

AJK PM lauds overseas Kashmiris' crucial role in development

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, while terming overseas Kashmiris as a valuable asset to the state, has said that the community has been significantly contributing to the region's development and progress.

He expressed these views while chairing a high-level meeting, which was convened here on Saturday to review preparations for the upcoming Overseas Convention to be held in Muzaffarabad.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that the convention would serve as an important platform to actively engage overseas Kashmiris in the state's development process.

It will also help to listen to and understand their concerns, besides providing them with better investment opportunities," he added.

He said that the government was taking all possible measures to resolve the issues faced by overseas Kashmiris



and to further strengthen their trust. On the occasion, the Prime Minister also issued clear instructions to the concerned departments to enhance inter-departmental coordination and finalize all preparations for the convention.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary gave a detailed briefing on the preparations being made so far, while participants gave their valuable input and suggestions to make the event more purposeful.

The meeting was attended by Chief

Secretary Khushhal Khan, Secretary of Information and Information Technology Muhammad Rashid Hanif, Secretary of Government Adnan Khurshid, and Adviser to the Chairman of the Overseas Foundation Ijaz Raza, along with other relevant officials.

Tradetional Foods

TAXILA: High Commissioner-designate of the Republic of Mauritius to Pakistan, Mr. Munsoo Kurrimboccus tastes the traditional snack "Gol Gappay" on a stall during Orange Festival at one of the Orange Garden of the City.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

AJK Minister Acknowledges Rights Movement Driven by Public Grievances

Spokesman Report

LAHORE: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Information, Endowments and Religious Affairs Minister Chaudhry Muhammad Rafiq Nair has said that the emerging rights movement in AJK is in response to public issues, political space and institutional weaknesses. There were, whose government always dealt with restraint, tolerance and responsibility. He was addressing a discussion on the rights movement in Azad Kashmir under the auspices of Asma Jehangir Foundation in Lahore. They said that demand for rights is a fundamental right of the people in any civilized society and the people of AJK demanded inflation, prices of electricity and flour, employment



opportunities and fair distribution of resources. The government is terrified of the reasons for these problems and

the facts on the ground. Information Minister clarifies that Azad Kashmir government recognizes democratic

right to protest. Violence, provocation and hatred against state institutions is unacceptable and declines on various occasions. They said that an important factor in the background of the rights movement was the political vacuum, in which non-partisan platforms came to the fore. The role of the Joint Action Committee was a natural consequence of this vacuum, however, only elected and constitutional bodies can provide sustainable solutions in the state. balanced prices, provided relief to low-income sections and promoted transparency in development projects. The solution is dialogue and correction, not conflict. The Government of Azad Kashmir is committed to protect human rights, political stability and defend the position of PTI.

Altaf Ahmed Bhat pays tribute to Pakistan for observing Kashmir Solidarity Day

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Senior leader All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and Chairman of Jammu Kashmir Salvation Movement (JKSM), Altaf Ahmed Bhat, has paid rich tribute to the people of Pakistan, the civil and military leadership, and all political and religious parties for observing Kashmir Solidarity Day with unity, resolve, and unwavering commitment to the Kashmiri cause.

In a press statement, Altaf Ahmed Bhat thanked the Government of Pakistan, Pakistan Muslim League (N), Jamaat-e-Islami, and all religious and political parties for standing shoulder

to shoulder with the oppressed people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK).

He said Pakistan has always stood by Kashmiris on every front; political, diplomatic, and moral; and continues to be their strongest voice at the international level.

Altaf Ahmed Bhat recalled that Kashmir Solidarity Day was initiated by late Qazi Hussain Ahmed in 1990, at a time when thousands of Kashmiris migrated from Indian occupied Kashmir to Muzaffarabad. That period marked one of the darkest chapters in Kashmiri history, a month of massacres when Indian occupation forces killed hundreds of innocent Kashmiris across

different areas of IOJK. He said the observance of Kashmir Solidarity Day keeps the memory of those martyrs alive and renews the collective commitment to their unfinished mission.

He also acknowledged the consistent support extended by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, and appreciated the current government for continuing Pakistan's principled stance on Kashmir despite global pressures.

Altaf Ahmed Bhat particularly praised Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, stating that his clear and uncompromising stance on Kashmir; and Pakistan's decisive victory in the Marka-e-Haq (2025); has once again brought the Kashmir issue into global focus. He said the victory humbled Indian arrogance and shattered India's false narrative at the diplomatic level.

"The victory revived the Kashmir cause globally and buried India's narrative diplomatically," he remarked.

He emphasized that Kashmir has never been a part of India and never will be, and said the time has now come for Pakistan to dispatch strong diplomatic delegations, including genuine Kashmiri representatives, to world capitals to expose Indian aggression in Kashmir; and demand the implementation of the

Saghar condemns Islamabad suicide attack, terms it as a handiwork of enemies

Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: Acting President Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (DFP), Mehmood Ahmed Saghar, has strongly condemned the suicide attack on an Imambargah on the outskirts of Islamabad.

In a statement issued here today, the DFP leader termed the dastardly attack the handiwork of enemies of Islam who are hell-bent on sowing the seeds of discord by fomenting sectarianism through such heinous acts.

Describing Islam as a religion of peace, he said that terrorism has no place in Islam, which preaches universal brotherhood, interfaith harmony, and mutual respect among religions.

Expressing sympathy with the victims and their families, Saghar emphasized that inter-religious harmony and unity at all levels of society are key to foiling the nefarious designs of enemies and eradicating the menace of extremism and terrorism from the country.

Kashmir Solidarity Day: Pakistan Reaffirms Unwavering Support for Self-Determination Struggle

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Masood Khan, former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and former Pakistan Ambassador to the United States, China, and the United Nations, has stated that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are not alone, emphasizing that Pakistan, the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and the global Kashmiri diaspora stand firmly with them in their just struggle for self-determination.



Speaking at events marking Kashmir Solidarity Day and addressing students, policymakers, and international participants, Ambassador Khan said that credible reports documenting human rights violations by India continue to surface, yet they remain largely ignored at the global level. He noted with concern that the ground realities in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) are still inadequately reported internationally, allowing systemic repression to continue without meaningful accountability.

Ambassador Khan stressed that Kashmir Solidarity Day is not merely a series of symbolic events but a strong and unequivocal reaffirmation of Pakistan's unwavering political, diplomatic, and moral support for the Kashmiri people. He highlighted that advocacy for Kashmir is actively carried out in international parliaments, think tanks, universities, and public forums, while diaspora communities continue to organize demonstrations worldwide against Indian oppression.

No-confidence motion against Deputy Speaker, nomination of Professor Dr. Taqdis Gilani from PPP

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: There is once again witnessing an increase in political temperature in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, where Deputy Speaker Assembly Chaudhry Riazri Gujjar (Member of Parliament, Local Protectorate) Source has decided to remove from office. According to reliable sources, important political consultations have been completed in this regard and action is expected soon. It is a bold and far-reaching decision to nominate Professor Dr. Taqdis Gilani, a powerful voice for education, social leader and women's rights, which marks extremely positive progress in political circles.

Professor Dr. Taqdis Gilani is one of the prominent personalities of Azad Kashmir who has rendered outstanding services in the academic, political and social fields. You possess a higher educational background and have been playing a key role in training the younger generation through teaching, research and intellectual guidance. Even after entering politics, he established his distinct identity through his principled stance, polite style of politics and strong voice on public issues, are understood to symbolize a constant struggle for equality. They highlighted the issues facing women in legislation, public forums and social platforms and played an active role in providing practical solutions to them. These campaigns reinforced the narrative of women's political participation, education and empowerment. It would not only be an important political achievement for the PPP but also a milestone in terms of women's representation in the parliamentary history of Azad Kashmir. This decision is a strong pledge to promote civility, knowledge and democratic traditions in the House. It could prove to be the beginning of a new chapter in Kashmir politics.

Power suspension scheduled in multiple areas on Feb 8

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (Iesco) has announced a temporary suspension of electricity supply in various areas on February 8, 2026, due to ongoing system maintenance and development work.

According to an Iesco spokesperson, power outages will occur as per the following schedule:

Rawalpindi Cantt Circle (9am-2pm): Askari-7, Sir Syed Road, CMH Flats, FFC, Khadim Hussain Road and Adamjee Road feeders.

Islamabad areas (9am-2pm): Mohra and Karala feeders.

Islamabad sectors (9am-11am): D-12 Markaz, D-12/4, D-12/3, MPCHS, NPF and Kalinjar feeders.

Other areas (9am-1pm): Reliance, Behal, Ghumti, IFM and Jarr Camp feeders.



