

Book unveiling sees AJK PM laud photographer's dedication to Kashmiri narrative



Bureau Report

MUZAFFERABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Chaudhry Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, attended as Chief Guest the book launching ceremony of "Kashmir - Wait and See" authored by European journalist and international photojournalist Cedric Gerbeyane. The event was organized by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell.

On the occasion, the Prime Minister viewed the photographs published in the book depicting various aspects of Kashmir and appreciated the artistic

and professional excellence of the author.

Addressing the ceremony, author and international photojournalist Cedric Gerbeyane said that the book and the photographic series are the result of several years of dedicated work, aimed at presenting the life, emotions and human rights situation of the Kashmiri people to the world. He stated that photography is a two-way medium of communication that enables viewers to closely feel reality, and expressed hope that this effort would prove to be a positive step towards a better and peaceful future.

Coordinator Kashmir Council European Union and organizer of the event, Ali Raza Syed, said that the project was initiated by Cedric Gerbeyane in 2017 and took nearly eight years to complete. Hungarian journalist András Bárkás said that the photo exhibition effectively portrays the daily life and challenges faced by the Kashmiri people.

The ceremony was also attended by a delegation comprising Belgian author and journalist Cedric Gerbe, human rights activist from the Netherlands Marjan Lucas, journalist Anna Olgivanna, former MEP from Poland Ryszard

Henryk Czarnecki, former MEP from Sweden Björn Anders Hilton, Karl Hilton from Belgium and Hungarian journalist András Bárkás.

Among others present at the event were Minister for Higher Education Zafar Iqbal Malik, Secretaries to Government Ansar Yaqoob Khan, Ms. Tehzeeb-un-Nisa and Mirza Aamir Mahmood, Coordinator Political Affairs to the Prime Minister of AJK Syed Aizadar Kazmi, Spokesperson to the Prime Minister of AJK Shaukat Javed Mir, Director Liberation Cell Raja Sajjad, and other senior officials.

Paintings exhibition

MUZAFFERABAD: Prime Minister AJK Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore taking interest in the paintings during exhibition regarding the cruelty of Indian forces on oppressed Kashmiri of IIOK, at PM House in the Capital of AJK.



Photo: Online

AIOU Establishes "Majlis-e-Fikr-o-Adab"

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has formally established "Majlis-e-Fikr-o-Adab" to promote academic, intellectual and literary activities. The inaugural ceremony of this scholarly and intellectual forum was officiated by the Dean of the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Prof. Dr. Shah Mohyuddin Hashmi.

The primary objective of the Majlis is to provide teachers, researchers and students with an effective, organized and sustainable platform for intellectual dialogue, research discussions and creative and literary pursuits, fostering



serious and meaningful discourse on various aspects of knowledge, thought and civilization.

Addressing the ceremony,

Professor Dr. Shah Mohyuddin Hashmi stated that Majlis-e-Fikr-o-Adab would play a vital role in strengthening the academic, intellectual and

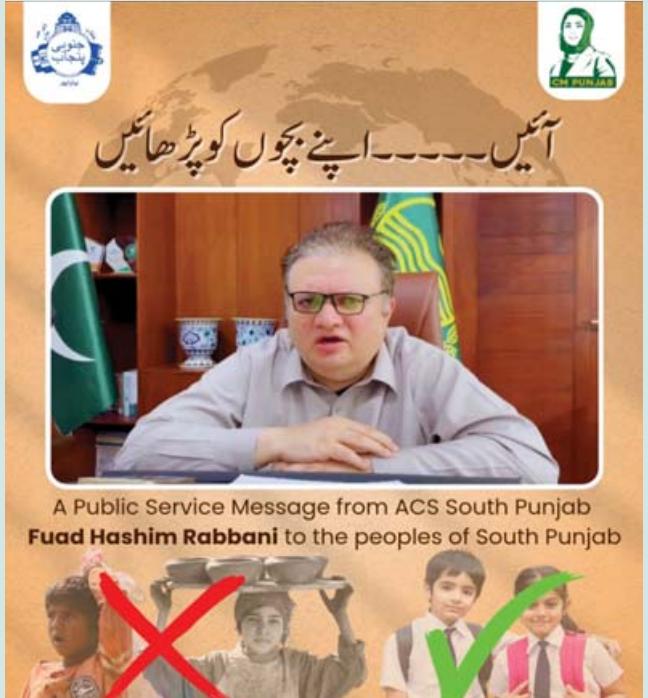
cultural identity of the university.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Hafiz Tahir Islam noted that the forum would serve as a space

to discuss creative and intellectual endeavors, critically review academic and literary masterpieces, explore new and original ideas, encourage researchers and authors and promote a culture of scholarly dialogue.

The Majlis-e-Fikr-o-Adab has been established by the Department of Islamic Thought, History and Culture. On the occasion, Chairman of the Department, Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Sajjad stated that the Majlis would organize various academic and intellectual programs, lectures, seminars and discussions in the future, contributing to a stronger and more dynamic academic and literary environment at AIOU.

"Children Belong in Schools, Not at Work": Rabbani Issues Video Message



Special Correspondent

MULTAN: Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab, Fawad Hashim Rabbani, has issued an important video message highlighting the critical issue of out-of-school children and child labor in Pakistan. He revealed that approximately 26 million children in the country are currently out of school, meaning one out of every three children is deprived of education, which poses a serious threat to the nation's future.

In his address, Fawad Hashim Rabbani emphasized that sending children to work, especially during flood-related emergencies and economic hardships, endangers their future. He stressed that a child's rightful place is in school, not in labor, and that education is the only sustainable path to ensuring a safe, dignified, and prosperous future for children.

The Additional Chief Secretary urged parents, teachers, religious scholars, social leaders, and citizens to not remain silent against child labor and exploitation. He appealed to the public to immediately report any incidents of child labor or abuse by contacting the "Child Protection and Welfare Bureau helpline at 1121," enabling timely intervention and protection.

NCHD, Ghazi Brotha Establish Two Literacy Centers in Attock

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: The National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), in collaboration with local NGO Ghazi Brotha, has established two literacy centers in two villages of Attock tehsil to promote adult literacy in the district.

Each literacy center has enrolled 20 learners, while one trained female teacher has been appointed at each center.

Under this initiative, NCHD will provide textbooks, office equipment and other essential stationery to the literacy centers. In addition, NCHD will be responsible for the professional training of teachers and regular monitoring of educational activities.

The NGO Ghazi Brotha will provide monthly honorarium to the teachers and will also extend full cooperation in the monitoring process.

Regular classes at these literacy centers will commence from February 2, 2026. During the initial phase of the project, baseline assessment of learners has been completed, teachers have been given necessary training, and textbooks have already been distributed among the learners.

The objective of this initiative is to increase the literacy rate among adults in the area, raise educational awareness, and promote social and community development through education. This joint effort of NCHD and Ghazi Brotha is being termed a significant step towards the promotion of education in the region.

Deputy Commissioner Attock Visits Different City Areas, Issues Instructions for Setting Up Ramazan Bazaar

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Deputy Commissioner Attock, Rao Atif Raza, visited various areas of Attock city to review the city's beautification and overall administrative arrangements. The purpose of the visit was to improve the overall condition of the city and to identify a suitable site for the establishment of a Ramazan Bazaar ahead of the holy month of Ramazan.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner issued instructions to the concerned officers regarding cleanliness, removal of encroachments, beautification of roads and markets, and provision of better facilities to the citizens. He said that setting up Ramazan Bazaars to provide essential food items to the public at reasonable rates during Ramazan is among the top priorities of the Punjab government, and all necessary arrangements will be completed in a timely manner.

The Deputy Commissioner also reviewed in detail the arrangements for facilities, parking, cleanliness, security and availability of essential commodities at the Ramazan Bazaar, and directed the relevant departments to perform their duties with mutual coordination.

On this occasion, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Anil Saeed was also present with the Deputy Commissioner and briefed him on various aspects of the administrative matters and the arrangements for the Ramazan Bazaar.

PR Department Honors Retiring Director Raja Amjad Hussain Minhas

Bureau Report

MUZAFFERABAD: A farewell ceremony was organized in honor of Director Public Relations Raja Amjad Hussain Minhas on the occasion of his retirement by APP Bureau Chief and senior journalist Farooq Mughal. The event was hosted and moderated by Farooq Mughal himself.

