



BALUCHISTAN
Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail ...
Page No 5



INTERNATIONAL
Israeli strikes kill 20 more in Gaza, violating US-backed ...
Page No 3



NATIONAL
Pakistan, Kazakhstan sign 30-plus MoUs as Shehbaz ...
Page No 8

SPORT
Sunderland make home a fortress as possible place...



Page No 7

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Field Marshal Asim Munir Briefed on Balochistan Security, Vows Zero Tolerance for Terrorism

NEWS DESK:

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, visited Quetta on Wednesday, the military's media wing said. Field Marshal received a comprehensive operational briefing on the prevailing security environment and internal security opera-

tions. The briefing covered recent terrorist attacks orchestrated by Indian backed internationally-designated terrorists of Fitna al Hindustan and the prompt aggressive response of security forces which failed their ulterior motive of compromising peace, stability, and development in Balochistan.

Measures being undertaken to further strengthen the writ of the state and ensure protection of the populace and critical infrastructure were also discussed. The COAS & CDF remarked that no terrorist and its facilitator will be spared and all will be dealt strictly as per law and that no one can rationalise violence and terrorism on any pretext.

He appreciated the professionalism, valor, and sacrifices of officers and troops of all law enforcement agencies in thwarting nefarious anti-Pakistan designs and maintaining law and order. Later, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir along with CM Balochistan visited Combined

Military Hospital (CMH) Quetta, where he met the injured personnel of Army, FC Balochistan and Police. He lauded their high morale and commended their bravery and steadfastness in protecting the motherland from foreign-sponsored terrorists. Earlier on his arrival he was received by Commander Quetta Corps.

Four more years for Imran's attacker in illegal arms case

NEWS DESK:

A court in Wazirabad has awarded an additional four-year sentence to Muhammad Naveed, already serving two life terms for the attack on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and former premier Imran Khan, in a case of illegal possession of arms.

Judicial Magistrate Fazl Elahi declared the convict guilty under the Punjab Arms (Amended) Ordinance 2015.

After reviewing the evidence in Case/FIR No 742/2022, the magistrate sentenced Naveed to four years of simple imprisonment along with a fine of Rs40,000.

The court has directed that the sentence run concurrently with any other sentences the convict is serving.

According to a warrant issued by the court on February 2, the Superintendent of Central Jail Gujranwala, has been authorised to take Naveed into custody to implement the four-year sentence.

The sentence relates to an incident on November 3, 2022, when Naveed attempted to assassinate Imran during PTI's long march in Wazirabad by opening fire on the rally.

The former premier was shot in the shin and left injured. Senator Faisal Javed and several others were also injured while one party worker was killed.

Following the attack, Imran accused the then Pakistan Democratic Movement government and certain officials of involvement in the incident.

Police arrested Naveed at the scene. The FIR was formally registered at City Police Station on November 7, and a joint investigation team was formed under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) of 1997.

In April 2025, Anti-Terrorism Court Judge Muhammad Naeem Saleem sentenced Naveed to two life terms under Pakistan Penal Code Section 302(b), which pertains to premeditated murder and ATA Section 7(a), which pertains to acts of terrorism.

Two co-accused, Tayyab Jahangir Butti and Waqas, were acquitted after being granted the benefit of doubt.

Mobile internet remains suspended in parts of Balochistan

NEWS DESK:

Mobile internet remains suspended in parts of Balochistan for the fifth consecutive day, with provincial authorities also halting train services in the province in the wake of last week's coordinated terrorist attacks across the province.

"Keeping in mind the worsening law and order situation in the province, mobile internet has been shut down," said Additional Chief Secretary Hanza Shafiqat while speaking to Dawn about the situation in Quetta. However, he added, "Now that the situation is returning to normal, it has been decided to restore mobile internet service from tomorrow at 12am midnight." Meanwhile, mobile data services reportedly remained suspended in Nushki and Sibi, as well as in Mastung where services were briefly restored.

Mobile data has been inaccessible for those in Kalat, Khuzdar, Awaran, Panjgur and Turbat for varying periods due to prior security concerns.

Separately, a spokesperson for Pakistan Railways' Quetta division, Muhammad Kashif,

Syed Ali Shah:

An all-parties representative delegation on Tuesday announced the suspension of protests across Balochistan following constructive talks with a government committee.

The decision was taken as a goodwill gesture in view of the prevailing situation in the province, while the Balochistan government agreed to release all employees arrested during the demonstrations.

The breakthrough came during a meeting between government representatives and leaders from several political parties, including the Awami National Party (ANP), National Party, Pakhtunkhwa National Awami Party (PKNAP), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and other stakeholders.

The all-parties delegation was led by ANP provincial president Asghar Khan Achakzai and included National Party central vice president Dr Ishag Baloch, PKNAP provincial president Nasrullah Khan Ziaiy,



PTI leader Salam Agha, HDP's Ismat Yari, ANP leader Sanaulah Kakar, National Party's Mir Inayat Buzdar, employees' representative Ismail

Kasi, and NDM leader Inayat Shah.

On behalf of the Balochistan government, members of the authorized commit-

tee included Provincial Minister for Finance and Minerals Mir Shoaib Noshervani, Provincial Education Minister Rahila Hameed Durrani, Provincial

Minister Ali Madad Jatak, PPP leader Syed Iqbal Shah, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Imran Zarkoon, and Special Secretary Finance Arif Khan Achakzai.

During the talks, the all-parties delegation formally announced the end of province-wide protests, citing the need for unity and stability in Balochistan. In return, the government committed to releasing all detained employees, a move welcomed by political leaders and employee representatives alike.

Both sides agreed to continue the dialogue, with a follow-up meeting scheduled for February 12.

The upcoming session will bring together senior political leaders and the government committee to develop a clear roadmap for addressing all outstanding and long-standing issues.

Observers see the development as a significant step toward restoring trust, reducing tensions, and promoting political consensus in Balochistan.

Thousands march in Caracas to demand release of Maduro after US-led capture

NEWS DESK: Thousands of supporters of Venezuela's former president, Nicolas Maduro, marched through Caracas to demand his release, one month after he was ousted in a US military operation and taken to New York to face drug charges, underscoring the political challenges facing interim leader Delcy Rodriguez.

Thousands of backers of Venezuela's former leader, Nicolas Maduro, who was ousted in a deadly US military operation, marched in Caracas on Tuesday to demand his freedom.

"Venezuela needs Nicolas," chanted the crowd, a month to the day since he was spectacularly toppled and whisked away to stand trial on drug charges in New York.

Interim president Delcy Rodriguez has been walking a tightrope since then - trying to hold on to support from Washington but also from Maduro acolytes in her government and the Venezuelan people.



Several demonstrators, many of them public sector workers, held photos of Maduro and of his wife, Cilia Flores, who was also seized in the US raid.

The march, called by the government,

stretched for several hundred metres, accompanied by trucks blaring music.

"These people are not American," said Maduro's son, Nicolas "Nicolaito" Maduro Guerra, a deputy in

Venezuela's National Assembly.

"We have achieved a profound anti-imperialist consciousness".

Many protesters waved Venezuelan flags and were dressed in the red colours of the ruling

"Chavista" movement named after Maduro's socialist predecessor, Hugo Chavez.

"We feel confused, sad, and angry. There are a lot of emotions," said Jose Perdomo, a 38-year-old municipal employee

who also declared his backing "for the decisions taken by our interim president, Delcy Rodriguez".

He added that "sooner or later they will have to free our presi-

dent".

Rodriguez was a staunch backer of Maduro and served as his vice president.

US President Donald Trump has said he is willing to work with her as long as she toes Washington's line, par-

ticularly on granting access to Venezuela's vast oil reserves.

Under pressure, Rodriguez has started freeing political prisoners and opened Venezuela's nationalised hydrocarbons industry to private investment.