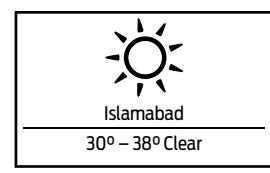
UN-recognized right to self-determination for the people of IOJK.

Altaf Ahmed Bhat also paid tribute to the Kashmiri diaspora and Pakistani communities abroad for observing Kashmir Solidarity Day across the world. He urged them to further accelerate their activities and reaffirmed his hope that they will continue their support until Kashmiris achieve freedom from Indian occupation.

He appreciated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for increasing the allowances for displaced Kashmiris and appealed to the Government of Pakistan to take concrete steps for the rehabilitation of displaced Kashmiris, and

to reinstate the 6% quota in education and employment for displaced Kashmiris as a matter of justice and constitutional responsibility.

Altaf Ahmed Bhat concluded by stating that the Kashmiri people draw strength from Pakistan's solidarity and remain confident that, with sustained support, their struggle for freedom will ultimately succeed.


SERVICES
Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:35 am
Zohr	12:22 pm
Asr	4:06 pm
Maghrib	5:44 pm
Isha	7:09 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
Cant Hospital	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

Politics and journalism have a deep and inseparable relationship: Bacha

Tariq Khan Yousafzai

TAKHT BHAI: The Provincial President of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, stated that politics and journalism have a deep and inseparable relationship. Journalists are the eyes and ears of society and play a key role in highlighting public issues.

He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony held to congratulate the newly elected cabinet members of the registered Takht Bhai Press Club. On this occasion, he said that responsible and well-informed journalism is the guarantor of a strong democracy, and journalists should guide the public correctly through fact-based reporting. Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha further said that the Pakistan Peoples Party has always been a staunch supporter of press freedom and the rights of journalists, and will continue to stand by the journalistic community in the future. Present on the occasion were PPP Divisional Vice President Irfan Mohmand, Divisional Information Secretary Ibrahim Syed Yousafzai, Tehsil President Javed Iqbal, General Secretary Mian Shah Hussain Advocate, Provincial Senior Vice President of Peoples Youth Imran Mohmand, Haji Yaqoob, Nazim Fazal Rahim, Fazal Haq, and other party leaders. PPP leaders extended their best wishes to the newly elected office-bearers and expressed hope that the Takht Bhai Press Club would continue to play an effective role in promoting journalistic values and highlighting public issues.

Second Day of Basant

Large number of international visitors to the Walled City for kite flying

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The second day of the Basant Festival in Lahore continued to fill the city's skies with colorful kites and an atmosphere of joy and celebration. Alongside participants from various cities of Pakistan, a large number of foreign visitors arrived in the Walled City to take part in the traditional sport of kite flying.

Qawali

TAXILA: A group of singers are singing Qawali to entertain people, during Orange Festival at one of the Orange Garden of the City.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

NCHD's ALP Package C Students Shine in 5th Grade Examination Organized by FDE

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) proudly announces that 926 students from the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) Package C successfully appeared in the 5th-grade examination conducted by the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) across Islamabad. The assessments took place in 23 well-organized examination centers, ensuring a smooth, standardized testing experience for every child.



NCHD extends its sincere gratitude to the FDE for their cooperation and support in facilitating the examination process, enabling ALP students to demonstrate their academic progress under standardized conditions.

Following the examination, all 926 students are scheduled to be mainstreamed into lower secondary classes in the upcoming academic session, ensuring continuity in their educational journey and opening doors for greater learning opportunities.

NCHD extends heartfelt thanks to the FDE for its partnership and support, which made this milestone possible. The success of these 926 students underscores NCHD's unwavering commitment to reducing educational disparities, promoting inclusive learning, and empowering children across Pakistan through innovative, community-driven models.

Multan Commissioner reviews progress of under-construction cancer hospital and PET Scan Center

Zain Khan Malghani

MULTAN: Commissioner Multan, Amir Kareem Khan, conducted a detailed inspection of the under-construction 100-bed Cancer Hospital and the PET (Positron Emission Tomography) Scan Center, reviewing the ongoing construction work.

During the briefing, officials informed the Commissioner that the basement, ground floor, first, and second floors of the 100-bed

Cancer Hospital are scheduled to be completed by April 15, 2026, while the third and fourth floors are targeted for completion by June 30, 2026. He noted that the Communication & Works (C&W) department, serving as the executing agency, is maintaining a satisfactory pace of work.

The Commissioner also directed concerned officials to enhance the aesthetic appeal of hospital corridors, staircases, and open spaces.

Later, Amir Kareem Khan visited

the under-construction PET Scan Center, where he was briefed that the building is in the final stage of completion and is expected to become operational by March 31, 2026. The IDEP is executing the project, and construction progress was described as satisfactory.

Officials also confirmed that all modern machinery, including PET Scan equipment, is already available on-site. The Commissioner noted that approval for 57 positions for doctors,



paramedics, and technicians has been granted and recruitment should begin soon.

Amir Kareem Khan instructed that

a separate scheme worth approximately Rs 10 crore be prepared to provide gas supply for all hospital beds instead of cylinders. Additionally, he

directed authorities to immediately coordinate with relevant agencies to secure the No Objection Certificate (NOC) for the PET Scan Center.



They added that they had always heard Lahore described as the "Zinda dilan-e-Lahore," and were delighted to witness its warmth and festive spirit firsthand.

International guests actively participated in kite flying and described Lahore's culture as beautiful and unique.

They appreciated the Punjab government's initiative to revive a cultural

festival like Basant, noting that it promotes public happiness and cultural activities.

On this occasion, Secretary Information Tahir Raza Hamdani also joined the Basant festivities and took part in the traditional pastime of kite flying.

To highlight the global significance of the Basant Festival, representatives from

Toba Tek Singh to Host District's First Marathon on 8th February

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: The district is set to host its first-ever marathon on 8th February with full arrangements underway under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Umar Abbas Mela. The Deputy Commissioner conducted a detailed inspection of the marathon routes, starting points and finishing points, accompanied by Assistant Commissioner Munawar Hussain Kamlana Sial, Chief Officer District Council Kashif Mahmood and the District Sports Officer Chaudhary Muhammad Jamil.

The race schedule is as follows: the 2.5 km race will start from 297 G. B Bus Stop at 9:00 a.m., the 5 km race will begin from Al-Hilal Housing Society, Kheikha Road at 9:30 a.m. and the 10 km race will start from District Council, Rajana Road at 9:45 a.m. The Deputy Commissioner will personally inaugurate all races. Residents are registering in large numbers, showing enthusiasm to participate. Athletes can register via QR code or online link until 7:00 p.m. on February 7. No registrations will be accepted after this deadline.

Arrangements underway for Ramazan package 2026, says DC Mela


Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: In line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, arrangements for the Ramazan Nighaban Package 2026 are under way in Toba Tek Singh to provide relief to deserving and low-income families during the holy month of Ramazan. A meeting to review the arrangements was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Umar Abbas Mela. The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Munawar Hussain Kamlana Sial, Deputy Director Agriculture (Extension) Dr Nosheen Ali Khan, District Manager PSER and other concerned officers. The meeting reviewed matters related to the distribution of Ramazan Nighaban Cards and the establishment of Nighaban Dastarkhwan titled "Maryam Ke Mehmam". It was informed that deserving and low-income families will receive Rs 10,000 through the Ramazan Nighaban Card. The cards will be delivered to beneficiaries' homes starting from February 8 by teams of the Urban Unit and PSER. The deputy commissioner directed that card activation counters be set up at Agriculture Extension offices in each tehsil to facilitate the public. After activation, beneficiaries will be able to withdraw cash through Bank of Punjab ATMs or HBL franchise outlets.

Deputy Commissioner Umar Abbas Mela directed the concerned departments to complete all arrangements for the Nighaban Dastarkhwans in a timely manner. He stressed that the dastarkhwans should be organised in a clean, disciplined and dignified manner to ensure ease and relief for fasting individuals.

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Arab Parliament for Child prepares for Sharjah session

The Arab Parliament for the Child is preparing to receive its male and female members from across the Arab world in the Emirate of Sharjah, as part of its ongoing efforts to empower Arab children, amplify their voices, and involve them in shaping their future. The third session of the fourth term will be held from 8th to 15th February.

Under the theme "Cybersecurity: Towards Child-Friendly Content for Arab Children", the eight-day programme will include the official session of the Advisory Council on Saturday, 14th February, at the Consultative Council headquarters in Sharjah. This key session will address one of the most prominent contemporary challenges facing childhood in the digital age, with the aim of developing visions and recommendations that promote a safe and positive digital environment for Arab children.

This session continues the pioneering role of the Arab Parliament for the Child as the first Arab parliament dedicated to children's rights and issues. It seeks to refine young leadership skills, strengthen the values of dialogue, and build a generation that is aware of national issues and capable of proposing solutions and creative initiatives.