The chief guest, Director Public Relations Raja Amjad Hussain Minhas, in his address said that the Public Relations Department is not merely a news dissemination body, but it serves as a bridge between the government, the journalist community and the public. He said that he worked fearlessly, selflessly and on merit for

the development of the department and the welfare of journalists.

Expressing gratitude, he thanked APP Bureau Chief Farooq Mughal for arranging the ceremony in his honor. He also thanked Secretary Information & IT, Muhammad Rashid Hanif for sparing his valuable time to attend the event. Raja Amjad Hussain Minhas said that he was thankful to Almighty Allah for granting him the opportunity to complete his successful service career with dignity.

On the occasion, Deputy Director Public Relations Muhammad Bashir Mirza thanked Farooq Mughal for organizing the ceremony and said that under the leadership of Raja Amjad Hussain Minhas, the department worked as a team for the repu-

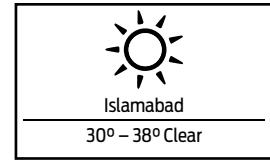
tation of the government, development of the department and welfare of journalists, which would continue in the future.

Vice Chairman Press Foundation Sardar Zulfiqar, former Presidents of Press Club Syed Afaq Hussain Shah,

Tariq Naqash, Sohail Mughal, senior journalists Aslam Mir and Javed Iqbal Hashmi also paid glowing tributes to Raja Amjad Hussain Minhas on the successful completion of his service.

The ceremony was also attended by officers of the Information Depart-




SERVICES
Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:41 am
Zohr	12:21 pm
Asr	3:58 pm
Maghrab	5:36 pm
Isha	7:01 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 4451122
& Rescue Services	4451122
Motorway Police	9266044
Motorway Police	9270601-20

Women Police
Stations

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance	115
PIA Flight Info	114
PIA Cargo	9280979
Railway Inquiry	117
Railway Exchange	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi	5555489
CAA	9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH	561111
MH	561116
MH	561116
Cantt Hospital	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	9212334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886

Cashless Economy Awareness Seminar held in Attock
Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: An important seminar was held under the supervision of Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Anil Saeed to promote awareness and adoption of a cashless economy. The objective of the seminar was to familiarize the public with modern digital payment systems and encourage the use of QR codes for day-to-day transactions.

Representatives of the Zindagi App and various private banks participated in the seminar and gave detailed briefings on digital payments, online banking and secure financial transaction mechanisms.

A large number of students from the District Council and various universities also attended the event. The participants were informed that a special public awareness seminar would be organized in August to further promote the adoption of a cashless economy, aiming to reduce the use of cash at the public level.

Speakers highlighted the advantages of a cashless economy, stating that digital transactions are not only easy, safe and transparent, but also help strengthen the financial system, curb corruption and save time.

At the conclusion of the seminar, it was reaffirmed that such awareness activities would continue in the future to ensure that more people benefit from modern and secure digital financial systems.

CM Maryam Nawaz orders arrests, dismissals over Bhati Gate manhole tragedy

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif expressed strong indignation over the fatal Bhati Gate

manhole incident, censuring the district administration, Lahore Development Authority (LDA), WASA and other concerned departments for what she termed "criminal negligence".



Chairing an emergency meeting at the Lahore Airport lounge on her return from Bhakkar, the chief minister ordered the removal from service and arrest of four officials, including the project director, project manager and safety in-charge of the ongoing construction project.

She declared the contractor, supervisor, consultant, commissioner Lahore, deputy commissioner Lahore, assistant commissioner, LDA and WASA all equally responsible for the incident.

"This is Punjab. It is not a place where someone falls and dies and no one cares. I am answerable here, and so are you," the chief minister said during the meeting.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed the contractor to pay Rs100 million as compensation to the husband of the deceased woman, while instructing the government to provide him a taxi for livelihood support.

The chief minister also ordered that all open manholes and excavations across

the province must be fully covered, properly lit at night and secured immediately. She further directed that wherever Safe City cameras have been removed due to construction work, temporary mobile or wireless cameras must be installed without delay.

The chief minister reiterated that every life in Punjab is precious. "Not only human life, even the life of an animal matters. Everyone responsible will be held accountable," she assured.

Inauguration

DAKKA: Adviser for Civil Aviation and Tourism of Bangladesh, Mr. Sk. Bashir Uddin and High Commissioner of Pakistan to Bangladesh, Mr. Imran Haider inaugurating the direct flight service from Dhaka to Karachi at Dhaka Airport on Thursday.



Photo: PID

IIUI Hosts High-Level Semiconductor Roundtable Highlighting Policy, Academia, Industry and Global Integration

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) hosted a high-level National Semiconductor Roundtable Conference, an initiative conceptualized and led under the vision of the worthy President of IIUI, Prof. Dr. Ahmed Saad Alahmed, reaffirming the University's commitment to steering Pakistan's technological future through academic leadership, policy engagement, and industry collaboration.

Addressing the gathering, Prof. Dr. Ahmed Shuja Syed, Vice President (Research & Enterprise), IIUI, who has spearheaded this event, highlighted the regional growth potential of semiconductors



and stressed that sustainable ecosystems require long-term policy continuity, institutional coherence, and patient investment.

The conference was graced by Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, as the Chief Guest,

whose presence emphasized the national importance of the dialogue. Prof. Dr. Ahmed Shuja Syed then presented CAEPE's annual portfolio report and the university insignia to her.

The roundtable featured three technical panels, each addressing a critical dimension of the semiconductor ecosystem. Panel 1, "Semiconductors: Policy, Governance, and Funds," moderated by Dr. Asma Mansoor, focused on policy coherence, governance frameworks, and sustainable financing, with participation from Dr. Sajid Baloch (NECOP), Mr. Zawar Hussain (MoST), Dr. Maria Sultan (SASSI), Mr. Zakir Syed (MoIT), and Dr. Mirza Habib Ali (PSF).

IRS-ISRS moot underscores expanding Pakistan-Uzbekistan partnership

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad in collaboration with the Institute of Strategic and Regional Studies, (ISRS), Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on Thursday hosted an Expert Online Conference titled "Pakistan and Uzbekistan: Strategic Partnership, Connectivity, and Sustainable Development in a Changing World".

The event brought together policy-makers, diplomats, and experts from Pakistan and Uzbekistan to discuss regional cooperation in a changing global environment. The conference was a prelude to Uzbekistan President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev's historic visit to Pakistan in the first week of February, 2026, said a press release.

The proceedings commenced with



welcome remarks by Director ISRS Uzbekistan Eldor Aripov, President IRS Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Pakistan Alisher Tukhtaev and Pakistan's Ambassador to Uzbekistan Ahmed Farooq, who collectively highlighted the significance of deepening strategic dialogue and unlocking regional connectivity opportunities.

The ISRS Deputy Director Bakhtiyor Mustafayev, featured Director of the Institute for Advanced Inter-

national Studies Akram Umarov and President Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies Muhammad Amir Rana, Nodira Abdunazarova, Head of the Department, Institute of Macroeconomic and Regional Studies in Uzbekistan and Haroon Sharif, Leading Economist, Former Minister of State and Chairman of the Board of Investment Hamzah Rifaat, Head of the Central Asia Program at IRS, titled Transport and Logistics Interconnectivity.

Mr. Bekzod Kholmatov, Director Center for Transport and Logistics Studies, Ministry of Transport in the Republic of Uzbekistan and Maj. Gen (r) Dr. Muhammad Samrez Salik, Former DG, Institute for Strategic Studies Research and Analysis (ISSRA), NDU, Islamabad, Mr. Quvonchbek Mahmudov, Researcher at the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies and Dr. Amina Khan, Director, Center of Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA), at ISSI also speak on the occasion.

The conference concluded with closing remarks by Eldor Aripov and Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, reaffirming the commitment of Pakistan and Uzbekistan to deepening cooperation across strategic, economic, and developmental domains.

Punjab Colleges Hosts Dinner for Newly Elected APSMA Rawalpindi Officials

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Punjab Group of Colleges hosted a dinner at a local hotel in honor of the newly elected office bearers of the All Pakistan Private Schools Management Association (APSMA) Rawalpindi Division. The chief guests were Director Punjab Group of Colleges Professor Chaudhry Muhammad Akram and APSMA North Punjab President Abrar Ahmad Khan.

