



A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ
عبداللہ بن عمرو رضی اللہ عنہما نے فرمایا ہے،
کہا کہ اگر اللہ تعالیٰ نے تم کو ایمان بخشا ہے،
تو تم اس کے ساتھ رہو اور اس کی راہ میں جہاد کرو۔

Daily The Spokesman



EU calls for restraint amid Pakistan, Afghanistan border clashes

The European Union has called on Pakistan and Afghanistan to exercise restraint and engage in dialogue to reduce rising tensions between the two neighboring countries.



Khawaja Asif asks Haqqani not to play role of enemy

Defense Minister Khawaja Asif on Friday said that Afghan Taliban's acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani may settle Pakistan's enemies in his home if he wishes, but he should not join them in playing the role of an enemy...

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High-level meeting

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high level review meeting on the overall National security situation on Saturday.



Photo: PID

PM orders comprehensive effective, security measures in view of prevailing situation

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday directed all relevant institutions at the federal and provincial levels to immediately ensure comprehensive and effective security measures in view of the prevailing situation.

country.

Shehbaz Sharif emphasized that all institutions must discharge their responsibilities with mutual coordination and complete harmony.

The Prime Minister was informed that all security agencies are on alert in light of the current situation and that all necessary measures are being taken to safeguard national security.

In view of the situation in Iran, the Prime Minister directed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take all necessary steps to ensure the safe repatriation of Pakistanis in Iran.

Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif stated that the people of Pakistan and the Armed Forces stand fully prepared at all times to safeguard the country's security, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He stated, "Under the leadership of Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Armed Forces of Pakistan are performing their duties in the best possible manner with national spirit and dedication."

The prime minister said, "The entire nation salutes the sacrifices being rendered by the security forces in the war against terrorism."

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON Engineer Amir Muqam, the Chief Secretaries of all four provinces, Inspector General of Police, and other relevant senior officials.

Russia condemns 'unprovoked armed attack' on Iran by US, Israel

Agencies

ISTANBUL: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Saturday condemned the "unprovoked armed attack" on Iran by the US and Israel, a ministry statement said.

In a phone call with Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Lavrov said the strikes on Iran violate the principles and norms of international law and disregard the grave consequences for regional and global stability and security.

He noted Russia's readiness, including at the UN Security Council, to facilitate the search for peaceful solutions based on international law, mutual respect, and a balance of interests.

Lavrov also emphasized the need to immediately cease attacks against Iran and return to a political and diplomatic resolution.

Araghchi, for his part, briefed Lavrov on steps taken by the Iranian leadership to repel US and Israeli "aggression," saying that Iran plans to urgently convene a meeting of the UN Security Council, according to the statement.

Israel launched the attack on the capital, Tehran.



Iran early Saturday under the name "Lion's Roar," declaring a "special and immediate" state of emergency across the country.

US President Donald Trump also confirmed "major combat operations" in Iran aimed at defending the American people

by "eliminating imminent threats from the Iranian regime."

Later, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel and the US have begun a joint operation against Iran to eliminate what he described as an "existential threat" posed by the Iranian regime.

The attacks come as talks between Washington and Tehran over Iran's nuclear program had been ongoing under Oman's mediation. A new round of talks in Geneva ended on Thursday.

Last June, the US struck three Iranian nuclear sites during the 12-day Israel-Iran war.

Iran will continue legitimate self-defense until aggression ceases fully and unequivocally: FM Araghchi

IRNA

NEW YORK: Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi says Iran will continue to exercise its inherent and lawful right of self-defense until the ongoing aggression by the United States and Israel is ceased "fully and unequivocally."

Araghchi made the remarks in a letter to the UN secretary-general and the president of the UN Security Council on Saturday. Earlier in the day, the US and Israel launched airstrikes on different Iranian cities, including



the capital, Tehran.

The following is the full text of

Araghchi's letter:

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Excellency, I write with profound regret to urgently draw your attention, and that of the members of the United Nations Security Council, to the manifest act of aggression and coordinated large-scale armed attacks perpetrated by the United States of America and the Israeli regime against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Today, 28 February 2026, the

United States and the Israeli regime flagrantly violated the national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran by launching attacks against a number of defensive facilities and civilian sites in various cities across our country. The air strikes carried out by the United States and the Israeli regime constitute a clear violation of Article 2(4) of the Charter of the United Nations and amount to an open armed aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Continued on Page 7

PM Shehbaz speaks to Mohammed bin Salman, condemns Israeli attack

News Desk

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephonic conversation with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on Saturday evening.

He strongly condemned the serious regional escalation that had taken place as a result of the Israeli attack on Iran on Saturday, followed by the regrettable attacks on other Gulf countries.

While assuring the Saudi leadership of Pakistan's full solidarity and support in the current situation, the prime



minister said that Pakistan would always stand with its Saudi brothers and sisters, at all times to come, and under all circumstances. Shehbaz Sharif said, "Pakistan is ready to play a constructive role at this difficult time and prayed that may the blessings of the holy month of Ramazan bring peace to the region at the earliest."

DPM, Saudi FM discuss regional developments

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar spoke on Saturday with Saudi Foreign Minister, Faisal Bin Farhan Al Saud.

Both leaders expressed deep concern over the unfolding



regional developments and agreed to remain in close contact on the evolving situation.

331 Afghan combatants killed, 104 posts destroyed in Operation Ghazab lil-Haq: Tarar

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attullah Tarar said Saturday that security forces killed 331 Afghan Taliban combatants, destroyed 104 posts, and captured 22 others during Operation Ghazab lil-Haq, launched in response to "unprovoked action" from across the border.

Sharing a summary of the Afghan Taliban regime's losses at 9:00 AM, Attullah Tarar said that more than 500

Afghan operatives were injured during Operation Ghazab lil-Haq (Righteous Fury).

The minister added that 163 tanks and armed vehicles



had been destroyed during the operation, while 37 locations across Afghanistan were effectively targeted by air strikes.

Pakistan stands firm, vigilant, fully capable of defending its sovereignty: Dr Tariq

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhary on Saturday said the Indian government and its "propaganda-driven media machinery" must stop misleading the world with fabricated stories about Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In a post on his X account, he said, "The reality is clear and has been witnessed by the world: Pakistan has demonstrated its defensive capability with confidence and precision. When tensions escalated in the past, Indian aircraft, including Rafale jets, were neutralised and exposed before the international community. These are not narratives; these are events recorded and acknowledged

globally."

He said that instead of manufacturing propaganda, India should reflect on its own actions.

Pakistan's armed forces, he added, have consistently acted with resolve against Indian-backed terrorist networks operating across borders. Targeted operations have dismantled these elements one by one, and the world has seen the results.

He further said that no amount of media spins can rewrite facts. False narratives may serve domestic political purposes, but they cannot deceive the international community indefinitely.

"Pakistan stands firm, vigilant, and fully capable of defending its sovereignty. Propaganda will fall. Truth will prevail," he added.

AJK PM hails Pakistan Army's Operation 'Ghazab-lil-Haq' as pride booster



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Describing operation "Ghazab-lil-Haq" as a testament to the courage and bravery of the Pakistan armed forces, the prime minister Azad Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore has said that Pak army's response to Fitnat-ul-Khwarij and their backers has elevated the nation's pride. Addressing a crowded press conference here today the AJK premier

hailed the armed forces for responding effectively to internal and external threats. He said the Taliban regime has consistently breached the commitments it made under the Doha Agreement. He, however, maintained that the armed forces were fully prepared to deal with any kind of threat. Referring to the shifting regional dynamics, he said that Pakistan was going through a difficult period, but the nation stands

completely at the back of its armed and fully united against the malicious plans of its adversaries. Prime Minister Rathore said that the security of Azad Kashmir was closely linked with Pakistan. Reaffirming the full support of the Kashmiri nation for the armed forces, he said that Kashmiri people stand shoulder to shoulder with Pakistan army. He said the government would

move forward while keeping all political stakeholders on board in national matters. Responding to a question about the opposition, he said that disagreement was the opposition's right, but despite that the overall political environment in the region was gradually improving. He said that crucial appointments, including the appointment of Election Commissioner and the Service Tribunal, have been completed.

Women of the Machhi Community Protest Inside Qasimabad Police Station

Qayoom Sarohi

HYDERABAD: Women belonging to the Machhi community staged a strong protest inside the Qasimabad police station in Hyderabad, accusing the police of arresting their boy, Rehman, and subsequently making him disappear, as well as allegedly demanding a bribe. According to details, the protesters said that their young boy Rehman was taken into custody by Qasimabad police outside the Technical College, after which the family was informed. The women stated that when they reached the police station, officers initially demanded Rs. 10,000. Upon delay in payment, the demand was allegedly increased to Rs. 20,000, then Rs. 40,000, and eventually raised to Rs. 100,000 by the following morning. On the other hand, when a team of journalists visited the concerned police station to seek an official stance, the head Muharrar refused to comment and allegedly behaved inappropriately with the reporters. Later, SHO Muhammad Juman Khoso arrived at the station and strongly denied the allegations of abducting and disappearing the boy, as well as demanding a bribe. He stated that they have no information about the mentioned boy and termed the bribery allegations baseless.

Tape ball cricket championship inaugurated by DC Umar Abbas Mela at TT Singh

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: The First Toba Tek Singh Tape Ball Cricket Championship 2026 was formally inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Umar Abbas Mela, at the District Sports Stadium in a colourful ceremony highlighted by a spectacular fireworks display. The event drew a large crowd of cricket enthusiasts and the stadium reverberated with applause and cheers. A total of 32 teams are participating in the championship, which is being played on a knockout basis. The winning team will receive a cash prize of Rs500,000, while the total prize pool for the tournament amounts to Rs2 million. The organisers have also announced prizes for the teams securing second, third and fourth positions. In addition, special cash awards and trophies will be presented to outstanding individual performers, including the players with the most sixes, highest runs and most wickets in the tournament. Assistant Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Munawar Hussain Kamalana Sial, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Zeeshan Labbah Masih, Chief Officer District Council Kashif Mahmood and other officials attended the ceremony. Speaking on the occasion, the deputy commissioner said that encouraging youth towards positive activities and promoting sports were among the top priorities of the district administration. All matches are being live-streamed on the official Facebook page of the Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh.

PPP leader demands all parties conference for impartial AJK General Elections

Bureau Report.