The countries have rekindled diplomatic relations severed in 2019 after Maduro was accused of stealing his first re-election, with American envoy Laura Doga's arrival in Caracas on Saturday.

On Tuesday, in a video issued by the US mission, she pointed to a three-phase plan for the crisis-stricken South American country, ending in "the transition to a friendly, stable, prosperous and democratic Venezuela".

Rodriguez confirmed the meeting, calling it a "frank conversation".

Earlier on Tuesday, hundreds of university students and relatives of political prisoners also marched in the capital, calling for the quick approval of an amnesty law promised by Rodriguez.

Myanmar junta plans 'super-body' to tighten grip on military, new government

NEWS DESK: Myanmar's junta will form a new entity to oversee both the military and civilian administration, a move experts say will allow the paramount ruler Min Aung Hlaing to become president without loosening his grip on the armed forces.

Just days after the completion of a final phase of an election that will see a parliament convene next month and power transferred to a nominally civilian government, the junta announced its plans in state media late on Tuesday to create the five-member Union Consultative Council.

Its mandate is exceptionally broad,

granting it control over every critical component of national security and the legislative process, said Naing Min Khant, programme associate at the Institute for Strategy and Policy - Myanmar think-tank.

Supreme authority

"The formation of the Union Consultative Council represents a significant institutional shift, likely to create a 'super-body' designed to hold supreme authority above the executive, legislative, and judicial branches," Naing Min Khant said.

A spokesperson for the junta did not answer calls seeking comment on the council.

Min Aung Hlaing took control of Myanmar in a 2021 coup that ousted a civilian government led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi and triggered widespread protests that expanded into a nationwide civil war.

More than 93,000 people have since been killed in violence in Myanmar, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. Sixty-nine-year-old Hlaing has indicated he intends to hand over "state responsibilities" to the next government. He is widely expected to become president.

The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development

Party swept the election, winning 81% of available upper and lower house seats in a contest criticised by the United Nations, some Western nations and rights groups as a one-sided exercise to keep the ruling generals in power through proxies.

Lack of accountability State-run media did not provide a reason for why the council was being formed. According to two lawyers, it will potentially enable Hlaing to become president while ensuring he retains full control over the military, which has governed Myanmar for five of the past six decades.

It would also ensure he had control over the civilian-led administration and legislative matters, they said. "I believe that this newly appointed Union Consultative Council will oversee the new [military] commander-in-chief on one hand, and the government on the other," said Kyee Myint, adding that the body would prevent any successor to Hlaing as military chief from holding "too much power. But there appears to be no oversight for the new council, according to Naing Min Khant. "A defining feature of this arrangement is its total lack of accountability," he said.



Human Rights Watch warns US heading to 'authoritarianism'

NEWS DESK: Human Rights Watch (HRW) warned on Wednesday that President Donald Trump was turning the United States into an authoritarian state as democracy declines globally to its lowest ebb in four decades.

Trump's return to the White House has intensified a "downward spiral" on human rights that was already under pressure from Russia and China, the New York-based advocacy and research group said in its annual report.

"The rules-based international order is being crushed," HRW said.

In the United States, the group said, Trump has shown "blatant disregard for human rights and egregious violations."

In descriptions that would have been unthinkable in the US section of its previous annual reports, the group pointed to the deployment of masked, armed agents - the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency - which has carried out



"hundreds of unnecessarily violent and abusive raids."

The administration's racial and ethnic scapegoating, domestic deployment of National Guard forces in pretextual power grabs, repeated acts of retaliation against perceived political enemies and former officials now critical of the regime, as well as attempts to expand the coercive powers of the executive and neuter democratic checks and balances, underpin a decided shift towards

authoritarianism in the US," the report said.

Human Rights Watch repeated its finding that the United States engaged in enforced disappearances - a crime under international law - by sending 252 Venezuelan migrants to a maximum-security prison in El Salvador.

In a recent report, HRW documented allegations by the men, who eventually were allowed into Venezuela, of being tortured, including beatings and sexual violence.

'Less free'

now Human Rights Watch pointed to metrics by which democracy has declined to the level of 1985 - when the Soviet Union still existed.

Russia and China are less free today than 20 years ago. And so is the United States," it said.

Philippe Boloipon, the group's executive director, called on countries to form alliances based on respect for human rights and to stand together - including against the tariff-wielding Trump.

Israeli strikes kill 20 more in Gaza, violating US-backed ceasefire again

NEWS DESK: In the latest violence to undermine the ceasefire in Gaza, health officials said Israeli tank shelling and airstrikes killed 20 Palestinians, including four children, on Wednesday.

Among the dead was a medic who rushed to help victims of a strike in the southern city of Khan Younis and was then killed by a second attack on the same location, health officials said. Other strikes hit Gaza City in the north, where health officials said a five-month-old boy was killed.

The attacks come three days after Israel reopened Gaza's main border crossing with Egypt, a major step in the US-backed truce.

The Israeli military claimed it had launched the strikes in response to gunmen opening fire against Israeli troops operating near its armistice line with Hamas. It said an Israeli soldier was severely injured by the fire Wednesday's attacks bring the number of Palestinians killed



since the border reopened to 28, according to a tally from Gaza's health officials.

On Saturday, before its reopening, Israeli strikes killed more than 30 Palestinians in Gaza. The military said it launched those strikes after gunmen emerged from a tunnel in a Gaza area under Israeli control.

Patient crossings at Rafah halted

Palestinian patients preparing to cross through the newly opened Rafah border crossing to Egypt were told that Israel had postponed the passage of

patients through the border. A few hours later, the patients were told to prepare again to cross the border.

A spokesperson for the Red Crescent said patients had arrived at a hospital in Khan Younis in preparation for crossing Rafah for treatment, only to be informed that Israel had postponed the evacuations. "They called the patients and said today there is no travel at all, the crossing is closed," Raja'a Abu Teir, a Palestinian patient who was set to be evacuated, told Reuters at the hospital, where several

patients were waiting in ambulances.

An Egyptian security source told Reuters that efforts were being made to reopen the crossing, and that Israel had cited security issues in the Rafah area as the reason for the closure. The Israeli agency that controls access to Gaza, COGAT, claimed in a statement on Wednesday that Rafah crossing remained open, adding that it had not received the necessary coordination details from the World Health Organisation (WHO) to facilitate the crossing.

Jaishankar, Rubio welcome India-US trade deal amid scrutiny at home

NEWS DESK: India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held talks in Washington, DC, with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio as New Delhi faces mounting domestic pressure to publish full details of a newly announced India-US trade agreement.

According to a US readout cited by Indian media, the two sides "welcomed the trade deal" agreed by Donald Trump and Narendra Modi earlier this week, and discussed steps to formalise cooperation on "critical minerals," which include materials used in supply chains for technologies such as batteries and clean energy systems.

The meeting took place ahead of a US-hosted critical minerals ministerial, with discussions also covering trade, energy, defence, nuclear and the Indo-Pacific, Jaishankar said in a social media post.

According to the meeting summary shared by State Department principal deputy spokesperson Tommy Pigott, "Rubio and Jaishankar welcomed the trade deal reached between President Trump and Prime Minister Modi."

The two leaders discussed working together to "unlock new economic opportunities and advance our shared energy security goals," and also "expressed their commitment to expanding bilateral and

multilateral cooperation through the Quad," acknowledging that "a prosperous Indo-Pacific region remains vital to advancing our shared interests", according to Pigott.

The broad outlines announced so far suggest the US will cut tariffs on Indian goods to 18%, down from a higher rate of 25%, while India would lower barriers for a range of American exports and increase purchases of US goods, including energy.

But opposition leaders in India say the government has not published a full text, timelines or an enforcement mechanism, and they want Parliament

briefed before the deal is implemented.

India's main opposition party, the Indian National Congress, said the government must take

"the Parliament and the entire country into confidence and share all the details," warning the deal could expose the domestic industry and farmers to fresh competition.

