 01
than in 2016—with Uzbek exports surpassing \$320 million. Leadership on both sides has set an ambitious target of \$2 billion “in the near future,” bolstered by the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) signed in 2022 and operational since 2023. The PTA currently offers customs benefits for 17 categories of goods from each side, with negotiations underway to expand the list substantially. Business engagement is thriving. As of late 2025, around 180 Pakistani-invested companies operate in Uzbekistan, active in textiles, food processing, pharmaceuticals, construction, and logistics. Pakistani investments reached approximately \$70 million from January to July 2025, nearly double the 2024 figure. Uzbek firms are exploring opportunities in Pakistan for household appliances, tractors, smart meters, and more, paving the way for technology transfer and joint ventures. Trade facilitation measures are accelerating: Uzbekistan established trade houses in Lahore and Karachi in 2025, while Pakistan plans reciprocal missions in Tashkent and Samarkand. Business forums and exhibitions have proven highly effective— the “Made in Pakistan” event in Tashkent (2024) and the “Made in Uzbekistan” exhibition in Lahore (February 2025) generated agreements worth hundreds of millions, including \$500 million from the Lahore event alone. Energy cooperation is emerging as a strategic pillar, with potential in oil and gas exploration, infrastructure modernization, and diversification to enhance security and support industrial growth. In the digital domain, collaboration in software, IT solutions for public services, and start-ups is gaining traction as a fast-moving frontier for innovation and competitiveness. The Uzbekistan–Pakistan relationship is fully geared to become a central pillar in the emerging architecture linking Central and South Asia. President Mirziyoyev’s visit, coinciding with preparations for deepened PTA implementation, railway advancements, and expanded industrial partnerships, signals a shift from goodwill to pragmatic, results-oriented cooperation. As Prime Minister Sharif once noted in praise of Uzbekistan’s reforms, “miracles are possible only through a clear vision, high dynamism, hard work, and a resolute pursuit of a common goal.” The February 2026 summit holds the promise of realizing that vision, forging a partnership that benefits not only the two nations but the broader region. The visit marks the second visit of President Mirziyoyev to Pakistan, signalling the upward trajectory in bilateral relations rooted in shared history, faith, and common aspirations for peace and prosperity in Central and South Asia.

PTI KP leadership ‘at odds’...

FROM PAGE 01
He warned that lockdowns and road closures would directly affect the public and create political difficulties for the Imran Khan-founded party in KP. The sources added that MNA Atif Khan supported Shahid Khattak’s stance during the meeting. Khattak also suggested that a list be compiled of party members who did not participate in protests outside Adiala jail. The meeting reportedly turned heated when PTI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President Junaid Akbar expressed frustration, saying the leadership is under pressure from “appeasing” everyone. Whom are we supposed to appease? First Aleema Khan, then the workers, and now you.... Whom should we convince?” Akbar told Khattak. Earlier, TTAP announced a nationwide strike on February 8 and maintained that it would prove to be a “decisive turning point in the struggle for restoration of constitutional rights, protection of right to vote and upholding democratic principles.”

PM, Kazak President unveil plaques for sports center

A ceremony was held at the Prime Minister’s House where the PM Shehbaz Sharif and the Kazakhstan President unveiled the commemorative plaque for the establishment of the Kazakhstan–Pakistan Dostik Sports Centre, aimed at further strengthening bilateral cooperation in the field of sports

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Wednesday unveiled commemorative plaques for the establishment of two mutual initiatives related to sports and education.

A ceremony was held at the Prime Minister’s House where the PM Shehbaz Sharif and the Kazakhstan President unveiled the commemorative plaque for the establishment of the Kazakhstan–Pakistan Dostik Sports Centre, aimed at further strengthening bilateral cooperation in the field of sports. In addition, a commemorative plaque was also unveiled for the establishment of three centres in the education sector to promote cooperation between academic institutions and students of the two countries. Under this initiative, a Technical Research Centre will be established through collaboration among three universities, along with the establishment of the Ahmed Yasawi Research Centre and the Al-Farabi Centre.



Polio drive day 2: 64% target achieved

ISLAMABAD: The second day of the year’s first polio vaccination campaign concluded in the federal capital, with health teams reaching 64 percent of the overall target. During the four-day drive, a total of 293,780 children have received polio drops so far, officials reported at a review meeting chaired by the Deputy Commissioner Islamabad. According to the district administration, vaccination teams continued door-to-door visits across urban and rural areas on the second day of the campaign. The focus remained on ensuring access to every household and covering children under the age of five. Officials said progress remained on track, with teams meeting daily targets despite operational challenges. The meeting reviewed field reports submitted by polio workers and supervi-

sory staff. Progress achieved during the first two days was discussed in detail, along with planning for the remaining days of the campaign. Security arrangements for polio teams were also reviewed during the meeting. Officials discussed measures taken to ensure the safety of field staff and the smooth movement of vaccination teams. The administration was briefed on coordination between district authorities, law enforcement agencies, and health departments to support uninterrupted field activities. Special attention was given to refusal cases reported during the campaign. The meeting was informed that 264 refusal cases were recorded during the first two days. Officials said these cases were addressed through immediate engagement with families.

