



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



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نے کہا ان سے عقل نے بیان کیا ان سے
زہری نے ان سے ان سے سبب نے اور ان
سے ابو ہریرہ رضی اللہ عنہ نے کہ نبی کریم
صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے فرمایا من کو ایک
سورج سے دو بار روگ نہیں لگ سکتا
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Joint session of Parliament on March 2, President approves summary

President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday approved the summary to convene a joint sitting of parliament on March 2, 2026, as part of the commencement of the new parliamentary year. According to the Presidency, the joint session will be held at 3pm. The joint sitting of parliament is convened at the start of each parliamentary year. President Zardari will address the joint sitting for the ninth time in his capacity as President of Pakistan.



FCC rules tax officials can conduct raids without prior notice

Rejecting an appeal filed by a private company, seeking a declaration by the court that conducting a raid without a case was illegal, the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC), in its written order on Thursday, ruled that the tax officials were empowered to raid any place at any time without prior notice

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Ramzan Package launched

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting on implementation of the Prime Minister Ramazan Package, 2026 on Thursday.



Photo: PID

DPM departs for Saudi Arabia to attend OIC moot on Israel's illegal measures



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday departed here for a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia to attend the Open-Ended Extraordinary Ministerial Session of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

Besides sharing Pakistan's perspective on the latest illegal measures by Israel to convert areas of the Occupied West Bank into so-called "state land" at the session, the deputy prime minister will also hold sideline bilateral meetings with his counterparts from OIC member states.

The ministerial session will be held tonight at the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah. The meeting has been convened to consider the illegal decisions of the Israeli occupation authorities aimed at expanding settlements, pursuing annexation, and attempting to impose Israeli sovereignty over the Occupied West Bank.

PM formally launches Rs. 38 billion Ramazan Relief Package 2026

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Thursday announced the formal launch of the PM Ramazan Relief Package 2026, with an allocation of Rs. 38 billion.

He made the announcement while chairing a review meeting on the Ramazan Relief Package 2026.

Addressing the participants, he highlighted that the assistance amount has been increased from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 13,000 per household to provide meaningful financial support to deserving individuals during the holy month of Ramazan.

"This is the largest and most comprehensive Ramazan relief package in the country," the Prime Minister said, adding the distribution will follow the transparent digital system successfully used last year. Cash assistance is being delivered directly to beneficiaries through digital wallets, ensuring efficiency, transparency, and respect for recipients' dignity by eliminating long queues.

Participants were briefed on the package's progress. As of 8th Ramazan, 64 percent of eligible individuals have received their assistance, while verification and disbursement for remaining beneficiaries are underway. The briefing also noted that 12 banks and fintech

companies are partnering with the government for distribution. So far, beneficiaries have completed 1.1 million digital transactions, and over 1.227 million automated calls have been made to inform people about the package.

Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, Minister for Poverty Alleviation Syed Imran Ahmed Shah, Minister for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima, Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kiyani, Special Assistant Haroon Akhtar, BISP Chairperson Senator Rubina Khalid, State Bank Governor Jameel Ahmed, and other senior officials attended the meeting.

Amir Muqam calls for dialogue to resolve pending Af&K issues

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Saffron, Engr. Amir Muqam, on Thursday praised the positive approach of the Joint Public Action Committee of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K) and emphasized the importance of dialogue in addressing all outstanding issues.



"The Implementation Committee remains committed to fulfilling all promises made under existing agreements," he said.

He said that both the federal government and the AJ&K administration are making serious efforts to implement agreed-upon demands, according to a news release.

He added that of the 37 demands presented by the committee, most have already been addressed, while work on the remaining issues is ongoing.

The minister urged the Action Committee to return to the negotiating table, describing dialogue as the most effective way forward. "The doors for discussion are open, and we are ready to meet to resolve any concerns," he stated.

Religious Ministry transfers Joint Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Saudi operations

News Desk

Ministry of Religious Affairs has ordered the transfers and postings of key officers on Thursday.

According to an official notification, Joint Secretary Hajj Sajjad Haider and Deputy Secretary Rehan Cheema have been transferred who were managing Hajj arrangements in Saudi Arabia for

the last 3 years.

Muhammad Bakhsh Sangi has been appointed as Joint Secretary Hajj while Fahad Ahmed has been posted as Deputy Secretary Hajj. Moreover, Secretary Ministry of Religious Affairs Dr. Atta-ur-Rehman has also retired as an officer while Additional Secretary Dr. Sajjad Chohan has been given the charge of Acting Secretary.

Pakistan, Italy, Spain and Greece agree on joint strategy to curb illegal immigration

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi held an important meeting in Rome with the interior ministers of Italy, Spain, and the migration minister of Greece on the sidelines of a four-nation conference aimed at tackling illegal immigration.

The interior ministers of all four countries participated in the conference hosted in Rome to discuss coordinated strategies to curb illegal migration. Italy, Spain and Greece praised Pakistan for its effective measures, noting a 47% reduction in illegal migration towards their countries.

The three European nations also

endorsed Pakistan's proposal to block illegal migration through legal pathways, agreeing that structured legal channels can significantly reduce irregular movement.

In a major development, the ministers decided that the European Union will enhance Pakistan's capacity-building efforts, offering full support to strengthen institutions working against illegal immigration.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi stated that Pakistan has taken strong action against mafias involved in illegal immigration, adding that Europe remains the most affected region. "Only through a joint mechanism can this challenge be overcome," he asserted.

Dr. Tariq Fazal questions Modi's remarks on civilian killings, calls for moral consistency

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhary Thursday, said that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks that the killing of civilians can never be justified before the Knesset ring hollow when viewed against the backdrop of unwavering political alignment with actions that have led to immense civilian suffering in Gaza.

In a post on his X account, he referred to Prime Minister Modi's remarks before the Knesset, where he emphasized that the killing of civilians can never be justified. "These remarks ring hollow when viewed against the backdrop of unwavering political alignment with actions that have led to immense civilian suffering in Gaza," he wrote.

He said, that across Gaza, entire neighborhoods lie in ruins, food insecurity has reached catastrophic levels, medical facilities are barely functioning, and repeated escalations have shattered hopes for lasting peace.

The minister added that the principles of human rights and civilian protection cannot be reduced to selective slogans and must apply equally, regardless of politics or partnerships.

He further stressed that global leadership demands moral consistency, warning that when economic or strategic interests overshadow humanitarian concerns, credibility is inevitably called into question.

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Azad Kashmir Minister declares power corridors now open after ending 'Closed Doors' Culture

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Central Deputy Secretary Information of Pakistan Peoples Party Azad Kashmir and candidate for Legislative Assembly Constituency-7, Shaukat Javed Mir, has stated that public access to the Presidency, Prime Minister's Secretariat, Prime Minister House, and ministers' offices has been made open and unhindered, effectively ending the culture of closed doors. He remarked that only a few months ago, these corridors of power were largely inaccessible, guarded by armed personnel, and heavily restricted.

He expressed these views while speaking to party office-bearers, workers, and dele-



gations from across Azad Kashmir during separate meetings held at his office chamber in the Prime Minis-

ter's Secretariat.

In response to a question, he said that in the upcoming general elections, the PPP will field candidates in all 45 constituencies and aims to return to power through the strength of the vote. He added that during its short tenure, the party has strengthened ideological bonds, reinforced the concept of "Stability of Pakistan," and countered negative propaganda by promoting unity and respect for the armed forces.

Paying tribute to PPP founder and former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, he said the party continues to follow their people-centric political philo-

sophy. Under the leadership of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the PPP considers it its national duty to contribute actively to a strong federation, an invincible defense, and the freedom of occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

He concluded by stating that under the leadership of Chief of Army Staff Asim Munir, Pakistan's recent successes have enhanced the country's global standing. He maintained that the people of Kashmir consider a strong, stable, and democratic Pakistan as the guarantor of the Kashmir freedom movement, and credited the current Azad Kashmir government for taking significant steps to bring youth into the national mainstream.

Pakistan's Diplomacy Focuses on Palestine While Upholding Kashmir Right, says Masood Khan

Spokesman Report



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Masood Khan, Former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, has stated that the recent visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Israel reflects the consolidation of an already existing strategic framework between New Delhi and Tel Aviv, particularly in the domains of defence production, advanced technology, and regional geopolitics.

Ambassador Khan reiterated that the ultimate objective of Pakistan's diplomacy remains the realization of a sovereign and independent State of Palestine, based on pre-1967 borders, living side by side with Israel in accordance with United Nations resolutions. At the same time, he stressed that Pakistan's principled support for Palestinian self-determination in no way dilutes its steadfast commitment to the right of self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Regional alliances are shifting and strategic equations are evolving," Ambassador Masood Khan concluded. "Pakistan's approach is clear: we will safeguard our national security, strengthen responsible partnerships, and pursue principled diplomacy rooted in international law and sovereign equality."

PML-N AfK Sub-Committee Finalizes Manifesto Aspirations Ahead of Elections



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the sub-committee of the Manifesto Committee of Pakistan Muslim League N Azad Jammu and Kashmir was held at Islamabad Club. The meeting was chaired by Secretary Sardar Abdul Khaliq Wasi and hosted by Chaudhry Sohaib Saeed.

The meeting was attended by committee members Shahid Mahmood Wani, Chaudhry Sohaib Saeed, and Maryam Idrees. Participants held detailed discussions on the overall political situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the upcoming elections, and the issues being faced by the people of the region along with their possible solutions.