US officials have framed the agreement as a boost for American exports, particularly farm products, while Reuters reporting has suggested India may retain protections for some politically sensitive agricultural sectors.

US Trade Representative Jamieson

He did not mention any new US access to India's markets for rice, beef, soybeans, sugar or dairy, which are highly guarded commodities that India excluded from its recent trade deal with the European Union.



India can no longer keep occupied Kashmir enslaved: GB Chief Minister

GILGIT (INP): Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, Justice (Retd) Yasar Muhammad, has said that India can no longer keep occupied Jammu and Kashmir under subjugation, reaffirming that supporting

the Kashmir freedom movement at every level and on every front is a religious and moral obligation.

The CM expressed these views while speaking at a meeting held in honour of Hurriyat AJK

leader Zahid Safi during his visit to Gilgit-Baltistan. The chief minister said that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan stand shoulder to shoulder with the oppressed people of occupied Kashmir and will continue to extend their full support to the just struggle for freedom.

Zahid Safi, on the occasion, thanked Justice (Retd) Yasar Muhammad and the valiant people of the northern areas for their unwavering solidarity. He said that during Operation

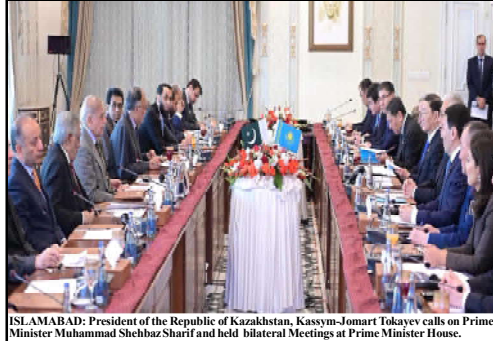
Bunyan-un-Marsos, India has been left with no credibility and is no longer in a position to show its face to the world. He added that Pakistan's continued

support for the Kashmir freedom struggle in all circumstances is clear proof of the resolve that "we are Pakistanis and Pakistan belongs to us".

Highlighting the significance of February 5, Kashmir Solidarity

Day, the Hurriyat leader said the day symbolizes a renewed pledge to remain united and steadfast in all circumstances and to continue the freedom movement until it reaches its logical conclusion.

The meeting was also attended by Gilgit-Baltistan Home Minister Sajid Ali Baig, Minister for Water, Mumtaz Hussain, Minister for Food Mir Dad, Minister for Education Bahadur Ali Khan.



ISLAMABAD: President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and held bilateral meetings at Prime Minister House.

Defence Housing Authority (DHA) Lahore's residents allowed to fly kites on Basant

LAHORE (INP): The Defence Housing Authority (DHA) has announced conditional permission for kite flying on the rooftops of its residential areas of Lahore after obtaining a no-objection certificate from the Punjab government.

Before this Basant Festival was only allowed in DHA Phase VII. According to the new framework, kite flying will be permitted strictly on approved days and within designated zones.

Organizers, residents, or community bodies seeking to arrange kite flying activities must secure prior clearance from relevant government departments, including local administration and law enforcement agencies.

The permission process is intended to ensure compliance with safety protocols, particularly regarding the use of hazardous string and aerial hazards near roads, power lines, and sensitive installations.

Officials associated with the Defence Housing Authority stated that the authority will coordinate with the district administration to monitor implementation. The use of metallic, chemical, or glass-coated string remains prohibited, and violators may face fines, confiscation of materials, or legal action under existing laws.

Maryam Aurangzeb visits Walled City to review SOPs for Basant. Punjab Senior Minister Maryam Aurangzeb visited the

Minister gave instructions on the spot to the Home Department, Police, Traffic Police, and Transport and Rescue 1122.

Maryam Aurangzeb also reviewed the security plan for the Basant Festival. She said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz is personally overseeing the security arrangements.

Aurangzeb appealed to citizens to reduce the use of private vehicles and prioritize collective transportation.

She added that joint measures are being taken to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, with artificial intelligence systems actively identifying pollution hotspots.

The minister also highlighted that drone surveillance is being used to monitor factories, brick kilns, and vehicles, ensuring strict enforcement of environmental regulations.

India-US trade deal reflects strategic compulsion for Delhi: Masood Khan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Ambassador Masood Khan, former President of Aaz Jammu and Kashmir and former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, China, and the United Nations, has said that India's recent trade agreement with the United States reflects strategic compulsion rather than strategic choice.

In a statement in Islamabad, Ambassador Masood Khan asserted that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had little room for maneuver following India's diplomatic and strategic setbacks after the May 2025 India-Pakistan conflict.

He observed that the agreement emerged after India found itself increasingly isolated in the aftermath of the conflict, with bilateral tensions and international scrutiny narrowing New Delhi's diplomatic space. He noted that both India and Pakistan had reached a strategic

stalemate, while President Donald Trump openly criticized India and its leadership, placing additional pressure on PM Modi to repair strained ties with Washington. He said that coercive diplomatic pressure from Washington accelerated the U.S.-India trade arrangement, which he described as largely favorable to American economic interests.

Highlighting the strategic implications of the deal, Ambassador Khan said that India had crossed long-standing red lines, particularly in agriculture, where tariff protections had historically been regarded as politically and economically sensitive. He said that these concessions would pose serious domestic challenges for the Modi government, especially in convincing India's farming community that such measures would not undermine their livelihoods.

lihoods. Ambassador Khan further observed that the agreement, coupled with India's free trade arrangement with the European Union, could expose vulnerable sectors of the Indian economy to intense external competition. He warned that these agreements might disproportionately affect marginalized and lower-income communities, while simultaneously facilitating the influx of luxury goods, advanced technologies, and industrial products from Western markets at highly competitive prices.

Commenting on the strategic dimension of the deal, Ambassador Khan stated that the United States had also secured commitments from India to gradually reduce its reliance on Russian oil and shift energy imports toward American and alternative suppliers. He noted that India had previously

continued substantial oil purchases from Russia despite public assurances to the contrary, and the new arrangement marks a significant recalibration of New Delhi's foreign policy priorities.

Ambassador Khan said that India's foreign policy narrative of "strategic autonomy" has increasingly come under scrutiny, with critics within India arguing that recent policy decisions have pushed the country toward what they describe as strategic uncertainty and economic vulnerability. He added that India's international image has also been affected by its aggressive posture during last year's conflict with Pakistan, which exposed gaps between its projected military capabilities and operational realities. While analyzing the broader regional impact, Ambassador Khan stressed that Pakistan must remain vigilant.

Kashmir Solidarity Day to be observed tomorrow

ISLAMABAD (INP): The entire Pakistani nation will observe Kashmir Solidarity Day tomorrow, February 5, with a renewed pledge to support the just struggle of the Kashmiri people for their inalienable right to self-determination, as enshrined in the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

The day will also be marked to expose the worst forms of oppression being perpetrated by Indian occupation forces against the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Solidarity walks will be organized across Pakistan to convey the message to

the oppressed people of Kashmir that they are not alone in their struggle for the right to self-determination. Anti-India demonstrations and rallies will also be held to draw the attention of the world community to Indian brutalities against the Kashmiri people.

Human chains will be formed at Kohala and other important points linking Pakistan with Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

In connection with the day, debates, declamation contests, and essay-writing competitions will be organized in educational institutions across the country.

Television channels will broadcast

special programmes to highlight human rights violations by Indian troops in the occupied territory. Newspapers will publish special supplements highlighting the Indian atrocities against the Kashmiri people.

All Pakistani missions abroad will organize seminars and photo exhibitions to draw the world's attention to the worst forms of subjugation and human rights violations committed by India in the occupied territory. The national media, both electronic and print, will air special programmes and publish special supplements to highlight decades-long struggle of the Kashmiri people

against Indian occupation. Banners highlighting the plight of innocent Kashmiris have been displayed across the country, including at airports, railway stations, and along national highways.