Speaking on the occasion, Professor Chaudhry Muhammad Akram congratulated the newly elected office bearers and praised APSMA's constructive role in the private education sector. APSMA North Punjab President Abrar Ahmad Khan thanked Professor Chaudhry Muhammad Akram and STEP Academy Regional Manager Professor Muhammad Zeeshan for hosting the event. The event was attended by Professor Muhammad Zeeshan, APSMA Rawalpindi Division President Abrar Ahmad Advocate, Secretary General Aamir Anwar, Senior Vice President Dr. Ijaz Mahmood, Divisional Finance Secretary Kamran Saif Qureshi, District Rawalpindi President Agha Shahab Maqsood, and others.

Is Basant Lahore's Monopoly? Lawyer Decries Cultural Discrimination in Punjab

Zain Khan Malghani

MULTAN: Punjab government's claims of reviving cultural traditions have once again come under sharp criticism after permission to celebrate Basant was restricted to selected areas of Lahore only, triggering anger across South Punjab and other parts of the province.

Legal and public circles argue that Punjab is not limited to a single city but is home to over 140 million people, all of whom have equal cultural rights. Restricting Basant to Lahore, they say, reflects discrimination rather than cultural revival.

Speaking to the media, M. Sajid Azdi Sanpal Advocate, High Court Lawyer, former Vice President District Bar, Vice President High Court Bar and Chairman Progressive Group of Lawyers Multan, strongly criticised the provincial policy. He said millions of rupees were being spent on advertisements in the name of promoting culture, while in practice Basant was being confined to Lahore, depriving cities like Multan and other regions of Punjab.

"This is not equality; it is a blatant violation of human rights," he said, adding that such policies deepen feelings of deprivation and discrimination among the people.

DC Umar Abbas Mela Chairs District Quality Control Board Meeting held

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: A meeting of the District Quality Control Board was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Umar Abbas Mela, in which a detailed review was conducted regarding the quality of medicines, their sale and compliance with rules and regulations across the district.

During the meeting, a total of 27 cases were taken up. Out of these, 4 cases were adjourned for the next hearing, prosecution was approved in 7 cases, warnings were issued in 14 cases, one case was referred for re-investigation, while de-sealing was allowed in one case. On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Umar Abbas Mela stated that no compromise would be made on the quality of medicines. Strict legal action will be taken against those who endanger public health. The Health Department and Drug Inspection teams were directed to ensure effective field monitoring and take indiscriminate action against violators of the rules.

PSCA ensures foolproof security arrangements for Pakistan-Australia T20 Int'l Series

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) has made comprehensive and foolproof security arrangements for the three-matches T20 International series between Pakistan and Australia. According to the PSCA spokesperson, match security is being ensured through modern technology and effective coordination in line with international security standards. All sensitive locations, including city entry and exit points, Gaddafi Stadium, players' routes, spectators' movement, hotels, and surrounding areas of the stadium are being closely monitored through more than 750 Safe City cameras, facial recognition systems, drone surveillance, and advanced monitoring technologies.

The spokesperson emphasized that Punjab Safe Cities Authority remains fully active and committed to providing a safe and secure environment for citizens, players, and cricket fans during the T20 International series through modern technology, drone surveillance, and an integrated security strategy.

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Wheat being issued to flour mills at controlled rate of Rs 3000 per 40 kg

Punjab Food Director General Amjad Hafeez on Thursday said that wheat was being issued to flour mills at a controlled rate of Rs 3,000 per 40 kg to ensure uninterrupted supply of flour and price stability in the province.

According to official sources here on Thursday the Punjab government was providing 100% of the province's daily flour consumption requirement to flour mills in the form of wheat.

He said, "The supply of wheat to flour mills at subsidized rates in Punjab has led to a significant improvement in the supply chain and flour is available in ample quantities to consumers across all districts of the province."

Amjad Hafeez further said that a record 34,000 metric tons of wheat were milled by flour mills, and 1.4 million flour bags were supplied to the market. He said, "The notified prices are Rs 905 for a 10 kg flour bag and Rs 1,810 for a 20 kg flour bag."

The DG stated that on notified rates of the Punjab government, 20,000 metric tons of wheat were being continuously issued on a daily basis to 670 flour mills. He mentioned that wherever incidents of overcharging were reported, price control magistrates took immediate and strict action.

Amjad Hafeez said that the Food Safety and Consumer Protection Department's crackdown against hoarders, profiteers, and rumor-mongers was continuously ongoing across the province, and all administrative and field resources were being utilized to ensure uninterrupted availability of flour.

Alongside this, the Punjab government would procure 3 million metric tons of wheat through the private sector at a rate of Rs 3,500 per 40 kg (one maund). In this regard, the deadline for submission of applications for pre-qualification by the private sector had been set as February 12, 2026.

He further said that before the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan, the flour supply chain had been further strengthened and made more effective, and keeping in view the increased demand for flour during Ramadan, all preparations to enhance milling and distribution had been fully completed.

NATO Distances Itself from Trump's Iran Strategy

In a moment charged with urgency and geopolitical drama, President Donald Trump convened what many described as a decisive, even "divorce-like," meeting with his closest advisers, weighing the prospect of direct intervention against Iran. Naval deployments were reportedly positioned, rhetoric sharpened, and speculation surged across capitals and newsrooms alike. Yet, almost in parallel, a starkly different message emerged from Brussels. NATO, speaking through its Secretary-General before the European Parliament, made clear that Iran lies outside the alliance's mandate and that the internal affairs of a sovereign state are not NATO's battlefield. In so many words, Europe refused to be drawn into another war.

This divergence marks a notable inflection point in the post-Cold War history of the transatlantic alliance. For decades, the United States and its European partners moved in near lockstep through Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria—conflicts justified in the language of security, democracy, and humanitarian intervention. This time, however, the line was drawn. The European Union's position, echoed in NATO's clarification, suggested a deeper calculation: if Europe were to endorse a unilateral American strike on Iran, it would forfeit any moral and legal standing to resist similar assertions of power elsewhere, even in regions closer to home. Sovereignty, once surrendered as a principle, becomes difficult to reclaim as a shield.

Geography, too, complicates the equation. The United States, separated by oceans, may be beyond the immediate reach of Iranian ballistic capabilities, but Israel lies within a far more proximate arc.

Any regional escalation would therefore carry implications not only for Washington's strategic interests but for the security of its closest Middle Eastern ally. This proximity amplifies the stakes, turning any potential confrontation into a regional, if not global, concern.

At home, the American political landscape adds another layer of tension. As debates rage over immigration enforcement, economic pressures, and civil liberties, large-scale demonstrations have filled streets and campuses. Critics point to what they describe as a striking contrast: a federal government deeply concerned with protests and political movements abroad, yet confronting widespread dissent within its own borders. The optics of prioritizing external regime narratives over domestic unrest have not gone unnoticed by the public or by opinion leaders across the political spectrum.

The moral dimension of the debate is equally charged. Advocates of non-intervention argue that international law, however imperfect, rests on the foundational principle of sovereignty. No state, they contend, possesses an inherent right to reshape another's political order through force. This argument gains potency when juxtaposed with the humanitarian toll of past interventions—civilian casualties, displacement, and long-term instability that linger long after the last troops withdraw.

In this context, the comparison often drawn by critics is stark. If powerful states claim the authority to intervene

in the name of justice or security, where does that authority end? Why are some leaders shielded by alliances and vetoes, while others are pursued across borders under the banner of international law? Such questions, increasingly voiced by journalists, academics, and civil society figures in both Europe and the United States, reflect a broader unease with what is perceived as a double standard in the application of global norms.

NATO's decision to distance itself from any intervention in Iran can thus be read as more than a tactical choice. It signals a potential recalibration of Europe's role in a world where power is

no longer unipolar and where the costs of alignment are being weighed more carefully. For European capitals, the calculus includes not only security concerns but public opinion, economic ties with emerging powers, and a growing desire for strategic autonomy.

For President Trump, whose leadership style has often been described as instinctive and unpredictable, this moment presents a dilemma. The rhetoric of strength and decisive action resonates with a segment of the electorate, yet the appetite for another major conflict appears limited both at home and among traditional allies. The very alliance that once amplified American power now, in this instance, constrains it.