The members conducted a thorough review of the key points of the party manifesto and deliberated on the future course of action. The sub-committee members reaffirmed their commitment that, InshaAllah, the manifesto of Pakistan Muslim League (N) will effectively represent the aspirations and expectations of the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants expressed their gratitude to Chaudhry Sohaib Saeed for his excellent hospitality.

CM Punjab's Advisor Salma Butt Inspects Nigahban Ramzan Bazaar in Attock

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Punjab, Salma Butt, visited the Nigahban Ramzan Bazaar in Attock on Thursday to review the prices and quality of essential commodities being provided to citizens under the Ramzan relief initiative.

During her visit, she inspected stalls set up for the sale of subsidized flour, sugar, pulses, rice, cooking oil, fruits, and vegetables. She carefully examined the officially displayed rate lists and compared them with the government-notified prices to ensure strict compliance.

Salma Butt interacted with shoppers and sought their feedback regarding the availability and quality of daily-use items. Several citizens expressed satisfaction over the controlled prices and availability of essential commodities at subsidized rates during the holy month of Ramzan.

The advisor directed the district administration and market committee officials to maintain transparency and ensure uninterrupted supply of quality items throughout Ramzan. She warned vendors against overcharging and profiteering, stating that no negligence in implementing the government's price control policy would be tolerated.

On the occasion DC Attock Rao Atif Raza, DPO Attock Mavarhan Khan ADCG Anil Saeed, AC Attock Arif Qureshi, chief Municipal officer Sardar Aftab Khan, SDEO PERA force Affaq Chaudhary, Usman Raffique and sana shabeer were also present.

Speaking on the occasion, she said the Punjab government is committed to providing maximum relief to the public amid inflation. She added that special monitoring teams are actively overseeing Ramzan bazaars across the province to protect consumers' rights.

Officials also briefed her on arrangements related to cleanliness, security, and crowd management at the bazaar. She appreciated the efforts of the local administration and emphasized continued vigilance to facilitate citizens in a smooth and organized manner.

AC Kamalia Erum Shahzadi Takes Action, Substandard Products Factory Sealed

Zafar Chishti

T T SINGH: Assistant Commissioner Kamalia Erum Shahzadi took action against illegal business activities and conducted a surprise raid on a factory operating within the city that was allegedly manufacturing products using chemicals. The factory was sealed on the spot. According to sources, the Assistant Commissioner received confidential information that the factory was producing substandard and hazardous products through the use of chemicals, posing a serious threat to public health. Acting promptly on the tip-off, Erum Shahzadi accompanied by the relevant staff, reached the site and carried out a detailed inspection of the premises. During the inspection, a large quantity of chemicals, raw materials and finished products was recovered. Preliminary examination raised serious concerns regarding the quality of the products and the manufacturing process. Consequently, the Assistant Commissioner ordered the immediate sealing of the factory. Legal proceedings have been initiated against those responsible and a report has been forwarded to the concerned departments for further action.

Speaking on the occasion, Assistant Commissioner Erum Shahzadi stated that no one would be allowed to endanger human health and strict action against those involved in the production of illegal and hazardous goods would continue without discrimination. She emphasized that ensuring the provision of safe and quality essential items to citizens is the top priority of the district administration and no negligence in this regard will be tolerated. The district administration has also urged citizens to report any information regarding the production or sale of illegal or harmful products to the relevant authorities so that timely action can be taken.

Protest

FAISALABAD: Government Employees holds protest in favor of their demands at District Council Chowk in City.



Photo: Online

South Punjab Additional IG Inspects Development Projects at Multan Police Training College

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Additional IG South Punjab Kamran Khan and City Police Officer DIG Sadiq Ali Dogar Visited Police Training College

Multan Ctiy. During the visit, he took a detailed look at the ongoing development projects under construction at the Police Training College, firing range, police mess and other facilities.

On this occasion, SSP Operations Multan Haider Ali, SSP Investigation Multan Muhammad Tahir, SP Cantt Kainat Azhar, SP City Dr Khadija Umar, SP Gulgasht Saifullah Gujjar and other police officers were also present with him.



Paying special attention to the quality, speed and transparency of construction projects, Additional IG South Punjab Muhammad Kamran

Khan and City Police Officer DIG Sadiq Ali Dogar issued instructions to the concerned officers that all development works should be completed within the stipulated time and the use of quality materials in construction should be ensured at all costs.

Additional IG South Punjab Muhammad Kamran Khan said that provision of modern and better facilities in the Police Training College is very important for the welfare of police personnel and improving the quality of professional training.

CPO Multan Sadiq Ali Dogar also stressed on the timely completion of development projects. At the end of the visit, the concerned officers also gave a briefing regarding the projects.

Any Move Against Khamenei will be seen as attack on global resistance, warns Ayaz Qomi

News Desk

HYEDRABAD: Prominent religious scholar Allama Ayaz Hussain Qomi has urged global powers to refrain from what he described as conspiracies that ignite conflict and unrest across the world, warning against actions that could further destabilize international peace.

Speaking to student delegations in Hyderabad on Friday, Allama Qomi said that Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei is not only a religious and Iranian



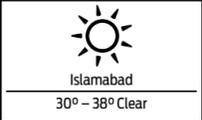
leader but also a guiding figure for people who stand for dignity, courage and freedom worldwide.

He stated that any attack on his person would be perceived as targeting all those who advocated justice and independence.

"All freedom loving and courageous people across the globe see him as a leader," Allama Qomi said, adding that the hearts of oppressed communities and advocates of justice beat in solidarity with Ayatollah Khamenei. He further cautioned what he

termed "global imperialist forces" against fueling tensions and conflicts in different parts of the world. According to him, international actors should avoid policies and actions that contribute to instability and instead work toward peace and justice.

The religious scholar emphasized that oppressed communities around the world look toward leadership that represents resistance, dignity and steadfastness, and urged global powers to exercise restraint in order to prevent further turmoil.



SERVICES
Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:17 am
Zohr	12:22 pm
Asr	4:22 pm
Maghrib	6:02 pm
Isha	7:25 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 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	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation	9209224
Potohar Town	9209224
Rawal Town	5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service	
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Journey of development, prosperity to continue under PML-N rule: Minister Salman

LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that, in line with the vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the journey of development and prosperity for the people will continue across the province.

He expressed these views on Thursday during his visit to the modern drainage and rainwater storage project in Tajpura B Block, PP-153, Lahore.

The provincial minister said that all ongoing development schemes in PP-153 have been directed to be completed within the stipulated timeframe. He added that the Punjab government is ensuring the provision of basic civic facilities to citizens in accordance with the vision of the chief minister. He stated that the PML-N government has consistently served the people and that under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan is progressing rapidly.

Khawaja Salman Rafique said the Parks and Horticulture Authority has also been directed to restore and maintain parks in the area. He noted that the Punjab government is working swiftly on a major project aimed at rainwater harvesting, drainage improvement and groundwater restoration in Tajpura B Block.

Five years are too short for public service: CM Maryam

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, addressing the ceremony of the e-Taxi Scheme, announced the launch of Green Bus Service in every tehsil of Punjab and said the trackless train project would also be launched soon in the province.

She said Punjab is the first province to introduce the e-Taxi scheme and I expressed gratitude to Allah Almighty for its successful launch.

She termed the e-taxi an environment-friendly vehicle and said the scheme would play a key role in providing employment opportunities, particularly to women.

The chief minister said five years are too short a period for public service as the work is enormous and time limited. "My desire is to serve the people in a way that my name is remembered with respect in history," she added.

She expressed satisfaction over allocating more than 30 per cent quota for

women in the e-Taxi scheme, saying women often hesitate to enter taxi driving due to fear. "I urge the women of Punjab to remove fear from their hearts. The government stands with every mother, sister and daughter.

No one needs to feel threatened," she said, adding that strict action would be taken against anyone attempting to harm women.

She said women were now working shoulder to shoulder with men and appreciated Transport Minister Bilal Akbar Khan and Secretary Transport Imran Sikandar Baloch for their efforts. She noted that the green electric buses had revolutionised Punjab's transport system and become a model for others.

As many as 1,500 buses are being added, with another 1,100 to join the fleet.

Work is under way on metro bus projects in Faisalabad and Gujranwala, while students, women, senior citizens and persons with disabilities were being provided free travel on green buses.



Beautiful

ISLAMABAD: A butterfly obstruct the nectar from flowers at Garden as the newly budding flowers and fragrant plants, indicating spring in Federal Capital.