MUZAFFARABAD: Central Deputy Secretary Information of Pakistan Peoples Party Azad Kashmir and candidate for Constituency-7, Shaukat Javed Mir, has strongly demanded that Chief Election Commissioner Justice (R) Ghulam Mustafa Mughal convene an All Parties Conference (APC) to ensure free, fair, and impartial general elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and to undertake advance planning against potential risks. He remarked that Justice (R) Ghulam Mustafa Mughal enjoys a strong reputation and credible standing, and urged him to initiate revolutionary steps to eliminate any perception of lack of transparency in the upcoming elections. Referring to the local government elections held after a 31-year gap under challenging circumstances and without security forces, he appreciated the role of former Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan and then Chief Election Commissioner Justice Abdul Rasheed Sulehria, stating that by resisting internal and external pressures, they had secured a place in history. Shaukat Javed Mir said that Chief Election Commissioner Ghulam Mustafa Mughal enjoys full support from Prime Minister of AJK Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, political and religious parties, and state institutions. He emphasized the need to convene an APC to safeguard the future of coming generations and to foil any conspiracies aimed at postponing the general elections. He further stated that for conducting general elections in AJK in line with national aspirations, PPP remains committed to unconditional

Solidarity with Pakistan Army

KARACHI: Supporters of Markazi Muslim League party chant slogans during rally to show solidarity with Pakistan Army, in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

After Narendra Modi's Address to the Israeli Parliament (Knesset)

The recent address by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Knesset marks a significant diplomatic moment in the evolving relationship between India and Israel. Such engagements between sovereign nations are natural in the conduct of international relations. Nations build alliances, strengthen trade, enhance defense cooperation, and pursue strategic interests. However, when speeches delivered on global platforms touch upon conflicts that carry deep religious, political, and humanitarian sensitivities, they inevitably resonate far beyond

the chamber in which they are spoken. The Middle East conflict, particularly the question of Palestine, remains one of the most complex and emotionally charged issues of our time. It is not merely a geopolitical dispute; it is a human tragedy that has shaped generations. For millions across the Muslim world — including more than 200 million Muslims in India — developments in the region are followed not only as news, but as matters of identity, justice, and empathy. India has historically maintained a delicate diplomatic balance: recognizing Israel's right to security while supporting the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. This balanced

posture earned New Delhi credibility across diverse regions and communities. Any perception of departure from that equilibrium, particularly in rhetoric, naturally generates concern among those who value inclusivity and fairness. Peace in the Middle East cannot be secured through alignment with one narrative alone. It requires acknowledgment of pain on all sides. It demands recognition of both Israel's security concerns and the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-

termination. The international framework for such a resolution is not undefined. The United Nations and various resolutions of the UN Security Council have consistently emphasized negotiated settlement, respect for international law, and the principle of a two-state solution. These are not symbolic declarations; they represent a global consensus that durable peace must rest on justice and mutual recognition. Words spoken by leaders carry

immense weight. In an interconnected world, a speech in one parliament echoes in countless homes across continents. Responsible leadership, therefore, requires careful balance — ensuring that diplomatic warmth toward one nation does not translate into perceived indifference toward another people's suffering. This is not a call for confrontation. Nor is it an argument against strategic partnerships. Rather, it is a reminder that true statesmanship lies in upholding universal principles consistently. Strategic cooperation and moral balance are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they strengthen one another.

For India — a nation built upon pluralism, constitutional equality, and coexistence — foreign policy must reflect its domestic ethos. A balanced and just approach not only strengthens international credibility but also reinforces national unity. The path to peace in the Middle East, and indeed in any conflict zone, will not be paved by applause or alignment alone. It will be built on fairness, restraint, empathy, and an unwavering commitment to justice for all. In an era of global polarization, the world does not need louder declarations. It needs wiser ones.



Shahid Gilani

AJK Chief Secretary Chairs Crucial Meeting to Boost Women's Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: An important meeting of the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) was held at the Chief Secretary's Office Conference Hall in Muzaffarabad under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, Government of Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The meeting commenced with the recitation of the Holy Quran. Mr. Muhammad Zahid Khan, Secretary of the Women Chamber, briefed the participants in detail on the objectives of the Chamber, its ongoing efforts for the promotion of women entre-

preneurship, and initiatives aimed at strengthening women's economic empowerment across the region. Key agenda items included formal registration of the Chamber, reconstitution of the Board of Governors, and the appointment of focal persons at central, divisional, and district levels through the concerned Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners to ensure effective representation and coordination. Participants emphasized the need for enhanced inter-institutional collaboration to strengthen the Chamber's operational capacity. Proposals discussed included the establishment

of a permanent office, provision of modern IT facilities, creation of data centers, launch of internship programs for young women, and the development of incubation centers to promote skill development and entrepreneurship. The meeting was attended by the Chief Secretary, Deputy Secretary Industries & Commerce, Deputy Secretary Information Technology, Ms. Maria Gilani (Senior Vice President), Ms. Khizra Manzoor, Ms. Tayyaba Bukhari, Ms. Bushra Naqvi, Ms. Amber Qayyum, Ms. Momina Fatima (Members, Board of Governors), and Mr. Muhammad Zahid Khan (Secretary, Women Chamber).



Islamabad
30° - 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 5:15 am
Zohr 12:20 pm
Asr 4:23 pm
Maghrib 6:03 pm
Isha 7:26 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad 1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 & 4451122
Motorway Police 92766044
Motorway Police 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
E-7, F-10 & F-11 9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8, 9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 9266316
Wapda Islamabad 9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint 119, 9272249

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif Expresses Gratitude Over Success of Her Public Service Initiatives

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif expressed with gratitude and humility that all thanks are due to Allah Almighty for the success of her Government's various initiatives aimed at public service. She thanked God that her promise of providing shelter to the homeless has been fulfilled, as nearly 1.5 lakh houses are being built in Punjab under 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' programme. She said that thanks are also due to Allah Almighty for materialising her other promise of providing world's most modern electric buses for every citizen of Punjab, as 1100 electric buses are running in Punjab, and 1500 more will be brought.

Chief Minister Punjab thanked God for fulfilling her promise of bringing medical treatment facilities to the doorsteps of people, as 02 crore patients have benefited so far from field hospi-

tals and clinics-on-wheels. She also thanked Allah (SWT) that implementation has started on a promise of bringing metro bus service to two major cities of Punjab, Faisalabad and Gujranwala, She said that thanks are due to Allah Almighty for enabling her to launch world's largest solid waste management project, 'Suthra' Punjab in the province, under which villages are also being cleaned for the first time in Punjab, besides providing employment opportunities for 1.5 lakh people. She added that all thanks are due to Allah (SWT) that her promise to put laptops in the hands of students has been fulfilled, as talented children have been given 01 lakh laptops on merit.

She highlighted that she is also grateful to Almighty Allah for fulfilling her another promise of educating children lacking financial resources, as lakhs of children have received 'Honhar' scholarships.



Stunning view

ISLAMABAD: A stunning view of the red flowers along the Srinagar Highway attracting the nature lovers and also indicating the most welcoming season "Spring" in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

Soldier martyred during Pak-Afghan tensions laid to rest with full military honours in Haripur

HARIPUR: A Pakistan Army soldier who embraced martyrdom during ongoing Pak-Afghan tensions was laid to rest with full military honours in his native village of Ganhari (Kakotri) on Saturday.

Sepoy Saud Khan was martyred in the Tangrai sector of Miranshah during an exchange of fire while performing his duties. His funeral prayer was attended by a large number of local political and social figures, area elders, residents, and officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army.

A smartly turned-out contingent of the Pakistan Army presented a formal salute to the martyr, and his coffin, draped in the national flag, was carried to the graveyard with full military protocol.

Speaking to media persons on the occasion, local residents paid tribute to the fallen soldier, stating that he had rendered the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the homeland. They emphasized that such sacrifices would not go in vain and that the nation would always remember the services of its martyrs.

According to sources, Sepoy Saud Khan had been serving in the Pakistan Army for the past seven years. He was laid to rest amid tearful scenes following the funeral prayer.

Laptop Distribution Ceremony held at The Women University Multan

Quatulain Asim

MULTAN: In compliance with the directives of Higher Education Commission Pakistan, The Women University Multan successfully organized the Laptop Distribution Ceremony under the Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Scheme Phase-IV.

A total of 444 laptops were distributed among high-achieving students enrolled in BS, M. Phil., and PhD programs, ensuring equitable access to digital resources across all academic levels. The initiative was carried out under the visionary leadership of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Kalsoom Pracha.

Addressing the ceremony, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Kalsoom Pracha emphasized that the provision of laptops is a transformative step toward bridging the digital divide and fostering a culture of innovation, research, and academic excellence.



The distribution process was efficiently supervised by Dr. Deebea Shahwar (Registrar) and Dr. Adeela Saeed, Super Focal Person of the PM Youth Laptop Scheme, who also played a pivotal role as the University Focal Person, ensuring transparency and smooth execution of the entire process.

The organizing team included Mr. Muhammad Azam (System Administrator), Mr. Atif Raza Zaidi (Deputy Director IT), Mr. Rizwan Siddiqui (Assistant DSA), Mr. Faheem Amin (Lab Assistant), along with departmental focal persons, whose collective efforts ensured the successful completion of the initiative.

PTI candidate slams Indian-sponsored Taliban Infiltration, praises army's response



Kiran Asim

MULTAN: PTI leader and NA-148 candidate Dr. Rubina Akhtar has said that the way the Taliban, a proxy of India, have infiltrated and promoted terrorism in Pakistan in return for Pakistan's favors is unparalleled, but our army is also the greatest army in the world, which has given a befitting reply to the malice of the Indian-sponsored Afghanistan. The bravery with which our Air Force and ground forces have broken the enemy's teeth is also an example. Pakistan's Ghadh-ul-Haq operation has uprooted the enemy's feet and they will soon be seen begging for a ceasefire like India. She further said that the people are with the Pakistan Army and are standing shoulder to shoulder with their brave soldiers in this difficult time and Insha Allah, Afghanistan and their facilitators will face failure and the humiliation of defeat will be their destiny. She expressed these views while addressing a women's corner meeting in NA-148 Graywala. She was given a grand welcome on this occasion. At the end of the meeting, the Pakistani Prayers were offered for the success of the army and for Pakistan.