The hearts of the people of Pakistan and Kashmir throb in unison, and Pakistan will continue to extend full moral, political, and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people.

India has kept a major part of the internationally acknowledged disputed Himalayan state of Jammu and Kashmir under illegal and forcible occupation since October 27, 1947, against the wishes of its people.

Kazakh president presented guard of honour at PM House in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (INP): A formal welcome ceremony was held in honour of Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the Prime Minister House in Islamabad on Wednesday. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif welcomed the Kazakh president at his office where national anthems of the two countries were played.

Later, a smartly turned out contingent of Armed Forces presented guard of honour to the visiting dignitary.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the President of Kazakhstan will hold bilateral and delegation-level talks today.

Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements in several sectors will also be signed between the two countries.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev arrived in Paki-

stan Tuesday on a two-day official visit, aimed at strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif received the visiting dignitary at Nur Khan Air Base. President Tokayev is accompanied by a high-level delegation, including senior ministers and government officials.

Separately, President Asif Ali Zardari will confer Nishan-e-Pakistan, the country's highest civilian award, to the Presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The award ceremony will be held at the Presidential Palace in Islamabad.

According to officials, the honour is given in recognition of the country's high-level delegation, including senior ministers and government officials.

According to officials, the honour is given in recognition of the country's high-level delegation, including senior ministers and government officials.

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

BEIJING (INP): Pakistan's exports of tools, implements, cutlery and related articles of base metal to China continued to grow in 2025, reaching \$8.14 million, up from \$7.76 million in 2024, representing a year-on-year increase of about 5%.

This was reported on Wednesday by China Economic Net (CEN) quoting the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC).

Customs data showed that hand tools led the export basket, with pliers, pincers, tweezers, and similar tools emerging as top products. Exports of these items rose from \$2.97 million in 2024 to \$3.72 million in 2025, driven mainly by strong demand from Zhejiang Province, which stood out as the largest destination, with exports worth \$1.78 million under processing with imported materials, highlighting Pakistan's integration into China's manufacturing supply chains, followed by Shanghai and Guangdong, through both ordinary and processing trade channels.

Scissors and shears ranked second, recording exports of around \$1.90 million in 2025, with major shipments destined for Shanghai and Zhejiang.

Safety razor blades placed third, earning about \$1.34 million, mainly supplied to Xinjiang and Zhejiang.

Faisal Shahzad, a Pakistani exporter, told China Economic Net that Wazirabad's cutlery industry reflects the resilience and skill of its people, blending traditional techniques with modern innovation.

He added that attracting Chinese investment and relocating related industries to Wazirabad could significantly boost exports.

Analysts note that Pakistan's competitive pricing



Lahore manhole tragedy: Court extends physical remand of accused

LAHORE (INP): A local court Wednesday extended physical remand of five accused in Lahore manhole tragedy case, in which a woman and her nine-month-old daughter lost their lives.

A woman and her nine-month-old daughter lost their lives after falling into an open sewage drain near Bhati Gate on January 28, 2026.

The child's body was recovered approximately 17 hours later, nearly eight kilometres from the site, while the mother's body was recovered around six hours after the incident.

Initially, the rescue teams and other officials termed the incident fake. Despite repeated pleas from the victim's family, the district administration denied the incident, but the position changed after the mother's body was recovered.

Police produced the accused before judicial magistrate Shafiqat Abbas in local court, after end of their physical remand.

The prosecution demanded further extension of remand, while the defense lawyer opposed it. After hearing arguments from both sides, the court extended the physical remand of the accused by five days.

The accused included Project Manager Asghar Sandhu, safety in-charge Hunzala, site in-charge Ahmad Nawaz and two brothers Salim and Usman working for a private company.

An inquiry committee formed by the Punjab Inspector General of Police (IGP) earlier completed its investigation into torture allegations of Ghulam Bhatti following the Bhati Gate incident in Lahore, in which his wife and nine-month-old daughter lost their lives after falling into an open manhole.

According to the inquiry report, three police officers — the

SP City, the SDPO, and the concerned SHO — were found responsible for negligence.

The committee stated that Ghulam Bhatti, the husband of the Bhati Gate victim, was subjected to torture inside the SHO's retiring room, allegedly in the presence of the SP.

The inquiry committee was constituted to probe allegations of custodial torture after the victim's husband was taken into custody following the incident.

The panel was headed by AIG CIA Imran Mahmood, with DIG Ahmed Nasir Aziz and DIG Imran Kishore as members.



HYDERABAD: Vice Chancellor, Liaquat University of Medical & Health Sciences (LUMHS), Prof. Dr. Ikram Din Ullah led a Cancer Awareness Walk held at LUMHS on World Cancer Day.

Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail Reaffirms Pakistan's Unwavering Support for Kashmir on Kashmir Solidarity Day

QUETTA: Governor of Balochistan, Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, in his message on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, stated that Pakistan has always supported the legitimate stance of its Kashmiri brothers and sisters at every international forum.

He said that Pakistan has consistently highlighted the human rights violations and oppression committed by India in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) at the global level.

The Governor emphasized that Pakistan's moral and diplomatic support will continue for the Kashmiri people until they are granted their right to self-determination.

He added that the purpose of observing Kashmir Day is to express complete solidarity with the oppressed people of



Kashmir.

Jaffar Khan Mandokhail reiterated that Pakistan's principled position on the Kashmir issue has always been clear—that the people of occupied Kashmir must be given the right to decide their future in accordance with the United Nations resolutions. He stressed the

need to draw the attention of the international community towards the Kashmir dispute and to shape global public opinion in favor of the Kashmiri people.

The Governor further stated that the brave and resilient people of Balochistan stand shoulder to shoulder with their Kashmiri brothers and sisters in every difficult time, reaffirming their unwavering support for the just struggle of the Kashmiri people.

Provincial Advisor Naseem-ur-Rehman Khan Malakhel Calls Kashmir Issue a Global Human Rights Concern

QUETTA: Provincial Advisor for Environment and Climate Change, Naseem-ur-Rehman Khan Malakhel, in his message on the occasion of February 5, Kashmir Solidarity Day, said that this day reminds the nation of solidarity with the Kashmiri brothers and sisters and of the sacrifices they have made in their struggle for freedom.

He reiterated that Pakistan has always supported the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination and has consistently raised the Kashmir issue at international forums.

Naseem-ur-Rehman Khan Malakhel emphasized that the Kashmir issue is not merely a dispute between Pakistan and India, but a serious global human rights issue. Despite numerous United Nations resolutions, the people of Kashmir have still been denied their right to self-determination.

He further said that India has intensified its military presence in occupied Kashmir, subjecting the local population to renewed oppression and violence.

DHO Dr. Naseem Lango Reviews Ongoing Anti-Polio Campaign in Union Council Baleena Khattan

KHUZDAR: District Health Officer (DHO) Khuzdar Dr. Naseem Lango visited various polio vaccination units established in Union Council Baleena Khattan in connection with the ongoing national anti-polio campaign aimed at eradicating polio from the country.

During the visit, the DHO conducted a detailed assessment of the performance of polio teams working in the field.

He reviewed children's finger markings, team registers, and activities carried out in accordance with the micro plan to ensure transparency and effectiveness of the campaign.



ness of the campaign.

While interacting with the polio teams, Dr. Naseem Lango listened to the challenges and issues faced during field operations and issued on-the-spot instructions to the staff to carry out the campaign in a more effective, organized, and responsible manner, ensuring that no child is left without polio drops.

On the occasion, the District Health Officer appreciated and encouraged the efforts of the polio teams, emphasizing that parental support is vital for a polio-free Pakistan.

He also appealed to parents to ensure that their children receive polio drops during every vaccination campaign and to extend full cooperation to polio teams, emphasizing that parental support is vital for a polio-free Pakistan.