The comprehensive programme includes welcoming members at Sharjah and Dubai International Airports, followed by a field visit to the Wheat Farm of Sharjah's Department of Agriculture and Livestock in Mleiha. The visit aims to introduce young parliamentarians to the importance of food security and local efforts in sustainable agriculture.

Members will also participate in Sharjah Heritage Days in the Heart of Sharjah, an activity designed to strengthen their connection with Arab cultural roots and introduce them to the emirate's rich heritage.

Members will take part in a series of specialised cybersecurity workshops, organised in partnership with Sharjah Digital Department, to enhance their awareness of opportunities and risks in the digital space and enable them to protect themselves and their peers.

Permanent parliamentary committees — the Child Rights Committee and the Activities Committee — will also hold preparatory meetings at the Parliament's headquarters to draft proposals and working papers in preparation for official deliberations.

The week will also witness the graduation of a new cohort from the Parliamentary Diploma Programme, in cooperation with the University of Sharjah, on the morning of Thursday, 12th February. This will be followed by the organisation of the Parliamentarians' Forum, aimed at continuing efforts to develop the life and leadership skills of young parliamentarians.

In addition, the Editorial Board and parliamentary bodies will hold coordination meetings to ensure the success of the session.

On this occasion, Ayman Othman Al Barout, Secretary-General of the APC, expressed great optimism about the session and its objectives. He affirmed that selecting cybersecurity as the theme comes as a direct and necessary response to the rapid digital transformation experienced by children today.

U.S.-Iran Talks: Peace or a Path to War?

February 6, 2026 has the feel of a turning point — not because the United States and Iran suddenly became friends, but because two sworn rivals chose diplomacy at the very moment when the logic of escalation was gaining speed. In Muscat, Oman, with anxiety rising across capitals from Tel Aviv to Beijing, the world watched an extraordinary scene: U.S. and Iranian delegations meeting under Omani mediation to test whether a negotiated path still exists before the region is pushed into another cycle of strikes, retaliation, and economic shock.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi came out of the talks calling them a "good start," and — crucially — confirming that the process will continue after consultations in both capitals. Oman's foreign minister, Badr al-Busaidi, described the discussions as "very serious" and stressed that outcomes would be weighed carefully in Tehran and Washington before the next steps are set. That language matters. It signals that neither side wanted a theatrical meeting designed to fail; both treated it as a controlled opening whose survival depends on disciplined messaging and political authorization at home.

Washington, by contrast, has signaled a broader ambition. Publicly, U.S. officials have voiced interest in a framework that reaches beyond the nuclear file to Iran's ballistic missiles, support for armed groups in the region, and internal governance and human-rights issues. But the early reporting around Muscat suggests the first round did not become a missile negotiation. A diplomat briefed on Iran's account of the talks said Tehran insisted on its "right to enrich uranium," and that missile capabilities were not raised during the discussions themselves — a telling sign that the meeting's primary purpose was to prevent collapse at the starting line.

This is where the real contest lies: enrichment versus zero-enrichment.

For Washington, domestic enrichment is treated as a red line because enrichment can be a pathway — depending on level, stockpile, and monitoring — toward weapons capability. For Tehran, enrichment is framed as sovereign entitlement under international norms, coupled with repeated claims that it does not seek a bomb. The Muscat channel appears to be searching for a formula that neither humiliates Iran nor leaves the United States politically exposed: limits on enrichment "level and purity," more intrusive oversight, or even alternative arrangements such as a regional consortium were discussed as possibilities in the reporting. In exchange, Iran's demands were described as immediate and effective sanctions relief — especially in banking and oil — and a reduction in U.S. military pressure on Iran.

Yet, even as delegates spoke in Muscat, pressure politics continued in Washington. President Donald Trump signed an order tied to tariffs on countries that trade with Iran — described in reporting as a mechanism that could raise import costs by as much as 25% for countries purchasing Iranian goods, aimed at discouraging third-country trade ties with Iran in energy, metals, and petrochemicals. Some coverage emphasized that the order sets a process and authority rather than flipping an immediate universal switch — but either way, the message was unmistakable: diplomacy is being run alongside economic coercion, not instead of it.

The same dual-track approach showed up in sanctions. Reporting described new U.S. measures targeting Iranian petroleum-related networks, including entities and vessels linked to oil and petrochemical trade. That timing is not acci-

dental; it is intended to signal negotiating leverage. But it also carries risk: Tehran can interpret such actions as proof that Washington negotiates with one hand while tightening the noose with the other — precisely the behavior Araghchi warned against when he demanded talks without "threats and pressure."

Against this backdrop, the strategic psychology is as important as the technical details. Both sides now appear to recognize that war is not a clean option. The United States holds greater conventional military power and unmatched financial leverage. Iran, however, has built a layered deterrent: missile capability, regional influence, and the ability to impose costs in a conflict that would not remain limited or predictable. The development leading up to the talks underscored the scale and seriousness of Iran's missile capability, tested during the June 2025 conflict, and the broader atmosphere of tension as talks were set.

Then there is the world's most sensitive nerve: the Strait of Hormuz. Any confrontation that threatens energy shipping through that chokepoint would ricochet immediately through global markets. It would not be a "regional war"; it would become a global inflation event. China's energy security, South Asia's import bill, Europe's fragile price stability — all become collateral. This is why even states that distrust Tehran fear a breakdown. The Muscat talks were not just about uranium; they were about preventing a chain reaction in trade, energy, and geopolitics.

The symbolism around the meeting also tells you how close the temperature is to boiling. Hours before talks, Iranian state media highlighted deployment of the Khorramshahr-4 ballistic missile at

an underground Revolutionary Guard "missile city" — a calculated signal of readiness and deterrence, designed to shape the psychology of negotiation: talk if you want, but do not assume coercion will be cost-free.

This is why the "good start" language matters more than it seems. U.S.-Iran diplomacy often collapses not because the issues are unsolvable in principle, but because the political ecosystem around the talks punishes concession and rewards confrontation. In that environment, secrecy and restraint are not suspicious — they are essential. Oman's emphasis that results must be considered carefully in both capitals is, in effect, an admission that the next phase will be decided not only by diplomats but by the domestic politics of power on both sides.

Your central argument stands: the implications radiate outward — to Israel's security calculations, to Gulf state stability, to Pakistan and Afghanistan's strategic environment, and to China's energy-risk horizon. The Muscat channel is a narrow door. If it widens, a framework could emerge that limits nuclear escalation risk and reduces market fear, even if it leaves missiles and regional alliances unresolved. If it slams shut, the region returns to the most dangerous pattern: sanctions, deployments, threats, miscalculation — and the constant possibility that one strike produces an uncontrollable reply.

For now, the most important fact is simple: the talks did not collapse on day one. In a relationship where collapse is often the default expectation, that alone is the first measurable achievement — and possibly the only thing standing between the region and a new inferno.

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.



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

Beyond Rituals: Time to Move from Solidarity to Solution for Kashmir

The people of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir have observed Kashmir Solidarity Day for more than seventy-five years to demonstrate their continuous support for those living in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). Every year on February 5 millions of people raise their voices against India which commits human rights violations while denying people their right to self-determination. The symbolic solidarity between these two groups produces strong emotional and moral value. After more than seventy-five years, a critical question demands serious reflection: Is symbolic support enough, or is it time to move toward practical, strategic, and sustainable solutions?



The international human rights organizations Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have documented human rights abuses yet the world has failed to establish effective systems for holding people accountable for these violations. Social media serves as a dominant platform for competing narratives during the current digital age. Indian authorities have dedicated substantial resources towards developing propaganda together with disinformation efforts which aim to manipulate international public understanding of the Kashmir conflict. Pakistan needs to establish a unified digital outreach program to counter this situation. International public perception can be shaped through youth-driven social media initiatives which include online educational projects and documentary filmmaking and podcast creation and global hashtag campaigns. The use of global influencers together with multilingual digital content production will enable Kashmiri voices to reach international audiences.

Humanitarian advocacy efforts should be strengthened by civil society organizations together with non-governmental organizations. The Kashmiri struggle can be humanized through ongoing awareness activities which build international partnerships and conduct policy discussions and implement public diplomacy work. The

lived experiences of Kashmiri victims and families and women and children should be highlighted to demonstrate the Kashmir conflict as a vital human rights issue which extends beyond geopolitical disputes.

The Kashmir Solidarity Day observance requires fundamental change because it needs to transform from its current state as a special day to an important strategic assessment event which evaluates progress and examines diplomatic successes while announcing plans. The annual program should produce specific results that show progress in diplomatic work and advocacy efforts and research initiatives and public education activities instead of showing the same symbolic results every year.