What happens next remains uncertain. The machinery of diplomacy and deterrence continues to grind forward, even as warships maneuver and statements harden. History offers countless exam-

ples of crises that de-escalated at the last moment—and others that spiraled despite the best intentions. The difference often lies in the willingness of leaders to listen not only to their generals and strategists, but to their citizens and partners.

In drawing its line, NATO has effectively reminded the world of a principle that has been tested, stretched, and sometimes broken over the past three decades: that the internal destiny of a nation should, in the final analysis, be determined by its own people. Whether this principle will hold in the face of mounting pressures, rivalries, and fears is an open question.

For now, the moment stands as a rare instance where the transatlantic alliance and Washington part ways on the threshold of war. It underscores a shifting global landscape, one in which power is contested, norms are debated, and the legitimacy of intervention is no longer taken for granted. The hope, voiced quietly in many capitals and loudly on many streets, is that restraint will prevail—that sovereignty will be respected, diplomacy will be given room to work, and the world will be spared another chapter of destruction written in the name of security.

The coming days and weeks will test that hope. They will reveal whether the pause in escalation is a turning point or merely an interlude. For a world already burdened by conflict, climate strain, and economic uncertainty, the stakes could hardly be higher.

The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former Press Attaché to Malaysia and Former MD, SRBC. He is living in Macomb, Michigan



Qamar Bashir



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmie. (Courtesy of Asharq Al-Awsat)

Pakistan's Unyielding Stand: Integrity and Resolve for Palestine

In an age when the mighty dictate terms through sheer force, and morality is too often reduced to a mere footnote in diplomatic cables, principles become the rarest and most precious currency. Giza today stands as the searing indictment of this moral bankruptcy—a once-vibrant land pulverized into dust, a people dehumanized and displaced, and a global conscience anesthetized by platitudes and selective outrage. Against this grim tableau, when a nation dares to proclaim unwavering solidarity with the oppressed, it is no ordinary diplomatic posture; it is an audacious act of defiance, a blazing torch of integrity in the darkness.

Pakistan's resolute and unambiguous commitment to Palestine embodies precisely this rare moral courage.

Islamabad harbors no delusions about its place in the hierarchy of global power. Pakistan wields no veto in distant council chambers, commands no fleets to reshape maps, and cannot alone shatter the chains of injustice. Yet, precisely because of these limitations, its refusal to bend becomes all the more profound. Pakistan has chosen—deliberately, defiantly—to remain steadfastly anchored to its historic, identity-defining stance: that Palestinian liberation is not negotiable, that freedom must precede any contrived "security" arrangement, and that no force on earth will compel it to participate in the disarming or subjugation of legitimate resistance.

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, as Chief of Defence Forces, has fortified this edifice with iron discipline and ethical clarity. Under his stewardship, the Pakistan Armed Forces reaffirm their sacred oath: military might

serves to safeguard constitutional sovereignty, national honor, and principled statecraft—not to advance foreign agendas or betray sacred causes. His steadfast commitment to democratic harmony and civil-military alignment ensures that Pakistan's security doctrine remains indivisible from its moral compass.

On the diplomatic stage, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar, together with his accomplished team, has traversed a minefield of competing interests with poise, precision, and principle. In a world where diplomacy too often degenerates into a bazaar of self-interest, Pakistan's voice remains measured, consistent, and resonant with conscience. By consulting eight brotherly Islamic nations before pivotal decisions, Islamabad honors the spirit of collective Muslim consultation over solitary bravado—striking a balance that few nations achieve. Critics, ever-vigilant, will always find shadows even in the brightest light; such fault-finding often betrays motive more than merit.

Healthy skepticism is the lifeblood of democracy, yet chronic cynicism toward every act of statecraft erodes the very unity it pretends to defend. History reserves its harshest verdicts for those who mistake perpetual doubt for wisdom.

Yet beyond borders, Pakistan's consistency is earning quiet respect. In an epoch of convenient flip-flops and expedient alliances, steadfastness itself carries transcendent moral authority. Pakistan may not command the loudest microphone in global forums, but it speaks with a sincerity that pierces through the noise. On Palestine, sincerity is not per-

ipheral—it is paramount. The heart of the matter is not armament, but occupation; not imposed "security," but rightful freedom.

As Pakistan has rightly insisted, resistance cannot be severed from its root cause. So long as illegal occupation endures, resistance remains an inevitable and legitimate expression of human dignity. Efforts to recast the Palestinian struggle solely as a question of disarmament are calculated diversions from the primal injustice. By refusing to endorse such distortions, Pakistan aligns itself unequivocally with the arc of justice and history.

To uphold principle amid adversity is never without cost. Diplomatic isolation, economic strains, and strategic perils loom large. Yet nations are measured not by their ease, but by their valor; not by their accommodations, but by their refusal to compromise the soul. Pakistan's enduring solidarity with Palestine—despite every inducement and intimidation—stands as eloquent testimony to the courage of its political visionaries, military guardians, and diplomatic stewards.

Domestically, may this resolve be embraced with the reverence it commands. Pakistan may lack the power to single-handedly remake the world, but it possesses something far rarer: the will to prevent the world from remaking its conscience. In today's merciless global order, that defiant integrity is itself a triumph—a resounding declaration that some flames refuse to be extinguished.

And in that unquenchable spirit lies the true measure of a nation's greatness.

The writer is a seasoned columnist, policy analyst, and advocate for Pakistani diaspora engagement. His writings focus on national development, geopolitical strategy, and the role of overseas Pakistanis in shaping a prosperous future.

Kashmiris observed black day on Indian Republic Day

India observes Republic Day on 26 January annually to mark the adoption of its constitution in 1950 as a way of projecting itself as the largest democracy in the world based on justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. This story of constitutional nationalism is reinforced by military parades, cultural pageantry, as well as diplomatic pageantry in New Delhi. However, this day means a lot of another thing to a significant to the people of Indian occupied Kashmir. It is noted as a Black Day, a symbol of being dispossessed and not being able to live up to promises and even the denial of political rights on a systematic basis. This opposition of celebration and mourning brings out a moral and political hypocrisy in the core of the Indian state relationship with Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir. This article takes the critical and unapologetically Kashmiri view that the Indian Republic Day is constitutional legitimacy to India and constitutional betrayal to Kashmir where the principles embodied in the Constitution have been selectively enforced, suspended or nullified.

On 5 August 2019 a turning point has been reached. India achieved a constitutional coup by abrogating unilaterally Article 370 and demoting Jammu and Kashmir to two union territories and thereby eliminating what many Kashmiris perceive as a constitutional coup. This action was taken with the harsh military lockdown, communication blackout and detention of political leaders, activists and civilians in mass. Instead of including Kashmir by the democratic consent, the Indian state proclaimed its direct rule by using extraordinary force. When Republic Day in such a circumstance is celebrated, it seems to be a statement of majoritarian authority rather than a statement of Constitutional values. To Kashmiris, 26 January is therefore not a sign of inclusion but rather one of erasure, or diminution of a politically discrete

and controversial territory into an administratively dominated and agency-less territory. The official discourses of Indians tend to ignore the Kashmiri dissent as foreign-funded or anti-nationalistic without factoring in the content of Kashmiri political agendas. This denial in itself serves to highlight the reason why Republic Day is celebrated as a Black Day. Shutdowns, call of protests, and black flags are symbolic resistance towards constitutional colonialism as seen. They are a collective memory of unfulfilled promises, lived experience of occupation and a continued disjunction between the image of the democratic India and its activities in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

As a form of criticism, it is not nihilism or anti-democracy; rather it is an anti-selective, anti-exclusionary, and anti-coercive version of constitutionalism that is being opposed on 26 January as a Black Day. To Kashmiris Indian Republic Day is the personification of a political order that is founded on denial and not consent, coercion and no negotiation. A constitution which purports to secure the fundamental rights and yet is allowed to suspend them indefinitely in one area becomes immoral. The Republic Day will continue being a status symbol of domination as opposed to democracy in Kashmir until Kashmiri people are acknowledged as political beings with the right to choose their future. This continued celebration of Black Day is therefore a lesson that the constitutional legitimacy cannot be achieved by blaring ceremonies or parades, but by justice, accountability and obedience to the will of the people.