Red Cross urges Afghanistan-Pakistan 'de-escalation'

AFP



GENEVA: The president of the International Committee of the Red Cross called on Friday for a de-escalation of hostilities between Afghanistan and Pakistan, insisting that civilians must be protected and healthcare

access guaranteed.

Pakistan bombed major cities in Afghanistan including the capital Kabul on Friday, with Islamabad's defence minister declaring the neighbours at "open war" following months of tit-for-tat clashes.

"We are witnessing a profound escalation of hostilities between Afghanistan and Pakistan," ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric said in a statement, calling for "restraint and de-escalation".

She highlighted that the upsurge in violence was harming people in a region that had "already endured decades of conflict, displacement and loss".

"They have seen and felt the impact of war on their loved ones in their communities," she said.

Pakistan's latest operation came after Afghan forces attacked Pakistani border troops on Thursday night in retaliation for earlier air strikes by Islamabad.

Islamabad accuses Afghanistan of failing to act against militant groups that carry out attacks in Pakistan, which the Taliban government denies.

Spoljaric stressed that under international law, "civilians, the wounded and others not — or no longer — taking part in the fighting must be protected".

"Humanitarian assistance must reach all those affected (and) hospitals must be able to operate and access to essential services must be guaranteed," she added.

Islamabad placed on high alert as senior police officers' leaves cancelled

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The federal capital has been placed on high alert, with authorities cancelling the leaves of senior police officers amid heightened security concerns.

According to officials, all supervisory officers of the Islamabad Police have been directed to report to duty immediately. All forms of leave have been suspended until further orders.

Police authorities stated that even previously approved leaves have been revoked with immediate effect. Strict administrative measures are being implemented in view of the emergency situation.

Leave will only be granted in unavoidable emergency cases with proper authorization. All concerned officers have been instructed to report to their respective units without delay.

Officials added that close monitoring of the security situation in the federal capital is ongoing.

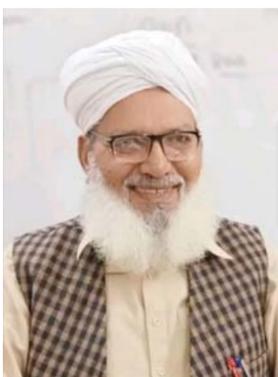
Our teacher.....

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: The real identity of any educational institution is not its buildings but the character, knowledge and sincerity of the teachers. Abdul Qadir Mushtaq had the honor of studying English with Javed Aslam Bajwa in the BA class at Government College Faisalabad.

This was from 1996 to 1998. At that time, passing English from Punjab University was considered a risky task. Javed Aslam Bajwa is one of those personalities who lit many lamps through his professional life.

He remained associated as an English teacher at Government College Faisalabad and later when the same institution got the status of a university and became Government College University Faisalabad, he also proved his abilities in the administrative field. As a teacher, his identity was not just that of a lecturer, but he was a guide,



compassionate elder and intellectual trainer for the students.

In teaching English literature and language, he did not limit himself to the curriculum alone, but also promoted critical awareness, courage of expres-

sion and moral maturity among the students. His classes were a beautiful blend of academic seriousness and politeness. When Government College was granted university status, the institution entered a new era.

As such a critical stage, talented individuals like Javed Aslam Bajwa were needed who could stabilize the administrative structure. He took on important positions like Registrar's Office and Controller of Examinations.

His administrative insight and discipline in the Registrar's Office organized institutional affairs, while as Controller of Examinations, his efforts for transparency, timely results and improvement of the examination system were noteworthy. While in administrative positions, his style was not one of authority but of service. He did not neglect humanity and convenience amidst files and rules. Listening seriously to the problems of students and teachers and finding appropriate solu-

tions were prominent features of his personality.

This is why he is remembered not as just an officer but as a reliable personality. Nowadays, he is associated with the educational institutions of Dawate-Islami and is rendering his services. This stage highlights that aspect of his personality which includes the passion for religious service and social reform.

As a teacher, he enlightened minds and is now associated with the mission of character building in the field of religious and moral education. Javed Aslam Bajwa's life is an example of how knowledge, management and religion—these three fields can be combined in the person of a person of character and sincerity. He is one of those people who not only run institutions but also give them a soul. Such people are the silent capital of educational history, whose services are not easy to sum up in words, but it is the duty of all of us to pay tribute to them.

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Strategic Siege: Is Pakistan Being Surrounded

Geopolitics has never been governed by sentiment. Not religion, not shared history, not cultural brotherhood—only interests. The unfolding realignments across South Asia and the Middle East illustrate this truth with striking clarity. Alliances are shifting, rivalries are recalibrating, and Pakistan finds itself increasingly positioned at the intersection of competing strategic designs.

The roots of today's complexity stretch back to 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Pakistan became the frontline state in a U. S.-backed campaign to counter Moscow. Billions of dollars in American and Saudi assistance flowed through intelligence networks to arm and train Afghan fighters. The mobilization of religious ideology was not incidental—it was strategic. Fighters from across the Muslim world converged in Afghanistan. By 1989, the Soviet withdrawal marked a Cold War victory for Washington and its partners.

But militant infrastructures rarely dissolve once their immediate utility ends. The Taliban emerged in the 1990s from the ashes of war, establishing control over Kabul in 1996. Pakistan was among the few nations to recognize their regime. Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, however, the same Taliban became the primary target of American military intervention. The subsequent 20-year war cost over \$2 trillion and claimed more than 170,000 lives before the U. S. withdrawal in August 2021.

The Taliban's return to power reshaped

the region yet again. Instead of ushering in stability for Pakistan, however, cross-border militancy intensified. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), operating from Afghan soil, escalated attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Islamabad responded with cross-border airstrikes against militant sanctuaries. While tactically decisive, these actions strained relations with Kabul and risked civilian backlash.

Instead, Pakistan with its deep intelligence roots in Afghanistan, had the option to adopt the same tactics which Afghanistan is using by infiltrating Pakistani Taliban in Pakistan and killing innocent people mostly by detonating human bombs in Mosque. This could have been a more discrete way to weed out the menace of TTP. History suggests that purely kinetic responses can produce unintended strategic consequences. Airstrikes may eliminate immediate threats, but they can also deepen mistrust and create diplomatic openings for rival powers.

In geopolitics, tactical victories can sometimes yield strategic setbacks. By intensifying overt military pressure, Islamabad may have inadvertently accelerated Kabul's search for diversified partnerships.

That diversification is perhaps the most striking development. The Taliban government, ideologically committed to Islamic governance, has increasingly explored diplomatic and economic

engagement beyond traditional Islamic partners. India reopened diplomatic channels in Kabul and expanded humanitarian assistance. Israel has pledged billions of dollars of aid to Kabul in alignment with India. This is a profound geopolitical entanglement: an Islamic Emirata seeking expanded engagement with a Hindu-majority India and a Jewish-majority Israel, even as tensions simmer with neighboring Muslim Pakistan.

This underscores a fundamental principle of realpolitik: states pursue survival and leverage, not theological alignment. Religious brotherhood and shared culture matter, but only when they coincide with national interest calculations. Facing economic collapse, frozen reserves, and diplomatic isolation, Kabul seeks diversification. India offers infrastructure and access. Israel offers technological cooperation and strategic outreach. Ideology yields to necessity.

For Pakistan, however, the optics intensify concerns of encirclement. On its eastern border, India remains a strategic competitor, particularly over Kashmir. On its western frontier now stands an Afghanistan willing to engage Islamabad's rivals. To the southwest lies Iran, itself navigating tense relations with the United States. This evolving geometry fuels perceptions of a tightening strategic ring.

An additional dimension compli-

cates matters further: Bagram Airbase. During the U. S. presence in Afghanistan, Bagram served as the largest American military installation in the country, with dual runways capable of handling heavy aircraft and advanced surveillance platforms. Its geographic location—approximately 500 kilometers from China's Xinjiang region—made it strategically significant.

U. S. President Donald Trump publicly criticized the abandonment of Bagram in 2021, arguing that retaining the base would have preserved American leverage, particularly in the context of intensifying U. S.-China rivalry. Bagram's proximity to Central Asia, Iran, and western China positions it as more than a counterterrorism platform—it is a potential springboard in great-power competition.

While direct American military reentry into Afghanistan appears unlikely in the near term, evolving regional alignments could create indirect pathways of influence. The strengthening of India's presence in Kabul, combined with Israel's strategic engagement in broader Asian geopolitics, introduces analytical possibilities. Washington maintains deep defense partnerships with both New Delhi and Tel Aviv. If Afghanistan continues diversifying toward these actors, space may gradually reopen for U. S. strategic leverage—without formal troop deployments.

Interestingly, geopolitics often unfolds through indirect channels. For Washington, containing China remains a central strategic priority. For India, Afghanistan offers westward strategic

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Analysis

Qamar Bashir

UN chief slams US-Israel attacks on Iran & Teheran's retaliatory strikes

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the heads of UN agencies have condemned Saturday's joint Israeli and US attacks on Iran and the Iranian retaliatory strikes on Israel and the Persian Gulf Regions.

"I condemn today's military escalation in the Middle East," the UN chief said in a statement as French President Emmanuel Macron called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security to address the strikes, which have targeted Iranian military and nuclear infrastructure. The meeting will take place at 4 PM (local time, 2 a.m. PST Sunday).

Meanwhile, The New York Times, a leading American newspaper, called President Donald Trump's approach to Iran as "reckless and dangerous."

"He started this war without explaining to the American people and the world why he was doing so. Nor has he involved Congress, which the Constitution grants the sole power to declare war," the Times said in an editorial, headlined: 'Trump's Attack on Iran Is Reckless'.

In his statement, Guterres, the UN chief, declared that the military escalation in the region undermines international peace and security, and recalled that all Member States must "respect their obligations under international law, including the Charter of the United Nations," which prohibits "the threat of the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."

He called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and de-escalation and warned that a failure to do so risks a wider regional conflict with grave consequences for civilians and regional stability.

Senior officials added their own responses on Saturday morning: Volker Turk, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, said that bombs and missiles are not the way to resolve differences but "only result in death, destruction and human misery." Civilians, he noted, "end up paying the ultimate price."

Turk called for all parties to return to negotiations in order to avoid a wider conflict that would mean further civilian deaths and "destruction on a potentially unimaginable scale, not just in Iran but across the Middle East region."