Kashmiris have faced severe hardships throughout their history yet they have shown remarkable strength. The people of Kashmir expect more than sympathy from others because they want both dignity and justice and the right to choose their own destiny. The time has arrived to stop using slogans for solidarity and instead work toward finding real solutions after decades of established solidarity.

The vision of a free and peaceful and just Kashmir can only become real through strategic diplomatic efforts, empowered youth and academic participation, digital advocacy, and consistent international diplomatic pressure.

The writer is student of international relations Fauast Islamabad and currently serving as an intern at the Kashmir Institute of International Relations.

When Silence Becomes Strategy: A Memoir, a Parliament in Uproar, and the Burden of Unmade Decisions

The controversy surrounding Four Stars of Destiny, the unpublished memoir of former Indian Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane, has evolved into more than a dispute over a delayed book. It has become a moment of political reckoning — one that has exposed deep anxieties within the Indian state about leadership, accountability, and the delicate balance between political authority and military command during moments of national crisis.

The memoir itself follows a familiar trajectory. Written after retirement and submitted through established clearance procedures, it reflects on nearly four decades of military service, including Naravane's tenure as Chief of Army Staff during the tense military stand-off with China in eastern Ladakh in 2020. Such accounts are neither unusual nor unprecedented. What is unusual is the prolonged uncertainty surrounding its publication and the defensive posture adopted once its contents entered public debate.

The matter reached a political flashpoint when Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi quoted from the manuscript during a debate in the Lok Sabha. The passages referred to a critical moment on August 31, 2020, when Chinese armoured units advanced towards Rechin La. According to Naravane's account, he sought clear political direction on whether the Indian Army should respond militarily. After consultations at the highest levels of government, he was informed that the army should act as deemed appropriate.

The continued withholding of Four Stars of Destiny has only reinforced this impression. The book, once publicly listed, quietly vanished from circulation. The explanation that it awaits official clearance has grown less persuasive with time. If inaccuracies exist, they could be corrected. If sensitivities remain, they could be addressed through redaction. Prolonged suppression suggests not concern for security, but unease with the implications of the narrative itself.

At stake is more than a memoir. The episode touches upon the health of civil-military relations in a democratic system.

When political leadership hesitates to provide clear direction, it shifts the burden of decision-making onto military commanders, exposing them to political fallout for choices that should properly belong to elected authority. Over time, such ambiguity corrodes institutional clarity and weakens the principle of civilian supremacy — not through overt interference, but through abdication.

Rahul Gandhi's role in forcing this issue into the open has therefore been consequential. Regardless of partisan alignments, his challenge compelled a public examination of how power is exercised at the highest levels. It exposed the fragility of a governance model that places great emphasis on image, decisiveness, and narrative control, yet appears uncomfortable when confronted with scrutiny over actual decision-making.

There is also a moral dimension to this debate. Soldiers are trained to act under orders, to accept risk, and to bear consequence. Political leaders, by contrast, are entrusted with the responsibility to decide when such risks are justified. When that responsibility is diluted or deferred, the ethical balance between command and sacrifice is disturbed. In this context, the words of Allama Iqbal resonate with particular force:

جس کیسے ہے دہلی کی خوشی کیم کو بے دلی

A system that fails to nourish responsibility and truth, however abundant it may appear, ultimately hollows itself from within.

Whether Four Stars of Destiny is published or not, its impact is already evident. It has revealed a state uneasy with its own record, a leadership wary of uncomfortable questions, and an opposition willing to press where answers are lacking. In democratic life, history cannot be postponed indefinitely. When power hesitates to confront its past, it signals not strength, but uncertainty. And it is that uncertainty — more than any memoir — that now stands exposed.

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US envoy reaffirms economic cooperation with Pakistan during Sindh visit

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Baker has concluded her official visit to Sindh, reaffirming Washington's commitment to economic development and bilateral cooperation with Pakistan, officials said on Saturday.

According to a statement, Baker visited the province from January 25 to 31, during which she met political leaders, business representatives, and local officials. The visit focused on promoting shared priorities, regional stability, and economic growth.

In Sukkur, she toured major industrial facilities, including the modern Continental Biscuits factory established in partnership with the US company Mondelez International. She described the project as a strong example of Pakistan-US economic collaboration.

"This partnership shows how we are creating jobs, encouraging innovation, and building shared prosperity," Baker said.

She noted that American companies and technologies are helping improve industrial performance and modernise supply chains across Pakistan.

In Mirpurkhas, Baker visited a sugar mill and ethanol, carbon dioxide, and paper plants, where US technology supports high-quality production and access to international markets. She said these facilities reflect growing economic ties and improved value addition.

She also highlighted the importance of local manufacturing and agricultural resources supported by the Indus River for long-term development.

During her visit, Baker paid homage at the Bhutto family mausoleum in Garhi Khuda Baksh, Larkana, and acknowledged its historical and cultural significance. She also met Hindu community leaders, reaffirming US support for religious freedom and interfaith harmony.

In Hyderabad, she visited Niaz Stadium to highlight American exper-

tise in sports and welcomed the inclusion of cricket in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. She noted that Hyderabad would also serve as the base for a new Pakistan Super League team backed by a US investor.

Separately, US Consulate Karachi's Political and Economic Counsellor Peter McSheri met Sukkur Mayor Arsalan Islam Sheikh and Sindh Assembly Speaker Awais Qadir Shah to discuss local governance and fair trade.

He also visited Sukkur IBA University, where he met faculty and students and reviewed the US-funded STEM Powered programme, developed in collaboration with Vanderbilt University, aimed at equipping youth with modern skills.

Officials said Baker's visit reflects a renewed commitment to a strong and sustainable Pakistan-US partnership ahead of America's 250th anniversary, focusing on stability, self-reliance, institutional development, and shared prosperity.



Ghulam Bilal Javid comes down hard on PTI district and Peshawar region office-bearers

News Desk

PESHAWAR: Announcement of support for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's shutter-down strike — by President Peshawar Traders Chamber, Ghulam Bilal Javid

We will come out, we will come out, we will rise against this system of oppression and fascism.

However, it is unfortunate that we were ignored at the level of Peshawar Region and District Peshawar.

President of the Peshawar Traders Chamber, Ghulam Bilal Javid, said that regarding the wheel-jam and shutter-down strike being held on 8



February, unfortunately the district and regional organizations of PTI Peshawar did not take the genuine and representative trader leadership into confidence, the consequences of which will be visible to everyone. Instead of serious and comprehensive consultation on this important matter, a few individuals acted on their own and limited the exercise merely to formality and photo sessions.

He said, I am a representative of the business community, Chairman of the All Pakistan Car Dealers Association (APDA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, spokesperson for the Sarhad Business Alliance, and we maintain strong

trader organizations. Our provincial president, Malik Mehr Elahi, who also holds a prominent position in the Peshawar Chamber, has significant influence throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Likewise, the Co-Chairman of the Sarhad Business Alliance, Muhammad Ishaq, has the backing of thirteen chambers across the province. Despite this, neither the office-bearers of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, nor the Sarhad Business Alliance, nor Tanzeem-e-Tajraran Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, nor the Peshawar Traders Chamber were taken on board.

and long-standing relations with all

Faisalabad Rally Declares Kashmir Unfinished Agenda, Demands National Strategy



Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: A rally was organized by Prem Union and PP 112 to express solidarity with the Kashmiris. The rally was led by former UC Nazim Mian Tahir Ayub, Muhammad Asif Islam, Khalid Mahmood Chaudhry, Zaheeruddin Babar, Shakir Alvi, Abid Islam, Mazharuddin Nomani, Syed Riaz Hussain Shah, Bao Tahir, Nooruddin, Sajid Imran, Chaudhry Tanveer Ahmad, and others. Mian Tahir Ayub, Khalid Mahmood Chaudhry, Muhammad Asif Islam delivered speeches. Mian Tahir Ayub, while speaking, said that Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of the partition of India and a tragedy of 75 years. Kashmiris have sacrificed millions of lives for their right to self-determination. The United Nations has also not been able to implement its resolutions. The state of Pakistan should immediately formulate a national agenda by calling an all-party conference of all political parties in and outside the parliament. Then, by highlighting this with unity at the Islamic and international levels, it will be necessary to decide to take action to give the Kashmiris the right to self-determination. Khalid Mahmood Chaudhry said that in order to make the struggle of the Kashmiris successful, the rulers should put aside their political and financial interests and support them through practical struggle rather than political, diplomatic and moral support. Finally, the rally participated in the main rally of Jamaat-e-Islami outside Chiniot Bazaar.