Community elders, local administration, and health officials were involved to resolve concerns and ensure vaccination. Briefing participants said that refusal cases were handled on the spot, and children in these households were later administered polio drops. The administration stressed the importance of early reporting and prompt response to such cases to avoid gaps in coverage. The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner East, Assistant Commissioners, and senior officials from the Health Department. They shared updates on field supervision, team attendance, vaccine supply, and reporting mechanisms. Officials noted that daily monitoring helped identify issues quickly and allowed timely corrective steps. – APP

US renews trade subsidy pact with African countries

WASHINGTON: The United States on Tuesday renewed the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) through the end of the year, an agreement that allows many African countries to access the US market duty-free. US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement that President Donald Trump had signed into law a reauthorization of the trade preference program through December 31, 2026, with retroactive effect from September 30, 2025 – the date it had expired. “AGOA for the 21st century must demand more from our trading partners and yield more market access for US businesses, farmers, and ranchers,” Greer said. Trump has used trade and tariffs – which he has called his “favorite word” – as a carrot and a stick to reshape international relations, as he sees fit. In a statement, Greer vowed to “work with Congress over the next year to modernize the program to align with” current US policy. A cornerstone of US-Africa trade relations for 25 years, the AGOA has allowed the United States to buy billions of dollars of duty-free cars, clothes and other items from select African countries each year. But the deal, which operates in 32 African nations, expired last September, affecting thousands of jobs and forcing exporters to absorb high tariff duties. In 2024, \$8.23 billion worth of goods were exported under the accord, half of which came from South Africa, mainly cars, precious metals and farm produce, and one-fifth from Nigeria, mainly oil and other energy products, according to the United States International Trade Commission (USITC). Smaller countries were hard hit, too. Lesotho’s textiles sector, the country’s biggest employer, was hard hit by AGOA’s expiration, and hundreds of workers demonstrated in the capital, Maseru, in late October against cuts sparked by the new American customs tariffs. – Agencies

Russian drone strikes kill four

KYIV: Russian and Ukrainian drones strikes have killed four people in east Ukraine, officials on both sides said on Wednesday. Two people were killed by a Russian drone strike on Ukraine’s Dnipropetrovsk region early on Wednesday, while another two people died after a late Tuesday Ukrainian drone strike in the Lugansk region, nearly all of which is controlled by Russian forces. In Dnipropetrovsk, “a 68-year-old woman and a 38-year-old man were killed” in the attack on Synelnykivsky district, Mykola Lukashuk, the head of the regional administration, said on Telegram. In Lugansk, “a young man and a 20-year-old woman were killed in a drone attack on the Novokrasnyanka” that hit a minibus, the local government said on Telegram, adding that the drone was launched by Ukrainian forces. – Agencies

UN experts alarmed over Imaan conviction

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which resulted in lengthy prison sentences “for simply exercising rights guaranteed by international human rights law”. “Lawyers, like other individuals, are entitled to freedom of expression. The exercise of this right should never be conflated with criminal conduct, especially not terrorism,” they were quoted as saying, while also emphasising the vague definition of terrorism-related offences under Pakistan’s counter-terrorism framework. “Doing so risks undermining and criminalising the work of lawyers and human rights defenders across Pakistan and has a chilling effect on civil society in the country,” the experts said.

Japanese CG highlights bilateral cooperation

KARACHI: The Consul General of Japan in Karachi, HATTORI Masaru, hosted the “Emperor’s Birthday Reception” (National Day Celebration) on Tuesday to celebrate the 66th birthday of the Emperor Naruhito here at a local hotel. The event was attended by distinguished guests, including the Chief Guest of the event, Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori and other notable figures from various sectors. In his welcome remarks, Consul General HATTORI expressed his utmost pleasure at hosting his third national day reception in Karachi. He reflected on the longstanding and cordial relations between Japan and Pakistan, highlighting recent efforts to enhance bilateral cooperations. He reaffirmed Japan’s commitment to strengthening ties with Pakistan and collaborating with the federal and provincial governments to promote mutual development and prosperity. Consul General HATTORI also emphasized Japan’s significant contributions to Pakistan’s socio-economic development, particularly in the fields of disaster prevention, healthcare and education. Governor Sindh, in his remarks, presented his wholehearted congratulations to the Japanese government and people on their national day. He acknowledged Japan’s role in catering to the needs of Pakistani workers and students in Japan and recognized Japan’s role in promoting sustainable growth and mutual cooperation. Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of further enhancing collaboration between Sindh and Japan across various sectors. – Agencies

X hits back after France summons Elon Musk

PARIS: French prosecutors on Tuesday searched the Paris offices of Elon Musk’s X as part of an investigation into alleged political interference and sexual deepfakes and summoned Musk in what the social media giant slammed as “politicized” raids. The search came as both Britain and the European Union have opened investigations into the creation of sexualised deepfakes of women and children by Musk’s AI chatbot Grok. A proposal by Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez to become the latest country to ban social media for under 16s enraged Musk who on Tuesday called Sanchez “a tyrant and traitor” to Spain’s people. French authorities conducted a search on Tuesday at X’s French premises as part of an investigation, which began in January 2025, over allegations that X’s algorithm was used to interfere in French politics. It now also includes a probe into the Grok AI tool’s dissemination of Holocaust denials and sexual deepfakes. EU police agency Europol said it provided an analyst to give on-the-ground support in the search. “The Paris Public Prosecutor’s office widely publicized the raid – making clear that today’s action was an abusive act of law enforcement theater designed to achieve illegitimate political objectives rather than advance legitimate law enforcement goals,” X’s Global Government Affairs team posted on the platform. “The allegations underlying

today’s raid are baseless and X categorically denies any wrongdoing.” The Paris prosecutor’s office said that “summons for voluntary interviews on April 20, 2026, in Paris have been sent to Mr Elon Musk and Ms Linda Yaccarino, in their capacity as de facto and de jure managers of the X platform at the time of the events” being investigated. Yaccarino resigned as CEO of X in July last year after two years at the helm of the company. The French probe focuses on alleged offences including complicity in possessing child sexual abuse material and denial of crimes against humanity. X employees have also been summoned to appear between April 20 and 24 “to be heard as witnesses”, said Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuaud, whose office announced in a final message on X it would be leaving the platform. Telegram founder Pavel Durov – who is under investigation in France over illegal content in his messaging app – also blasted the raid. “France is the only country in the world that is criminally persecuting all social networks that give people some degree of freedom,” the Russian-born entrepreneur wrote on X, naming Telegram, TikTok, and X. Durov, who holds French and Russian passports, has been accused of complicity in running an on-line platform that allowed illicit transactions, images of child sex abuse and other illegal content. He denies the allegations. – DNA