World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement that he was deeply troubled by the situation and urged leaders to "choose the challenging path of dialogue over the senseless route of destruction."



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

CDF's Strategic Visit to Munich: Strengthening Global Partnerships

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir's visit to Germany from February 12 to 14, 2025, highlighted Pakistan's proactive engagement in global security diplomacy. On the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, he reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to dialogue, strategic stability, and cooperative approaches to complex geopolitical challenges. His meeting with U. S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio focused on regional and global security issues, with particular emphasis on sustained counterterrorism cooperation, intelligence sharing, and coordinated efforts to address transnational threats. In Germany, discussions with senior officials centered on strengthening bilateral security and defense ties, enhancing internal security cooperation, promoting strategic communication, and expanding military-to-military collaboration through training exchanges, joint exercises, and cooperation in emerging domains such as cyber and hybrid warfare.

Beyond Western engagements, the visit demonstrated Pakistan's intent to diversify its global partnerships. Talks with Brazil's Chief of Joint Staff explored expanded military cooperation, including officer exchanges, collaboration in peacekeeping, and potential defense industry partnerships, reflecting shared interests among major Global South nations. A separate meeting with Lebanon's armed forces leadership addressed regional security dynamics, particularly developments in the Middle East, and emphasized solidarity, experience-sharing, and enhanced bilateral defense cooperation. Collectively, these engagements underscored a deliberate and strategic approach to military

diplomacy, leveraging both formal meetings and informal interactions to build trust, deepen partnerships, and strengthen Pakistan's role in promoting international peace and stability.

For Pakistan, a nation that has faced immense security challenges, contributed disproportionately to global counterterrorism efforts, and consistently served as a responsible and reliable partner in United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world, such high-level representation at a globally recognized and respected forum like the Munich Security Conference is of paramount importance. It serves to powerfully reinforce Pakistan's image as a responsible, proactive, and indispensable stakeholder in the architecture of international security affairs. The country's armed forces have amassed a wealth of experience and expertise through decades of extensive counterterrorism operations on their own soil, fighting a brutal and often invisible enemy while suffering tremendous sacrifices. Sharing these hard-won experiences, the lessons learned from both successes and setbacks, on prestigious international platforms allows Pakistan to present its own authentic perspective on the nature of the terrorist threat, to highlight the immense human and material sacrifices it has made in the common fight against extremism, and to actively seek collaborative, mutually beneficial solutions to challenges that are, by their very nature, shared by the entire international community. It transforms Pakistan from a passive recipient of security policies into an active contributor, a nation with valuable insights and capabilities to offer.

The strategic visit to Munich, therefore, is significant not merely because of the impres-

sive list of meetings that were held, but because of the powerful and coherent broader message it conveys about Pakistan's diplomatic posture and its vision for its role in the world. Strengthening global partnerships through sustained, high-level dialogue is not a luxury but a necessity, and it aligns perfectly with the fundamental understanding that modern security challenges are inherently transnational and transcend all borders. Issues such as terrorism, which morphs and adapts across continents; cyber threats, which can originate from anywhere and strike anywhere; climate-related security risks, which exacerbate resource scarcity and drive instability; and the dangerous resurgence of great-power geopolitical rivalries all require robust, agile, and inclusive cooperative frameworks. They cannot be effectively addressed through isolated national responses or unilateral actions. By engaging purposefully and constructively with leaders from the United States, Germany, Brazil, Lebanon, and numerous other nations present at the conference, Pakistan signaled in the clearest possible terms its genuine willingness and readiness to be an active, contributing, and collaborative part of collective efforts aimed at sustaining and strengthening global peace and stability. It is a message of partnership, not isolation; of contribution, not detachment.

For the people of Pakistan, observing their country's senior military leadership participating so actively, confidently, and effectively in such prestigious and influential international forums generates a profound and justifiable sense of confidence and national pride. It provides tangible, visible evidence that counters any narrative of Pakistan being isolated or marginalized on the world stage. Instead, it reflects the reassuring reality that Pakistan is engaging constructively, on terms of mutual respect, with the most influential global actors.

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Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

Operation Ghazab lil-Haq

The relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has always been rooted in centuries-old bonds of history, religion, culture, and geography. From the creation of Pakistan to the Afghan Jihad, hosting millions of refugees, providing humanitarian assistance, diplomatic support, and economic cooperation, Pakistan has consistently demonstrated the highest standards of brotherhood and sacrifice.

Yet in recent years—particularly since the current Taliban regime came to power—cross-border terrorism has continuously increased, anti-Pakistan elements (especially Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP, often termed Fitna al-Khawarij) have found safe havens on Afghan soil, and no effective action has been taken by Kabul despite repeated evidence-sharing and diplomatic warnings. These factors have pushed bilateral relations toward severe tension and repeated border clashes.

It is precisely in this context that Operation Ghazab lil-Haq (Wrath for the Right / Righteous Fury) was launched. This is not merely a military campaign; it is a clear and unambiguous declaration of Pakistan's state resolve: there will be no compromise on national sovereignty, the protection of citizens, or national security. The goal is the total eradication of terrorism and its sanctuaries—no matter where they are located—until the threat is completely eliminated.

On 27 February 2026, Director General Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry held a detailed press conference in Rawalpindi and presented the latest progress and verified facts of the operation. He stated that on the night of 21–22 February, initial intelligence-based strikes targeted TTP and ISIS-K camps inside Afghanistan. Escalation followed when Afghan Taliban regime forces opened

unprovoked fire and conducted incursions at 53 locations across 15 sectors along the border. In response, Pakistan carried out precise, intelligence-driven defensive and retaliatory actions under Operation Ghazab lil-Haq.

Key Figures from the DG ISPR Briefing (27 February 2026)

Enemy casualties: 274 personnel of the Afghan Taliban regime and affiliated terrorist groups (including TTP) have been eliminated so far.

Injured: More than 400 terrorists wounded.

Destroyed infrastructure: 73 Taliban posts completely demolished; 18 posts captured by Pakistani forces.

Neutralized military assets: 115 tanks, armored vehicles, artillery pieces, and other hardware fully destroyed or rendered inoperable.

Pakistani losses: 12 brave soldiers of the Pakistan Army embraced martyrdom while defending the motherland.

Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry emphasized that all strikes were executed with extreme precision to avoid civilian casualties. The targeted locations included terrorist camps and networks in the provinces of Kabul, Kandahar, Paktia, Nangarhar, Khost, Paktika, and others facilities from where TTP and other groups were planning and launching attacks inside Pakistan.

Addressing the Afghan Taliban regime directly, the DG ISPR said they now face a clear choice: either continue supporting terrorist organizations (TTP, ISIS-K, al-Qaeda affiliates, etc.) or restore normal relations with Pakistan. He made it explicit that the regime must choose between terrorist proxies and Pakistan.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited General Headquarters (GHQ) on 27 February 2026, where the military leadership briefed him on the latest operational situation. This

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Experts at Pak- Russia Media Forum stress strengthening strategic, economic and media ties

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Senior diplomats and experts from Pakistan and Russia at the Pakistan-Russia Media Forum emphasized strengthening strategic engagement, expanding economic and defence cooperation, and enhancing media collaboration to further consolidate the growing partnership between the two nations.

Speaking from Moscow during the first session of the forum, titled "Global Challenges and Perspectives in the Changing World: Overview from Moscow and Islamabad," Pakistan's Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, said the event reflects a deep mutual interest between the intellectuals of both nations. "Notably, the upcoming summit in Moscow will mark the fifth meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Vladimir Putin, highlighting a high level of diplomatic engagement," he added.

He announced that Pakistan is organizing the Pakistan-Russia Business Forum, with over 100 leading Pakistani companies engaging their Russian counter-

parts during the Prime Minister's visit. Highlighting growing bilateral momentum, he emphasized opportunities in education, trade, agriculture, and cultural exchanges, and the importance of strengthening people-to-people contacts. "We aim to increase Pakistani students in Russia to 13,000 and welcome Russian scholars to Pakistan for academic exchange," he said. He also noted regular 'Druzhiba' military exercises and joint naval drills, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to peace, dialogue, and diplomacy to promote regional and global stability.

Director of the Information and Press Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Maria Zakharova said the forum was a good opportunity to promote media cooperation between Russia and Pakistan. It reflects an innovative vision in the field of information exchange. She noted that information has become a strategic resource and a key dimension for measuring national power and sovereignty, though it presents certain challenges alongside its benefits. She further observed that new forms of hybrid conflicts are



emerging, which employ political, economic, and non-military measures rather than conventional military means.

She spoke about the alarming rise in the quantity of fake news, saying it has exceeded all limits. Millions of people are led to believe that nothing significant is happening, as the international media landscape enters a new era. Maria Zakharova criticized the efforts in the past in shaping public opinion prior to military interventions. She questioned how people were deceived nearly 20 years before through media which, she said, resulted in horrible consequences in different parts of the world.

She also expressed solidarity by supporting March 15 as the Inter-

national Day to combat Islamophobia. She stressed the need to prove who truly represents culture and faith, noting that all doctrines advocate freedom of speech and freedom of religion. However, she observed that some countries, despite claiming to uphold these values, fail to notice the contradiction between their principles and actions. She emphasized the importance of working together through dialogue and constructive engagement.

Chairman Pakistan China Institute and former Parliamentarian Syed Mushahid Hussain appreciated the proactive role of Pakistan's Ambassador and said that the upcoming visit of the Pakistan Prime Minister to

Russia in March is expected to be a landmark event.

Highlighting the growing alignment between the two countries, he stressed that Pakistan and Russia share no fundamental conflicts of interest. Drawing on his personal experience dating back to his first visit to the Soviet Union in 1984, he recounted decades of professional and personal linkages with Russian media, including collaborations with outlets such as Russia Today (RT) and sporting news networks.

Syed Mushahid Hussain also emphasized the importance of addressing media perception and misinformation. He highlighted persistent double standards in media coverage, pointing to situations such as Palestine, where humanitarian crises are often overshadowed by geopolitical interests. He advocated for the creation of a new, rules-based international order anchored in inclusivity, equality, international law, and the principles of the United Nations Charter. "Pakistan and Russia are aligned in this vision," he said, emphasizing the importance of joint efforts to uphold global norms and implement cooperative



solutions to challenges such as climate change, poverty alleviation, and regional security.