Flights remain suspended at Berlin airport due to black ice



BERLIN: Operations at Berlin Brandenburg Airport (BER) remained halted early on Friday, with no aircraft able to depart due to black ice and persistent freezing rain, an airport spokeswoman said.

"Because of black ice and ongoing freezing rain, no take-offs or landings are currently possible at BER," a spokeswoman said.

She added that airport ground crews had treated runways and other operational areas with de-icing agents throughout the night, but without success, leaving surfaces extremely slippery.

It remained unclear when flight operations could resume. Take-offs and landings had already been suspended on Thursday evening due to black ice.

Pakistan and Uzbekistan: A New Chapter of Two-Billion-Dollar Trade, Regional Connectivity, and Geo-Economic Partnership

By Dr. Muhammad Tayyab Khan Singhanvi, Ph. D)

The recent diplomatic and economic progress between Pakistan and Uzbekistan is not merely another example of bilateral cooperation; rather, it represents a clear declaration of a new geo-economic strategy emerging within a rapidly changing global and regional landscape. The agreement to increase bilateral trade volume to two billion dollars over the next five years reflects a decisive shift from symbolic engagements and formal statements toward concrete economic targets and measurable outcomes. This development has taken place at a time when South and Central Asia are undergoing a major reconfiguration of trade routes, energy linkages, and regional partnerships.

The signing of twenty-nine agreements and memoranda of understanding across diverse sectors including trade, information technology, agriculture, food security,

like Explore and Invest in Pakistan highlight Pakistan's positive image and encourage investors to explore opportunities in various sectors. I congratulate Brain Designer and Muhammad Rauf Raja on organizing this excellent and purposeful event."

Muhammad Rauf Raja, CEO Brain Designer, said in his keynote address "Our mission is to connect Pakistan with the global business community, promote entrepreneurial thinking among youth, and make sustainable economic development possible. Through Explore and Invest in Paki-

stan, we are providing opportunities for youth, SMEs, and overseas Pakistanis to play an active role in national development."

Tariq Mahmood Jadoon, Vice President FPCCI, said "FPCCI fully supports all initiatives that promote trade, investment, and business activities. This platform provides excellent networking opportunities to the business community and plays an important role in strengthening Pakistan's business environment."

Barrister Abid Hussain said "Encouraging young entrepreneurs and high-

lighting their capabilities is the foundation of a strong and stable economy. Such platforms promote young leadership and innovation."

On this occasion, award distribution, panel discussions, business networking sessions, and encouragement and awards were given to personalities and institutions rendering outstanding services at national and international levels.

The ceremony expressed commitment to public-private partnership, international cooperation, and sustainable economic development.

to address future challenges through mutual trust and practical collaboration. The unveiling of commemorative plaques for Tashkent Street and Babur Park in Islamabad symbolically renews the historical and cultural bonds that have linked South and Central Asia for centuries.

Pakistan's announcement of a five-year action plan sends a clear message that this relationship is not confined to short-term interests but is aimed at establishing a durable and long-term economic partnership. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's statement describing Pakistan as a close friend and a trusted partner goes beyond diplomatic courtesy; it reflects a strategic choice shaped by evolving global realities. The shared resolve to move

forward together on regional and international issues suggests that this partnership will expand beyond trade to encompass greater political alignment and diplomatic cooperation.

The proposed Afghanistan-Pakistan-Uzbekistan railway project stands

as a central pillar of this evolving cooperation. Recognized by both governments as a key driver of regional connectivity between Central Asia and Pakistan's seaports, the project promises to reduce transportation costs, shorten supply timelines, and unlock new opportunities for economic integration and regional stability. At a time when global supply chains are increasingly vulnerable to geopolitical tensions and disruptions, this railway initiative offers a viable and secure alternative for

regional commerce.

At the political level,

a notable convergence of perspectives is also evident. Pakistan's principled stance linking lasting global peace with the resolution of the Palestine issue, the restoration and reconstruction of Gaza, and the settlement of the Kashmir dispute reflects a consistent and value-based foreign policy. Uzbekistan's commitment to working closely with Pakistan on regional and global matters underscores that the partnership rests not only on economic considerations but also on shared ethical and political values.

The conferral of an honorary doctorate and professorship by NUST Islamabad upon the Uzbek president, along with congratulations on the award of Pakistan's highest civilian honor, Nishan-e-Pakistan, adds dignity and mutual respect to this new chapter in bilateral relations. These gestures highlight the appreciation of leadership, academic collaboration, and national service. The decision to establish joint working groups across various sectors further ensures that the signed agreements will translate into tangible progress rather than remaining confined to paper.

Overall, this renewed momentum in Pakistan-Uzbekistan relations has emerged at a time when the world is gradually shifting from power politics toward economic interdependence and regional integration. If both countries demonstrate consistency and resolve in implementing their agreed objectives, bilateral trade is likely to witness substantial growth, while South and Central Asia could evolve into a new and dynamic economic bloc. This partnership stands as a compelling example of how historical ties, geographic proximity, and shared interests can be harnessed to create pathways of development, stability, and prosperity for the peoples of both nations.

Analysis

Dr. Muhammad Tayyab Khan Singhanvi

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index

Current	Prev. Close
184,129.58	187,832.08
Day's High	Day's Low
188,036.30	183,547.29
Index Value	Change
48,367,476,050	-3702.50
Percentage	Time
-1.97%	6 Feb, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index

Index Value	Change
10,369.75	+60.53
Percentage	Time

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
49,947.67	+1,038.95
Percentage	Time

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
54,253.68	+435.64
Percentage	Time

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	193.25	197
Bahrain Dinar	743.80	753.33
Canadian Dollar	203.50	207.01
China Yuan	38.00	40
Danish Krone	43.32	43.72
Euro	330.54	333.75
Hong Kong Dollar	35.45	36.30
Indian Rupee	2.8	3.31
Japanese Yen	1.7773	1.8766
Kuwaiti Dinar	908.10	917.56
Malaysian Ringgit	66.60	69.95
New Zealand \$	165.93	168
Norwegians Krone	27.61	27.91
Omani Riyal	728.55	738.18
Qatari Riyal	76.11	79.11
Saudi Riyal	74.90	75.30
Singapore Dollar	219.24	224.18
Swedish Korona	30.1	30.4
Swiss Franc	358.88	362.92
Thai Bhat	8.55	8.77
U.A.E Dirham	76.55	77.20
UK Pound Sterling	384.67	388.18
US Dollar	280.6	282.30

Bitcoin falls below \$70,000 amid gold demand and economic concerns



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The price of Bitcoin fell below \$70,000 on February 5, down 44% from its October 2025 high of \$126,210, as investors shift interest to gold and global economic concerns rise.

Earlier in the day, Bitcoin briefly touched \$63,000 before closing at \$70,000.

Last week alone, its value dropped more than \$20,000, reducing it by almost a quarter.

Compared to four months ago, Bitcoin has now lost about half its peak value.

Analysts say investor interest in Bitcoin is waning, with growing pessimism surrounding the broader cryptocurrency market.

Shabbar Zaidi calls for relocation of FBR headquarters to Karachi

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Former Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) chairman Shabbar Zaidi has called for major structural and economic reforms in Pakistan, including the relocation of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) headquarters from Islamabad to Karachi.

Speaking at a discussion on his book "32 Onkar Road" on the second day of the 17th Karachi Literature Festival, Shabbar shared his views on governance, history, economics and society.

He said: "The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) performs 100 times better than the FBR, despite both being government institutions."

According to him, one key reason is that the State Bank's headquarters is in Karachi, whereas the FBR operates from Islamabad.

He suggested: "If the government wants to improve the performance of the FBR, its headquarters should be shifted to Karachi."

Explaining why he wrote the book, Shabbar said he had spent most of his life in Karachi and Lahore, two cities that are culturally and socially different.

Within the chartered accountancy profession, he said, many voices remain unheard in society.

He also observed that Pakistan's history is often recorded emotionally rather than strategically.

The book also reflects his personal views on religion. However, he acknowledged removing certain pages, stating that society has "a certain level of tolerance".



Shabbar also shared his perspective on Pakistan's economic direction and said the country did not free itself from the supremacy of the Western economic system.

He argued that independence in 1947 was

political rather than economic.

Referring to Islamabad's relations with international money lenders, he claimed that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) does not seek to address Pakistan's core economic issues.

Discussing leadership and governance, he said there is no comparison between former prime ministers Shaukat Aziz and Dr Manmohan Singh, adding that placing the two in the same bracket would be unfair to Dr Singh.

Pakistani Art and Cultural festival

H.E. Mr. Hussain Muhammad, Consul General of Pakistan in Dubai, along with Mr. Muhammad Saleh, Press Counsellor inaugurated Pakistani Art and Culture Festival at Dubai International Art Centre on Saturday.