WTO must ‘reform or die’: talks facilitator

The Geneva-based organisation faced structural and geopolitical obstacles long before US President Donald Trump returned to the White House last year, dramatically ratcheting up global trade tensions

GENEVA: Successfully reforming the WTO is a matter of life and death for the organisation, warns the facilitator of talks on revamping the global trade body. The World Trade Organization regulates large swathes of global trade but is handicapped by a rule requiring full consensus among members, and a dispute settlement system crippled by the United States. Reform will be at the heart of the WTO’s ministerial meeting in Cameroon next month. The Geneva-based organisation faced structural and geopolitical obstacles long before US President Donald Trump returned to the White House last year, dramatically ratcheting up global trade tensions. “We need to

reform,” Norway’s ambassador to the WTO Petter Oberg told AFP in a recent interview. “Reform or die.” Oberg said he was preparing a “reform work plan, which we will ask (trade ministers) to endorse” in Yaounde during the March 26-29 meeting. Many of the WTO’s 166 members agree with Oberg on the importance of significantly overhauling the organisation. “The WTO is at a critical and, in fact, an existential juncture,” he warned at the end of January. The WTO was created in 1995 but is based on a trading system established shortly after the end of World War II. The need for a revamp has been discussed for years, and was formally recog-

nised by the organisation’s 2022 ministerial conference. But the discussions have intensified significantly since Trump returned to power, snubbing agreed trade rules and wielding giant tariffs against foes and friends alike. “Everyone realises there’s a sense of urgency that wasn’t there before,” Oberg said. “This time... we have to do it.” The tariff issue, he stressed, “is not the whole story, but it certainly contributes to this sense of urgency.” “Many, if not all countries are affected by this, small or big.” At the World Economic Forum in Davos last month, WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala pointed out that the trade agreements announced

by the Trump administration have not been notified to the WTO, as required to ensure they conform with the organisation’s rules. This has raised concern that the deals could potentially violate the WTO’s so-called “most-favoured nation” (MFN) principle, which aims to extend any trade advantage granted to one trading partner to all others, in a bid to avoid discrimination. The United States itself indicated to the WTO last December that it considers the principle “unsuitable for this era”, particularly given “some countries’ unwillingness to pursue and uphold fair, market-oriented competition” and “insistence on maintaining economic systems that are fundamentally incompatible with WTO principles”. – APP

UNSC calls for accountability...

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importance of holding those responsible for the attacks – including perpetrators, organisers, financiers, and sponsors – accountable and bringing them to justice. The condemnation followed days after the separatist Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) carried out multiple attacks, targeting nearly a dozen locations and killing 22 security personnel and 36 civilians. In response, security forces launched a wide-ranging counterterrorism operation across Balochistan, sources said, killing 197 militants linked to India-sponsored Fitna al-Hindustan, after coordinated attacks struck 12 towns in the province over a three-day period. “The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) has claimed responsibility for the attacks. Members of the Security Council expressed their deepest condolences to the families of the victims, as well as to the government and people of Pakistan, and wished a swift and complete recovery to those injured,” the statement read. The UNSC reiterated that terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, remains one of the gravest threats to international peace and security. The council members urged all states to actively cooperate with the government of Pakistan, in line with international law and relevant UNSC resolutions, to counter terrorism. They reaffirmed that acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of motive, location, timing, or those responsible, and underlined the need for all states to combat terrorist threats in accordance with the UN Charter and international human rights, refugee, and humanitarian law. On January 31, terrorists belonging to Fitna al-Hindustan carried out attacks, targeting civilians in Quetta, Mastung, Nushki, Dalbandin, Kharan, Panjgur, Tump, Gwadar, and Pasni. Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti had said around 200 militants attacked different parts of the province, adding that most of them have either been chased out or killed. Bugti said that militants deliberately used civilians as human shields during the attacks.

Pakistan eyes \$1bn trade...

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The national anthems of Kazakhstan and Pakistan were played while both leaders stood on the saluting dais. A smartly attired contingent of the three services of the Pakistan armed forces presented the guard of honour, which President Tokayev reviewed. The two leaders introduced their respective delegations to each other before proceeding for one-on-one meeting, followed by talks at the delegation level. During the talks, the two sides will review the full spectrum of bilateral relations and explore new avenues to further deepen cooperation across diverse sectors. Both sides will also sign Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements to boost bilateral ties. Later, the Kazakh president also planted a commemorative sapling in the lawn of the Prime Minister’s House. The route of the Kazakhstan leader’s motorcade and main avenues of the federal capital were decorated with Pakistani and Kazakhstan flags as well as the large portraits of President Tokayev. Separately, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar held a one-on-one meeting with Kazakhstan president, the Foreign Office said on X.

There should be no politics in sports...

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Similarly, 31 civilians were martyred.” He added that a “heartbreaking incident” took place in Gwadar, where five women and children were martyred. “These people (terrorists) are not human,” the premier said. PM Shehbaz said that the nation would never forget the sacrifice of security forces and that since Marka-Haq – the name for Pakistan’s brief conflict against India last year – Pakistan’s “hostile eastern neighbour” and other khawarij are conspiring against the country’s progress and prosperity.