The writer is a research intern at the Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) and serves as the Member of HEAL Pakistan Organization, a youth-driven effort for humanity, education empowerment, awareness and leadership.



Ahsan Javed

President Zardari departs for Pakistan after concluding UAE visit



Spokesman Report

DUBAI: President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday departed for Pakistan after completing a four-day official visit to the United Arab Emirates aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and economic cooperation.

At Dubai Airport, the president was

seen off by UAE Minister of State Abdul Rahman bin Mohammed Al Owais, Pakistan's Ambassador to the UAE, the UAE's Ambassador to Pakistan, and the Consul General of Pakistan in Dubai, a Presidency's news release said.

During the visit, President Zardari held important meetings with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed



Al Nahyan and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. The discussions focused on enhancing bilateral relations, expanding economic partnership, and exploring avenues for deeper cooperation.

The two sides also exchanged views on progress in defence and security cooperation, as well as strengthening people-to-people contacts, reflecting the long-standing fraternal ties between Pakistan and the UAE.



Spokesman Report

Bhutto Zardari MNA, visited the Museum of the Future in Dubai on Thursday on the invitation of the

DUBAI: First Lady Bibi Aseefa

First Lady Aseefa Bhutto visits Dubai's Museum of Future

government of the United Arab Emirates.

During the visit, the First Lady toured the museum's immersive exhibitions focused on innovation, sustainability, science and creative approaches to future challenges. She appreciated the museum's role as a global platform that encourages forward-looking thinking, inspires young people and brings together ideas across cultures and generations.

The First Lady described the Museum of the Future as a

powerful expression of the UAE's visionary outlook and its commitment to shaping what lies ahead. She also admired the museum's distinctive architecture, including the Arabic calligraphy bearing the words of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, which she noted reflects a thoughtful blend of culture, innovation and purpose.

Reflecting on her visit, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari said it is a privilege to experience an institution that embodies imagination and possibility for human-

ity's future. She paid tribute to the visionary leadership of the UAE and the foresight of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, observing that his enduring commitment to innovation, knowledge and human progress continues to guide future generations.

The visit underscored the close and friendly ties between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, as well as shared values centred on innovation, education and forward-looking leadership.



EU Ambassador calls on PM Shehbaz, assures effort to strengthen bilateral ties

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the European Union, Raimundas Karoblis Thursday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here at the Prime Minister's House and assures his efforts to strengthen Pakistan-European Union relations on all spheres.

The prime minister was assisted by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr. Syed Tauqir Shah, SAPM Tariq Fatemi and Foreign Secretary Anna Baloch, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

Welcoming the EU Ambassador, who

recently assumed his responsibilities in Pakistan, the prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthen cooperation with the EU in all areas of mutual interest, particularly trade, investment, development, security, migration and climate change.

The prime minister emphasized upon the critical role of the GSP Plus scheme in enhancing trade between Pakistan and the EU, and said the Government of Pakistan is committed to working closely with the EU on mutually beneficial trade enhancement initiatives, especially through the GSP Plus.

The prime minister also expressed satisfaction at the 7th round of Pakistan-EU Strategic Dialogue held in

Brussels in November last year, where the Pakistan side was led by Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

The EU Ambassador expressed his gratitude and deep appreciation to the Prime Minister for the warm welcome he had received since his arrival in the country and assured him that he would continue to work steadfastly to strengthen Pakistan-EU relations across all spheres.

He also conveyed the good wishes of the EU leadership to the Prime Minister and said that the EU would continue to engage closely with Pakistan on enhancing trade, under GSP Plus as well as through trade promotion activi-



ties such as the first ever EU-Pakistan Business Forum, that would be held in April this year.

Pakistan, Rwanda eye new trade horizons as Jam Kamal Khan inaugurates Rwanda Coffee festival

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Rwanda took a significant step toward deepening bilateral trade and investment ties as Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan inaugurated the Rwanda Coffee Festival in Islamabad and addressed the gathering, underscoring Pakistan's strong resolve to expand economic cooperation with East Africa.

On the sidelines of the festival, the Federal Minister also held a detailed meeting with Rwanda's Minister of Trade and Industry Prudence Sebahizi, during which both sides agreed to establish direct supply chains, boost business-to-business linkages, and widen collaboration across trade, agriculture, manufacturing, logistics, and investment, said a release issued here.

Addressing the festival, Jam Kamal Khan welcomed the Rwandan delegation and termed the engagement a timely initiative to unlock the vast untapped trade potential between the two countries.

He noted that Pakistan and Rwanda, both agro-based economies, share strong complementarities at a time when global food security has become a strategic priority.

The Federal Minister highlighted that while Rwanda's exports to Pakistan have traditionally been dominated by tea, coffee consumption in Pakistan is rising rapidly, particularly among the younger population.

He pointed out that Pakistan imports tea worth nearly USD 3 billion annually, while coffee is fast transitioning from a niche product to a mainstream

consumer item.

He said Rwanda's premium-quality coffee, competitive pricing, and geographic proximity give it a natural edge, adding that Pakistan—with a market of over 250 million people—could also serve as a future gateway for Rwandan coffee exports to Central Asia, western China, and neighboring regions.

Jam Kamal Khan further informed that Pakistan's ongoing tariff rationalization policy would gradually reduce tariff lines, making imports more competitive and supporting increased coffee consumption.

On the export side, he highlighted Pakistan's strengths in rice, textiles, leather and footwear, sports goods, surgical instruments, pharmaceuticals, home appliances, electronics, agricultural machinery, tractors, motorcycles, and low-end manufacturing.

He also indicated Pakistan's interest in importing Rwandan avocados, pulses, lentils, and beans, while assuring facilitation in phytosanitary certification through cooperation between relevant authorities.

Speaking on the occasion,

Rwandan Minister Prudence

Sebahizi described Pakistan as

a major potential market for

Rwanda and reaffirmed his country's commitment to diversifying exports beyond tea to include

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Speaking on the occasion,

Rwandan Minister Prudence

Sebahizi described Pakistan as

a major potential market for

Rwanda's premium-quality coffee, spices, and other value-added products.

He said the Rwanda Coffee Festival was part of a broader strategy to introduce Rwanda's premium coffee to the Pakistani market.

The Rwandan Minister highlighted Rwanda's position as a trade and distribution hub for Africa, offering investors access to a market of over 1.4 billion people under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

He noted that Pakistani investors had already begun exploring opportunities in Rwanda and were being warmly received.

He also pointed out that Pakistani rice—both basmati and non-basmati—is not only consumed in Rwanda but also re-exported to other African countries.

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Both sides stressed the importance of establishing a direct

supply chain to reduce reliance on transhipment through third countries.

The Rwandan side shared that discussions with Pakistan's maritime authorities were underway to cut shipping times and costs, noting that current shipment durations of up to 45 days could be significantly reduced through direct connectivity.

The two ministers also reviewed progress on the proposed Memorandum of

Understanding on Trade and

Economic Cooperation, which

has been exchanged through diplomatic channels.

The Rwandan side indicated that only minor technical adjustments remained and expressed confidence that the MoU could be finalized shortly, providing a strong institutional framework for cooperation in trade, manufacturing, investment, tourism,

and logistics.

The engagement further explored collaboration in light engineering, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, agricultural equipment, mining and minerals, as well as technology-driven sectors such as IT, digitalization, and artificial intelligence. Both sides agreed that joint ventures, business delegations, and sustained private-sector engagement would be crucial to translating opportunities into concrete outcomes.

Concluding the event and meetings, Jam Kamal Khan expressed optimism that sustained follow-up would deliver tangible results and reiterated Pakistan's commitment to building a long-term, mutually beneficial partnership with Rwanda.