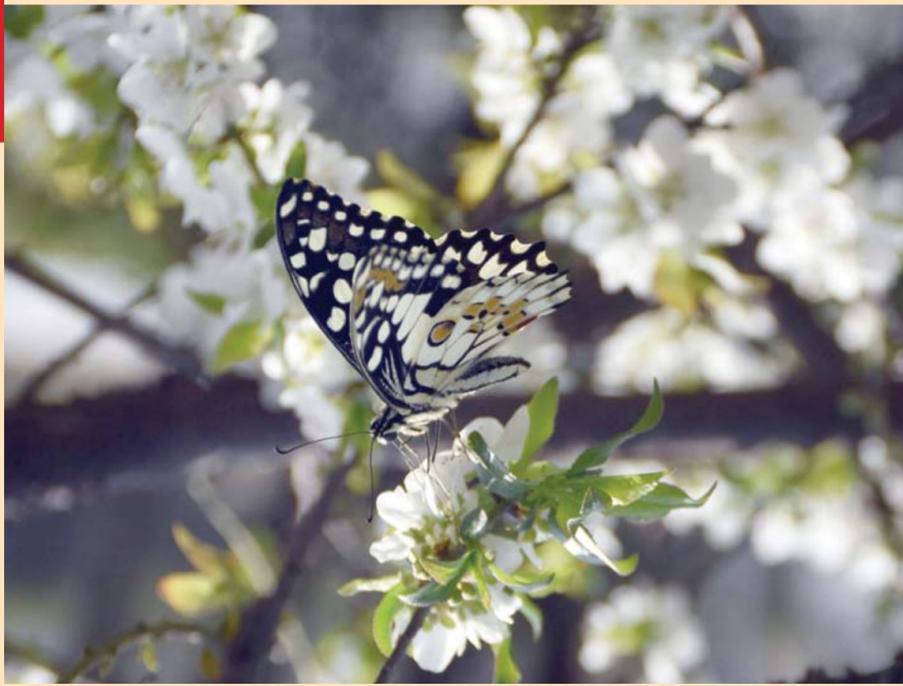


Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Civil Society Condemns Diplomatic Lobbying Against Public Health Policy

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Civil society organizations, health experts, and public health advocates in Pakistan have strongly condemned the recent meeting between a delegation including the US Counselor in Islamabad and the Federal Secretary of the Ministry of Science and Technology, during which the US official reportedly lobbied against Pakistan's evidence-based proposal on Front-of-Pack Warning Labels (FOPWL) on ultra-processed products — a vital measure to protect public health and address the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The health and economic burden is severe. Pakistan spends approximately USD



2.6 billion annually on diabetes alone — nearly double the IMF installment received by the country. Over 2,400 Pakistanis die daily from preventable NCDs, placing immense strain on families, the health-care system, and the national

economy.

To address this crisis, the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination has recommended Front-of-Pack Warning Labels (FOPWL) to the Ministry of Science and Technology as a

simple, evidence-based solution. These labels clearly inform consumers when products contain excessive levels of sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats. Global evidence shows that FOPWL helps consumers make informed food choices, reduces intake of harmful nutrients, and encourages product reformulation by industry.

The Pakistan National Heart Association (PANA), civil society partners, and the Ministry of Health have actively advocated for mandatory FOPWL to safeguard public health. Notably, the National Assembly's National Health Committee has already directed the Ministry of Science and Technology to proceed with implementation in the national interest.

DPO Akhlaq Ullah Tarar Assume Charge in TT Singh

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: The newly appointed District Police Officer (DPO) Toba Tek Singh Akhlaq Ullah Tarar has formally assumed charge of his office.

Upon his arrival at the Police Lines, he was warmly received by SP Investigation Toba Tek Singh Fazal Abbas, who presented him with a bouquet. A smartly turned-out police contingent presented a guard of honor to the new DPO at the District Police Lines. The DPO laid a floral wreath at the Police Martyrs' Memorial and offered prayers for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs. After assuming charge, DPO Akhlaq Ullah Tarar held an introductory meeting with the office staff. During the meeting, he directed branch in-charges to adopt honesty, integrity and dedication as their guiding principles in performing their duties. Later, he chaired a meeting with SDPOs and SHOs, where the overall law and order situation, public issues and key policing matters in the district were discussed in detail.

PSCA's VCCS Achieves Another Milestone to Reunite Speech and Hearing-Impaired Man with His Family After 18 Years

City Desk

LAHORE: Punjab Safe Cities Authority's Virtual Center for Child Safety (VCCS), has achieved another significant milestone by reuniting a speech and hearing-impaired man with his family after 18 years of separation.



The missing individual, who was unable to communicate his name or address, was taken into protective custody from Taunsa Sharif. He was subsequently shifted to Edhi Homes Multan, where proper care and shelter was provided to him.

According to the PSCA's spokesperson, "Mera Pyara" team recorded a video of the individual at Edhi Homes and shared it on numerous social media platforms in an effort to ascertain his identity. After the video went viral, his brother, Umar Hayat, contacted "Mera Pyara" team and identified him as Muhammad Yar, son of Dama. The family informed "Mera Pyara" team that Muhammad Yar had gone missing from District Khanewal in October 2007, and despite continuous efforts, they had been unable to trace him. VCCS "Mera Pyara" team completed all necessary verification procedures with the family. Following due diligence, the Safe City Reunification Team formally handed Muhammad Yar over to his family after a lapse of 18 years.

CM Punjab pays tribute to security forces for eliminating 34 terrorists

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif pays tribute to the security forces for eliminating 34 terrorists in operations carried out in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

She commends the security forces for foiling an infiltration attempt along the Pak-Afghan border and appreciates their professional response and vigilance.

The chief minister says that maintaining peace remains the top priority and makes it clear that no one will be allowed to spread terrorism or disturb law and order in the country.

Laptop distribution ceremony held under Phase-IV at Virtual University of Pakistan

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Virtual University of Pakistan formally commenced the distribution of laptops under Phase-IV of the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme 2025 in a prestigious ceremony held at its Head Office in Islamabad today. A total of 2,475 laptops will be distributed among eligible students of the University in phases.

The ceremony was graced by

Ms. Wajihah Qamar, Minister of State, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, as the Chief Guest. Ms. Rabia Naseem Farooqi, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, attended the event as Guest of Honor.

Speaking on the occasion, the Worthy Rector, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, highlighted the significance of the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme in

empowering students through enhanced access to technology. He expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training for its continued support in promoting digital inclusion and academic excellence across Pakistan.

The Chief Guest, Ms. Wajihah Qamar, appreciated the pivotal role of Virtual University in expanding access to higher education through innovative and technology-driven

learning platforms. She emphasized the government's commitment to equipping youth with modern tools to strengthen their academic and professional capabilities.

Ms. Rabia Naseem Farooqi congratulated the selected students and encouraged them to utilize the laptops productively to further enhance their education along with digital skills and contribute positively to national development.



Prof. Dr. Ather Azim Khan, Registrar of Virtual University of Pakistan, along with senior officials, faculty members, and

students, was also present on the occasion. While addressing the ceremony, he stated that the entire selection and distribution

process was conducted strictly on merit and in accordance with the guidelines and directions of the Higher Education Commission.

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Ukraine's Existential Struggle for Freedom and Independence

February 24 marks four years since the beginning of Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. For the fifth consecutive year, Ukraine has been resisting the invasion, exercising the inherent right of self-defense enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter. The war has already lasted longer than the 1941-1945 conflict between the Nazi Third Reich and the USSR — a sobering historical parallel that underscores both its duration and its magnitude.



H. E Markiian Chuchuk

From the outset, Russia's actions have constituted a flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, which prohibits the acquisition of territory by force. On 2 March 2022, 141 UN member states adopted the UN General Assembly Resolution "Aggression against Ukraine," unequivocally condemning Moscow's invasion. Yet condemnation alone has not halted the violence.

The human cost is staggering. According to expert assessments, Russia's losses in killed and wounded have exceeded one million people.

What has Russia achieved at such an enormous cost? Over the past two years, Russian forces have occupied approximately 1.5 percent of Ukraine's territory. In many sectors, their daily advance has been measured in tens of meters — slower than during trench warfare in the First World War. The inability to break Ukraine's resistance has exposed

the limitations of the Russian military machine. Despite vast material and human resources, Moscow has failed to achieve its strategic objectives: the destruction of Ukraine's statehood and independence.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has demonstrated resilience and operational effectiveness. It now possesses the largest land army in Europe and ranks among the world's twenty most powerful armed forces. Its defense-industrial complex has shown unprecedented growth under wartime conditions, significantly strengthening national defense capabilities.

The driving force behind this war remains Vladimir Putin's obsession with imperial greatness and his disregard for human life. Russian citizens are paying with their lives for the ideological illusions of their leadership. At the same time, the war has accelerated the erosion of Russia's geopolitical position

— from Central Asia and the Caucasus to the Middle East and Latin America.

For Ukraine, the price has been immense: tens of thousands of lives lost, children abducted, millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, and large-scale destruction of civilian and industrial infrastructure. During the winter of 2026, as temperatures fell below minus twenty degrees Celsius, Russia intensified massive missile and drone attacks against Ukraine's critical energy infrastructure. Millions were left without electricity, heating or water in freezing conditions. Such deliberate targeting of civilians falls within the scope of Article II(c) of the Genocide Convention.

In 2026, Russia continues to target maternity hospitals, residential buildings, markets, schools, passenger trains and buses — further expanding its record of war crimes and crimes against humanity. On the battlefield, Russian forces have also used ammunition containing dangerous chemical agents, including CS and CN gas grenades, more than 12,000 times since the start of the full-scale invasion. In January 2026 alone, at least 224 such incidents were documented. These actions constitute grave violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Ukrainian law enforcement agencies have opened 216,090 investigations into war crimes and crimes of aggression committed by Russia. These cases include the killing of at least 16,784 civilians, among them 684 children, and the wounding of 40,178 civilians, including

2,367 children.

According to UN data, in 2025 alone, at least 2,514 civilians were killed and 12,142 injured — the highest annual civilian toll since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. Ninety-seven percent of these casualties resulted from deliberate Russian strikes on residential areas and civilian infrastructure.

Justice is indispensable to a comprehensive and lasting peace. On 25 June 2025, an agreement establishing the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine was signed in Hague. This Tribunal is the first international judicial body since World War II mandated to prosecute the crime of aggression regardless of the official position of the suspects. Ukraine continues to cooperate closely with the International Criminal Court to ensure accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Russia's aggression has also generated destabilizing global effects. By disrupting supply chains, Moscow has pushed at least 70 million people worldwide to the brink of starvation. Despite being at war, Ukraine remains a reliable guarantor of global food security through the humanitarian initiative "Grain from Ukraine," launched by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. More than 320,000 tons of agricultural commodities have been delivered to 18 countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, supporting approximately 20 million people.