Briefs

PSX gains
931 points

ISLAMABAD : The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Wednesday witnessed a bullish trend, gaining 931.34 points, a positive change of 0.50 percent, to close at 187,832.08 points compared to 186,900.74 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 1,195,264 million shares with a traded value of Rs 44,102 billion, against 848,559 million shares valuing Rs 50,026 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization increased to Rs 21.278 trillion from Rs 21.149 trillion a day earlier. Out of 483 active companies in the ready market, 246 advanced, 188 declined, while 49 remained unchanged. K-Electric Limited topped the volume chart with 590,867 million shares, followed by Waves Home Appliances with 36,307 million shares and First National Equities with 32,938 million shares. The top gainers included Nestle Pakistan Limited, which rose by Rs 75.39 to close at Rs 7,906.13, and Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited, which gained Rs 68.36 to settle at Rs 27,208.17.—APP

Rupee gains
03 paisa
against US
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 03 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.72 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 279.75. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 280.55 and Rs 282.25, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs0.40 to close at Rs 330.95 from the previous day's close of Rs 330.55, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 02 paisa and closed at Rs 1.78, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs0.53 and closed at Rs 383.69 compared to the previous day's Rs 383.16. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham declined by 02 paisa to close at Rs 76.15, while the Saudi Riyal remained unchanged and closed at 74.59.—APP

Gold price
jumps by Rs
14,800 per
tola

ISLAMABAD :Gold prices surged in the local market on Wednesday, as the price of 24-karat gold per tola increased by Rs14,800 to settle at Rs529,162, the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported. Likewise, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold rose by Rs12,689 to Rs453,671 whereas that of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went up by Rs11,632 to Rs415,880. The silver prices also recorded an increase, with 24-karat silver per tola rising by Rs109 to Rs9,255 and 10 grams of silver increasing by Rs93 to Rs7,934. In the international market, gold prices climbed by \$148 to \$5,064 per ounce, while silver rose by \$1.09 to \$87.80 per ounce, the association reported.—APP

China to ban
hidden door
handles on
cars

HONG KONG: China will ban hidden door handles on cars, commonly used on Tesla's electric vehicles and many other EV models, starting next year. All car doors must include a mechanical release function for handles, except for the tailgate, according to details released by China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology on Monday. Officials said the policy aims to address safety concerns after fatal EV accidents where electronic doors reportedly failed to operate and trapped passengers inside vehicles. The new requirement for both internal and external door handles will take effect on Jan. 1, 2027.—APP

Pak, Kazakhstan agree to
deepen investment coop

The Kazakh Minister highlighted the strategic importance of developing major infrastructure projects, particularly railway and road corridors, noting that such initiatives could generate trade and investment flows worth approximately \$ 5 billion while creating employment opportunities and supporting regional supply chains

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a comprehensive bilateral meeting with Arman Shaqqaliev, Minister of Trade and Integration of the Republic of Kazakhstan, at the Ministry of Commerce, Islamabad, to review the current state of bilateral trade and explore concrete avenues for expanding economic cooperation, connectivity, and investment, said a release issued here on Wednesday. The meeting focused extensively on addressing connectivity challenges between Pakistan and Central Asia and identifying practical solutions to unlock the full trade potential between the two countries. Both sides agreed that improved rail, road, and multimodal connectivity is fundamental to strengthening Pakistan-Kazakhstan trade and enabling sustainable, long-term economic engagement.

The Kazakh Minister highlighted the strategic importance of developing major infrastructure projects, particularly railway and road corridors, noting that such initiatives could generate trade and investment flows worth approximately \$ 5 billion while creating employment opportunities and supporting regional supply chains. He emphasized Kazakhstan's vision of becoming a regional hub connecting Central Asia with South Asia, China, Europe, and the Global South, including Pakistan's ports. Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan underscored Pakistan's strong interest in enhancing direct connectivity with Central Asia through Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, while acknowledging regional and geopolitical



challenges. He stressed that improved transit routes would not only benefit Pakistan and Kazakhstan but also open broader opportunities for regional and global trade, including access to African and ASEAN markets through Pakistan's ports. Both ministers discussed cooperation in priority sectors, including agriculture and food security, pharmaceuticals, textiles, sports goods, leather products, mining and minerals, energy, and infrastructure development. The

Kazakh side expressed interest in joint ventures, particularly in food processing, agriculture value chains, and pharmaceuticals, while Pakistan invited Kazakh investment in mining, minerals, and agri-based industries under Pakistan's investment facilitation framework. The meeting also reviewed the need for structured business-to-business (B2B) engagement. Both sides agreed that trade promotion bodies should play a facilitative role by connecting businesses,

sharing market intelligence, and supporting matchmaking, without creating regulatory bottlenecks. In this context, it was agreed to work towards finalizing a framework document outlining priority sectors, trade targets, and a roadmap of activities, including trade missions, exhibitions, and exchange of delegations. The two sides agreed to prepare and sign non-binding Minutes of the Meeting to capture agreed ideas, next steps and timelines, serving as a practical commitment to

advance cooperation while formal agreements proceed through relevant approval processes. Both ministers reaffirmed their shared commitment to transforming Pakistan-Kazakhstan economic relations from potential to performance, with a strong focus on connectivity, investment-led growth, and regional integration. They expressed confidence that sustained institutional coordination and private-sector engagement would significantly enhance bilateral trade and investment in the coming years.