Both sides agreed to remain in close coordination and to encourage deeper busi-



Photos ONLINE by Sultan Bashir

Bull & Bears
 PSX 100-Share
 Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
182,338.12	188,380.38	
Day's High	Day's Low	
188,923.39	181,961.14	
Index Value	Change	
52,452,140,443	-6042.26	
Percentage	Time	
-3.21%	29 Jan, 2026 4:30 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
10,171.76	+17.33	
Percentage	Time	
-0.17%	29 Jan, 4:35 pm GMT	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
49,013.35	-2.25	
Percentage	Time	
-0.0046%	29 Jan, 12:28 pm GMT-5	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
53,375.60	+16.89	
Percentage	Time	
+0.032%	29 Jan, 3:45 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	197.42	202.71
Bahrain Dinar	743.45	752.97
Canadian Dollar	206.05	209.61
China Yuan	38.15	40.5
Danish Krone	43.32	43.72
Euro	335.33	339.46
Hong Kong Dollar	35.47	36.35
Indian Rupee	2.80	3.31
Japanese Yen	1.8179	1.9193
Kuwaiti Dinar	907.45	916.91
Malaysian Ringgit	66.75	69.5
New Zealand \$	169.23	174.19
Norwegians Krone	27.61	27.91
Omani Riyal	728.20	737.72
Qatari Riyal	76.12	79.1
Saudi Riyal	74.85	75.35
Singapore Dollar	220.59	225.58
Swedish Korona	30.1	30.4
Swiss Franc	363.81	368.92
Thai Bhat	8.55	8.8
U.A.E Dirham	76.50	77.30
UK Pound Sterling	387.33	391.83
US Dollar	280.70	282.35

Zong Partners with Pak-EPA for Major Tree Plantation Drive in Islamabad

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's leading information services and technology innovation company, has signed an agreement with the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) to launch a comprehensive Tree Plantation Drive across Islamabad, under its Green and Low Carbon Initiatives.

The agreement was formally signed during a ceremony held at Zong Headquarters. The initiative was inaugurated with the plantation of the first sapling by Syed Abrar Hussain, Director General Pak-EPA; Dr. Mohsina Zubair, Director Pak-EPA; Nabila Yazdani, Head of Corporate Communications, Brand and Sustainability at Zong; and Andleeb Aslam, Deputy Director of Corporate Communications and Sustainability at Zong. Syed Abrar Hussain, DG Pak-EPA, added: "This partnership with Zong demonstrates how public-private collaboration can address Pakistan's environmental challenges in a tangible way."

KARACHI: inDrive, a global mobility and services platform, hosted an offline learning event in Karachi, bringing together top drivers and local digital creators as part of its ongoing efforts to support drivers beyond their work on the road.

Commenting on the initiative, Awas Saeed, Country Manager, inDrive Pakistan, said: "By extending access to digital education and creating spaces for learning and dialogue, we aim to help our drivers unlock new opportunities for themselves and their families. With initiatives like this, we want to empower our drivers with skills that can enhance their livelihoods and contribute to their personal and professional development."

To further support learning at home, inDrive awarded a laptop to the top driver in the learning program. The laptop was won by Muzaffar Shah, an inDrive driver who has been associated with the platform for more than three years.

"My son had been asking for a laptop

for some time, and I wasn't sure I could afford one," shared Muzaffar. "Winning this means I can finally support his studies, and my wife can explore educational content and develop new skills."

This will benefit our whole family. Programs like this empower us and open new opportunities. I hope to see more initiatives focused on learning and development."

With a shared vision for ethical finance, we are confident that this collaboration will generate a global impact on the industry. We are excited to have MAC & RO Capital onboard as a Gold Partner for our global events, and together, we will continue to advance the development of Islamic finance products."

Dr. Angelo Rossi, Chief Executive Officer of MAC & RO Capital, shared his thoughts on the agreement: "We

are excited to formalize our partnership with AlHuda CIBE. Over the years, we have cultivated a strong and productive relationship with AlHuda CIBE, and we are now eager to take our collaboration to new heights."

MAC & RO Capital Partner with AlHuda CIBE for Global Expansion
Commerce Desk

DUBAI, UAE: AlHuda Centre of Islamic Banking and Economics (AlHuda CIBE) has entered into a groundbreaking partnership with MAC & RO Capital, a leading shariah-compliant gold investment firm, to drive the worldwide expansion of Islamic finance. This collaboration is designed to enhance research, intellectual development, and the promo-

tion of Shariah-compliant financial products and services on a global scale.

In a strategic move to broaden the influence of Islamic finance, MAC & RO Capital will join forces with AlHuda CIBE as a Gold Partner for its prestigious international events, exposure visits and webinars. These initiatives are aimed at fostering collaboration among global financial experts, policymakers, and institutions to further the development of Islamic

finance. This partnership also underscores the long-standing relationship between the two entities, rooted in shared goals of promoting ethical and sustainable financial practices.

Mr. Muhammad Zubair Mughal, CEO of AlHuda CIBE, states that, "This partnership with MAC & RO Capital presents an exceptional opportunity to continue our work in expanding the reach of Islamic finance, particularly in Europe and beyond.

With a shared vision for ethical finance, we are confident that this collaboration will generate a global impact on the industry. We are excited to have MAC & RO Capital onboard as a Gold Partner for our global events, and together, we will continue to advance the development of Islamic finance products."

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'Cantonment Area Gets Business Boost: No Sealing Without Notice, Digital Payments Promoted'

Station Commander Brigadier Ali Anjum stated that no shops will be sealed in the Cantonment area in the future. Before any sealing, the concerned authority will inform through a formal notice, clearly stating the reasons for the action, and sufficient time will be given to ensure compliance.

RCCI President Usman Shaukat said that providing a business-friendly environment must be given top priority to achieve economic growth. He added that the Chamber will continue to organize such awareness sessions on digital systems on a regular basis.

Group Leader Sohail Altaf said that the decision not to seal business centers in the Cantonment area is welcome and other departments should also follow this example. He stressed that to foster a business-friendly environment, tax rates should be brought down to single digits and the cost of doing business must be reduced.

Addressing the session, Rizwan Khaleel Shamsi, Chief Manager State Bank, said that in line with the Prime Minister's directives, the State Bank has taken immediate steps to promote digital payment systems. The State Bank of Pakistan's "Raast" is a free, instant, and secure digital payment system through which funds can be sent and received using a mobile number (Raast ID) or IBAN without any additional charges. It is Pakistan's first instant payment system that connects all banks nationwide.

Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Executive Committee members, representatives of traders' associations including Munir Baig Mirza, Senior Vice President of the Small

Chamber Dost Ali Jan, and others were also present.

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Pakistan Cricket Team Beat Australia By 22 Runs in First T-20 Match in Lahore

By Asim Tanveer

LAHORE: An all-round performance from Saim Ayub led Pakistan to a clinical 22-run win over Australia. Ayub's 74-run partnership with Salman Agha, in which Agha contributed 39 off 27, set Pakistan up for a big total in the first half of the innings. While the pair's dismissal led to Australia pulling the innings back, with Adam Zampa and Xavier Bartlett taking two wickets each, Pakistan had built up enough of a buffer to keep the run rate respectable.

Some of the more seasoned players struggled to get over poor runs of form. Fakhar Zaman and Babar Azam struggled notably to get their innings off the ground, with Babar scoring 14 off his first 15 balls and ultimately falling for 24 in 20. Zaman's battles were even more pronounced, scratching around for 16 poorly timed balls and managing 10, but a late cameo from Usman Khan propelled Pakistan to 168.

For a fresh-faced Australian side, captain Travis Head's performance was always likely to have an outsized role in the ultimate outcome. He began brightly with a first-over six, but a brief, entertaining knock ended on 23 when Ayub had him hole out to Babar, who made up for his batting woes with three excellent catches in the deep.

With Ayub having already removed Matt Short, Pakistan needed to only bear the passing storm of Matt Renshaw and Cameron Green's 40-run partnership, whose end also effectively heralded the conclusion of Australia's most muscular challenges. The rest of the innings folded fairly tamely, and by the time Salman Mirza closed out the final over, the outcome was no longer in doubt.

Saint, Salman get Pakistan flying

Shrugging off the soft first-ball dismissal of Sahibzada Farhan, Ayub and Agha made effective use of the powerplay. Ayub made his intentions plain by whipping his first ball towards



midwicket for six. Each of the first three overs saw a six struck as Ayub combined crisp timing with focused aggression, with Salman playing a competent supporting hand at the other end. The 50-run stand was brought up in 32 balls as Pakistan put on 56 in the powerplay—the joint highest in T20Is for Pakistan against Australia.

Crucially, there was no deceleration as the field spread out, Agha making the point with a six off the second ball post powerplay, and 29 runs coming in the three overs after the sixth. By the time the pair were dismissed, Ayub had struck 40 in 22, while Pakistan sped up to 85 in nine overs.