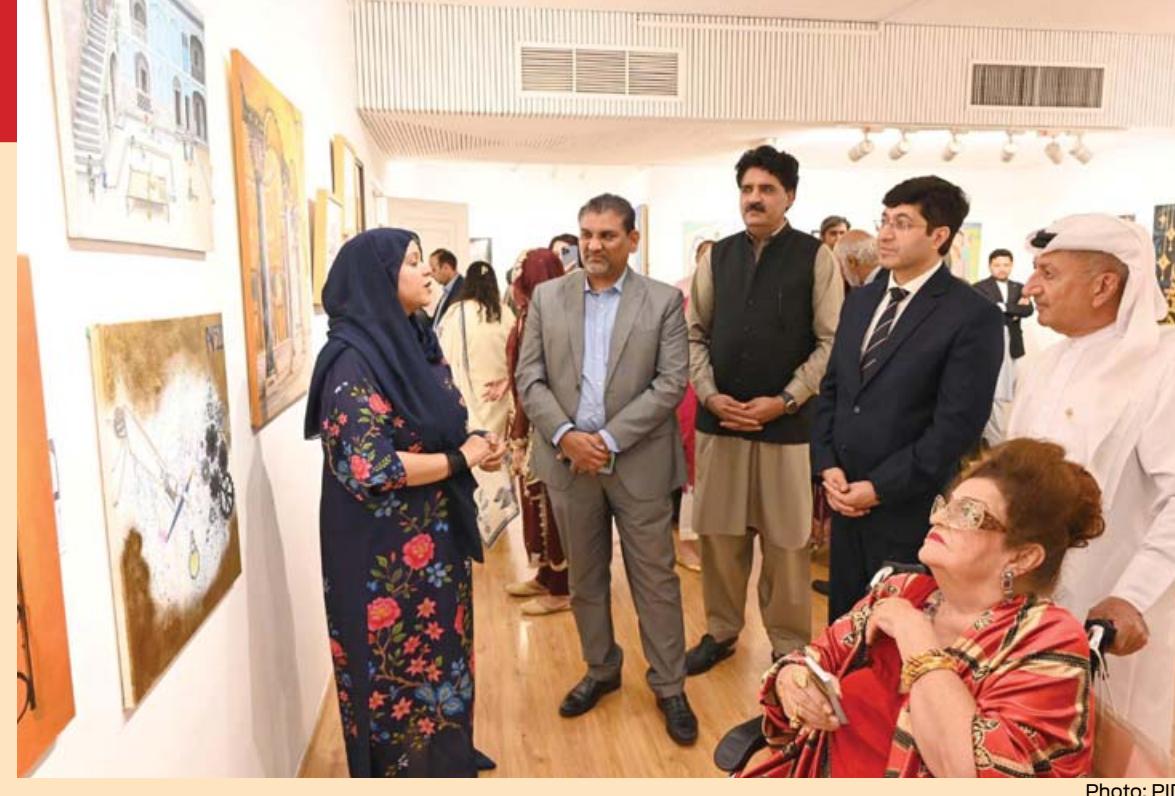


Photo: PID

11th Annual 3-day Blue Fair Exhibition Organized by the Women Chambers Multan

Iram Asim

MULTAN: The annual 11th 3-day Blue Fair of the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Multan Division was inaugurated by Commissioner Multan Aamir Karim Khan by cutting the ribbon. On this occasion, Begum Farah Mukhtar, Patron-in-Chief, Farah Saqib, President Chamber, Senior Vice President Nadia Wasim, Vice President Shahnaz Nasir were also present. After the inauguration, the Commissioner Multan was also inspected by women from all over the country at the Blue Fair. These included clothing, blue pottery, jewelry, shoes and food stalls. On this occasion, Commissioner Multan appreciated the work done to encourage women and suggested sending Pakistani goods abroad so that foreign currency could also come with the artisans. Begum Farah Mukhtar, Patron-in-Chief, Farah Saqib, President Chamber, Senior Vice President Nadia Wasim, Vice President Shahnaz Nasir, in

their joint discussion, said that the purpose of organizing the Blue Fair is to showcase the capabilities of women in the industrial field. Batu, Tahira Najam, Farah Faisal, Masoom Sibtain, Seerat Fatima, Ayesha Yasin, Begum Naseem Akhtar, Gener-

al Secretary Saeed Altaf Agha, Sheikha Waseem, Thaqbir Haim, Altaf Shah and other women participated. Shields were given to Fatima Group, Bank Sponsors, Arif Habib Corporation and Gautam College.

February 12 at the Serena Hotel, Islamabad. The summit will serve as a major national platform to highlight the role of Pakistan's corporate sector in driving sustainability, philanthropy, and social development initiatives aimed at uplifting underserved segments of society. Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, will attend the ceremony as the chief guest, while Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Imran Ahmad Shah, will grace the occasion as the guest of honour. Both dignitaries will jointly distribute the CSR Awards among the winning organizations in recognition of their impactful and compassionate efforts.

70 corporate trailblazers to be honoured at 18th CSR Summit for driving change, sustainability

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: In a powerful recognition of corporate commitment to social responsibility and sustainable development, as many as 70 leading companies and organizations from the public and private sectors, including prominent multinational firms, will be honoured with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Awards for their outstanding contributions to supporting disadvantaged communities and promoting environmental protection across Pakistan. These prestigious awards will be presented at the 18th Annual CSR Summit, organized by the National Forum for Environment & Health (NFEH), scheduled to take place on

FEDMC leasing model may hurt exports, warns PHMA

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: The proposed plan by the Faisalabad Industrial Estate Development and Management Company (FIEDMC) to allocate industrial plots under a leasing model could adversely affect exporters and slow industrial growth, warned Ahmad Afzal Awan, Senior Vice Chairman of Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers and Exporters Asso-

ciation (PHMA), North Zone on Thursday.

In a statement, Awan said exporters require ownership security and long-term stability to make substantial investments in machinery, infrastructure and compliance with international standards. He expressed concern that a leasing model would create uncertainty, discourage long-term planning and weaken the confidence of exporters already facing high

energy costs, financial constraints and tough global competition.

He said Faisalabad remained the backbone of the country's textile and hosiery exports, adding that any policy limiting industrial ownership could negatively affect export volumes, employment and foreign exchange earnings. "Instead of facilitating industrialists, such bureaucratic measures may push investors away and could force some exporters



PM congratulates nation on Pakistan's victory against Netherlands in T20 World Cup opener

 Sports Desk

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday congratulated the nation on Pakistan's victory against the Netherlands in their opening match

of the ICC T20 Cricket World Cup. The prime minister praised the outstanding performance of the Pakistani cricket team and paid tribute to the players as well as the team management for their collective efforts.



He said the national side displayed excellent cricket and won the hearts of fans with their impressive performance. Terming the win a successful start to Pakistan's World Cup campaign, the prime minister expressed hope that

the team would maintain this winning momentum in the matches ahead.

He also conveyed his best wishes for the continued success of the national cricket team in the remainder of the tournament.

FG Polo clinch historic 49th EcoStar Aibak Polo Cup title

 Sports Desk

LAHORE: FG Polo emerged as the champions of the 49th EcoStar Aibak Cup, defeating Diamond Paints by 7½-4 in a high-octane final at the historic Lahore Polo Club.

The grand finale, coinciding with the festive spirit of Basant, drew a massive crowd of polo enthusiasts and 'lively Lahorites', who filled the stands to witness one of the most prestigious trophies in the Pakistani polo circuit change hands.

The final was a showcase of elite athleticism, ending in a 7½-4 victory for FG Polo. The winners displayed exceptional synergy, led by a standout performance from Raja Mikayal Sami, who hammered home four crucial goals. Marcos Rivarola complemented the effort with a brilliant hat-trick, contributing three goals to the tally. Adding to their score was a half-goal advantage carried over from their handicap.

Despite a spirited fightback from Diamond Paints, they remained unable to bridge the gap. Lao Abelenda was the primary aggressor for the runners-up, scoring three goals, while Mohammad Ali Malik added a single goal to their total.

The prize distribution ceremony was a star-studded affair, acknowledging



the tournament's top performers with premium rewards. Marcos Rivarola emerged as Most Valuable Player (MVP) and received a 65-inch QLED TV for his instrumental role in the victory. The top scorer award was claimed by Raja Mikayal Sami, who was honored with a 55-inch QLED TV for his prolific goal-scoring throughout the event. While best playing pony award went to 'Mustaza', owned by Mian Abbas Mukhtar, who was presented with a 55-inch QLED TV in recognition of the mare's exceptional agility and stamina.