The Governor further stated that the brave and resilient people of Balochistan stand shoulder to shoulder with their Kashmiri brothers and sisters in every difficult time, reaffirming their unwavering support for the just struggle of the Kashmiri people.

The meeting reviewed the rapid depletion of underground water reserves, measures to curb unnecessary and illegal water usage, and strategies to ensure sustainable water availability in the future.

During the meeting, a comprehensive emergency action plan was discussed, under which consensus was reached on promoting rainwater harvesting, establishment of groundwater recharge points, installation of water treatment plants, and the adoption of sprinkler and drip irrigation systems in the agricultural sector. It was emphasized that the allocated budget for the action plan will be utilized efficiently and transparently.

The meeting was informed that national organizations including the World Bank, United Nations, European Union, and various NGOs will provide support for the successful implementation of the plan, aimed at protecting Quetta from a severe future water crisis.

Participants also decided to form a Water Committee comprising representatives from WASA, Irrigation, Agriculture, Forests, and the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). The committee will oversee coordination and monitoring of all water-related initiatives. Under the action plan, not only will water conservation and protection of existing reserves be ensured, but effective measures will also be taken to utilize rain and floodwater efficiently.

These efforts aim to address water scarcity on one hand and safeguard citizens, their homes, and properties from flood-related damage on the other, paving the way for a more resilient and sustainable future for Quetta.

ADC Muhammad Anwar Kakar Chairs Review Meeting on Day Two Performance of Ongoing Anti-Polio Campaign

QUETTA: A review meeting regarding the second day performance of the ongoing anti-polio campaign was held under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Quetta, Muhammad Anwar Kakar.

The meeting was attended by the District Health Officer (DHO) Quetta, representatives of the National Emergency Operations Center (EOC), members of the Provincial EOC, monitors, the District

cases, Still NA, Non-Accessible refusals, Still refusals, refusal coverage, and other challenges faced during field operations.

Addressing the participants, ADC Muhammad Anwar Kakar directed officials to take immediate and effective measures to ensure vaccination coverage on the second day was presented.

The briefing included a comprehensive report on Non-Accessible (NA) cases, Still NA, Non-Accessible refusals, Still refusals, refusal coverage, and other challenges faced during field operations. ADC Muhammad Anwar Kakar directed officials to take immediate and effective measures to ensure vaccination coverage on the second day was presented.

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DG GDA Moin-ur-Rehman Khan Reviews Proposed Development Projects for FY 2026-27

GWADAR: A review meeting regarding the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA)'s proposed development projects and ongoing schemes for the fiscal year 2026-27 was held under the chairmanship of Director General GDA, Moin-ur-Rehman Khan.

The meeting focused on finalizing GDA projects for inclusion in the Provincial and Federal Public Sector Development Programme (PSPD) 2026-27.

The meeting was attended by Chief Engineer GDA Haji Syed Muhammad, Director Town Planning Shahid Ali, Superintending Engineer Nadir Baloch, along with other concerned engineers and officers.

During the session, several important projects aimed at improving economic, social, and tourism, and basic infrastructure in Gwadar were reviewed.

These projects focus on enhancing urban facilities, providing quality public services, and aligning the city with modern development standards. Key projects discussed in detail included the GDA Old

upgradation of Gwadar Cricket Stadium, a new GDA housing scheme, and residential flats for GDA employees. In addition, proposals related to drainage, sewerage, street development, and road expansion in various areas of the city—including TTC Colony, Bakshi

with modern standards, transparency, and urban needs, with the objective of transforming Gwadar into a modern, well-planned, and world-class city equipped with essential facilities.

PC-I documents and initial planning stages of all proposed projects at the earliest, so that timely recommendations can be submitted for their inclusion in the PSPD 2026-27.

He emphasized that all development schemes should be designed in accordance with modern standards, transparency, and urban needs, with the objective of transforming Gwadar into a modern, well-planned, and world-class city equipped with essential facilities.

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ADC Muhammad Ismail Mengal Conducts Field Visit to Review Ongoing Polio Campaign

LORALAI: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Loralai, Muhammad Ismail Mengal, conducted a field visit to various polio vaccination teams operating in different areas during the ongoing polio campaign.

During the visit, the ADC carried out a detailed review of the overall performance of polio teams, inspecting door-to-door vaccination activities, door chalking, finger marking of children, and entries made in tally sheets to ensure proper implementation of campaign protocols.

Addressing the polio workers, Muhammad Ismail Mengal directed them to perform their duties with honesty, dedication, and commitment to make the polio eradication more effective and successful, ensuring that no child is left without polio drops.

He emphasized that polio eradication is a shared national responsibility, and stressed the importance of accurate reporting and timely data entry by field teams for achieving the desired results.

The ADC also appealed to parents to extend full cooperation to polio teams and ensure that all children under

five years of age receive polio drops, so that future generations can be protected from

that future generations can be protected from

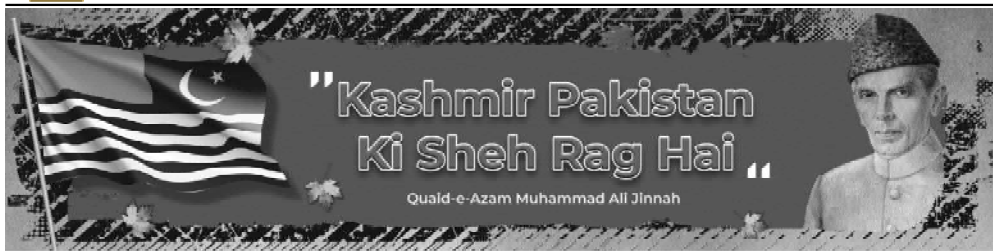
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NOTICE INVITING TENDER		
The Irrigation Division Pishin intends to carry out the following Development Work for the year 2025-26 and invites sealed tenders on composite schedule of rates 2023 GOB from the PEC Registered Government Contractors. Note in All Procurements of GOB Whether through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, it is Mandatory for All the Bidders to Get Registered at Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. Tender Fee: Rs. 500 and Earnest Money 2%.		
S.R.	Name of work	ECost
1	REHABILITATION OF JARNOH DAM DIST PISHIN UNDER BSDF PHASE 1 2025-26	48.0M
2	REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION OF SANJALAKAREZ UNDER BSDF PHASE II 2025-26	20.0M
<p>The Procurement shall be carried out in accordance with the BPPRA rules 2014 and Amended 2018.</p> <p>ELIGIBILITY OF CONTRACTORS: Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required. The bidder must have completed 2 Assignments of similar nature of work Turnover of at least 70% of the Estimated Cost PRR Amount in 3 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm. Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in Relevant Category and Specialized Code is C254 (I) (General Refracting Structures), C254 (II) (Irrigation & Flood Control Systems), C254 (III) (Irrigation Only). The bidder must have completed 2 Assignments of similar nature in last 3 years. Minimum value of each project should be 70% of the Estimated Cost. Underwriting of Non-Blacklisting and Liquidation of the firm(s) on Rs. 100 stamp paper obtained by notary public, including the name of work, and TSE on it addressed to Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Pishin. Underwriting of documents that all documents provided are true and genuine on Rs 100 stamp paper attested by notary public including the name of work and TSE on it addressed to Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Pishin in case of Joint venture the JV agreement on Rs. 100 Stamp Paper duly attested by notary public. Audit Reports of the firm(s) should be attached & appearing in ICAP directory and Registered last Three years Audit Report, Bank Guarantee OR CDR in case of rate offered below 10% of the total cost must be submitted with Financial Bid security @ 2% of the Estimated Cost in shape of Call deposit or Bank Guarantee in Favor of Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Pishin Green Chalan Of Rs. 500 Detailed Technical Evaluation Criteria is mentioned on BPPRA Bidding Documents. METHOD OF PROCUREMENT: Bids are invited on Single stage two envelope procedure (Technical & Financial Proposals). Financial Proposals of bids found non-responsive by the procurement committee shall be returned unopened to the respective bidders. The interested Contractors Firms are required to provide Technical Proposal comprising information regarding Experience, Personnel Capabilities, Financial Status, Equipment Capabilities and other relevant information as explained in the Bid Soliciting Documents (one original + one copy) in sealed envelope & the Financial Proposal in separate envelope, clearly labeled each accordingly. BIDDING / TENDER DOCUMENTS ISSUANCE: Complete Bidding Documents can be obtained from www.bppra.gov.pk. SUBMISSION OF BIDDING / TENDER DOCUMENTS: The last date & time for submission of tender documents will be 18/02/2026 at 11.00 AM. Only the Bid (Technical Proposal) will be opened on the same date 19/02/2026 in the OFFICE OF DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PISHIN at 12.00 PM. before procurement committee and in the presence of Contractors' firms or their authorized representatives. Date and time for opening of (Financial) Bids will be communicated to all the shortlisted contractors after evaluation of the technical bids accordingly. The Tender Fee Rs. 500/- will be deposited through green chalan in National Bank of Pakistan under the head of Account C-03434 (Irrigation Refund). BID SECURITY: Bid Security of 2% of estimated cost in the shape of call deposit from any scheduled bank as mentioned against the contract shall be enclosed with the bid (Technical Proposal). The Procurement Authority reserves the right to accept/reject any or all bids at any time prior to acceptance of a bid, due to cogent reason. Any further information regarding the bid can be obtained from BPPRA or Office of the Undersecretary on any working day. The Office of the Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division Pishin.</p>		
<p>PRO No. 3659/04-02-2026</p> <p>www.bppra.gov.pk www.dgdp.gov.pk www.dgdp.gov.pk www.dgdp.gov.pk</p>		<p>EXECUTIVE ENGINEER IRRIGATION DIVISION PISHIN</p>



Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah



Asif Ali Zardari

Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan



Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan



Muhammad Ishaq Dar

Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister



Amir Muqam

Minister of Labour Affairs, Small Industries, Tribes and Fisheries Affairs



Rana Muhammad Qasim Noon

Federal Minister and Chairman, Provincial Committee on Kashmir

The people of Pakistan across the globe observe Kashmir Solidarity Day to reaffirm our unwavering moral, diplomatic and political support for our Kashmiri brothers and sisters in their just struggle for the realization of their right to self-determination.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The situation on the ground in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) has moved beyond episodic violations to a sustained system of repression. Since the unilateral and illegal actions of 5 August 2019, India has dismantled legal safeguards, weakened local institutions, and imposed measures aimed at consolidating its permanent occupation of the disputed territory, including artificially altering the demographic composition to change Muslim majority into minority, forcing media to follow the official line and contravening any form of dissent. Under the Hindu-driven framework, people in IIOJK face constant discrimination.

The recent profiling of mosques in IIOJK where religious functionaries are forced to give their personal details, photographs and sectarian affiliations show the extent of institutionalized Islamophobia.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On this day, the entire Pakistani nation expresses its unwavering solidarity with its Kashmiri brothers and sisters. Kashmir Solidarity Day is a reaffirmation of our pledge that Pakistan stands shoulder to shoulder with its Kashmiri people in their just and legitimate struggle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Ameen.

Spin-heavy Pakistan hit form, but India boycott risks early T20 exit

NEWS DESK: Pakistan's spin-heavy squad are in winning form ahead of the T20 World Cup, but a controversial decision to forfeit their matches against India could still trigger an early exit.

Pakistan came close to withdrawing from the tournament in solidarity with Bangladesh, who pulled out after refusing to play in India, citing security concerns.

The Pakistan government eventually cleared the team's participation but it barred them from facing India in Colombo in a blockbuster clash on February 15.

With two points for a win, a forfeit of the match will leave Pakistan with no margin for error if they are to progress as one of the top two from a five-team Group A.

It means they must win their opening game against the Netherlands in Colombo on Saturday and beat the United States three days later to stay in contention.

Their final group game will be against Namibia on February 18.

Captain Salman Agha said the move to boycott the India game was out of the team's hands.

"That is not our decision. We have to follow what our government decides," he said. "Our job is to win, and we are capable of doing that," he said.

Pakistan will be keen to avoid a repeat of the last T20 World Cup in 2024, where a shock super over defeat to co-hosts the United States led to them failing to get out of the group.

The side has since faced criticism for failing to adapt to the modern demands of T20 cricket, with the batting, particularly Babar Azam's low strike rate, under scrutiny.

The criticism was fuelled by Pakistan's 21 of their 34 T20 international wins came



against lower-ranked opponents.

Confidence restored: Against elite teams, the results were sobering: three losses to India in the Asia Cup and a 4-1 series defeat to New Zealand.

However, Agha believes recent performances have restored confidence.

Pakistan beat South Africa 2-1, won a home tri-series, and then completed a 3-0 sweep of an under-strength Australia. "We've had good

preparation by beating Australia. We have the luxury of quality spinning all-rounders like Mohammad Nawaz, Shadab Khan and Saim Ayub.

"We're ticking most boxes and believe we can win the World Cup," Agha said. The spin department has been strengthened by Abrar Ahmed

and Usman Tariq, the latter known for his unusual, sly action and exaggerated pause at the crease.

The pace attack is led by the experienced Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah.

Faheem Ashraf provides seam-bowling all-round support and newcomer Salman Mirza has been impressive.

Batting remains Pakistan's most volatile component. When openers Saim Ayub and Sahibzada Farhan provide strong starts, the side can post competitive totals, but collapses remain a constant threat.

Head coach Mike Hesson has added another layer of risk by leaving out experienced wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan because of poor form, opting instead for makeshift options in Usman Khan, Khawaja Nafay and Farhan.

For Pakistan, the ingredients for a deep run are present, but with points potentially forfeited, there is little room left for error.

India aim for back-to-back T20 triumphs

NEWS DESK: Holders India will enter the T20 World Cup as firm favourites on home soil, but coach Gautam Gambhir faces intense scrutiny under the weight of expectation from a billion-plus fans.

India, led by Suryakumar Yadav, will begin their campaign against the United States at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium on Saturday.

It will round off the opening day of the tournament's 10th edition, which has been marred by a chaotic build-up.

Bangladesh last month refused to play in India, citing security concerns, and were kicked out to be replaced by Scotland.

This week the Pakistan government fol-

lowed up by barring its team from playing against India in Group A on February 15 in Colombo as a protest at Bangladesh's treatment.

The boycott has robbed the group stage of the biggest rivalry and money-spinning spectacle, but leaves India in pole position to top the group.

Pakistan should also progress to the Super Eights in second place, barring a slip-up against the Netherlands, Namibia or the USA, who make up the five-team group.

Top-ranked India reinforced their credentials as tournament favourites with a recent 4-1 win over New Zealand – their ninth successive T20 bilateral series triumph.

But home defeats in

other formats have put Gambhir's high-profile job on the line.

India were beaten 2-0 by South Africa in a Test series last year and New Zealand won an ODI series 2-1.

Gambhir, 44, replaced Rahul Dravid as coach after the T20 World Cup triumph in 2024 and has lost 10 out of 19 Tests.

Abhishek Sharma has replaced Rohit in the role of fearless opener, with the swashbuckling batsman scoring at a punishing strike rate of more than 194.

The 25-year-old left-hander is in form. He smashed India's second fastest 50, off 14 balls, against New Zealand.

Captain Suryakumar ended a batting slump with three half-centuries in the same series while Ishan Kishan's comeback has added muscle to the batting order.

Batting great Sunil Gavaskar told broadcaster JioStar that India were full of confidence. "Even if there is a small stumble, this team knows it can recover, regroup, and continue marching towards victory," said the former India captain.