Pakistan's cutlery exports
to China rise 5% in 2025

BEIJING: Pakistan's exports of tools, implements, cutlery and related articles of base metal to China continued to grow in 2025, reaching \$8.14 million, up from \$7.76 million in 2024, representing a year-on-year increase of about 5%. This was reported on Wednesday by China Economic Net (CEN) quoting the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC). Customs data showed that hand tools led the export basket, with pliers, pincers, tweezers, and similar tools emerging as top products. Exports of these items rose from \$2.97 million in 2024 to \$3.72 million in 2025, driven mainly by strong demand from Zhejiang Province, which stood out as the largest destination, with exports worth \$1.78 million under processing with imported materials, highlighting Pakistan's integration into China's manufacturing supply chains, followed by Shanghai and Guangdong, through both ordinary and processing trade channels. Scissors and shears ranked second, recording exports of around \$1.90 million in 2025, with major shipments destined for Shanghai and Zhejiang. Safety razor blades placed third, earning about \$1.34 million, mainly supplied to Xinjiang and Zhejiang. Faisal Shahzad, a Pakistani exporter, told China Economic Net that Wazirabad's cutlery industry reflects the resilience and skill of its people, blending traditional techniques with modern innovation. He added that attracting Chinese investment and relocating related industries to Wazirabad could significantly boost exports. Analysts note that Pakistan's competitive pricing, improving quality standards, and skilled metalworking base have supported steady demand across China's industrial and consumer markets. With deeper trade and manufacturing cooperation, Pakistan's base-metal tools exports to China are expected to maintain stable growth.—APP

Bangladesh to fund Rohingya
education for first time

DHAKA: The Bangladeshi government will fund the primary education of Rohingya children living in refugee camps following the closure of thousands of UN-supported facilities due to budget shortages, authorities said on Wednesday. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas were forced to flee a military crackdown in Myanmar and take shelter in neighboring Bangladesh in 2017. Today, more than 1 million of them are cramped inside 33 camps in Cox's Bazar district on the country's southeast coast. About half are children. The Bangladeshi government does not allow Rohingya children to enroll in regular public schools outside the camps under its longstanding policy to prevent long term integration. Since the beginning of the crisis, Bangladesh, which is not a signatory to the UN refugee convention, has made it clear that the Rohingya settlement is temporary. Education has largely been organized by NGOs and UN agencies, providing basic literacy without recognized certificates. But many of these schools were forced to close last year, as foreign aid plunged — especially after the US, which contributed 55 percent of it, suspended most of its humanitarian operations. To prevent the collapse of educational facilities, the Bangladeshi government on Tuesday for the first time approved state funding to keep them operational, with more than \$16 million designated for primary education for Rohingya children under a World Bank grant. "This World Bank funding will be used by UNICEF to operate learning centers in the Rohingya camps. As UNICEF is currently facing a severe funding shortage, the Bangladesh government has stepped in to provide support, with assistance from World Bank loans," Mizanur Rahman, refugee relief and repatriation commissioner in Cox's Bazar, told Arab News. "Due to the funding crisis, most learning centers in the camps have suspended operations. With this new funding, many of these centers will be able to resume activities. There are around 8,000 learning centers in the camps, of which only about 4,000 are currently operating, while the other half remain closed." There are more than 400,000 school-age Rohingya children in the Bangladesh refugee camps. The Bangladeshi government's support will reach 200,000 of them, with the teaching program based on the national curriculum of their home country, Myanmar. About 1,100 teachers will be employed and trained to work with the children, Rahman said. "The government has approved the funding primarily for one year, but the program will continue until 2027. Revised negotiations may take place later to consider a further extension."—DNA

Jailed Tunisia
opposition leader
Ghannouchi handed
longer sentence

TUNIS: A Tunisian court has sentenced opposition leader Rached Ghannouchi to 20 years in jail for "plotting against the state," his lawyer told AFP on Tuesday, increasing the sentence by six years. The charge is one of several for which Ghannouchi has already been in prison since 2023, with the 84-year-old now facing a total of more than 40 years behind bars. Twenty-two people stood trial alongside Ghannouchi last year accused of offenses that include "plotting against state security," which Ghannouchi's defense team called "fabricated" and politically motivated. An appeals court has upped the sentence from 14 years to 20, Ghannouchi's lawyer Samir Dilou told AFP on Tuesday. Ghannouchi leads Tunisia's Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party and has been a staunch critic of President Kais Saied. His defense team said he would not appeal against the latest ruling, citing a lack of guarantees for a fair trial. Tunisia has emerged as the Arab world's only democracy following the ouster of longtime ruler Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011, which kicked off the Arab Spring uprisings. But since Saied came to power in 2019, local and international NGOs say there has been a regression of rights and freedoms. Ennahdha played a key role in Tunisian politics for years before Ghannouchi was hit with multiple prison terms, which include a 22-year sentence on a separate charge of plotting against state security. Other defendants in the latest trial include former presidential chief of staff Nadia Akacha and former prime minister Youssef Chahed, who are both currently abroad. They faced charges including "conspiracy against the state's internal security" and "forming an organization and an agreement linked to terrorist crimes," according to court documents. Ghannouchi and other senior Ennahdha figures, including his son-in-law Rafik Abdesslem and retired military officer Kamel Bedoui, were also accused of setting up a "secret security apparatus" serving the party. Their trial followed a similar one last year in which some 40 opposition figures were sentenced to up to 45 years in prison. Most of Saied's opponents — whether from the left or right — have either been detained or have fled the North African country.—APP

SIMAP
applauds
PM's pro-
export relief
steps

SIALKOT: The Surgical Instruments Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (SIMAP) has applauded the pro-export initiatives announced by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, terming them significant facilitative measures to support exporters and promote industrial growth in the country. According to SIMAP, the Prime Minister has introduced several key incentives, including a reduction of Rs. 4.04 per unit in industrial electricity tariffs, lowering of the export refinancing rate to 4.5 percent from the earlier 7.5 percent, and the issuance of Blue Passports to top-performing exporters. The association stated that these steps will substantially enhance the global competitiveness of Pakistani exporters, reduce financial pressure on the industrial sector, and enable smoother international business engagement. SIMAP Chairman Zeshan Tariq expressed strong appreciation for the Prime Minister's continued focus on exporter facilitation and industrial development, noting that such policy measures will help strengthen Pakistan's export performance and economic stability.—APP