The event was graced by Ms. Natalie A. Baker, Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) at the US Embassy, who attended as the chief guest. Speaking at the ceremony, Ms. Baker expressed her delight, saying, "It is wonderful to be here at the Lahore Polo Club. Watching such high-quality polo amidst the vibrant Basant festivities and the beautiful Lahore weather has been a truly exhilarating experience."

Joining her were several dignitaries, including DWP Group Director Taha Muhammad Naseem, Lahore Polo

Club Executive Committee members Mohammad Nasir and Raja Amir, Secretary Maj Amjad Ghafoor, and DWP EcoStar Marketing Head Shoib Younas. A huge number of polo players, their families and polo enthusiasts were also present on the occasion.

Earlier in the day, the subsidiary final provided its own share of drama as BN Polo edged out SQ Seagold with a score of 8-6. The victory set the stage perfectly for the main final, ensuring a full day of top-tier sporting action for the families and fans in attendance.

attacks, and those videos immediately appear on Indian channels.

Yet no one questions why."

Naqvi acknowledged resource constraints within Pakistan's security apparatus, saying the budget was far lower than often claimed. "I wish I could meet all the requirements of our security forces. There are small things they need that I cannot provide due to financial issues."

He vowed to take the matter to international forums. "Our Deputy Prime Minister will be briefed, and our missions abroad will update the world."

Responding to criticism of security agencies, Naqvi said that for every successful attack, "ninety-nine" attempts were thwarted. "If 100 attacks were being planned, 99 were blocked," he said.

He urged the public to support security agencies through community intelligence. "We are in a state of war. When people report suspicious individuals, that activates the entire system."

The minister also accused Indian media of amplifying propaganda by banned outfits such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). "BLA produces high-quality videos, carries out

"We will close the gaps, Inshallah. Pakistan remains safe, and we will continue fighting," he said, adding that further briefings would follow as investigations progress.

T20 Cricket World Cup Opening Match Pakistan Cricket Team Close to Defeat

 Asim Tanveer

COLOMBO: T-20 World Cricket Cup. Pakistan Missed the Opportunity to Start Winningly with Better Net Run Rate. Defeat to Netherlands. Cricket Breaking News is that Pakistan has made a successful start to the ICC T20 World Cup 2026. Not only this, but with a barely 3 wicket win against the Netherlands, it has not laid a good foundation for the net run rate either.

Pakistan won the toss and elected to bowl in the first match of the T20 World Cup 2026, or rather the first match of their Group A, and the Dutch team, which had scored 105 runs for 3 wickets at one point, bowled better in the final overs and the Netherlands team was bowled



out for 147 runs in 19.5 overs.

Captain Scott Edwards scored 37 runs. Bas de Leed scored 30 and Mitchell Lewitt scored 24 runs. For Pakistan, Salman Mirza took 3 wickets for 24 runs.

Mohammad Nawaz took 2 for 38 runs, Abrar Ahmed took 2 for 23 runs and Saim Ayub took 2 wickets for 7 runs.

In reply, Pakistan started well.

Saim Ayub scored 24 runs and was caught. Sahibzada Farhan and Salman Ali Agha continued their fast batting.

Pakistan's second loss came at 53 when Salman Ali Agha was dismissed for 12 runs. Pakistan lost 2

wickets at 98. Sahibzada Farhan made 47 and new batsman Usman Khan walked on zero.

The Dutch team created a sensation. In the 12th over, Pakistan

admitted that they were under

pressure by playing a maiden.

Then Babar Azam also scored 15 runs. Shadab and Nawaz

also failed. Pakistan's 7 wickets

had fallen. There were 31 runs

remaining in the last 2 overs.

In such a situation, the Nether-

lands dropped the T20 World

Cup cricket match by drop-



ping Faheem Ashraf's catch.

Faheem Ashraf scored 24 runs

in the 19th over to give Pakistan

a 3-wicket victory with 3 balls to spare. Faheem Ashraf returned

unbeaten after scoring 29 runs.

Reviving Basant

 Iqra Liaqat

IT'S hard to shake off a feeling of 'bread and circuses' from the Punjab government's recent ordinance to revive Basant in the province after an 18-year ban. As the political environment grows evermore stifled, as the space for dissent shrinks every single day, as the governing system becomes more centralised and opaque, and as critical voices (from Balochistan to Islamabad) confront lengthy incarcerations, mustering festive excitement seems to be a bit of a challenge.

But life goes on, as it usually does. Governments will do what they do for whatever ends. The people too deserve respite and joy in a society that provides little of either. And so there is a case to be

made for the revival of a coming-of-spring festival that has deep cultural roots in this specific region.

My line of advocacy for the revival of the festival, on these very pages eight years ago, was fairly straightforward: Basant defines Lahore like few other activities. It was for the longest time the most eagerly anticipated event of the year. It drew in tourists, generated revenue for all kinds of associated businesses, and contributed to a general uplift in the public mood.

It was also the only cultural event that transcended class boundaries in a city that otherwise segregates all manners of entertainment by the ability to pay.

It is that last part that needs to be underscored. Kite-flying is a relatively democratic activity. The monetary barriers to entry

are generally low. Keeping aside competitive and commercial events, not much is required for an average person to participate. Kites and string are relatively inexpensive; roof space, while desirable and amply available, is not essential. People can and have in the past flown kites from large open spaces.

These appear to be prosaic points but they remain important given just how stratified leisure has become in a city like Lahore. Open green spaces are few and far between, and those that do exist are often actively policed in exclusionary manners. Old walled-city pastimes like pigeon racing and wrestling are inaccessible for the new urban poor, along with being highly gendered in their participation practices.

The universe of leisure in

the city then remains confined to dining out, a practice that carries vastly different experiences contingent on your ability to pay. As the well-heeled recede to a plethora of privatised/faux public spaces, such as coffee shops, private member clubs, and restaurants, the popular classes have to make do with far more limited options.

The bigger challenge, beyond the issuing of an ordinance, will be ensuring safety and preventing loss of life. As the point of origin of the ban recedes further into the past, it's worth remembering why it was instituted in the first place.

Part of the story was the moral and cultural panic around the festival from conservative religious groups, who actively propagated against it on grounds of being a 'Hindu' festival. Leaving

aside the fact that there is nothing wrong with the majority celebrating local cultural diversity, it is also worth noting that it is a geographically-specific festival, regardless of its religious affiliation. Like Lohri and Vaisakhi, it corresponds to large parts with the environmental and seasonal reality of a region; an ecological reality that one must stress does not change with the faith of its inhabitants. People of all religious persuasions still look forward to spring.

But this part of the story is less instrumental in the actual ban. In the early 2000s, the main drivers of public and political sentiment were the loss of life and damage to property (especially related to electricity distribution). In petitions filed in this time, including on behalf of those who had lost

kin/relatives, numbers ranged from 30 to 40 deaths over a few years. In the one year that the festival was unbanned in 2007, 11 people were killed.

These deaths were related to dangerous, chemically/ materially enhanced string, as well as rooftop accidents, and incidents of electrocution. Motorcyclists (and those riding with them) were frequent victims.

These are all difficult tasks, but perhaps in a twist of dark irony, the security calculus that prevails so much over the state's functioning may enable it to carry out these tasks better than it was able to in the past. Additionally, the growth of CCTV monitoring, and the capacity and experience developed during the pandemic might be put to good use here as well.

There is one other point of

concern in the legislation worth highlighting. The ordinance gives local administration the power to ban motorcycles from operating in any given territory. Presumably, this ban will be operationalised in various parts of the city on the day(s) of the festival. To me this seems like the most ham-fisted solution to the actual problem.

People on motorbikes are not the issue. Anyone going about their daily life (or on any urgent business) should not have to bear the brunt of regulatory failure. The real issue remains with the string and its associated dangers, as well as rooftop practices. That is where the state's attention should remain confined, and where its capacity is best served.

The writer is senior analyst and she can be reached at igra.14@gmail.com

Al Noor Gymkhana in Semifinal of Master Oil Inter Club Cricket Tournament



 Sports Desk

KARACHI: Due to some good batting by Muhammad Ammar 84, Fazal Subhan 60 and Unbeaten 52 by Test Cricketer Fawad Alam Alnoor Gymkhana defeated Faisal Gymkhana by 8 Wickets in the last Quarter and moved into Semi Final of the Master Oil Internet Club Cricket Tournament on Friday at KCCA Stadium. Muhammad Afzal also played and scored 100 but could not save their team from defeat.

The Tournament is being organized by Regional Cricket Association Karachi with the collaboration of Master Oil Lubricants. Scores in Brief:

Alnoor Gymkhana beat Faisal Gymkhana by 8 Wickets at KCCA Stadium. Faisal Gymkhana 217/6 in 35 overs. Muhammad Afzal 100 12x4 4x6, Arsalan Farzand 41 2x4 3x6, Aun Abbas 37. Farhan Anwar (sla) 3/49, Fawad Alam 2/24.