Zampa drags Pakistan back As the senior statesman in an Australian attack that was particularly wet behind the ears, it fell to Zampa to rein Pakistan in. The spinner delivered with predictable consistency, deploying the full arsenal of his variations to break the pair's rhythm. Off his fourth ball, Ayub failed to get enough purchase on a muscled pull down the ground, holing out to long-on. It was a fielder Pakistan found often, with five catches taken at that position.

Adam Zampa took crucial wickets in the middle overs. Salman vs Australia, 1st T20I, Lahore, January 29, 2026

Adam Zampa took crucial

wickets in the middle overs. Getty Images It fell to Zampa to remove Agha, too, when he lit up the Pakistan captain's eyes with a looping ball on the stumps, off which Agha found elevation but not distance. Taken off for a few overs, Zampa came back to snare a struggling Babar when he darted one through and trapped him in front as the batter looked to reverse-sweep. He made it four in four overs with a sensational 18th over, in which he conceded three runs and sent Usman Khan on his way. By the time his spell was done, Zampa had 4 for 24, and Pakistan's run rate had slipped to 8.27.

The run out and the collapse Australia were well on their way in the first seven overs of the chase, speeding along to 68 with Green and Renshaw timing the ball cleanly and keeping the asking rate in check. It was Abrar Ahmed's introduction that began the turnaround, even if what started it had little to do with him. Renshaw nudged the first ball to

midwicket and set off for a sharp single, but Green stayed rooted to the spot. Agha dived sharply to intercept, and it wasn't until he had made it more than halfway through that Renshaw realised the peril, by which time it was much too late.

Two balls later, Abrar had his first wicket when he skidded one through to Cooper Connolly that

turned back in and knocked back his stumps. It set Australia off on an irrevocable slide as the runs dried up and Pakistan continued to puncture their way through the line-up. Six wickets fell for 44 runs with Abrar playing a similarly devastating role as his Australian wristspinning counterpart, finishing with 2 for 10 in his four.

U19 World Cup: Sri Lanka stay alive with win over South Africa

BULAWAYO: Viran Chamuditha slammed a brisk century as Sri Lanka secured a comfortable five-wicket win over South Africa in their ICC Men's U19 World Cup 2026 Super Sixes clash at Queens Sports Club on Thursday.

Sri Lanka chased down 262 run target in 46 overs, losing five wickets in the process.

After losing their opener Dimantha Mahavithana in the fifth over, Senuja Wekunagoda

and Viran Chamuditha made the light work of the chase with a 143 run partnership.

Senuja Wekunagoda made 48 off from 63 balls with the help of four boundaries and a six.

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Meanwhile, Chamuditha continued on despite losing wickets at the other end. He scored 110 from 94 balls with the help of 13



boundaries and a six.

Eventually, Sri Lanka reached the target in 46 overs.

For South Africa, Corne Botha and Michael Kruiskamp picked up two wickets each.

Earlier, after opting to bat first, South Africa posted 261 for seven in 50 overs.

Jorich Van Schalkwyk starred with the bat, striking 13 fours and two sixes in his 116 from

130 balls.

Adnaan Lagadien remained the other notable contributor with the bat, scoring 46 from 57, including six fours and a maximum.

For Sri Lanka, Vigneshwaran Akash remained the standout bowler, picking up a four wicket haul in his quota of 10 overs. Kavija Gamage also supported him well with two wickets to his name.

AB de Villiers lauds Lahore Qalandars' sustainable success

By Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Former South African captain and global cricket icon AB de Villiers has lauded the leadership and management of Lahore Qalandars, crediting owners Sameen Rana and Atif Rana for transforming the franchise into one of the world's most valuable and exemplary T20 teams through vision, consistency, and strong core values.

Speaking highly of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise, de Villiers said that while T20 leagues and franchises have proliferated across the globe, only a select few manage to distinguish themselves through a clear long-term vision, robust organisational values, and sustained team strength. According to him, Lahore Qalandars have firmly established themselves among this elite group over the past decade.

"Across the world, there are countless T20 franchises, but only a handful



succeed in building a lasting identity rooted in vision, values, and continuity," de Villiers said. "Over the last ten years, Lahore Qalandars have consistently stood out as one of the most remarkable and well-managed franchises in global T20 cricket."

Reflecting on his illustrious career,

the former South African skipper described representing Lahore Qalandars as a matter of pride and honour. He said that some franchises leave a lasting imprint on a player's career, and Lahore Qalandars rank among the very best in that regard. "What Lahore Qalandars have achieved goes far beyond on-field success," de Villiers remarked. "It represents a strong, structured, and sustainable model, one that many franchises around the world can learn from."

AB de Villiers extended his heartfelt congratulations to Sameen Rana, Atif Rana, and the entire Lahore Qalandars organisation for achieving extraordinary growth in the franchise's value over the past ten years. He credited their success to sound decision-making, consistent strategy, and continuity in leadership, which have collectively positioned Lahore Qalandars as one of the most valuable T20 franchises of the modern era.

Expressing his regret at being unable to join the team in Lahore on this occa-

sion, de Villiers nevertheless conveyed his best wishes for the franchise's future. He voiced strong confidence in Lahore Qalandars' continued progress and success over the next decade, expressing optimism about their long-term trajectory.

Under the leadership of Sameen Rana and Atif Rana, Lahore Qalandars have emerged not only as a strong commercial and brand entity, but also as a benchmark in cricketing values, team culture, and consistent on-field performance. By winning three major titles in the last four years, the franchise has demonstrated that sustained success is achievable through long-term vision, stable leadership, and unwavering commitment to excellence.

Today Lahore Qalandars stand as a complete, successful, and highly replicable model in global T20 franchise cricket, earning recognition not just for trophies, but for building a legacy rooted in purpose, professionalism, and performance.

D Cattle Farms and Saudi Titans win in Wing 999 Inter Departmental Cricket League Tournament

By Sports Desk

KARACHI: Due to Brilliant Unbeaten 137 by Arsalan Farzand and Zaid Umar 81 D Cattle Farms thrilling 18 runs victory against Pakistan Stallions and Saudi Titans beat Custom Academy by 3 wickets due fighting knock of 86 by Basit and 71 by Hassan Danish in the Wing 999 Inter Departmental Cricket League Tournament matches at various Cricket Grounds.

The Tournament is being organized by Regional Cricket Association Karachi with the collaboration of Wing 999 Sports.

Scores in Brief:

D Cattle Farms beat Pakistan Stallions by 18 runs at RLCA UP. D Cattle 246/4 in 40 overs. Arsalan Farzand 137 12x4 6x6, Aliyan Mehmood 83 4/58.

7x4 1x6 both not out. Hammad Bhatti (mf) 3/41.

In reply Pakistan Stallions 228 allout in 39.3 overs. Zaid Omar 81 9x4 4x6, Farman Shah 48 3x4 3x6, Naqash Nazar 33, Muhammad Hussain 27. Muhammad Owais 3/52, Sikandar Soomro 2/36 Aliyan Mehmood 2/50.

Saudi Titans beat Custom Academy by 3 Wickets at Eid Gah Ground Korangi. Custom Academy 262/7 in 40 overs. Tariq Bakht 74 10x4, Salman Sarwar 57 4x4 3x6, Umar Farooq 41 4x4 1x6, Farman Shah 41 5x4, Hashir Nawaz 29, Ghulam Mustafa 3/37, Basit Khan 2/58.

In reply Saudi Titans 265/7 in 39.1 overs. Basit Khan 86 10x4, Hassan Danish 71 4x4 3x6, Ghulam Mustafa 38, Hassan Iqbal 33. Rehan Shah (mf) 4/58.

Iran unaframed of US, ready to defend against aggression: says Envoy Reza Amiri

Continued from Page 8

Reza Amiri said on December 31, the Zionist Israeli Prime Minister's statement on the protests came out while on January 2, the US President's statement came out that we are ready to intervene, which was a signal to the protesters.

He said then US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's tweet

came out in which he admitted the connection between the protesters and the Mossad.

After that, the peaceful protests turned into violent activities. The public and government property and lives were targeted in this violence. Public property, police stations and mosques were burnt. These violent acts were not related to peaceful protesters. All types

of weapons, including modern weapons, were used in the violent activities.