Continued on Page 7

Pakistan urges urgent steps to ensure safety of UN peacekeepers

As one of the world's largest contributors to UN peacekeeping, Pakistan has issued a stark warning regarding the evolving dangers facing blue helmets, saying the growing use of unmanned aerial systems and other devices by hostile actors has transformed the threat environment.

"Peacekeeping environments are becoming more complex, more fluid and more lethal," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told an event held at UN Headquarters in New York to discuss the 'Safety and Security of UN Peacekeepers in the Context of Emerging Technologies'.

"Our response must therefore be equally adaptive, coherent and collective," he said, adding that for troop and police-contributing countries, safety and security of peacekeepers has a human dimension.

"Our peacekeepers serve in the most dangerous theatres, often with significant constraints," Ambassador Asim Ahmad said, pointing out that Pakistan has lost 182 peacekeepers under the UN flag.

While attacks against peacekeepers are increasing — in South Sudan, in the Central African Republic, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNIFIL, which monitors the "Blue Line" separating Lebanon and Israel, and other situations, he said the mission resources and footprints are shrinking.

"This combination is dangerous. When capacities are reduced, peacekeepers become more exposed, and hostile actors take note," the Pakistani envoy warned.

In this regard, he cited the recent drone attack in Kadugli which killed 6 Bangladeshi peacekeepers, saying it demonstrates how new technologies are being used by non-State actors.

"It also shows how difficult it is to identify perpetrators and ensure accountability. If attacks cannot be traced, deterrence is weakened. That is why accountability must remain central to our collective efforts."

Emerging technologies, Ambassador Asim Ahmad said, present a "double challenge" — they increase the threat, but also are part of the solution.

"Counter-UAS (Unmanned Aircraft Systems) capabilities, better early-warning systems, improved surveillance and data-driven threat analysis are no longer optional — they are essential for force protection," he said.

"Safety and security must start with a simple principle: mandates must be matched with the necessary capabilities and resources," the Pakistani envoy said, as he again underscored accountability for attacks against peacekeepers.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Ashraf Al-Awsat)

Prahhar: Seven Pillars Seven Bars: The Architecture of Occupation

Recently, New Delhi unveiled "Prahhar," its National Counter-Terrorism Policy, framing it as a "whole-of-government" doctrine anchored in human rights, the rule of law, and the mitigation of structural "root causes."

The seven-pillar framework, prima facie, reads like a liberal democratic manifesto centered on intelligence-led prevention, judicial oversight, community engagement, and societal resilience. Yet in contested regions like Jammu and Kashmir, where this strategy is stress-tested on daily basis, Prahhar reveals itself not as a shield against terrorism, but as a smoke-screen for an enduring occupation. The policy is sophisticated political theatre, designed to placate international observers while normalizing a digital and legal siege of a civilian population.

The dissonance between doctrine and reality is stark and unmistakable. Prahhar's "human rights" pillar claims adherence to constitutional protections and "multiple legal redress mechanisms." On the ground, this manifests in the form of the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act (PSA) 1978—a law that permits detention without trial for up to two years based solely on the "subjective satisfaction" of a magistrate.

Following the unilateral abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, thousands of Kashmiris—including elected representatives, lawyers, and journalists—were caged under the PSA. When courts intervene to quash such detentions, the administration simply issues fresh orders, turning the PSA into a "revolving door" of incarceration, as noted in the case of Mehbooba Mufti v. Union Territory of J&K.

This is not counter-terrorism; it is purely administrative lawfare, intended to suppress political dissent and dissenters who challenge the status quo.

Its so-called "zero-tolerance" framework, in effect, operates within a regime of zero-accountability, masking the pervasive system of impunity.

Similarly, the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) 1990 grants security forces immunity from prosecution for killings, torture, and enforced disappearances in "disturbed areas," requiring only central government sanction to proceed—a permission that is almost never granted.

The Justice Jeevan Reddy Commission recommended repealing AFSPA as far back as 2006, yet it remains the cornerstone of India's Kashmir policy, rendering Prahhar's "rule of law" rhetoric hollow. When security forces operate with legal impunity, "counter-terrorism" becomes indistinguishable from collective punishment.

The AFSPA enables physical impunity, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) 1967 provides the legal vocabulary to criminalize thought while Prahhar cites the UAPA as its "principal anti-terror law." However, the statute's sections 15, 17, and 18, which define "terrorist act" and "unlawful activity," have been weaponized against activists, journalists, and students.

The Bhima Koregaon 16, journalist Siddique Kappan, and anti-CAA protesters have all been imprisoned under the UAPA's reverse burden of proof and stringent bail provisions, creating a pre-trial detention regime that the Supreme Court has criticized yet failed to restrain.

When organizing a protest or posting critical

commentary online qualifies as "terrorism," the strategy is not neutralizing militancy—it is annihilating democratic opposition.

The "resilience" pillar promises the protection of critical infrastructure, but in Jammu and Kashmir, resilience means enduring the world's longest internet shutdown, braving state repression peacefully, and refusing to surrender political and democratic rights.

From August 2019 to March 2020, and through recurring throttling thereafter, Delhi imposed a digital blackout that the Supreme Court in Anuradha Bhasin (2020) affirmed violated fundamental rights. Rather than heed the court, the state weaponized Prahhar's "cyber-counterterrorism" provisions to justify mass surveillance—most infamously through the Pegasus spyware revelations—turning the entire population into suspects.

A policy that severs millions from the global digital commons while infiltrating their devices with military-grade spyware is not building resilience; it is constructing a panopticon.

India's engagement with international human rights mechanisms exposes this duplicity. While enthusiastically implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1373 and FATF standards to combat terror financing, Delhi systematically denies access to UN Special Rapporteurs on torture, extrajudicial executions, and minority rights. During Universal Periodic Review cycles, India "accepts" recommendations on counter-terrorism cooperation but merely "notes" (rejects) calls to repeal AFSPA, reform UAPA, or investigate civilian killings in Kashmir. This bifurcation—embracing the security architecture while rejecting the human rights architecture—reveals Prahhar as a diplomatic instrument to deflect scrutiny, not a genuine commitment to rights-based governance.

Continued on Page 7

Indian Forces Used Chemical Weapons in Kishtwar: Call for International Investigation

In the Muslim majority Kishtwar district in Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir, two young men were killed during a recent brutal military operation conducted by the Indian Army. According to local testimonies, chemical substances were used during the raid, consequently the bodies of the deceased were burned beyond recognition. These serious allegations have sent across the region, intensifying fear and anguish in an already heavily militarised territory.

Residents of the Chatroo area occupied territory stated that the youths were taken into custody during a prolonged search operation before being killed in a staged encounter.

Reports circulating locally allege that chemical compound was used to destroy evidence and conceal identities. Following the incident, additional troops were deployed, and the area was sealed off, restricting movement and communication. Such measures have further heightened concerns about transparency and accountability.

Widespread protests have erupted across multiple localities. Religious scholars, community elders and civil society representatives have called for a credible and independent investigation. Families of the victims maintain that domestic accountability mechanisms have repeatedly failed to deliver justice, reinforcing a longstanding perception of impunity.

Observers and rights advocates argue that this incident reflects a broader pattern of alleged extrajudicial actions in the region. Past tragedies such as the Gawakadal massacre, the Bijbehara massacre and the Sopore massacre remain deeply embedded in public memory. These events, widely documented by human rights groups, are frequently

cited as examples of excessive use of force against civilians. Allegations of burning homes and civilian property during cordon and search operations have also surfaced repeatedly over the years, further eroding trust.

Under international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians is a binding obligation. The Geneva Conventions, particularly Common

Article 3, prohibit violence to life and person, cruel treatment and outrages upon personal dignity against those not participating in hostilities. Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention classifies willful killing and inhuman treatment as grave breaches.

The Chemical Weapons Convention categorically prohibits the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances. Chemical substances against civilians constitutes a serious violation of international law. Furthermore, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court defines in Article 8 the intentional targeting of civilians and use of prohibited weapons as war crimes, while Article 7 addresses crimes against humanity committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population.

As Jammu and Kashmir remains a United Nations recognized disputed territory, the demand for an impartial international investigation is both a legal necessity and a moral imperative. Only an independent inquiry under international supervision can establish the facts, ensure accountability and uphold the principles of justice and human dignity.

The author is a senior leader of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference and a legal expert in international law. He can be reached at faiz.naqshbandi@gmail.com.

Analysis

Altaf Hussain Wani

Analysis

Syed Faiz Naqshbandi

Pakistan slams India over terrorism allegations, condemns Israel's West Bank move

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday accused India of involvement in terrorism inside its territory and alleged that New Delhi is engaged in anti-Pakistan propaganda, while also warning that recent Israeli actions pose a threat to regional peace.

At a weekly media briefing, Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Hussain Andrabi said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited Doha at the invitation of the Emir of Qatar.

During the visit, both sides agreed to enhance cooperation across all areas of mutual interest, including discussions on Afghanistan and defense collaboration.

The spokesperson added that Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has departed for Saudi Arabia to present Pakistan's position at an extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).



He reiterated Pakistan's strong condemnation of Israel's move to convert parts of the West Bank into state land, calling the step unacceptable and a violation of international law.

Marking the 19th anniversary of the Samjhauta Express attack, in which more than 70 people lost their lives, Andrabi condemned what he described as the Indian government's "callousness" and the release of four convicted individuals.

He demanded that all those involved be brought to justice.