In reply Alnoor Gymkhana 220/2 in 27 overs. Muhammad Ammar 84 9x4 2x6 Fazal Subhan 60 4x4, Fawad Alam 4x4 3x6 not out.

Inauguration

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, along with his Uzbek counterpart and SAPM Haroon Akhtar Khan, cuts the ribbon to inaugurate the Made in Uzbekistan Exhibition on the sidelines of the Pakistan-Uzbekistan Business Forum in Islamabad, marking a renewed push for bilateral trade, industrial cooperation and private-sector partnerships.



Photo: PID

Chairman Senate Strongly Condemns Suicide Blast at Imam Bargah Islamabad

Kiran Asim

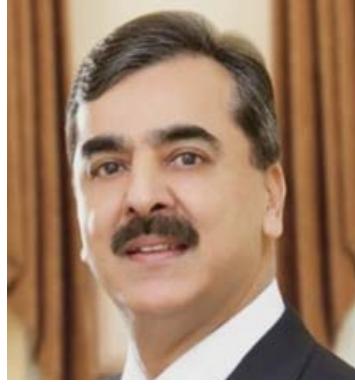
Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani on Friday issued a forceful condemnation of the suicide bombing near an Imam Bargah in Islamabad's Tarlai area, describing the attack as a direct assault on the state's religious harmony and national fabric.

In a statement released shortly after the incident, the Chairman expressed profound grief over the loss of precious lives and the injuries sustained by numerous citizens. He characterized the targeting of innocent, unarmed

worshippers as a heinous act that defies both humanity and religious values.

"Targeting places of worship is an unforgivable crime against humanity," Gillani stated. He emphasized that such "cowardly and brutal" acts would not succeed in intimidating the public. On the contrary, he asserted that these tragedies only serve to bolster the nation's collective resolve to eliminate the menace of extremism.

The Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani reiterated that terrorists belong to no faith or nation, labeling them as enemies of progress who



seek to sabotage the country's stability. He maintained that the perpetrators' "nafarious designs" are destined to fail as the citizenry and state institutions remain united in their counter-terrorism narrative.

Extending his deepest condolences to the bereaved families, the Chairman prayed for the high ranks of the martyrs and the speedy recovery of the wounded. He assured the victims' families that the state shares their grief during this difficult hour and remains committed to bringing the facilitators of the attack to justice.

Nahid and Safdar Strong Condemnation of Terrorist Attacks in Islamabad

Kiran Asim

We, Dr. Safdar Ali Abbasi, President Pakistan Peoples Party Workers, Naheed Khan, Political Assistant to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, Fayyaz Khan, Senior Vice President, Advocate Amjad Baluch, vice President, Kunwar Mohammad Zahid, General Secretary Rai Qaiser, Deputy Secretary General, Hur Bukhari, Malik Mazhar Hussain, Rana Usman, and Naveed Sadiq, strongly and unequivocally condemn the heinous and cowardly terrorist attack at Masjid-e Khadja Imam Bargah in Islamabad.

The barbaric assault on



innocent worshippers who had gathered for Namaz-e Juma solely to bow their heads before Almighty Allah and surrender themselves to His mercy is not merely an act of terrorism. It is an attack on humanity itself. Our hearts bleed for the innocent children who have lost their fathers, for the courageous mothers who have lost their sons who were their only support, and for the helpless widows who have lost their life partners and strength in a single moment of unimaginable cruelty.

Mosques and Imam Bargahs are sacred places where the names of Almighty Allah and His beloved Prophet

effectively managed by tribal structures rather than security deployments alone. Engaging these indigenous mechanisms can significantly contribute to long-term peace.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of all those who embraced Shahadat in the house of Almighty Allah, and we pray sincerely and deeply for the early and complete recovery of those who remain injured. May Allah grant patience to the bereaved families and hold the martyrs in the highest ranks of Jannat-ul-Firdous (Ameen).

Pakistan must choose life, peace, and unity over fear.

mind of the attack is an Afghan Daesh commander who has also been apprehended.

The attack, including its planning, training, and radicalisation, was reportedly carried out under Daesh networks in Afghanistan.

Security sources warned that terrorists operating under the Afghan Taliban's supervision posed a major threat to peace in the region.

Authorities have stated that intelligence-based operations against terrorists will continue.

Nawaz Sharif joins friends for Basant near Masti Gate

Bureau report

LAHORE: Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president Nawaz Sharif on Saturday joined Basant celebrations in Lahore's Walled City area, spending several hours with close friends and enjoying traditional kite-flying festivities from a rooftop gathering.

Nawaz Sharif visited a friend's residence near Masti Gate in the Sultan Tipu Building area, located close to Pani Wala Talab in Androon Lahore. He remained in the area for around four hours as Basant activities continued across the old city neighbourhoods.

During the visit, the former premier sat on the rooftop and watched colourful kites soar across the skyline, a hallmark of the Basant festival. He also held a kite and string reel, appreciating the quality of the string and



remarking that kite strings used to be much thicker in the past.

Several political and social figures

were present at the gathering, including Sheikh Rohail Asghar, Khurram Butt and Ahsan Dar. A delegation of over-

seas Pakistanis also attended the celebration and met Nawaz Sharif during the rooftop event.

DPM/FM Dar reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to further strengthen engagement with Iran in key sectors



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Saturday, reiterated Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening engagement with Iran in key priority sectors of mutual interest.

The DPM/FM received the Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Raza Amiri Moghaddam.

Ambassador Raza Amiri Moghaddam

conveyed condolences over the tragic blast at an Imam Bargah in Islamabad.

The DPM/FM strongly condemned the terrorist attack and reaffirmed Pakistan's firm resolve to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

The DPM/FM was briefed by the Iranian ambassador on progress achieved through various bilateral institutional mechanisms to enhance cooperation across diverse areas.

4-6kg explosives used in Islamabad suicide blast

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Four to six kilograms of explosives were used in the suicide blast at Islamabad's mosque, while the amount of ball bearings in the attack was unusually high, sources said on Saturday.

The unusually high amount of ball bearings caused high casualties, according to the sources.

Authorities have collected crucial evidence in the investigation being carried out by the National Forensic Agency (NFA), while NADRA was also extending cooperation.

According to officials, the attacker first opened fire before entering. He also fired six once he entered the main prayer hall.

All spent cartridges have been recovered from the scene.

Following the gunfire, the suicide

bomber detonated himself inside the mosque hall.

The sources confirmed that the 4-6 kilograms of explosive material were used in the blast and an unusually high quantity of ball bearings, increasing the blast's lethality.

The National Forensic Agency (NFA) and NADRA are assisting in the investigation to help identify the attacker.

Authorities are reviewing CCTV footage, mobile data, and other evidence from multiple angles and examining other aspects of the incident.

Investigators are also probing the planning, facilitation, and supply of explosives linked to the attack.

Security officials stated that additional details about the incident will be released once the investigation is complete.

Four facilitators of Islamabad suicide bomber arrested

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Four facilitators of the Islamabad suicide bomber have been arrested by law enforcement agencies during raids in Peshawar and Nowshera, sources confirmed on Saturday.

The arrest came in the wake of ongoing investigations into the deadly suicide explosion at a mosque in the Tarlai area of Islamabad, which claimed 31 lives and injured dozens.

According to officials, the master-

mind of the attack is an Afghan Daesh commander who has also been apprehended.

The attack, including its planning, training, and radicalisation, was reportedly carried out under Daesh networks in Afghanistan.

Security sources warned that terrorists operating under the Afghan Taliban's supervision posed a major threat to peace in the region.

Authorities have stated that intelligence-based operations against terrorists will continue.

Overseas Kashmiris Convention 2026 Set to Tackle Investment and Grievances

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in collaboration with the Overseas Pakistani Foundation is organizing the Overseas Kashmiris Convention 2026 in Muzaffarabad from February 15 to 17, 2026.

During the convention, group discussions and dialogues will be organized to discuss in detail the problems, difficulties faced by Overseas Kashmiris, investment opportunities in Azad Kashmir and other important issues. On this occasion, Overseas Kashmiris will be able to present their legitimate grievances and suggestions for their resolution. About 300 Overseas Kashmiris are expected to participate in the convention, while representatives of the chamber, investors and civil society from all over Pakistan will participate.

This convention will prove to be an important step towards overseas investment in Azad Kashmir. According to the vision of the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, the inauguration of an overseas complaints portal during the convention is expected, while other measures, including the establishment of a separate court to resolve the problems of overseas Kashmiris through legislation, are also expected. The government says that overseas Kashmiris are a valuable asset of the state and all possible steps are being taken to resolve their problems.