EU hospitals
released 5m
cancer patients
in 2023

BRUSSELS: The latest European health data showed that hospitals across the European Union discharged about 4.9 million patients diagnosed with cancer in 2023. According to the data, colorectal cancer was the most common diagnosis among discharged cancer patients, with 554,112 cases, representing 11.2 percent of total discharges. It was followed by lung cancer with about 506,372 cases (10.3 percent) and breast cancer with around 480,922 cases at around 9.7 percent. In 18 EU countries, colorectal cancer was the leading diagnosis among discharged resident in-patients suffering from cancer. The discharge rate was highest in Croatia (360 discharged colorectal cancer patients per 100,000 inhabitants), Latvia (243) and Austria (239). In contrast, the lowest discharge rates were reported in Malta (31 patients per 100,000 inhabitants), Luxembourg (56) and Ireland (58). A hospital discharge occurs when a hospital patient is formally released after an episode of care. The reasons for discharge include finalisation of treatment, signing out against medical advice, transfer to another healthcare institution, or death of the patient.—APP

Turkiye again
blocks aid
convoy for
Kurds in
Syria: NGO

DIYARBAKIR, Turkiye: Turkish authorities have blocked for a second time an aid convoy from reaching the Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani that's been overwhelmed by people fleeing fighting, a local NGO said on Wednesday. As the Syrian army and Kurdish forces clash in Syria, Kobani has been inundated by people trying to escape the hostilities. Last week, Turkish authorities prevented a convoy of 25 trucks carrying humanitarian supplies destined for Kobani from reaching the Turkiye-Syria border. The convoy, which included water, milk, baby formula and blankets, had been assembled in Turkiye's southeastern Kurdish city of Diyarbakir by the Diyarbakir Solidarity and Protection Platform, the NGO that organized the aid drive. After it was blocked last week, it had initially been authorized to travel via Azaz, a city in northern Syria, with its own delegation overseeing the handover. But "the delegation was again denied permission," the group said in a statement on Wednesday. The trucks "were not allowed to cross into Kobani despite all efforts," it said, adding that "the aid was brought back to Diyarbakir."—APP

Britain's PM Starmer faces MPs as
pressure grows over Mandelson scandal

LONDON: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer faced growing pressure Wednesday over his appointment of Peter Mandelson as US ambassador, after fresh revelations about the disgraced politician's close ties to Jeffrey Epstein. Starmer was set to be grilled in parliament about his judgment in appointing Mandelson, following new allegations that the ex-envoy had passed confidential information to the late US sex offender Epstein nearly two decades ago. UK police have announced they are now probing the claims, which emerged from email exchanges between the pair that revealed the extent of their warm relations, financial dealings as well as private photos. Around that time, Epstein was serving an 18-month jail term for soliciting a minor in Florida while Mandelson was a UK government minister. For decades a pivotal and often divisive figure in British politics, Mandelson has had a chequered career having twice been forced to resign from public office for alleged misconduct. Starmer sacked him as UK ambassador to the US last September after an earlier Epstein files release showed their ties had lasted longer than previously revealed. He had only been in the post for seven months. On Tuesday, Mandelson resigned from the upper house of par-

liament — the unelected House of Lords — after the latest release of Epstein files sparked a renewed furor. The main Conservative opposition will use its parliamentary time Wednesday to try to force the release of papers on his appointment in Washington. They want MPs to order the publication of all documents related to Mandelson getting the job in February last year. They want to see details of the vetting procedure — including messages exchanged with senior ministers and key figures in Starmer's inner circle — amid growing questions about Starmer's lack of judgment on the issue. Starmer's center-left government appeared willing to comply on Wednesday, at least in part. It proposed releasing the documents apart from those "prejudicial to UK national security or international relations." London's Metropolitan Police confirmed on Tuesday it had launched an investigation into 72-year-old Mandelson for misconduct in public office offenses following the latest revelations. If any charges were brought and he was convicted, he could potentially face imprisonment. Starmer sacked the former minister and ex-EU trade commissioner as Britain's top diplomat in the US after an earlier release from the Epstein files detailed his cozy ties with the dis-

graced American. The scandal resurfaced after the release by the US Justice Department of the latest batch of documents. They showed Mandelson had forwarded in 2009 an economic briefing to Epstein intended for then-prime minister Gordon Brown. In another 2010 email the US financier, who died by suicide in prison in 2019, asked Mandelson about the European Union's bailout of Greece. The latest release also showed Epstein appeared to have transferred a total of \$75,000 in three payments to accounts linked to the British politician between 2003 and 2004. Mandelson has told the BBC he had no memory of the money transfers and did not know whether the documents were authentic. He quit his House of Lords position on Tuesday shortly after Starmer said he had "let his country down." The UK leader said Tuesday he feared more revelations could come, and has pledged his government would cooperate with any police inquiries into the matter. The Met police confirmed they had received a referral on the matter from the UK government. The EU is also investigating whether Mandelson breached any of their rules during his time from 2004-2008 as EU trade commissioner.—DNA

Briefs

CM Punjab invites Iranian investors to invest in Punjab

DNA

LAHORE: President Pakistan Muslim League-N Muhammad Nawaz Sharif along with Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif met Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam to discuss bilateral relations, trade, energy, and regional situation. They reiterated their commitment to further strengthening Pakistan-Iran relations. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif welcomed the Iranian Ambassador, who expressed gratitude for the grand reception. She also invited Iranian investors to invest in agriculture, information technology, and tourism sectors of Pakistan, and expressed her strong desire to enhance economic and social ties between the two brotherly Islamic countries.