Syed Mushahid Hussain called for sustained media bridges, strengthened people-to-people connections, and strategic cooperation to advance Pakistan-Russia relations and promote a stable, prosperous, and multipolar global order.

Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Pakistan, Albert Khorev, highlighted the expanding partnership between Islamabad and Moscow, emphasizing public diplomacy, people-to-people engagement, and strengthened strategic collaboration in the Eurasian region.

Ambassador Khorev highlighted Russia's proactive

engagement since 2010, which has accelerated closer cooperation across various sectors, including diplomacy, media, and cultural exchanges.

He commended Pakistan for tackling security challenges and contributing to regional stability despite border escalations with Afghanistan and ongoing terrorism threats, and praised its responsible management of conflicts, including the recent incident with India, which avoided escalation between two nuclear powers.

Looking ahead, he stressed the importance of expanding bilateral collaboration through trade, technological cooperation, business engagement, and public diplomacy.



Dr. Faisal Mushtaq makes Pakistan stand tall at the Oxford Union

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark moment of national pride, Dr. Faisal Mushtaq, Chairman & CEO The Millennium Education Group Pakistan and a distinguished cognitive scientist represented Pakistan at the historic Oxford Union, one of the world's most prestigious debating platforms says a press release.

The Oxford Union renowned for hosting prime ministers, presidents, Nobel Laureates, and global thought leaders welcomed Dr. Mushtaq to speak in Proposition on the motion, "This House Would Keep Politics Out of Sport." Standing in a forum steeped in centuries of tradition and global influence, he delivered a deeply researched, intellectually rigorous, and principled

address that reflected both scholarly excellence and national pride.

Presenting a compelling case for preserving sport as a rule-bound and merit-based institution, Dr. Mushtaq examined the historical entanglement of politics and sport, reflecting on moments when political interference reshaped global competitions and affected generations of athletes. With analytical precision and measured conviction, he argued that while sport may inevitably reflect the realities of the world around it, it must not be governed by partisan interests. To protect its legitimacy and unifying power, sport must remain anchored in neutrality, fairness, and institutional integrity.

Drawing upon his expertise in cogni-

tive science and decades of educational leadership, Dr. Mushtaq emphasised that institutions endure only when guided by consistent principles rather than fluctuating political agendas. He articulated that sport represents one of humanity's last truly shared civic spaces where discipline overrides division, merit supersedes ideology, and rules apply equally to all. In doing so, he projected Pakistan's intellectual leadership onto the global stage with clarity, composure, and confidence.

This landmark participation was more than an individual achievement; it was a moment of collective national pride. At a time when global discourse grows increasingly polarised, Dr. Mushtaq's presence at the Oxford Union symbolised Pakistan's capacity

to contribute thoughtfully, courageously, and constructively to international debate. It affirmed that Pakistan's strength lies not only in its resilience, but in its scholarship, its ideas, and its unwavering commitment to principled dialogue. In the end, he concluded with words that captured the shared human pulse of sport and the universal spirit that transcends borders: "We share the same breath before a penalty is taken, the same silence before the final ball is bowled, the same surge of adrenaline before the tape is broken."

With these words, delivered beneath the vaulted ceilings of one of the world's most storied debating halls, Pakistan stood taller, through thought, through reason, and through the enduring power of ideas.

Strengthening Peace in Gaza and Expanding Economic Ties with the U. S.

Viktor Abaturov

At the invitation of the President of the United States Donald Trump, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev paid a working visit to Washington on February 17-19 to participate in the inaugural meeting of the Peace Council. The visit combined a substantive political agenda with an extensive economic program and resulted in a number of agreements aimed at further strengthening Uzbek-American strategic partnership and expanding bilateral cooperation across key sectors.

Expanding Participation in Addressing Global Challenges

The Peace Council is an intergovernmental initiative put forward by President Trump within the framework of the Gaza peace plan endorsed by the UN Security Council in November 2025. The establishment of this platform is intended not only to coordinate humanitarian assistance but also to create institutional mechanisms for long-term stabilization, reconstruction, and socio-economic recovery of the Gaza Strip, while reducing the risks of renewed escalation in the Middle East.

The Charter of the Peace Council was signed on January 22, 2026, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos. Signatories included leaders and representatives of Azerbaijan, Argentina, Armenia, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Hungary, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Qatar, Morocco, Mongolia, the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Paraguay, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, and Kosovo. Subsequently, Belarus, Albania, Cambodia, Egypt, El Salvador, Jordan, and Kuwait officially joined the group of founding states, expanding the Council's geographic and political representation.

By joining the founding members at the invitation of the U. S. President, Uzbekistan reaffirmed its commitment to peaceful diplomacy, respect for international law, and shared responsibility for maintaining global stability. Uzbekistan recognized Palestine in 1994 and consistently supports the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state in accordance with international legal norms and UN resolu-



tions. Uzbekistan's policy toward Gaza combines principled political positioning with practical humanitarian engagement. In 2023, Uzbekistan allocated \$1.5 mln through UNRWA. In December 2023, 100 wounded Palestinian women and children were evacuated and provided with medical treatment and rehabilitation services. In 2025, Uzbekistan developed a comprehensive state support mechanism for Palestinian citizens received in the country, including asylum procedures, access to healthcare, education for children, and employment assistance. A dedicated fund under the National Agency for Social Protection was established to finance these measures through budgetary and charitable resources.

The inaugural meeting of the Peace Council held on February 19 in Washington brought together leaders and representatives of more than 40 countries. Discussions focused on humanitarian relief, infrastructure restoration, and ensuring the sustainability of the post-conflict recovery process. At the opening of the session, President Trump announced that nine countries – Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, the UAE, Morocco, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, and Kuwait – had jointly pledged \$7 bn in assistance to Gaza, while the United States committed an additional \$10 bn to support the Council's activities.

In his address, President Mirziyoyev expressed full support for the peace initiative and confirmed Uzbekistan's

readiness to participate practically in its implementation. Particular emphasis was placed on the principle that any external governance framework for Gaza must rely on internal public support in order to ensure legitimacy, stability, and long-term effectiveness.

Highlighting the importance of coordinated international efforts, the President noted that joint actions would help secure the sustainability of the post-conflict process and accelerate socio-economic recovery. Uzbekistan also declared its readiness to contribute to the construction of residential housing, schools, kindergartens, and healthcare facilities in Gaza, thereby supporting both humanitarian and development objectives.

The Palestinian and Gaza issue has remained on the international agenda for decades without a comprehensive solution. In this context, the creation of the Peace Council represents one of the most structured multilateral attempts in recent years to address the crisis, while Uzbekistan's participation among the founding states reflects the growing recognition of its constructive diplomatic role.

Expanding Trade and Economic Cooperation

Alongside political dialogue, the economic dimension of the visit formed a central pillar of bilateral engagement. In recent years, Uzbekistan and the United States have steadily restored institutional mechanisms of strategic partnership and expanded practical cooperation.

Cooperation with the U. S.

Export-Import Bank resumed in 2017 after a 13-year hiatus. Agreements were concluded between Amazon and Uztrade, while science, technology, and economic modernization were identified among priority cooperation areas. In 2018, a \$100 mln memorandum on trade financing was signed between Eximbank and Uzbekistan's National Bank for Foreign Economic Activity. Cooperation with Openbank supported the development of e-commerce and digital payment infrastructure.

A major milestone was reached in September 2025 during the 80th UN General Assembly in New York, where negotiations between the two presidents resulted in the formation of a portfolio of contracts and prospective projects exceeding \$100 bn. The agreements covered aviation, mining and chemicals, energy, finance, and innovation. Specific arrangements included cooperation with Denali Exploration Group on rare earth elements, Re Element Technologies in rare earth metals, Flowserve on modernization of pumping stations, Valmont Industries on water-saving technologies, and Palo Alto Networks in artificial intelligence.

During the Washington visit, President Mirziyoyev held meetings with U. S. Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, Eximbank President John Jovanovic, DFC CEO Ben Black, and U. S. Trade Representative Jameson Greer. Discussions focused on expanding financing for major industrial and infrastructure projects, supporting high-tech equipment exports, launching a bilateral Investment Platform, advancing Uzbekistan's WTO accession, and strengthening regional trade cooperation under TIFA. The agreement establishing the Investment Platform was formally signed during the visit.

Additional bilateral documents were concluded covering construction of fuel station networks, sprinkler irrigation technologies, extraction and supply of critical minerals, development of poultry clusters, agro-industrial cooperation, financial market development, and investment climate reforms. The economic agenda was identified as one of the key pillars of Uzbek-American strategic partnership, with priority cooperation areas including critical raw



materials, petrochemicals, energy, agriculture, and industrial modernization.

Trade and Investment Dynamics

The intensification of bilateral cooperation has already produced tangible economic results. Between 2017 and 2025, trade turnover increased 4.7-fold from \$215 mln to \$1 bn. Exports grew 9.1-fold to \$291.7 mln, while imports rose 3.9-fold to \$712.3 mln.

Exports to the United States are dominated by services (81%), including programming, financial, information, and transport services. Petroleum products account for 8.6%, machinery and equipment 3.7%, food products 3.5%, and industrial goods 3.3%.

Imports from the United States are led by machinery and equipment (59%), including aircraft, vehicles, computing equipment, engines, pumps, and industrial installations. Services account for 20.5%, chemicals 9.7%, industrial goods 3.8%, food products 3.2%, and manufactured goods 2.2%.

Investment cooperation has expanded dynamically. U. S. FDI and loans increased nearly 64-fold from \$8.6 mln in 2017 to \$383.2 mln in 2025, with cumulative inflows exceeding \$2.9 bn. As of February 2026, 346 enterprises with U. S. capital operate in Uzbekistan, including 146 joint ventures and 200 wholly foreign-owned firms. Investments are concentrated in manufacturing, mining, construction, services, and agriculture.

Prospects for Deeper Economic Partnership

Recent dynamics indicate a transition from trade expansion toward long-term technological and industrial partnership. While services dominate exports, significant untapped potential remains in agro-processing, textiles, non-ferrous metallurgy, and higher value-added manufacturing.

Given annual U. S. imports of \$118 bn in textiles and apparel, \$539 bn in food products, and \$213 bn in pharma-

ceuticals, even limited market penetration could significantly expand Uzbek exports and rebalance their structure.