The bowling attack, led by Jasprit Bumrah, has new talent in the shape of medium-pacer Harshit Rana.

Bumrah, Rana and Arshdeep Singh form the seam attack, with Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube as the all-rounders.

It will be India's first T20 World Cup since the retirements of then captain Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli following the final victory in Barbados in 2024.

India first won the title under Mahendra Singh Dhoni in Johannesburg in 2007 but will have to defy history to win again, with no team having previously gone back-to-back.

Pakistan announced its decision without citing a specific reason for boycotting the match against India. In the past, however, Australia and the West Indies forfeited their World Cup matches against Sri Lanka in 1996 on security grounds following instructions from their government.

England and New Zealand similarly forfeited matches against Zimbabwe and Kenya, respectively, during the 2003 World Cup on political grounds.

Some quarters have termed Pakistan's move a mistake, noting that unlike previous in-

'Back-channel talks underway after Pakistan decide to skip India T20 World Cup clash'

NEWS DESK: The government of Pakistan's decision on Sunday not to play its T20 World Cup group match against India, scheduled for Feb 15, has prompted the International Cricket Council (ICC) to initiate back-channel efforts to resolve the issue and avoid significant financial losses, Dawn has learnt.

The decision was announced around 15 days ahead of the scheduled fixture, giving the ICC sufficient time to explore possible options, including accommodating any reservations Pakistan may have, sources said.

According to sources, a couple of other cricket boards have also stepped in to assist the ICC in its efforts to reach an amicable solution with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

Pakistan announced its decision without citing a specific reason for boycotting the match against India. In the past, however, Australia and the West Indies forfeited their World Cup matches against Sri Lanka in 1996 on security grounds following instructions from their government.

England and New Zealand similarly forfeited matches against Zimbabwe and Kenya, respectively, during the 2003 World Cup on political grounds.

Some quarters have termed Pakistan's move a mistake, noting that unlike previous in-



stances involving other teams, no explicit justification was provided. Sources, however, said the PCB has factored this into its position and plans to rely on proceedings of the ICC's Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) in a case filed by Pakistan against India in 2018.

That case stemmed from India's failure to honour a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the PCB and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in 2014, under which the two countries were to play six bilateral series between 2015 and 2023.

In return, the PCB had supported the ICC's 'Big Three' revenue-sharing model, under which India, Australia and England received a larger share of ICC revenues.

"During the hearing, the PCB asked the BCCI to explain its refusal to tour Pakistan,"

a source familiar with the 2018 proceedings said. "Initially, the BCCI stated that it was not obliged to provide a reason. Later, it claimed that the Indian government had not allowed the tour."

When the PCB requested written instructions from the Indian government, the BCCI responded that such decisions were conveyed verbally and not documented, the source added.

Despite this, sources expressed concerns that, as in 2018, the BCCI influence within the ICC could again result in a ruling against Pakistan, potentially leading to financial penalties or sanctions.

In such an event, the government of Pakistan may consider approaching an international court of arbitration.

It is believed that Pakistan's decision was influenced by a recent

ICC ruling involving Bangladesh.

The ICC had rejected Bangladesh's request to shift its World Cup matches from India to Sri Lanka on security grounds and instead excluded Bangladesh from the tournament, replacing it with Scotland.

The decision was passed by a 14-2 majority, with only Pakistan and Bangladesh voting against the move.

The India-Pakistan fixture is considered the most lucrative match in world cricket and a cornerstone of the ICC's revenue model.

Media reports estimate its overall commercial value at around \$500 million, factoring in broadcast rights, advertising premiums, sponsorship ticket sales and ancillary commercial activity. Advertising slots during an India-Pakistan T20 typically fetch between Rs2.5 million and Rs4 million for 10 seconds.

Sunderland make home a fortress as possible place in Europe beckons

NEWS DESK: Sunderland find themselves in exalted company this season, on a list with some of Europe's top teams, as they chase down a Premier League record and a potential berth in continental football next season.

Their 3-0 home win over Burnley on Monday kept up their status as the only side left in the Premier League with an unbeaten home record this season – a feat that puts them in the same category with European champions Paris Saint-Germain and a cohort of giants like Atletico Madrid, Barcelona, Borussia Dortmund and Juventus, who have also not lost at home this season.

The victory also lifted them up to eighth in the league standings, allowing them to eye a place in Europe next season.

But manager Regis Le Bris insisted he was



keeping focus on the first priority of garnering enough points to avoid relegation. "For me, the target remains the same," he said. "The first target is around 40 points, maybe more."

The league is tough. For us, go to 40 and see if we can get more." His players, however, have set their sights on a chance to compete in European club competition in the next campaign, possibly even the Champions

League. "We want to reach the top," said midfielder Noah Sadiki. "If we can get top six or top five. There are a lot of matches coming so we have to focus on the next game."

National ranking table tennis tournament begins in Islamabad



NEWS DESK: The Pakistan National Ranking Table Tennis Tournament will be held from 5th to 8th February 2026 at the NUML University Gymnasium (Gate 3).

The event is being hosted by the Islamabad Table Tennis Association, in collaboration with Tibhar Table Tennis Academy. Top-ranked men's and women's players from across Pakistan will participate in this prestigious tournament, making it a highly competitive national event.

Rafique Sarhadi, Secretary of the Islamabad Table Tennis Association, appreciated the Pakistan Table Tennis Federation for taking such a progressive initiative and for its commitment to bringing positive change in line with international standards.

He also briefed the media on the arrangements for the event and shared that the tournament has received an overwhelming response, with remarkable entries and encouragement from players nationwide. He further stated that the introduction of a structured national ranking system will elevate the game to world-class standards by ensuring fair, transparent, and unbiased results, paving the way for the development of international-level table tennis in Pakistan.



No Jobs Will Be Sold in Balochistan, Merit Will Prevail: CM Sarfraz Bugti

Qasem Shah: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has reaffirmed his government's commitment to transparent and merit-based recruitment, declaring that no job belonging to the people of Balochistan will be sold under any circumstances.

The chief minister said the provincial government is taking concrete steps to provide dignified employment opportunities to the youth. As part of these efforts, advertisements for more than 25,000 government vacancies from Grade 1 to Grade 15 have already been issued across various departments.

In a message shared on social media platform X, Bugti disclosed that a formal summary for around 4,000 vacant

posts in Grades 16 and 17 has been sent to the Balochistan Public Service Commission (BPSC).

He said this step aims to ensure that recruitment is carried out through a transparent, constitutional, and fair process.

The chief minister added that in departments where tests and interviews have already been completed, appointment orders will be issued at the earliest to prevent further delays for successful candidates.

He stressed that eligible applicants should not be made to suffer due to administrative bottlenecks.

To further strengthen merit and transparency, Bugti announced that an online testing system, similar

to the one used by the Finance Department, will be introduced in other departments as well.

Under this system, recruitments will be conducted strictly on merit, eliminating any possibility of favoritism or manipulation.

"Merit-based recruitment is the foundation of good governance," the chief minister said, adding that the provincial government would not compromise on this principle under any pressure.

He reiterated his firm stance, stating that the government would not allow anyone to play with the future of Balochistan's youth. "We are standing by our promise. Every deserving candidate will get their rightful place purely on merit," he concluded.

In meeting with Nawaz and Maryam, Iranian envoy appreciates Pakistan's 'continued support' toward Iran

NEWS DESK: In a meeting with PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Wednesday, Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amir Moghadam appreciated Islamabad's "principled positions and continued support" toward his country in various areas.

"Highly honored to call on Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, president of the PML-N, and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif," Moghadam said in a post on X about the meeting.

He added: "Reiterating the firm commitment of the Islamic Republic of Iran to further enhance Iran-Pakistan relations, I expressed my sincere appreciation for the principled positions and continued support of the government of Pakistan toward Iran in various arenas."