Iranian Ambassador Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam thanked Prime Minister Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar for their diplomatic support on various international forums. President Pakistan Muslim League-N Muhammad Nawaz Sharif said, "If doors of negotiations are kept open with generosity, major issues can be resolved through dialogue." He added that Iran had faced circumstances with great courage, we have many prayers and good wishes for Iran, as the people of Iran are very dear to us. Iranian Ambassador said, "Pakistan and Iran are like two bodies with one soul."

14 killed off Greece coast

ATHENS: A Greek coastguard vessel and a boat carrying migrants collided in the Aegean sea Tuesday, killing 14 people, police said. Greek authorities did not immediately give details on the collision, which occurred off the island of Chios, near Turkey.

The collision involved a "port police patrol vessel" and a "high-speed" small boat, a coastguard official told AFP. Two coastguard members were taken to hospital and 24 migrants rescued, the coastguard said. Seven children and a pregnant woman were among the injured, Greek media reported. Public broadcaster ERT said the patrol gave a warning signal after spotting the migrant boat, but it tried to escape. A Greek air force helicopter is taking part in search operation for survivors, ERT said.

Large numbers of migrants seek to cross the Mediterranean each year to reach Europe. The UN refugee agency said in November more than 1,700 people died or were missing in 2025 on migration routes to Europe in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic off the coast of west Africa. — **APP**

T20 World Cup: ICC seeks 'back-channel talks'

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: In the aftermath of Pakistan's announcement against playing their T20 World Cup 2026 match against India, the International Cricket Council (ICC) has asked its Deputy Chairman Imran Khwaja to hold back-channel negotiations with PCB, NDTV reported on Wednesday. Khwaja, who represents the Singapore Cricket Association and is seen within the ICC as a neutral figure who can talk to all sides, has been asked to convince Pakistan to play their T20 World Cup 2026 group match against India on February 15 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, reported Firstpost. The report comes as the Pakistani government, on Sunday, announced that it would participate in the T20 World Cup 2026 but would boycott the match against arch-rival India. The ICC had rejected the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) request to move their matches to a venue outside India.

Serena Hotels, Behbud join hands for a noble cause

Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, reiterated the group's dedication to social development via cultural diplomacy, stressing that strategic partnerships and cultural platforms can generate enduring positive change for communities



SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels and the Bebbud Association have joined forces in a meaningful collaboration to bolster mater-

nal and child health services in Pakistan. Through Serena Hotels' Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, the two organizations hosted a special fundraising gala at the Serena Hotel in Islamabad on February 3, 2026, with all proceeds supporting

the Behbud Maternity and Children Hospital in Rawalpindi. This vital facility delivers essential healthcare to women and children from underserved communities, helping to improve access to quality medical care.

The event seamlessly blended culture, education, and philanthropy. A major highlight was a captivating presentation by renowned Egyptologist Salima Ikram, titled "A Journey Through Ancient Egypt," which provided guests with a fascinating dive into ancient history, art, and civilization.

Ms. Abida Malik, President of the Behbud Association, thanked Serena Hotels for the partnership, noting how such initiatives are crucial for sustaining Behbud's ongoing mission to deliver high-quality maternal and child healthcare.

H.E. Dr. Ihab Abdel Hamid, who served as the chief guest, praised the role of cultural dialogue in promoting international understanding and lauded the event for advancing a worthy social cause.

Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, reiterated the group's dedication to social development via cultural diplomacy, stressing that strategic partnerships and cultural platforms can generate enduring positive change for communities. The evening wrapped up on a vibrant note with a soulful performance by acclaimed Pakistani artist Abrarul Haq, infusing the fundraiser with additional cultural energy. This collaboration underscores Serena Hotels' continued efforts to foster cultural exchange while driving inclusive community development and supporting critical health services for vulnerable populations. For more details on the event, check recent coverage from sources like the Islamabad Post and Serena Hotels' official channels.

US jet downs Iran drone but talks still on course

Tehran wants talks to be held in Oman, scope be narrowed to two-way negotiations on nuclear issues only

WASHINGTON: A US fighter jet shot down an Iranian drone that approached an American aircraft carrier in the Middle East on Tuesday, Washington said, as renewed tensions on the high seas overshadowed plans for nuclear talks. White House spokeswoman Karoline Levitt told Fox News that US envoy Steve Witkoff is still expected "to have conversations with the Iranians late this week," despite the incident. The downing of the drone was the second clash between the foes in Middle Eastern waters on the same day, after Iranian forces attempted to detain a US-flagged tanker in the Strait of Hormuz. Washington and Tehran have agreed to talks after US President Donald Trump repeatedly threatened Iran with military action – and Iran warned that it would respond with strikes on US vessels and bases. The US bombed Iran's nuclear sites last summer, and has sent a naval battlegroup back to the

region since Tehran's deadly crackdown on anti-government protests. Negotiations are now set for Friday, but Trump has refused to rule out military action, and his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian insists talks will only go ahead provided they were free of threats. "An F-35C fighter jet from Abraham Lincoln shot down the Iranian drone in self-defence," Central Command spokesman Captain Tim Hawkins said in a statement. The aircraft carrier was dispatched to the Arabian Sea last month amid a "buildup of US forces. Trump had told Iranians that "help is on its way" during anti-government protests in Iran that were met with a deadly crackdown last month. Pezeshkian confirmed on Tuesday that he had ordered the start of talks with the United States, provided they were free of threats, after Trump suggested "bad things" would happen without a deal. Iran has not confirmed where the talks will take place but said Turkey, Oman and "some other countries in the region" had expressed willingness to host them, adding that the venue and timing were "not a complicated issue." Meanwhile, Iran has demanded that talks with the US this week be held in Oman, not Turkey, and that the scope be narrowed to two-way negotiations on nuclear issues only, a regional source said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Witkoff in Jerusalem on Tuesday that Iran "cannot be trusted," according to a statement from Netanyahu's office. The US opposes Iran's nuclear programme, which it maintains is a precursor to acquiring nuclear weapons, while Tehran insists it is for civilian research purposes. Washington also wants to curtail Iran's support for forces in the region and cut its vast arsenal of ballistic missiles. "I have instructed my minister of foreign affairs, provided that a suitable environment exists – one free from threats and unreasonable expectations – to pursue fair and equitable negotiations," Pezeshkian wrote in a post on X. — **Agencies**