Addressing concerns about Afghanistan, the spokesperson stressed that Pakistan's actions are directed against terrorists, not the Afghan people.

He said that documented evidence of terrorism has been presented to the United Nations Security Council.

While welcoming Qatar's efforts to facilitate reconciliation between Pakistan and Afghanistan, he termed threatening statements from Kabul as regrettable.

Pakistan's armed forces and law enforcement agencies, he said, are fully prepared to respond to any such threats. The spokesperson added that Pakistan is aware of defense cooperation between India and Israel and remains prepared for any threats to peace.

Referring to protests in Israel during the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he remarked that it is "encouraging to see that some conscientious voices still exist there."

Immediate & effective response given to Afghan Taliban's unprovoked action: MoIB



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MoIB) said on Thursday that the security forces have given an "immediate and effective" response to the "unprovoked action" of the Afghan Taliban regime along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

"Afghan Taliban miscalculated and opened unprovoked fire on multiple locations across Pakistan Afghanistan border in KP which is being met with immediate, and effective response by Pakistan's security forces," said the MoIB in a news statement.

"Taliban regime forces are being delivered punishment in Chitral, Khyber, Mohmand, Kurram and Bajaur sectors," the ministry said, confirming "heavy casualties" on Afghan side with multiple posts and equipment destroyed.

The ministry said Pakistan would take all necessary measures to ensure its territorial integrity and the safety and security of its citizens.

RPO Sohail Akhtar Sukhera Meets Goods Transport Associations



Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Regional Police Officer Faisalabad, Sohail Akhtar Sukhera, held a meeting with a delegation of Goods Transport Associations.

The delegation included Mohsin Saleem Akhtar, Chairman of Faisalabad Goods Carriers Association, along with representatives from the Container Association, Cargo Association and Mazda Association.

Both sides agreed on formulating a joint strategy to promote vigilance and enhance security within the transport sector. The RPO Sohail Akhtar Sukhera assured full protection of life and property of individuals associated with goods transportation and stated that concrete measures would be taken to address security issues faced by the sector.

Speaking on the occasion, RPO Sohail Akhtar Sukhera said that the safety and security of goods transport vehicles will be ensured at all costs. Continuous engagement with the trader and transporter community remains our priority. Through a joint and coordinated strategy, sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by the transport sector will be achieved, and the protection of the business community will be ensured under all circumstances.

FIA ACC Action Against Spurious and Smuggled Drugs in Quetta

News Desk

QUETTA: The Anti-Corruption Circle (ACC) of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Quetta, carried out a successful operation against the illegal trade of spurious and smuggled medicines. The raid was conducted as part of ongoing efforts to curb the circulation of counterfeit and unregistered pharmaceuticals in the region.

During the operation, the accused, Muhammad Waseem s/o Abdul Hakeem, was apprehended. A substantial quantity of Indian-origin medicines, suspected to be smuggled and unregistered, was recovered from his possession.

The seized medicines are suspected to be spurious and smuggled, posing a serious risk to public health. The estimated market value of the recovered items is approximately PKR 2.5 million.

The operation and subsequent briefing were conducted by Fazal Rehman Kakar, Deputy Director, Anti-Corruption Circle Quetta, who stated that further investigation has been initiated to identify other individuals involved in this illegal network. Strict legal action will be taken against all those found responsible.

FIA remains committed to safeguarding public health and combating the menace of counterfeit and smuggled pharmaceuticals.



Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Allama Tahir-ul-Hassan, Central Deputy General Secretary of the Pakistan Ulama Council and Member of the Divisional Peace Committee, said this in his special statement and added that the Afghan interim government and the Afghans who are waging a campaign against Pakistani scholars are challenged to appoint Islamic scholars in whose presence Pakistani scholars will present their position and the Taliban will present their position.

Pakistani religious leader challenges Afghan Interim Govt to Islamic Debate on Terrorism

It should be decided in the light of the Quran and Sunnah whether the terrorism being carried out in Pakistan under the auspices of the Afghan interim government is permissible or unlawful according to Sharia and whether the Pakistani government's response to this terrorism is correct or not.

The Quran and Sunnah will make it clear. The officials of the Afghan government and the terrorists of the Indian and Afghan media will never accept this challenge from us.

But this challenge is always there from our side and the scholars and the entire nation of Pakistan stand with their Pakistani army and security institutions and the operation should continue until the last terrorist is eliminated in Afghanistan.

The Holy Quran clearly commands that any group that rebels should be fought until it surrenders to Allah's command.

Teachers and government employees hold protest rally



Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Lakhs of employees will protest at all divisional places and in Lahore on March 31 for the approval of their demands, these views were expressed by Chief Coordinator AGICA Pakistan Rehman Ali Bajwa while addressing the participants of the peaceful protest demonstration

and rally organized by teachers and employees from the Department of Water Resources to the District Council Chowk under the auspices of All Government Employees Grand Alliance.

Thousands of teachers and employees from across the division participated in the rally. The rally was led by Chief Coordinator AGICA

Pakistan Rehman Ali Bajwa, Central Senior Vice President APC Chaudhry Zulfikar Ali Kahlon, Provincial President Chaudhry Shafiq Rasool Sindhu, Hafiz Ghulam Mohiuddin Central Teachers Union, Chaudhry Muhammad Safdar Punjab Education Association, Mian Muhammad Saeed, District President PAS and Senior Staff Association, Chairman

Chaudhry Imtiaz Ahmad Tatla, Chairman APC Mian Maqsood Ahmed, Rana Sajjad Ahmed Khan, Shahbaz Ahmed Khan President Punjab, Atiqur Rehman, Aamir Mahmood Awan, Rana Yasir and others.

The participants held banners and placards with the demands written on them for the approval of the demands.

Uzbekistan and Pakistan strengthen the bridges of friendship

Bekhzod Alimjanov

In the first days after Uzbekistan's independence, I was deeply moved to learn that in both large and small cities across Pakistan, our Pakistani brothers welcomed this event with joy and enthusiasm. It was both heartening and somewhat surprising to see our independence so warmly received by people in a distant land.

I encountered this same sense of goodwill during my subsequent visit to Pakistan. Despite the geographical distance between our countries, I found a strong sense of spiritual closeness — a feeling that our Pakistani friends genuinely share in our joys and stand with us in times of hard-

ship.

Over time, I came to understand that this connection had been shaped over centuries. Travelers from the lands of present-day Uzbekistan journeyed towards the Indian subcontinent for trade and pilgrimage, laying the foundations for lasting ties. Historical, cultural and spiritual links — rooted in the legacy of the Silk Road and strengthened by the influence of Sufi traditions — have helped foster a deep and enduring friendship between our peoples.

A particularly significant role in bringing our nations closer together has been played by the shared legacy of Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur — a towering historical figure whose heritage remains important to both

Uzbekistan and Pakistan. This common inheritance has contributed to similarities in our traditions, languages and cultural outlook. I have sensed this closeness not only during official meetings, but also in conversations with ordinary people, which have consistently reaffirmed the depth of mutual understanding between our societies.

Over the years, these ties have been reinforced by cultural and spiritual affinity, as well as shared values, encouraging closer cooperation at both the regional and international levels.

Bilateral engagement has steadily expanded over time, reaching the level of a strategic partnership in 2021 — a reflection of the growing depth of relations, the widening scope of inter-

action, and the inclusion of new areas of cooperation.

In recent years, the continued strengthening of friendly ties between Uzbekistan and Pakistan has largely been driven by the strong political commitment of the two leaders — President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan — and the trust-based, constructive dialogue that has developed between them. This, in turn, reflects a shared desire to deepen mutual understanding and further reinforce their longstanding bonds.

Over the past decade, Uzbekistan and Pakistan have made tangible progress in advancing political dialogue, expanding trade and economic cooperation, enhancing collaboration in

the fields of defense and security, and strengthening cultural and humanitarian exchanges, as well as coordination on regional and international issues.

Today, relations between Tashkent and Islamabad continue to evolve on the basis of good neighborliness, mutual trust and respect for each other's interests. Closer institutional contacts have been established, political confidence has grown, and cooperation between government bodies and business communities in both countries has become increasingly dynamic.

With the regional climate becoming more favorable, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has focused on strengthening ties and connectivity between Central and South Asia — including a major

project to connect Uzbekistan to Pakistan's seaports through Afghanistan.

High-level dialogue and cooperation between the respective governments and state institutions have helped facilitate mutually beneficial engagement and created new opportunities to deepen collaboration across several key areas.

In Pakistan, there is also growing attention to initiatives focused on the study of the Uzbek language, literature and history. The teaching of Uzbek at the National University of Modern Languages in Islamabad is a clear example of the interest in, and respect for, our country and its linguistic heritage.

Relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan are entering

a new phase of development based on partnership and shared interests. In a rapidly changing global environment, this cooperation has the potential to serve as a successful model of inter-regional engagement capable of bridging geographical and political divides.