Technology cooperation represents a separate strategic track. The United States accounts for 45% of Uzbekistan's IT exports, with 448 of 800 exporters supplying digital services to the U. S. market. The next phase may involve joint industrial production in electronics and microelectronics with companies such as NVIDIA, Intel, and Qualcomm, enabling integration into global value chains.

Energy cooperation could support infrastructure modernization and renewable energy deployment, while pharmaceutical localization and joint R&D with companies such as Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, and Merck offer additional avenues for technology transfer and investment.

Privatization and PPP initiatives create further opportunities. By 2030, the private sector share in Uzbekistan's economy is projected to reach 85%, with stakes in 2,000 enterprises planned for sale and \$30 bn in PPP projects to be launched. Cooperation with U. S. capital markets, including the NYSE and Nasdaq, may further support the development of Uzbekistan's financial infrastructure.

Conclusion

President Mirziyoyev's visit to Washington and participation in the inaugural Peace Council meeting carry both diplomatic and economic significance.

Uzbekistan's engagement in the Council strengthens its international standing and expands its contribution to addressing global challenges. At the same time, the agreements reached and the expanding portfolio of joint projects elevate Uzbek-American relations to a new stage characterized by deeper institutional cooperation, industrial integration, and long-term strategic trust.

The writer is associate with Center for Economic Research and Reforms

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
168,062.16	168,893.08	
Day's High	Day's Low	
169,379.97	165,811.87	
Index Value	Change	
18,971,818,996	-830.92	
Percentage	Time	
-0.49%	27 Feb, 2026 4:30 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
10,910.55	+63.85	
Percentage	Time	
+0.59%	27 Feb, 4:35 pm GMT	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
48,765.02	-734.18	
Percentage	Time	
-1.48%	27 Feb, 12:52 pm GMT-5	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
58,850.27	+96.88	
Percentage	Time	
+0.16%	27 Feb, 3:45 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	197.93	201.25
Bahrain Dinar	742.12	751.62
Canadian Dollar	203.68	207
China Yuan	38	39.05
Danish Krone	43.32	43.72
Euro	330.75	335.28
Hong Kong Dollar	35.35	36.25
Indian Rupee	2.8	3.25
Japanese Yen	1.7822	1.8818
Kuwaiti Dinar	905.78	915.22
Malaysian Ringgit	66.50	68.45
New Zealand \$	166.20	169
Norwegians Krone	27.61	27.91
Omani Riyal	726.85	736.35
Qatari Riyal	76.10	77.80
Saudi Riyal	74.88	75.65
Singapore Dollar	220.05	223.30
Swedish Korona	30.15	30.45
Swiss Franc	360.07	363.85
Thai Bhat	8.52	8.67
U.A.E Dirham	76.35	77.35
UK Pound Sterling	377.90	382.16
US Dollar	280.35	282.15

Chairman FBR meets Islamabad Business Delegation, assures maximum facilitation in taxation matters

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: An 18-member delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), led by its President, Sardar Tahir Mahmood, called on Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Mr. Rashid Mahmood Langrial, at the FBR Headquarters in Islamabad to discuss key taxation issues faced by the business community.

During the meeting, the ICCI delegation apprised the Chairman FBR of various challenges confronting businesses in the capital, including issues related to super tax, tax refunds, point-of-sale (POS) integration for small businesses, taxation of the real estate and property sector and other operational hardships.

Chairman FBR listened attentively to the concerns raised and assured the delegation that maximum facilitation would be extended to the business community. He emphasized that genuine hardship cases would be given special consideration, while reiterating that the collection of taxes payable under the law would be ensured and tax evasion would not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Member (Legal IR), Member (IR Operations) and Member (Customs Operations) of the FBR were also present during the meeting. They responded to the queries raised by the ICCI representatives and provided clarifications on relevant matters.

While appreciating the vital role of



the business community in the country's economic growth and prosperity, Chairman FBR stated that establishing a busi-

ness-friendly environment remains one of the top priorities of the FBR. He directed the concerned wings to examine the issues high-

lighted by the Islamabad business community and resolve their genuine concerns at the earliest.

Hard Work

RAWALPINDI: Employees of WAPDA are repairing electric wires for convenience of the people at City.



Photo: Online

ADB delegation visits SECP to discuss insurance reforms

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), led by Country Director Ms. Emma Fan and including Mr. Salman Mian and Dr. Raja M. Ali Saleem, visited the SECP Head Office. SECP Chairman Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, along with the Insurance team, discussed ongoing reforms in Pakistan's insurance sector and future areas of cooperation.

During the meeting, SECP briefed the delegation on comprehensive reforms, including a new insurance law currently under consideration at the Ministry of Law. The proposed law covers the regulatory reforms in the areas of opening of market, easy of doing business, digitalization and product innovation and enhance supervisory powers for policy holders protection.

They also briefed about the other key initiatives including establishing a consortium of insurers to underwrite agriculture



insurance, and expanding crop insurance coverage for both loanee and non-loanee farmers through public-private partnerships and enhancing the scope of mandatory insurances.

The SECP also highlighted proposals

for mandatory catastrophe insurance for critical public assets, the use of modern technologies such as satellite-based assessments and digital claims systems, and improved data sharing to enhance transparency and efficiency.

Payoneer Delivers Strong Q4 and Full-Year 2025 Results

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Payoneer (NASDAQ: PAYO), the global financial technology company powering business growth across borders, today announced its financial results for the fourth quarter and full year ended December 31, 2025, highlighting strong performance driven by continued customer growth, higher transaction volumes, and increasing adoption of its high-value services.

The company reported solid year-on-year revenue growth for both the quarter and the full

year, supported by rising activity from small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) globally. B2B volume remained a key growth driver, alongside continued momentum in marketplaces and a steady increase in take rate, reflecting deeper customer engagement with Payoneer's expanding suite of financial services.

Payoneer also delivered improved profitability, with significant growth in adjusted EBITDA and continued progress toward its long-term financial targets. The results underscore the company's ability to scale effi-



ciently while investing in product innovation, global licensing, and customer experience.

Commenting on the performance, John Caplan, Chief Executive Officer, Payoneer,

said: "Payoneer continued to support the global ambitions of our customers and delivered record results in 2025, crossing \$1 billion in annual revenue with strong profitability and meaningful free cash flow. We are moving our strategy upmarket to serve the more complex needs of SMBs and SMEs engaged in global trade, while strengthening our platform for the future of money movement and accelerating product innovation through an AI-first approach. Our ambition is bold, our strategy is clear, and we have the assets and team to execute."

Tax Rationalization Central to Economic Growth: PBC Engages IMF Delegation

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: A delegation of the Pakistan Business Council (PBC), led by its Chairperson Dr. Zeelaf Munir, met with the visiting International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission headed by Ms. Iva Petrova, Head of Mission to Pakistan, and Mr. Mahir Binici, Resident Representative, to discuss Pakistan's transition from macroeconomic stabilization toward durable, export-led growth.

Acknowledging improvements in inflation and fiscal consolidation under the current programme, the PBC delegation noted that stabilizing growth. A competitive and equitable tax framework, predictable energy pricing and policy consistency are essential to expand exports, attract investment and generate employment at scale. The private sector stands ready to deploy capital where reform signals remain clear and credible."

Tax rationalization formed

a central part of the engagement. The delegation highlighted that the current structure places a disproportionate burden on compliant and documented enterprises. The continuation of the super tax across income, dividends and capital gains, along with extensive advance and withholding tax regimes, has elevated effective corporate taxation at a time when Pakistan requires export expansion and industrial scaling.

Dr. Zeelaf stated, "Stabilization has provided breathing space. The priority now is institutionalizing growth. A competitive and equitable tax framework, predictable energy pricing and policy consistency are essential to expand exports, attract investment and generate employment at scale. The private sector stands ready to deploy capital where reform signals remain clear and credible."

CCP Clears Acquisition of Al-Haj Automotive by Bestway Automotive

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved the proposed acquisition of Al-Haj Automotive (Private) Limited by Bestway Automotive (Private) Limited, following a Phase-I competition assessment conducted under the Competition Act, 2010.

Bestway Automotive (Private) Limited filed a pre-merger application on January 26, 2026, for the acquisition of Al-Haj Automotive (Private) Limited, under Section 11 of the Competition Act, 2010. The transaction arises from an Asset Purchase Agreement executed on December 22, 2025, between the merger parties.

The acquirer Bestway Automotive (Private) Limited is a private limited company incorporated in Pakistan and a wholly owned subsidiary of Bestway Cement Limited, a company listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange. Bestway Automotive intends to assemble, market, and sell automobiles in Pakistan. Al-Haj Automotive (Private) Limited, the target, is a private limited company engaged in the assembly, marketing, and sale of vehicles, including sedans and SUVs, and related spare parts.

CCP's analysis established

that both the acquirer and the target currently have no production or market share in the defined relevant market. Accordingly, the transaction will not result in any increase in market concentration or alter the competitive structure of the market.

CCP determined that the proposed transaction does not result in the creation or strengthening of a dominant position, nor is it likely to substantially lessen competition or impede market entry. The Commission therefore found no competition concerns under the Competition Act, 2010, and has authorized the transaction in accordance with the applicable legal framework.

The entry of Bestway Automotive into Pakistan's automobile sector through this acquisition reflects continued investor interest in the country's automotive industry. Such transactions have the potential to enhance competition, promote efficiency, and support the development of local assembly capabilities, subject to market conditions and future operationalization.

CCP remains committed to facilitating pro-competitive investments that contribute to economic growth while ensuring that market structures remain competitive and fair.

SAI Pays Tribute to Lt. Col. Shahzada Gulfray Shaheed, Propose Funds for Martyrs' Families



Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Industrialists from SITE area recently gathered to pay tribute to Lt. Col. Shahzada Gulfray Shaheed, who, along with his colleague, sacrificed his life while fighting the Indian proxy group, Khwarij, in Bannu District. The industrial community expressed their firm belief that the sacrifices of our martyrs will never go in vain and that our enemies will face defeat on every front.

The business community, along with the entire nation, stands proud of the Pakistan Armed Forces.

Lt. Col. Shahzada Gulfray was a brave commanding officer renowned for his daring actions, who was leading his unit from the frontline.

He was former Wing Commander of 92-Wing Rangers, located next to SAI office.