Libya's former leader Gaddafi's son Saif killed

LONDON: Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, the son of Libya's late longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi, was killed on Tuesday by a "four-man commando" in his home in western Libya's Zintan, his French lawyer, Marcel Cécaldi, told AFP. "For now, we don't know" who was behind the killing, Cécaldi said, adding that he was told by one of Saif's close associates about ten days ago "that there were problems with his security." Saif went from his father's heir apparent to a decade of captivity and obscurity in a remote hill town before launching a presidential bid that helped derail an attempted election. Sources close to the family, his lawyer Khaled el-Zaydi and Libyan media on Tuesday confirmed the assassination. Details surrounding the circumstances of his death were not immediately clear. Despite holding no official position, he was once seen as the most powerful figure in the oil-rich North African country after his autocratic father, Muammar Gaddafi, who ruled for more than four decades. Saif

shaped policy and mediated high-profile, sensitive diplomatic missions. He led talks on Libya abandoning its weapons of mass destruction. He negotiated compensation for the families of those killed in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988. Determined to rid Libya of its pariah status, Saif engaged with the West and championed himself as a reformer, calling for a constitution and respect for human rights. Educated at the London School of Economics and a fluent English speaker, he was once seen by many governments as the acceptable, Western-friendly face of Libya. But when a rebellion broke out against Gaddafi's long rule in 2011, Saif immediately chose family and clan loyalties over his many friendships to become an architect of a brutal crackdown on rebels, whom he called rats. Speaking to Reuters at the time of the revolt, he said: "We fight here in Libya, we die here in Libya." — **Agencies**

Pakistan and Kazakhstan reaffirm strategic partnership



SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari said that Pakistan and Kazakhstan share a firm commitment to broadening cooperation across political, economic and regional domains, while affirming Pakistan's readiness to work closely with the country to advance shared goals of peace, connectivity and sustainable development. He said this while talking to the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, H.E.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who met him at Aiwan-e-Sadr this evening. The two Presidents first held a tête-à-tête meeting, during which they exchanged views on key bilateral, regional and international issues, which was followed by an extended meeting with their respective delegations. Talking to his Kazakh counterpart, President Asif Ali Zardari said that Pakistan and Kazakhstan share a relationship rooted in mutual trust, shared values and a common vision for regional prosperity. He noted that the visit of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the first by a Kazakh head of state in over two decades, provides a timely opportunity to reinvigorate bilateral ties and translate political goodwill into concrete outcomes through expanded cooperation and stronger institutional linkages. Highlighting economic engagement, the President observed that while bilateral trade had registered growth in recent years, it remains well below its true potential. He expressed confidence that the Roadmap for Trade and Economic Cooperation 2025–2027, together with agreements on transit trade, customs cooperation and banking, would help remove operational bottlenecks and open new avenues for trade, investment and business-to-business collaboration. He also underscored the importance of leveraging Pakistan's facilities and frameworks in areas such as energy, agriculture, mining, information technology and defence production. President Zardari underscored the centrality of regional connectivity in strengthening Pakistan–Kazakhstan relations. He welcomed progress on rail and road linkages, including cooperation on the CASA railway alignment and effective utilisation of Quadrilateral Transit Trade Agreement (QTTA) routes and noted that enhanced connectivity, supported by improved air links and access to Pakistani ports, would not only boost bilateral trade but also contribute to wider regional integration and economic stability.

Punjab govt notifies public holidays on Basnat

DNA

LAHORE: The Punjab government has notified public holidays in the province on February 6 and 7 (Friday and Saturday) for Basant, said a notification. The notification was issued on Tuesday by the provincial government's Services and General Administration Department, a copy of which is available with Dawn.

"It is hereby notified for general information that 6th and 7th February, 2026 (Friday and Saturday) shall be observed as public holidays in the province of Punjab," the notification said.

On Sunday, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz had announced a "long weekend" in the province, declaring a Basant holiday.

"Punjab will enjoy a long weekend with Kashmir Day on February 5, a provincial Basant holiday on the 6th, followed by Saturday and Sunday. "We hope people across Punjab take this time to relax, recharge, and make the most of the break," she posted on X.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has said dry weather with clear skies was expected for the majority of Basant festival.

LHC asks NAB to approach trial court

COURT REPORTER

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday directed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to move the trial court concerned after the anti-graft body decided to close the Chaudhry Sugar Mills inquiry against Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. The case pertains to alleged money laundering and income beyond means via "dubious" business transactions of the Chaudhry Sugar Mills, of which Maryam was a major shareholder. A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice Aalia Neelum and including Justices Muhammad Jawad Zafar and Abber Gul Khan, heard CM Maryam's civil miscellaneous application seeking the refund of Rs70 million deposited as a guarantee in the case. During the proceedings, the NAB's prosecutor informed the bench that following the new amendments, bureau's chairman had approved the closure of the probe.



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





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