The envoy said he had met the father-daughter duo to exchange views on the latest regional developments, "particularly in light of recent interventions by the United States and the Israeli regime, including their interventionist positions, threats, and escalatory rhetoric."

"We also discussed initiatives aimed at further strengthening the bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan," he said. Moghadam also acknowledged during the meeting the "tireless endeavors" of Pakistan's government, particularly Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, in their efforts to further promote comprehensive and all-round cooperation between the two nations.

"While stressing Iran's full readiness to defend itself against any imminent adventurism, I underlined the steadfast determination of the Islamic Republic of Iran to pursue fair, equitable, and constructive negotiations aimed at resolving outstanding issues through dialogue, mutual

respect, and adherence to international norms," the envoy further stated.

Moghadam added he emphasised that Iran and Pakistan were "like two bodies and one soul," and that both nations have consistently demonstrated their love, commitment, and brotherhood throughout history and the test of time."

According to the Iranian envoy, Nawaz ex-



pressed concern regarding recent developments and imminent threats while referring to the close monitoring and continuous follow-up of developments in Iran and the region.

"He emphasised the importance of constructive negotiations based on mutual respect and equality, within the framework of international law and good faith, in accordance with the United Nations charter," he said.

"He noted that dialogue and diplomacy, alongside the protection of national sovereignty and the rejection of any threat or use of force, constitute the path toward ensuring peace, stability, and prosperity throughout this already volatile region," Moghadam said about Nawaz.

Separately, the PML-N also posted about the meeting on X, saying bilateral ties, trade, energy and the regional situation were discussed during the meeting, and the leaders from both sides "reiterated their commitment to strengthen Pak-Iran relations." The party's statement said that Maryam invited Iranian investment in the areas of agriculture, IT and tourism during the exchange and reaffirmed her commitment to advancing economic and social ties between the

Pakistan, Kazakhstan sign 30-plus MoUs as Shehbaz seeks \$1bn trade target

NEWS DESK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday called for raising trade between Pakistan and Kazakhstan to \$1 billion within a year as the two countries signed more than 30 memoranda of understanding (MoU) and agreements across multiple sectors.

Addressing a joint press conference after the signing ceremony, Shehbaz said the current level of trade did not reflect the strength of bilateral ties or the economic potential of the two countries.

"Unfortunately, our trade volume is a meagre \$250 million, which does not reflect the strength of our friendship and the potential of both countries. Let us commit to raising our trade volume to \$1 billion within the next one year," he said.

Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev described Pakistan as a "reliable and important partner in South Asia and beyond."

"Our people are united by centuries-old ties rooted in the legacy of the great Silk Road, as well as by deep cultural and spiritual affinity," Tokayev said.

"Our nations share common values, tradi-



tions and joint aspirations for the future," he added. Tokayev said the two sides had "signed a historical document—a joint declaration—on establishing a strategic partnership between Pakistan and Kazakhstan."

By elevating our relations to a new level, we open up immense opportunities to engage across the full spectrum of bilateral and multilateral agendas," he said.

Earlier, President Tokayev was accorded a warm reception and a guard of honour on his arrival at the PM House, where he held a one-on-one meeting with PM Shehbaz followed by delegation-level talks.

The Kazakh president, accompanied by a high-level delegation of senior cabinet ministers and officials, is on his first two-day state visit to Pakistan at the invitation of the prime minister. The national anthems of Pakistan and Kazakhstan were played as the two leaders stood on the saluting dais.

A contingent of the Pakistan Army, Navy and Air Force presented the guard of honour, which Tokayev reviewed. The two leaders later introduced members of their respective delegations.

Following the talks, a signing ceremony was held for MoU and agree-

ments aimed at expanding cooperation. Documents were exchanged covering areas including UN peacekeeping cooperation, mining and petroleum, maritime affairs, prisoner exchange, transit trade, customs cooperation and railways.

The two sides also agreed to cooperate in climate change, virtual assets, protection and veterinary services, as well as artificial intelligence and digital development. Officials said the agreements would support future technical cooperation and digital partnership.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, Deputy

Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, and Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal attended the ceremony.

Tokayev arrived in Pakistan on Tuesday and was received at Nur Khan Airbase by PM Shehbaz and President Asif Ali Zardari. A six-member squadron of Pakistani Air Force fighter jets paid an aerial salute as his aircraft entered Pakistani airspace.

Later, Tokayev planted a commemorative sapling on the lawn of the PM House. Roads along his motorcade route in Islamabad were decorated with Pakistani and Kazakh flags and large portraits of the visiting president.

During the visit, Tokayev is also expected to meet President Zardari. The talks are expected to cover trade, logistics, regional connectivity, people-to-people contacts and cooperation at regional and international forums. Separately, FM Dar called on President Tokayev. According to a Foreign Office statement, Dar conveyed greetings from Pakistan's leadership and reaffirmed the shared commitment to expand cooperation across political.

Chaudhry Sugar Mills case: LHC directs NAB to approach trial court for closing inquiry against Maryam

NEWS DESK: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday directed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to move the trial court concerned after the anti-graft body decided to close the Chaudhry Sugar Mills inquiry against Maryam Nawaz.

The case pertains to alleged money laundering and income beyond means via "dubious" business transactions of the Chaudhry Sugar Mills, of which Maryam was a major shareholder.

A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice Aalia Neelum and including Justices Muhammad Jawad Zafar and Abher Gul Khan, heard CM Maryam's civil miscellaneous application seeking the refund of Rs70 million deposited as a guarantee in the case.

During the proceedings, the NAB's



prosecutor informed the bench that following the new amendments, the bureau's chairman had approved the closure of the probe.

Justice Neelum, however, observed that the NAB should have approached the accountability court concerned for closure of the inquiry.

Quoting the investigation process,

the chief justice asked the bureau's counsel to explain the procedure adopted in the case.

In response, the prosecutor stated that the NAB board had decided in a meeting to close the inquiry.

The prosecutor answered the bench in the affirmative when asked whether a new NAB board could reopen the case in the

future.

At this, the bench remarked that such a situation would render the NAB board's decision to close a case meaningless.

Justice Neelum observed, "If the court orders the release of the bail surety amount today and the case is reopened tomorrow, all blame would fall on the court."

Subsequently, the

bench directed the NAB to approach the relevant accountability court within one month for the formal closure of the Chaudhry Sugar Mills inquiry.

A NAB team had arrested Maryam in connection with the case on Aug 8, 2019 when she was present at the Kot Lakhpat jail on her weekly visit to her incarcerated father Nawaz.

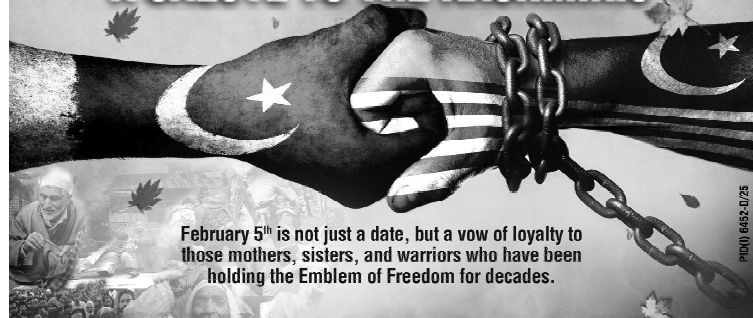
On Nov 4, 2019, the LHC released Maryam in the sugar mills case on bail, subject to surrendering her passport to the court. She was also ordered to deposit a surety amount of Rs70m with the registrar judicial of the court.

In October 2022, the LHC directed officials to return the passport to Maryam after the NAB said it did not require the travel document anymore.

#79YearsOfIllegalOccupation

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Kashmir Will Become Pakistan

RAISING THE EMBLEM OF FREEDOM
A SALUTE TO THE KASHMIRIS



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

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