The condolence reference meeting held at the SITE Association of Industry was attended by Wing Commander 63-Wing Rangers, Lt. Col. Haroon Sarfraz, SITE Association Patron-in-Chief Zubair Motiwala, Patron Saleem Parekh, President Abdul Rehman Fudda, former President Ahmed Azeem Alvi, Muhammad Kamran Arbi, Anwar Aziz, Abdul Hadi, Muhammad Riaz Dhedhi, Abdul Rasheed, Saleem Nagaria, Muhammad Hanif Tawakkal, and the Executive Committee members.

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

Pakistani Opener Farhan's Brilliant Century and a Record Opening Partnership of 176 Runs with Fakhar Zaman; Pakistan Could Not Qualify to the Semi-Final

Asim Tanveer

KANDY: Pakistani Opener Farhan's Brilliant Century and a Record Opening Partnership of 176 Runs with Fakhar Zaman Could Not Take Pakistan to the Semi-Finals. The Sri Lankan cricket team could not limit itself to the score against Pakistan that would have guaranteed Pakistan's entry to the semi-finals. Not only this, Pakistan also escaped defeat when Sri Lanka could not score the required 6 runs off the last 2 balls. Whether the last ball was wide or not was also a question. Pakistan won the thrilling match by 5 runs. Thus, Pakistan was eliminated from the semi-finals of the ICC T20 World Cup 2026. Pakistan's first loss of the toss was a reason, but despite this, Pakistan created a hope by scoring 212. It was necessary to restrict Sri Lanka to 147 or less, but Pakistan failed to do so. Pakistan and New Zealand finished on 3 points each, but the Black Caps qualified for the semi-finals on a better net run rate.

When Sri Lanka started chasing 213 runs, Pakistan had only 147 runs in mind and it was not much, yet they lost two wickets in Pakistan for 33



runs. Patham Nishanka made 3 and Kamil Mishra made 26. Cherith Asalanka made 25 but Pawan Ratnaik became the real villain. When he completed his half-century in the 15th over of the innings, Pakistan seemed to be going far away from the semi-finals. Dathan Sanaka showed the utmost aggression and taught a lot. His innings provided a lot of support to Sri Lanka, who defeated Pakistan in the first round and secured their semi-final spot. In the eighth over, Ratnayake was caught by Shaheen Shah Afridi after scoring 58 runs. Dathan Sanaka played an aggressive

innings of 76 runs off 31 balls. He accepted the challenge of 28 runs required in the last over. Shaheen was hit with 3 consecutive sixes. He could not score 6 runs off the last 2 balls. The umpire did not give a wide on the last ball, but it looked like a wide. Thus, Sri Lanka was limited to 207 runs for 6 wickets. Pakistan won by only 5 runs. Sanaka hit 8 sixes and 2 fours. For Pakistan, Abrar Ahmed took 3 wickets for 23 runs. All the others were unsuccessful. Shaheen was hit for 48 runs in 4 overs for one wicket. Naseem Shah took one wicket for 36 runs. Usman Tariq got 43

runs in 4 overs. No No wickets were taken. Mohammad Nawaz took one wicket.

Earlier, in the Super 8 stage of the T20 World Cup, Pakistan set a target of 213 runs for Sri Lanka to win thanks to Sahibzada Farhan's brilliant century. In the match, the Sri Lankan captain won the toss and invited Pakistan to bat. Pakistan scored 212 runs for 8 wickets in the stipulated 20 overs thanks to the smoky innings of Sahibzada Farhan and Fakhar Zaman. Sahibzada Farhan played an innings of 100 and Fakhar Zaman played an innings of 84 runs. A record partnership

of 176 runs was made between the two.

Apart from this, no batsman could enter double figures. Khawaja Nafi 2, Shadab Khan 7, Muhammad Nawaz and Salman Agha were dismissed for zero. This was Sahibzada Farhan's second century in a single edition of the T20 World Cup. Babar Azam, Saim Ayub and Salman Mirza have been dropped from the playing XI for the crucial match against Sri Lanka. They were replaced by Naseem Shah, Khawaja Nafi



and Abrar Ahmed. Pakistan had to bowl out Sri Lanka for 147 or less to qualify for the semi-fi-

nals. England has already qualified for the semi-finals from this group.

Walee Technologies set to acquire four-year broadcast and live-streaming deal in the Pakistan region worth PKR 26.11b

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board today announced the successful conclusion of the tender process for TV Broadcast and Live-Streaming Rights for the HBL Pakistan Super League (HBL PSL) for the 2026-29 cycle.

The tender process saw the biggest financial offer made for acquisition of Media Rights in the history of Pakistan cricket.

Prior to the opening of the financial bids, the PCB had announced the reserve price

for the Rights in line with its transparent and robust bidding process. Walee Technologies exceeded the collective reserve price with an unprecedented offer of PKR 26.11 billion.

The newly structured rights allow for exploitation of both television and live-streaming rights across the Pakistan region, ensuring extensive and enhanced coverage for hundreds of millions of cricket fans nationwide.

This valuation of Rights reflects the exponential growth of HBL PSL over

the past decade and underlines the commercial strength and brand value of Pakistan's premier T20 tournament.

The four-year agreement once executed will cover the 2026 to 2029 editions of the league, shattering all previous records and valuations, reaffirming HBL PSL's position as one of the most sought-after T20 properties in the region.

HBL PSL CEO Salman Naseer said "This will be the biggest broadcast deal in the history of not only the HBL PSL but also Pakistan cricket. The steep rise in valuation

of HBL PSL's Commercial Assets reflect the remarkable growth and credibility of HBL PSL as a world-class league. We are delighted that all past records and valuations have been surpassed in this four-year term from 2026 to 2029.

"The strategic alignment of both TV and live-streaming rights in the Pakistan region ensures that our fans can continue to enjoy the HBL PSL experience across multiple platforms with added enhancements and innovations that will be developed and launched periodically."

Iran will continue legitimate self-defense until aggression ceases

Continued from Page 1

In responding to this act of aggression, the Islamic Republic of Iran is exercising its inherent and lawful right of self-defense under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. The Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran will utilize all necessary defensive capabilities and means to confront this criminal aggression and deter the hostile acts. Accordingly, all bases, facilities, and assets of the hostile forces in the region shall be regarded as legitimate military objectives within the framework of Iran's lawful exercise of self-defense. Iran

will continue to exercise its right of self-defense decisively and without hesitation until the aggression ceases fully and unequivocally.

The United States and the Israeli regime shall bear full and direct responsibility for all ensuing consequences, including any escalation arising from their unlawful actions. In light of the grave and far-reaching consequences of this armed aggression for regional as well as international peace and security, the Islamic Republic of Iran recalls the core responsibility of the United Nations and in particular, the Security

Council, to take immediate action in response to this breach of international peace and security resulting by the flagrant military aggression of the United States and the Israeli regime against Iran.

Iran calls upon the Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council, and the Security Council's members to discharge their duties without delay. In this context, the Islamic Republic of Iran urgently calls upon the members of the Security Council to convene, without delay, an emergency meeting of the Council to address the US and Israeli regime's acts of aggression, breach

of peace which is a real and serious threat to international peace and security, and to take the necessary and immediate measures to halt this unlawful use of force and to ensure accountability.

The Islamic Republic of Iran calls on all Member States of the United Nations that bear responsibility for international peace and security to unequivocally condemn this act of aggression and to undertake urgent and collective measures to confront it, as it undoubtedly poses an unprecedented threat to regional as well as global peace and security.

CDF's Strategic Visit to Munich: Strengthening Global Partnerships

Continued from Page 4

The deeply held belief among the citizenry that the Chief of Defence Staff, as the nation's top military official, is making sincere, dedicated, and tireless efforts to strengthen Pakistan's national security architecture, to build bridges with key partners, and to enhance the country's international standing resonates powerfully with a population

that aspires, above all else, to see their nation strong, prosperous, respected, and secure in the comity of nations. The visit to Munich, widely reported and discussed within Pakistan, serves to bolster public confidence in the institutions of the state and in the country's ability to navigate the complex and often treacherous currents of international politics.

The visit to Munich powerfully

underscores the increasingly vital role of military diplomacy as an indispensable complement to traditional statecraft and foreign policy. While the primary and non-negotiable duty of armed forces remains the defense of the realm and the protection of its citizens, the leadership of these forces is now, more than ever, called upon to participate actively in diplomatic engagements that shape strategic part-

nerships, build trust, and contribute directly to the creation of a more stable and predictable international environment.

It is through persistent dialogue, mutually beneficial cooperation, and the patient cultivation of understanding that nations can effectively reduce the risk of conflict, manage competition peacefully, and enhance their collective ability to respond to

shared threats. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir's comprehensive and highly successful engagements during the Munich Security Conference exemplify this modern approach to security and diplomacy in action. They vividly illustrate how strategic outreach, a commitment to global partnership-building, and a willingness to engage with a diverse range of actors can directly and positively contribute

to the advancement of Pakistan's long-term national objectives: enduring security, sustainable prosperity, and the achievement of the international recognition and respect that a great nation and its proud people so richly deserve. The visit was not an end in itself, but a significant and strategically valuable step on a long and continuous journey of constructive global engagement.

Operation Ghazab lil-Haq

Continued from Page 4

visit demonstrates that the political and military leadership stands fully united on matters of national security.

Pakistan's position remains crystal clear: this operation is not a war against the Afghan people or the country as a whole; it is a legitimate act of self-defense against terrorism originating from Afghan soil and the regime's failure or refusal to act against it. The state has repeatedly shared concrete evidence showing that terrorist networks based in Afghanistan plan and facilitate attacks inside Pakistan.

Regional proxy politics also cannot be ignored. The deepening defense cooperation between India and Israel, and the possibility of anti-Pakistan alignments in the region, form part of the larger strategic picture.

At the diplomatic level, Pakistan is actively briefing friendly countries that these measures are fully consistent with international law and the inherent right of self-de-

fense. Pakistan does not seek confrontation or escalation, but it will take every necessary step to protect its sovereignty and the lives of its citizens.

Domestically, Operation Ghazab lil-Haq has become a powerful symbol of national unity. The people of Pakistan have expressed complete support for the armed forces and state institutions. This unity is the greatest strength any nation can possess—and it is Pakistan's real power.

Pakistan desires peace. But sustainable peace is possible only when threats to its security are eliminated. The red lines of the state represent fundamental principles: preservation of sovereignty, protection of citizens, sanctity of borders, and zero tolerance for any use of foreign soil for terrorism against Pakistan.