Uzbek-Pakistani relations are continuing to develop across political, economic and cultural spheres. This not only reflects a shared commitment to strengthening friendly ties, but also opens up new opportunities for long-term and mutually beneficial partnership, contributing to stability and sustainable development across the wider region. *Author is Chief Research Fellow at the Center for Foreign Policy Studies.*

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
168,893.08	164,626.29
Day's High	Day's Low
169,374.27	162,953.63
Index Value	Change
29,554,789,644	+4266.79
Percentage	Time
+2.59%	26 Feb, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,851.83	+45.42
Percentage	Time
+0.42%	26 Feb, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
49,493.10	+10.95
Percentage	Time
+0.022%	26 Feb, 11:32 am GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
58,753.39	+170.27
Percentage	Time
+0.29%	26 Feb, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	197.40	201.05
Bahrain Dinar	742.02	751.52
Canadian Dollar	203.40	206.90
China Yuan	38.25	39.30
Danish Krone	43.32	43.72
Euro	329.92	334.44
Hong Kong Dollar	35.29	36.16
Indian Rupee	2.8	3.25
Japanese Yen	1.7803	1.8800
Kuwaiti Dinar	905.68	915.12
Malaysian Ringgit	66.50	68.45
New Zealand \$	165.33	168
Norwegians Krone	27.61	27.91
Omani Riyal	726.76	736.26
Qatari Riyal	76.07	77.75
Saudi Riyal	74.75	75.5
Singapore Dollar	219.28	223.22
Swedish Korona	30.1	30.4
Swiss Franc	358.42	362.85
Thai Bhat	8.5	8.65
U.A.E Dirham	76.3	77.3
UK Pound Sterling	378.06	382.32
US Dollar	280.40	282.30

SECP Revises Shariah Screening Criteria for PSX-KMI All Share Index

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has approved revisions to the Shariah screening criteria and methodology for the PSX-KMI All Share Index. The revisions align with international benchmarks and aim to strengthen investor confidence in Shariah-compliant capital market instruments.

The decision follows a high-level review meeting of the Committee on the Post-2027 Financial Sector Strategy, chaired by the Finance Secretary. The meeting emphasized accelerating the implementation of initiatives in line with the Federal Shariat Court's ruling. Progress on the ongoing transformation and next steps toward transitioning Pakistan's financial system to a Riba-free framework were reviewed. The SECP was directed to prepare a comprehensive plan for transforming SECP-regulated sectors into Shariah-compliant models and to develop a post-2027 strategy to sustain the transition.

The enhancement of Islamic indices forms part of this broader reform agenda under the SECP's Strategic Action Plan 2024-26 for enabling of Islamic finance in all regu-



lated sectors. These measures are part of the ongoing implementation of the Federal

Shariat Court's ruling and the 26th Constitutional Amendment relating to Article 38(1)(f), which mandate the elimination of riba from the financial system in a phased manner by December 2027.

The list of Shariah-compliant companies for the PSX-KMI All Share Index will be published with a five-working-day objection window for evidence-based requests for revision. A mechanism has also been introduced for interim inclusion of newly listed companies, subject to screening and approval by the KMI Index Committee.

SECP has further advised PSX to consider additional enhancements, including reducing the non-compliant investments-to-total assets ratio from 33 percent to 30 percent, introducing quarterly index updates, and automating data collection.

Under the Shariah Governance Regulations, 2023, screening methodologies for Shariah-compliant securities require SECP approval. Accordingly, PSX, Al-Meezan Investment Management Limited, and Meezan Bank Limited jointly submitted the methodology for the PSX-KMI All Share Index, which was approved by SECP in May 2024.

Meeting with Coca Cola Delegation

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, held a meeting with a senior delegation of Coca-Cola Icecek Pakistan on Thursday.



Photo: PID

Imran Amin meets CM's Advisor Ali Mustafa Dar

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Chief Executive Officer of Punjab Central Business District Development Authority known as CBD Punjab and Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA) Imran Amin met with Ali Mustafa Dar Advisor to the Chief Minister of Punjab on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Special Initiatives. The high-level meeting focused on the strategic integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and tokenization frameworks within the ongoing and upcoming projects of CBD Punjab and RUDA.

Ali Mustafa Dar appreciated the proactive approach of CBD Punjab and RUDA in embracing AI and inno-

vatative financial technologies. He assured full support from his office in facilitating policy guidance, technical collaboration and pilot initiatives to position Punjab as a leading hub for smart and technology-enabled urban development.

CEO CBD Punjab & RUDA Imran Amin briefed the Advisor on the ongoing progress of CBD Punjab & RUDA emphasizing their vision to transform urban development through vertical growth sustainability and smart-city principles. He reiterated the commitment of both authorities to adopt emerging technologies that align with the Government of Punjab's digital transformation agenda.

Supernet Limited Merges into Supernet Technologies Limited Following Court Sanction

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Supernet Limited has been merged with and into Supernet Technologies Limited (STL) pursuant to a Scheme of Arrangement sanctioned by the High Court of Sindh, resulting in STL becoming the surviving listed entity.

Following the merger's effectiveness, all assets, liabilities, rights, and obligations of Supernet Limited have been vested in STL. The merged entity will continue operations under the name Supernet Technologies Limited and will trade on the Main Board of the Pakistan Stock Exchange under the symbol "STL".

Under the capital reorganization approved as part of the Scheme of Arrangement, STL will capitalize its accumulated profits and issue 5.5 million fully paid-up ordinary shares of PKR 10 each to its existing shareholders in the ratio of 11 shares for every one share held. Subsequently, STL will issue 101.62 million fully paid-up ordinary shares of PKR 10 each to the shareholders of Supernet Limited based on the approved share swap ratio. Following the issuance of new shares,



STL's issued and paid-up share capital will increase to approximately PKR 1.076 billion, comprising 107.6 million ordinary shares.

Supernet Limited, listed on the Growth Enterprise Market (GEM) Board of the PSX, was founded in 1995 and has operated as a nationwide provider of data connectivity and digital infrastructure

services. The company has established operational coverage across more than 200 cities and towns. In 2024, Supernet strengthened its regulatory framework by obtaining Fixed Local Loop (FLL) licenses for 14 regions from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, enabling enhanced telecom service delivery under a unified licensing regime.

CCP Approves Acquisition of Attock Cement by Fauji Cement and Kot Addu Power Company

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved the proposed acquisition of the Attock Cement Pakistan Limited by Fauji Cement Company Limited and Kot Addu Power Company Limited, following a Phase-I competition assessment conducted under the Competition Act, 2010.

On February 3, 2026, Fauji Cement Company Limited and Kot Addu Power Company Limited filed a pre-merger application for the acquisition of controlling interest in Attock Cement Pakistan Limited from Pharaon Investment Group Limited. The proposed acquisition is pursuant to Scheme of Compromises, Arrangement, and Reconstruction

Agreement dated January 30, 2026.

Upon completion of the transaction, Fauji Cement Company Limited and Kot Addu Power Company Limited will acquire control of Attock Cement Pakistan Limited.

Fauji Cement Company Limited, a subsidiary of Fauji Foundation, is a publicly listed company engaged in the manufacture and sale of cement and related products. Kot Addu Power Company Limited is a publicly listed energy company engaged in power generation. Attock Cement Pakistan Limited is a publicly listed cement manufacturer.

The seller, Pharaon Investment Group Limited, is an international investment holding company based in Lebanon.

Standard Chartered Pakistan delivers resilient annual performance with profit before tax of PKR 58.5 billion

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Standard Chartered Bank Pakistan Limited (SCBPL) delivered a resilient financial performance with a profit before tax of PKR 58.5bn compared to PKR 100.6bn last year.

Revenue was lower year on year primarily due to sharp reduction in interest rates. The impact of margin compression on revenue was partially offset by a decrease in cost of funds.

Despite a high inflationary environment and continuous investments in our infrastructure, operating expenses were well managed through efficiencies and disciplined spending, with an increase of 6% from last year. Moreover, a prudent risk approach coupled with strong recoveries of bad debts led to a net release of PKR 1.8bn during the year.

On the liabilities side, the Bank's total deposits stood at PKR 650bn; down by 22% from start of the year.

This was driven by a deposit optimization initiative, which is reflected in the improved current accounts mix, comprising 59% of the deposit book as compared to 48% last year.

On the assets side, net advances continued positive momentum and were higher by PKR 43bn or 25% since start of the year. The Bank is well placed to cater for the needs of its clients and will continue its strategy to build a profitable, efficient and sustainable portfolio.



IMF Delegation Engages with OICCI in Interactive Session on Key Economic and Taxation Issues

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) convened a dialogue between a visiting International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation, led by Iva Petrova and Mahir Binici, and CEOs of leading member multinational companies. The discussion focused on Pakistan's economic outlook and the perspectives of foreign investors operating in the country.

OICCI President Mr. Yousaf Hussain acknowledged the progress achieved in macroeconomic stabilisation. Fiscal consolidation is strengthening, primary balance discipline is improving, the external account has stabilised with reserve buffers rebuilding, inflation is moderating, and the financial sector remains resilient. The recent improvement in Pakistan's credit ratings reflects enhanced fiscal discipline and renewed international credibility under the ongoing reform programme.

Secretary General OICCI Mr. M. Abdul Aleem noted that Pakistan's strong geo-economic positioning offers significant potential that must be unlocked through greater policy coherence, predictability, and investment-focused improvements in the regulatory framework. He stressed the need for stronger incentivisation of export-led industrialisation to attract sustained long-term investment inflows.

OICCI reaffirmed its commitment to continued engagement with policymakers and international partners to support reforms that sustain stability and promote long-term investment in Pakistan.

ICC Men's T-20 Cricket World Cup 2026: South Africa VS West Indies

Asim Tanveer

AHMEDABAD: The South African cricket team remained unbeaten in the T20 World Cup 2026 after breezing past the West Indies by nine wickets in its Super 8 match at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

After electing to field first in their second Super 8 stage game at the same venue, the Protea pacers Lungi Ngidi (3/30), Kagiso Rabada (2/22) and Corbin Bosch (2/31) ripped through the West Indies top and middle orders.

However, Jason Holder (49) and Romario Shepherd (52 not out) stitched together the highest eighth-wicket partnership in T20 World Cup history to drag their side from 83/7 to 176/8.