To prove it a documentary video was shown prior to the briefing on the recent protests and sabotage under the guise of protests in Iran. The documentary video shows malicious elements hijacking the protests and turning them into sabotage activities.

Iranian envoy said Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei also described the American and Israeli conspiracies during his speech in Qom. Ayatollah Khamenei justified the protesters' demands and directed negotiations. After that, measures were taken to calm the protesters. However, on January 8, protesters and violent elements started mischief.

Various Western-sponsored channels outside Iran incited provocations and incited protesters to use weapons. On January 9, the government and people of the country held large rallies in support of the government. The US president then tweeted that help was coming. The miscreants seized government and administrative offices. They were instructed to target

police and security forces.

He said a large number of attacks were carried out on security forces and police. 2497 civilians and ordinary citizens lost their lives. More than 3117 security forces and police personnel were martyred. While 690 terrorists were killed, 305 ambulances and buses, 24 gas stations were destroyed in violent and terrorist attacks.

700 convenience stores, 300 private homes and 750 banks were targeted in terrorist attacks. Violent mobs destroyed 414 government buildings and 749 police stations. 120 Basij centers, 200 schools and 350 mosques were targeted in terrorist incidents. 15 libraries, 2 Armenian churches and 253 bus stations were destroyed in terrorist attacks.

Change of Command

BAHRAIN: Pakistan Navy assumes Command Of Combined Task Force (CTF)-150 for the 14th time during Change of Command Ceremony held on Thursday.



Photo: PID

Iran unafraid of US, ready to defend against aggression: says Envoy Reza Amiri

By Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moqadam said that Iran was not afraid of US, adding that Tehran does not want war but Iranian nation will defend itself against the h

aggression. Talking to media in Islamabad, Reza Amiri several countries were are in contact with Iran and they wanted to stop the war. He said Tehran was grateful to Pakistan for its support and efforts to stop the war so far.

Talking about recent protests in Iran, Ambassador Reza Amiri said that Iranian media exposed 12 day conspiracy against Iran in the form of protest which



had erupted in favor of cut in inflation. He said that on the demands of the protesters the government took several steps

to curb inflation. He said that on December 28 protest started in Iran against inflation which

include Tehran and other cities and the government held talks with them.

Iranian Ambassador

claimed that US and Israel tried to give a different color to these protests. The protesters demanded stability in the market and relief measures. By then, the protesters were holding pictures of the Supreme Leader and Iranian flags. Senior Iranian officials recognized the people's right to protest.

Iranian Ambassador said Iran govt accepted the demands of these peaceful protesters. The Supreme Leader also directed to resolve the problems of the protesters. This was the first time that representatives of Iranian protesters were invited to a cabinet meeting. The cabinet meeting discussed the resolution of their problems.

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Laptop Scheme reflects PM's vision of meritocracy; says Hanif Abbasi

By City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi has described the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme as a clear symbol of merit and performance, and emphasized that it rewards deserving and qualified students for their hard work.

Addressing a ceremony for the distribution of laptops under the scheme in Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agricul-



ture University Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR) on Thursday, the minister said that the current leadership takes pride in tangible achievements and performance over mere slogans.

He highlighted that the laptop scheme was originally initiated when Shehbaz Sharif served as Chief Minister of Punjab and has now been reinitiated at the federal level under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

"Its core objective is to equip

the youth with modern tools and align them with contemporary demands", he added.

Abbasi stressed that merit prevails in all aspects of the scheme, ensuring laptops go to qualified and high-achieving students who are honored for their efforts.

Later, Federal Minister Hanif Abbasi, the Parliamentary Secretary Barrister Danyal Ch and VC Prof Dr Qamar-uz-Zaman distributed the laptops among the students.

Pakistan Navy Takes Over Command Of Combined Task Force-150 For The 14th Time

By Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy took over the command of Combined Task Force-150 (CTF-150) for the 14th time during a change of command ceremony held at the Headquarters of Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), Bahrain. Commodore Muhammad Yasir Tahir of Pakistan Navy assumed command from Commodore Fahad S. Al Joadi of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF).

While addressing the audience, the incoming Commander CTF-150 assured that his team is fully prepared to shoulder this prestigious responsibility and contribute towards maritime security and stability across the region. Commodore Muhammad Yasir Tahir also reaffirmed Pakistan Navy's resolve to counter illicit maritime activities while ensuring the safety and security of vital sea lines of communication.

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

The change of command ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of Pakistan to Bahrain, H. E. Mr Saqib Rauf, Commander Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), Vice Admiral Curt A. Renshaw, Commander Royal Bahrain Naval Forces, Rear Admiral Ahmed Mohamed Ebrahim Al Bin Ali and representatives of several other navies operating under CMF.

Energy security vital for economic stability: Ali Pervaiz Malik

By Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik on Thursday said energy security was fundamental to Pakistan's economic stability, industrial growth and national resilience, and assured that the government would take every possible step to protect the interests of investors in the oil and gas sector.

Addressing an annual technical conference here, the minister said the government had taken difficult but necessary decisions to ensure macroeconomic stability amid challenging economic conditions.

He emphasized the need for clear, decisive, investor-friendly and forward-looking policies in view of rapid technological shifts, rising energy demand and volatility in global markets.

He also called for long-term, integrated planning to address the challenges, warning that sustainability



could not be achieved without structural reforms.

Ali Pervaiz Malik said cooperation in the energy and infrastructure sectors was indispensable for long-term economic development, noting that several Pak-China cooperation projects were underway across multiple sectors, while new opportunities were emerging in the mining sector.

Semiconductors now core to modern digital architecture: Shaza Fatima

By Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Thursday said that semiconductors were no longer a standalone technological vertical but the foundational layer underpinning modern digital architectures, including artificial intelligence, 5G and emerging 6G technologies.

Addressing an event at the Islamic International University Islamabad (IIUI), she said rapid global technological shifts had made indigenous semiconductor capabilities critical for economic resilience and national security.

Keeping practical constraints in view, Pakistan had adopted a phased and pragmatic approach under the National Semiconductor Policy

issued last year, prioritizing chip design, education and OSAT development before moving toward capital-intensive fabrication.

Shaza Fatima said the policy aimed to provide regulatory clarity, IP protection and a predictable framework, with plans to establish a single-window facility under the Ministry of IT.

She said the government was procuring advanced EDA tools, including Cadence, for shared use across nine university-based Semiconductor Education and Research Clusters nationwide.

She added that Pakistan would train around 7,200 young engineers in semiconductor design and verification, while working with friendly countries, including Saudi Arabia, to create international employment pathways.

Committee reviews major BISP reforms, digital wallet system to cover 10 million beneficiaries

ISLAMABAD: The Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety on Thursday reviewed sweeping reforms in the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), including the launch of a nationwide digital wallet system aimed at transforming beneficiary payments, strengthening financial inclusion, and eliminating leakages.

The Committee, which met at the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) headquarters under the chairmanship of Mir Ghulam Ali Talpur, was informed that the initiative would

initially cover at least 10 million beneficiaries through biometrically verified digital accounts.

During a detailed briefing, the Governor State Bank of Pakistan told the Committee that a robust digital wallet framework is being developed to integrate newly created bank accounts with digitally enabled wallets, accessible through biometric verification.

He said the system is designed to ensure secure, direct, and transparent transfer of funds to beneficiaries.

PM Youth Programme chief meets Saudi envoy to boost jobs, education ties

By City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan met Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmed Al-Malki at the Prime Minister's Office Youth Affairs Wing on Thursday to discuss expanding employment opportunities, education collaboration and trade ties for Pakistani youth, with both sides pledging practical steps to link universities and prioritize skilled workers in Saudi Arabia.



PM Youth Programme chief meets Saudi envoy to boost jobs, education ties

He emphasised that providing maximum overseas employment and productive roles for the country's youth remains the government's foremost priority.

Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmed Al-Malki welcomed the Al-Ufa Foundation's initiative to establish the "Al-Ufa International University" and proposed linking it with Saudi universities.

He noted that youth from both countries would play a pivotal role in their nations' development

stan-Saudi economic partnerships, underscored Riyadh's role as the top destination for job placements for educated

and skilled Pakistani youth, Rana said.