Whether the threat comes from Afghanistan alone or through collaboration with external actors (India, Israel, or others), Pakistan will give a firm and unambiguous response. The political, diplomatic, and mili-

tary leadership stands shoulder to shoulder—united and determined.

From Pakistan's perspective, pursuing total eradication of terrorism until complete elimination is not only right but essential and morally justified. When a neighboring regime provides safe havens, facilitates planning, and even engages in direct aggression that costs Pakistani lives, the state has both the right and the duty under international law (Article 51 of the UN Charter) to defend itself decisively. Half-measures have failed for years; continued tolerance only emboldens terrorists and endangers more innocent lives on both sides of the border. True peace requires the complete dismantling of these networks—no sanctuaries, no compromises.

Operation Ghazab lil-Haq sends a loud and clear message to the world: Pakistan wants peace, but it will never compromise on its defense. Terrorism will be pursued and eliminated until its complete eradication—no matter where the sanctuaries are located

Strategic Siege: Is Pakistan Being Surrounded

Continued from Page 4

depth. For Israel, expanded regional engagement broadens diplomatic influence. For Kabul, diversified partnerships reduce isolation. For Pakistan, however, these convergences heighten strategic anxiety.

For Israel, extending its engagement with Kabul through India would provide a strategic foothold in South Asia and enhance its capacity to deter Pakistan from aligning with Turkey and Saudi Arabia in any configuration perceived as intimidating to Israel. Such cooperation could be viewed as a counterweight to a potential alignment involving Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and nuclear-armed Pakistan, which some analysts argue might aim to exert strategic pressure or encirclement against Israel.

Simultaneously, the Persian Gulf remains heavily militarized. The U. S. Fifth Fleet in Bahrain deploys advanced naval assets, while Iran has invested in ballistic missiles, drones, and anti-ship systems designed to offset conventional asymmetry. China, importing substan-

tial Gulf energy supplies, and Russia, expanding ties with Tehran, both observe carefully.

Any escalation between Washington and Tehran would reverberate in Pakistan. The country already hosts approximately 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees. A major Iran conflict could trigger further displacement, compounding economic strain amid IMF-backed reforms and domestic political polarization.

Internally, Pakistan faces political turbulence, including debates surrounding the incarceration of former Prime Minister Imran Khan and federal-provincial tensions. External pressure combined with internal division magnifies vulnerability.

Yet one broader truth emerges from this complex web: strategic encirclement is not solely a product of adversarial design. It can also arise from miscalculation, over-reliance on hard power, and insufficient diplomatic agility. States that rely exclusively on military tools risk narrowing their strategic options.

This is a defining moment. Great-power rivalry, regional insecurity, and

ideological contradictions intersect at fragile fault lines. Afghanistan's outreach beyond traditional religious alignments demonstrates the primacy of interest over identity. Bagran symbolizes the enduring shadow of great-power competition. India and Israel's evolving engagement in Kabul reflects the fluidity of modern alliances.

But history offers a sobering lesson. From the Soviet-Afghan war to the U. S. intervention, military campaigns have reshaped borders without resolving deeper grievances. Stability requires not merely deterrence but diplomacy.

Encirclement strategies may promise leverage. Hybrid doctrines may promise precision. Yet sustainable security demands cooperation grounded in mutual recognition of vulnerabilities.

Geopolitics may be ruthless in its calculations, but peace remains the only enduring strategic victory.

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

Tarffic Jam before Iftar

ISLAMABAD: A large number of vehicles are stuck in the Police Check Post at Srinagar Highway as people rush to reach their homes before Iftar in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Spokesman

Bilawal Bhutto condemns Israel's attack on Iran, calls it threat to regional peace



Bureau Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has strongly condemned Israel's attack on Iran, terming it alarming for regional peace.

In his statement, he said that Israeli aggression against Iran poses a serious threat to regional stability. He added that Israel carried out what he described as a cowardly attack on Iran to divert

attention from the ongoing atrocities in Gaza.

The PPP chairman demanded that the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation take all possible measures to stop Israeli aggression against Iran.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari further stated that the international community must immediately take notice of what he called an open violation of Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity by Israel.

US backs Pakistan's 'right to defend itself' against Taliban

APP

WASHINGTON: The United States expressed support for "Pakistan's right to defend itself" with President Donald Trump signaling openness to intervene in the Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict while praising Islamabad for "doing terrifically well".

Trump, asked about the strikes on Afghanistan on Friday, praised Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir. "I would (intervene), but you have a great prime minister, you have a great general there,



you have a great leader. I think two of the people that I really respect a lot. I think Pakistan is doing terrifically well," he told reporters before heading to Texas.

At the same time, a State

Department spokesperson said in an emailed statement, "The United States supports Pakistan's right to defend itself against attacks from the Taliban, a Specially Designated Global Terrorist group."

U. S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Allison Hooker said on X platform that she spoke on Friday with Pakistan Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch.

"Spoke today with Pakistan Foreign Secretary Baloch to express condolences for lives lost in the recent conflict between Pakistan and the Taliban," she wrote in her post on X.

"We continue to monitor the situation closely and express support for Pakistan's right to defend itself against Taliban attacks," the US diplomat said. The State Department spokesperson also said Wash-

ington was aware of the escalation in tensions and "outbreak of fighting between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban," adding the U. S. was "saddened by the loss of life."

"The Taliban have consistently failed to uphold their counterterrorism commitments," the State Department said, adding that "terrorist groups use Afghanistan as a launching pad for their heinous attacks."

Pakistan is a major non-NATO ally of Washington. The U. S. considers the Afghan Taliban to be a "terrorist" group, he further added.

Pakistan directs ATC to intensify airspace surveillance amid Iran attacks

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Following Israel-US joint strike on Iran, the Pakistan government has directed the Air Traffic Control (ATC) to closely monitor the country's airspace.

According to sources, Pakistani airlines have been advised to avoid using Iranian airspace. The ATC has also been directed to maintain strict surveillance over the airspace of both Iran and Afghanistan.

Israel and US have carried out a

sudden strike on Iran on Saturday morning, causing multiple explosions in Tehran and other locations.

Iranian media reports indicate that several Israeli missiles landed in Tehran's University Street and Jomhoury area as part of a joint attack by the US and Israel. Reports also claim that seven missiles struck near the Iranian presidential palace and the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei's compound, while smoke plumes were seen rising from the suburbs and other areas of Tehran.

Official Statement by Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan on Operation Ghazab Lil Haq

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has said that the launch of "Operation Ghazab-lil-Haq" by the Pakistan Armed Forces against the aggression of the Taliban regime along the Afghan border is a decisive step and serves as a crushing response one that the enemy rightly deserves to the persistent and cowardly attacks carried out

against our territorial integrity, innocent civilians and security forces over the past several months. We congratulate our armed forces for their loud and clear message to the enemy. He added that we wish to make it clear to the entire world: the Indian proxies using Afghan soil against Pakistan must remember that they will be dealt a humiliating defeat, identical to the one inflicted when Indian aggression was thwarted last year. Abdul



Aleem Khan further stated that the fate of those who jeop-

ardize Pakistan's Security will be horrific. During this operation, our Armed Forces have demonstrated unparalleled courage, completely destroyed 73 enemy check posts and sent numerous terrorist Khawarij to their end, he added. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan said that in this great war for the defence of our motherland, 12 of our Soldiers have embraced martyrdom, 27 have been injured and one soldier remains missing.

Malaysia strongly condemns attacks against the Islamic Republic of Iran

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Malaysia strongly condemns the attacks against Iran and the subsequent retaliatory attacks against several countries in the region namely Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Qatar on 28 February 2026.

The attacks violate the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the prohibition against the use of force under the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Such unilateral military measures risk further destabilising

an already fragile region and endangering civilian lives.

At this critical juncture, all parties must exercise maximum restraint to prevent further escalation that could destabilise the region and carry wider global consequences. Malaysia reiterates that disputes must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy, in full respect of international law.

Malaysia calls on the international community, including the United Nations, to take urgent and decisive action to de-escalate the situation, and restore peace and stability in the region.

Pakistan issues urgent advisory for nationals in Iran amid escalating regional conflict

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued an emergency travel advisory, strongly urging its citizens to avoid all non-mandatory travel to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The move comes as the Middle East is plunged into a renewed and volatile military confrontation following a massive joint military operation by Israel and the United States against Iranian targets on Saturday.

The Foreign Office has instructed Pakistani nationals currently residing in Iran to exercise extreme caution, remain vigilant, and minimize non-essential movement. Citizens have been directed to stay in constant communication with Pakistani diplomatic missions as the secu-



city situation remains fluid.

The joint US-Israeli strikes represent a significant escalation after a twelve-day air war between Israel and Iran this past June. The attacks targeted several major Iranian cities, including the capital Tehran, Isfahan, Qom, Karaj, and Kermanshah.

"The State of Israel launched a pre-emptive attack against Iran to remove threats to the State of

Israel," stated Defense Minister Israel Katz, confirming the commencement of the operation.

While explosions rocked the capital, Iranian state media reported that the office of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was among the sites targeted. Reports suggest the Supreme Leader was not in Tehran at the time of the strike and has been relocated to a secure, undisclosed location.

AJK Officials Meet Federal Minister to Discuss Refugees, Development, and Coordination

Abdul Majeed Tahir.

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Amir Muqam, held a meeting with the Minister for Food, TEVIA and KDA Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Javed Iqbal Budhanvi, to discuss key political and economic issues facing the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

According to sources The meeting was focused on the welfare of Jammu and Kashmir refugees, progress on ongoing development projects, and strengthening cooperation between the Federal Government and the Government of AJK. Matters relating to infrastructure development, public service delivery, and enhanced coordination were discussed in detail.

Speaking on the occasion, Federal Minister Amir Muqam reiterated that the Kashmir issue remains a fundamental pillar of Pakistan's national policy and that the Kashmir freedom movement continues to be among the top priorities of the Govern-



ment of Pakistan. He reaffirmed that Pakistan will continue its political, diplomatic, and moral support for the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination and will effectively raise their voice at international forums.

On the occasion, Minister Javed Iqbal Budhanvi expressed gratitude to President

Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs for their attention and seriousness in addressing public issues, particularly during the Action Committee's protest. He stated that the Federal leadership's engagement conveyed a positive message to the people of AJK and strengthened public confidence.