Aiden Markram (82 not out off 46) produced a skipper's knock to make short work of the 177-run chase as the Proteas achieved their target in 16.1 overs.

The win saw South Africa go to the top of the T20 World Cup 2026 Super 8 Group 1 with four points and a Net Run Rate (NRR) of 2.890. They are also favourably



placed to make the semis. West Indies flew out of the blocks thanks to Brandon King's 21 off 11 but the early momentum quickly faded.

Ngidi removed Shai Hope and Shimron Hetmyer in the third over while Ngidi picked up King and Roston Chase in the next. By the end of four overs, West Indies were in freefall at 43/4.

Wickets of Sherfane Rutherford, Rovman Powell and Matthew Forde left West Indies tottering at 83/7 inside 11 overs.

From there, Holder and Shepherd absorbed pressure before

striking decisively at the death. Holder's 49 off 31 included four boundaries and three maximums while Shepherd's maiden T20I half-century was laced with three fours and four sixes.

South Africa's chase of 177 was a cruise from the outset, powered by a commanding opening stand of 95 runs between Aiden Markram and Quinton de Kock.

Markram and Quinton de Kock matched each other stroke for stroke as South Africa motored to 69/0 by the six-over mark, well ahead of the required rate.



Quinton de Kock (47 off 24) missed out on a fifty after being deceived by a slower one from Chase in the eighth over.

However, Aiden Markram continued his attack, bringing up a 27-ball fifty in the next over. It was his third half-century of the T20 World Cup 2026 and 14th overall. Aiden Markram's knock included seven fours and four maximums.

An unbeaten 82-run stand between Markram and Ryan Rickleton, who finished not out on 45 off 28, saw the Proteas sail over the line in the 17th over.

This was South Africa's fifth win over West Indies in six head-to-head meetings at the T20 World Cup.

South Africa's next match at the T20 World Cup will be against Zimbabwe on Sunday.

South Africa vs West Indies T20 World Cup 2026, Super 8 Match

brief scores: West Indies 176/8 in 20 overs (Romario Shepherd 52 not out, Jason Holder 49; Lungi Ngidi 3/30) lost to South Africa 177/1 in 16.1 overs (Aiden Markram 82 not out; Roston Chase 1/46) by nine wickets.



The Winter Festival was organized by Piyam Foundation at Askari XI, Lahore

Sports Desk

LAHORE: The Winter Festival held at Askari XI recently presented a scene full of colours, happiness, and the splendour of life. The festival provided entertainment and enjoyable activities for people of all ages. The smiles of children, the enthusiasm of the youth, and the joy of the elders were making the event memorable. The participants were enjoying the diverse flavours of food and drink, games, music, and shopping.

The Piyam Foundation team was also present in this sea of happiness, but the purpose of their presence was not just entertainment but to spread the message of serving humanity. A special awareness stall was set up by the foundation where



information was provided about the projects related to the welfare of the disabled, the promotion of education, and the deprived sections of

the society. Chairman Syed Zohaib Saeed Advocate met the participants along with the special persons and

informed them about the objectives of the foundation. On this occasion, guests from China also appreciated the welfare projects of the foundation and called it a beautiful example of philanthropy.

Chief Operating Officer Irshad Ahmed Soomro, setting a high example of selflessness and sacrifice, donated the entire income generated from the exhibition and sale of precious stones included in his personal collection to the foundation. This act was a manifestation of the fact that when the spirit of service is ingrained in the heart, a person gives up even his most precious things for the happiness of others.

President Piyam Foundation Dr. Madiha Batool, while visiting various stalls of the fair, encour-

aged people to join the mission of serving humanity. On this occasion, Colonel (ret'd) Rana Afzal, makeup artist Jannat, Madam Dua, and other esteemed personalities also announced their cooperation with the foundation.

Considering the promotion of education as the basis of social development, Piyam

Foundation provides warm clothes, books, copies, stationery, clean water, and food to deserving children. Sewing machines are being provided, and skill training programs are being organized to make women independent. Projects such as assisting in the marriages of orphan girls, providing wheelchairs for special people, and distributing langar, blankets, and clothes for homeless people are also underway.

Alif Holdings Announces Launch of "20 Canal Residence"

LAHORE: Alif Holdings, a growing name in Lahore's premium real estate landscape, has officially announced the upcoming launch of its 20th project titled "20 Canal Residence," a signature high-rise development set to redefine luxury apartment living in the city.

Strategically located on Main Canal Bank Road, Lahore, 20 Canal Residence is a 4.5 Kanal, Ground plus 11 (G+11) premium resi-

dential project designed to introduce an elevated lifestyle concept to Lahore's urban community.

The project stands out as a high-end residential development featuring luxury apartments with private swimming pools, a rare and exclusive offering in Lahore's apartment segment. The concept reflects Alif Holdings' commitment to blending modern architecture with premium lifestyle amenities.

ICC Men's T-20 Cricket World 2026 Cup Super Eight Match

Abhishek Sharma Returns to Form as India Beat Zimbabwe to Keep Semi-Final Hopes Alive

Asim Tanveer

CHENNAI: The Indian cricket team beat Zimbabwe by 72 runs in the T20 World Cup 2026 Super 8 match at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Thursday to keep its hopes of qualifying for the semi-finals alive.

In a must-win situation after losing to South Africa in their Super 8 Group 1 opener, India rode on half-centuries by Abhishek Sharma and Hardik Pandya to post 256/4 after being sent in to bat first.

Despite Brian Bennett's unbeaten 97, Zimbabwe trudged along to 184/6 in 20 overs, never really threatening the target.

The result sets up India's

last Super 8 Group 1 match against the West Indies at the Eden Gardens on Sunday as a virtual playoff, with the winner progressing to the semi-finals.

West Indies lost to South Africa earlier in the day and are now tied with India in the Group 1 standings on two points. The Proteas lead the group with four points and will play Zimbabwe in their final Super 8 game.

Sanju Samson, opening the batting with Abhishek Sharma, took the attack to the Zimbabwe bowlers early on but failed to convert his start into a big score as he was caught in deep midwicket off Blessing Muzarabani for 24.

However, Abhishek Sharma and Ishan Kishan joined forces

to sustain the early momentum. The duo took India to 80/1 after six overs—the third-highest powerplay score in this edition of the T20 World Cup.

Abhishek Sharma also brought up his maiden T20 World Cup fifty in 26 balls. Though it was the second-slowest T20I half-century of his career, it was a welcome one for the opener who had managed just 15 runs in four innings in the tournament before this.

Sharma was eventually dismissed for 55 shortly after Ishan Kishan's knock ended on 38. Indian T20 captain Suryakumar Yadav, though, ensured the wickets didn't disrupt India's rhythm and scored a brisk 13-ball 33 to keep the scoring



rate over 10.

Hardik Pandya (50 not out of 23) and Tilak Verma (44 not out off 16) then provided the late fireworks to help India post 256/4—

their highest total at T20 World Cups.

It was also the second-highest team total in the tournament's history after Sri Lanka's 260/6



against Kenya back in the inaugural edition in 2007. India's previous highest total in a T20 World Cup was 218 against England in the same edition.

On a surface favouring the batters, India were made to work for their breakthrough. Brian Bennett and Tadiwanashe Marumani put up 44 for the opening wicket before Axar Patel dismissed the latter for 20 in the seventh over.

Varun Chakravarthy, the world No.1 T20 bowler, removed Dion Myers shortly after, but

Bennett battled on to bring up his third fifty of the 2026 T20 World Cup with a six off Jasprit Bumrah.

Zimbabwe captain Sikandar Raza contributed a handy 21-ball 31 before falling victim to Arshdeep Singh.

While wickets proved hard to come by, Zimbabwe never had a real go at the target either. Arshdeep picked up two more wickets towards the end as the Zimbabwe innings tottered to 184/6. Bennett remained unbeaten on 97.

Ukraine's Existential Struggle for Freedom and Independence

Continued from Page 4

In 2025, Pakistan became a recipient of this initiative. With the support of Spain and the Czech Republic, Ukraine delivered 2,000 tons of wheat, 100 tons of vegetable oil, and 200 tons of peas — assistance valued at approximately two million US dollars. These supplies were distributed among 26,000 people affected by floods in Sindh.

Diplomatic efforts continue. Ukraine seeks peace and remains open to diplomacy. However, peace requires political will and readiness for compromise on both sides — conditions that are currently absent in Moscow. The jingoistic rhetoric of Russian officials and the continued strikes against civilians reveal the aggressor's true intentions.

Ukraine's red lines remain unchanged: full respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; the sovereign right to choose alliances; and no externally imposed limitations on Ukraine's defense capa-

bilities. All security-related decisions concerning Ukraine must be made with Ukraine's full participation.

Draft peace proposals that legitimize Russian occupation or annexation are perceived by Ukrainians as appeasement of aggression, with grave consequences not only for Ukraine but for the integrity of the international legal order. Such arrangements would preserve a criminal regime, normalize territorial conquest, and incentivize further expansionism. There is no credible reason to believe that this would produce a safer or more stable world.

The international community appears disoriented. Instead of a renewed and equitable order, we are witnessing the emergence of an era defined by arbitrary dominance and intensified competition among major powers. Law is increasingly being supplanted by force.

Despite immense suffering, Ukraine will not surrender. This war is existential for us. Yet our struggle extends beyond

national survival. By containing an aggressive and terrorist regime, Ukraine makes a decisive contribution to European and global security. Support for Ukraine is not charity; it is a rational investment in shared stability.

Ukraine expresses appreciation for the consistent efforts of the United States aimed at ending the war and for the steadfast support of its European partners. We are equally grateful to Pakistan for its principled position in support of sovereignty and territorial integrity, and for its commitment to a just and lasting peace. As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Pakistan holds significant potential to contribute to advancing a just settlement.

Ukraine does not ask neutral states to choose between geopolitical blocs. Neutrality in great-power rivalry is understandable. However, neutrality must not become indifference to aggression and war crimes. Those who seek peace for their own societies cannot

remain passive observers when the foundations of international law are under assault.

Ukraine firmly aspires to be part of a united Europe — a normative alternative to imperialism and autocracy. For its own defense and prosperity, Europe must continue to strengthen itself militarily and politically and be prepared, when necessary, to respond to global challenges in the language of power. Ukraine sees itself as a pillar of this stronger Europe.

Four years of war have passed. The path to a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace remains arduous. Yet Ukraine calls on its friends and partners to remain resolute and united. Our resilience today is an investment in a more secure tomorrow — for Ukraine, for Europe, and for the international community as a whole.

The writer is Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Prahhar: Seven Pillars Seven Bars: The Architecture of Occupation

Continued from Page 4

Legally, the strategy relies on conflating self-determination with terrorism. By refusing to distinguish between armed combatants (who may have rights under international humanitarian law) and civilians (protected under the ICCPR), and by treating all opposition to Indian sovereignty as "terrorism," Delhi securitizes political dissent.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism has warned that such overbroad frameworks violate the principle of legality and the distinction between civilian and combatant. Yet India persists, denying that IHL applies to Kashmir while simultaneously rejecting the applicability of human rights law, leaving Kashmiris in a legal vacuum where any speech can be terror, and any soldier's bullet

is legal.

Prahhar in essence succeeds not in preventing terrorism, but in legitimizing a permanent state of exception. Until Delhi repeals AFSPA, narrows the UAPA to exclude peaceful dissent, allows UN monitors unfettered access, and ceases using the PSA as a tool of political containment, Prahhar will remain what it truly is: not a strike against cross-border militancy, but a calibrated strike against the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination and India's own constitutional soul. When examined critically, Prahhar's seven pillars are merely seven bars of the same cage.

The writer is the chairman of Islamabad-based think tank—the Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR). He can be reached via email: saleem-wani@hotmail.com

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: The Honourable Chief Justice of Pakistan and Chairman, Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP), chairing a meeting to review nationwide judicial infrastructure reforms at Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday.



PM visits residence of Shaheed Lt Col Shahzada Gul Faraz to offer condolences

Abdul Wahid Khan

MANSEHRA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday visited the residence of Lt Col Shahzada Gul Faraz Shaheed in Manshehra, who was martyred while leading an operation against Fitna al Khawarij terrorists, to offer condolences to his family.

The prime minister met the mother, wife, and children of the martyred Lt Col Gul Faraz and prayed for strength and patience for them to bear the loss.

He also visited the grave of the martyred officer, offered Fateha, and prayed for the elevation of his ranks in Jannah.

"Lt Col Shahzada Gul Faraz Shaheed sacrificed his life while safeguarding the country," the



prime minister said, adding that Shaheed Gul Faraz set an example of bravery and

courage.

He said the entire nation, including himself, was proud of the martyrs and their families, adding that Pakistan could never forget their sacrifices.

The prime minister assured the bereaved family of the government's and the Pakistan Army's full support.

On the occasion, he also announced the establishment of a Daanish School in Manshehra in the name of Lt Col Shahzada Gul Faraz.

Federal Ministers Attaullah Tarar, Engineer Amir Muqam and Sardar Muhammad Yousuf, Adviser to the Prime Minister Rana Sanaullah, Capt (ret'd) Muhammad Safdar, Murtaza Javed Abbasi, and Shah Ji Gul Afridi were also present on the occasion.

Seven children killed, 22 injured in Chaman gas cylinder blast

Bureau Report

QUETTA: At least seven children were killed and 22 others injured in a gas cylinder explosion inside a house in Balochistan's Chaman city on Thursday, officials said.

The tragic incident occurred in the Killi Mahmoodabad area, where a gas cylinder exploded inside a residential house, causing a room to collapse and trapping several people under the debris.

Rescue officials said seven children died after being buried under the rubble, while the injured included five women and eight children.

Security forces cordoned off the area following the explosion as rescue teams launched



relief operations, retrieving them to the Civil Hospital in Chaman. After receiving initial medical treatment, critically injured victims were referred to Quetta due to the severity

of their conditions. Officials warned that the death toll could rise as several injured remain in critical condition.

Police said children had gathered at the house to buy lassi for Iftar when the explosion occurred.

President Asif Ali Zardari expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives, particularly children, and extended condolences to the bereaved families.

He prayed for the departed souls and the swift recovery of the injured, directing authorities to ensure the provision of the best possible medical treatment.

The president also stressed the need for an effective regulatory system to prevent such incidents in the future.

CM Maryam inaugurates Pakistan's first e-taxi scheme

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has inaugurated Pakistan's first e-taxi scheme. Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Maryam Nawaz said E-taxi scheme is a respectable employment scheme, adding that women in Punjab do not need to be afraid of anyone.

She said e-taxi scheme will play a key role in securing employment for women. Every daughter of Punjab is safe, if anyone tries to harm them, let them know the consequences, Maryam Nawaz said. She said women in Punjab are working side by side with men.

Green buses will be delivered to every tehsil of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz said. She said women are being provided



employment opportunities in Punjab. She said e-taxi will generate a monthly income of Rs150,000 to Rs200,000, Maryam Nawaz said. She said trackless train project in Punjab will also

be started soon. Maryam Nawaz said that a subsidy of Rs4 billion has been given in the e-taxi scheme. The Punjab government will pay 50 percent down payment for male drivers and

60 percent for women, Maryam Nawaz said.

E-taxi is an environment-friendly scheme, Chief Minister said. She said Ramadan bazaars converted into convenience markets forever. Maryam Nawaz said environmental pollution is being monitored on a daily basis in Punjab.

In the first phase, 1100 e-vehicles will be provided in the e-taxi scheme. About 30 percent quota is reserved for women in the e-taxi scheme. The colour of the vehicle with a lady driver will be different for women in the e-taxi scheme. In the e-taxi

scheme, the Punjab government will also pay the registration, fitness test and token tax fees of the vehicles. The dues of the e-taxi scheme will be paid in five-year easy installments.

CJP reviews nationwide judicial infrastructure reforms

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Chief Justice of Pakistan, who also serves as Chairman of the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP), chaired meeting to review progress on nationwide judicial infrastructure reforms, with particular emphasis on the solarization of courtrooms and bar rooms across the country.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary of the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan and Resident Additional Secretaries from all provinces. Participants conducted a comprehensive review of projects being implemented under the Judicial Development Fund (JDF), the Under-Developed Regions (UDR) window of the Access to Justice

Development Fund (AJDF), and grants-in-aid provided by federal and provincial governments. Progress benchmarks, funding streams, implementation gaps, system capacities, and technical configurations were examined in detail.

In Punjab, a substantial infrastructure package has been approved, including Rs 99.575 million under UDR, Rs 1,042.893 million under JDF, and Rs 490.442 million as grant-in-aid. Solarization of 56 eligible bar rooms has been completed, while work is underway in 47 additional bar rooms. The provincial government has prioritized solarization of district court complexes, including District Kasur and Tehsil Fort Abbas (Bahawalnagar), during the fiscal year 2025-26.

Pakistan Security Forces Neutralize Ten More 'Khawarij' in Zhob Counter-Terror Operation



Spokesman Report

RAWALPINDI: Further to an intelligence based operation in Zhob District of Balochistan on 24 February 2026, in which eight Indian sponsored Khawarij were successfully neutralized; on "25 February 2026", security forces conducted a comprehensive "area sanitization operation in Zhob District of Balochistan", to hunt down hiding Khawarij belonging to Indian proxy, Fitna al Khawarij.

During the conduct of operation, own forces tracked down Khawarij on multiple routes and effectively engaged their locations. After an ensuing fire exchange, ten Indian

sponsored Khawarij were sent to hell.

Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the Khawarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area.

Sanitization operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Indian sponsored terrorist found in the area. Relentless Counter Terrorism campaign under vision "Azme Istehkam" (as approved by Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out menace of foreign sponsored and supported terrorism from the country.

Aleem Khan denounces PM Modi's 'Double Standards' on Gaza; Calls for global accountability



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan on Thursday issued a scathing critique of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent address to the Knesset, labeling it a "staggering display of double standards" regarding the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

In a powerful statement on his X Account, the Federal Minister highlighted the contradiction in Prime Minister Modi's rhetoric, noting that while the Indian leader claimed "no cause can justify the murder of civilians," he continues to stand firmly with an aggressor. Aleem Khan emphasized that this selective empathy deliberately ignores the harrowing realities on the ground in Gaza, including systematic starvation, the total collapse of the healthcare

infrastructure, and persistent ceasefire violations by Israeli forces.

"The sanctity of human life is a universal principle under international norms; it must be applied to all, not selected based on political convenience," stated Abdul Aleem Khan.

The Minister further described this as a "watershed moment" for the Muslim Ummah. He issued an urgent call to action for nations maintaining robust trade ties with India, urging them to re-evaluate their bilateral partnerships in light of India's current diplomatic stance.

"We cannot allow economic interests to be bought with the silence of a conscience," the Minister remarked. "The international community, particularly the Muslim world, must now choose between economic profit and the blood of the innocent people of Gaza."