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Rs.10.00 Vol.VII:No:128  
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Friday 06, February, 2026

First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan

Editor: Asim Khan.

# QUETTA VOICE



## Quetta Train Services Resume as Jaffar Express and Chaman Passenger Restart

### Staff Reporter:

Train services from Quetta, which had been suspended following serious security incidents across Balochistan, have begun resuming, bringing relief to stranded passengers.

Railway authorities confirmed that operations halted for the past five days have now gradually been restored as the security situation improved.

According to officials, rail services were suspended after

multiple militant attacks on January 31 damaged railway tracks at various locations in the province. Citing safety concerns, Pakistan Railways temporarily stopped all train operations from Quetta to other parts of Balochistan and the rest of the country.

Several major services, including the Jaffar Express (Quetta-Peshawar), Bolan Mail (Quetta-Karachi), and Chaman Passenger train, were affected. The Jaffar Express traveling from Peshawar was also stopped at Jacobabad, while

ticket refunds were issued to impacted passengers.

With conditions stabilizing, the railway administration has announced that the phased resumption of services. The Chaman Passenger train has departed from Quetta according to its regular schedule, while the Jaffar Express bound for Peshawar has also resumed operations from today.

Passengers expressed satisfaction over the route, describing the route as a vital transport link for the province.

Railway officials stated that

the Bolan Mail service between Quetta and Karachi has not yet fully resumed, but is expected to restart within the next few days. They added that regular work on damaged tracks and security clearance procedures are progressing swiftly to ensure safe operations.

The restoration comes amid ongoing security operations by law enforcement agencies, which have led to an improvement in the overall situation.

Passengers said the suspension of train services had caused

significant hardship and disrupted Balochistan's connectivity with other provinces.

Authorities further emphasized that increased security arrangements have been put in place along railway routes to prevent any untoward incidents. Travelers have been advised to confirm train schedules before departure. The resumption of rail services is seen as a major milestone in the development of Quetta Railway Junction serving as a key link connecting Balochistan with the rest of the country.

### PAA issues kite-flying alert for Lahore airport during Basant festivities

#### NEWS DESK:

The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) on Thursday issued an alert warning pilots of intense kite flying in the airspace around Lahore airport during Basant festivities, posing potential risks to aircraft operations.

After years of silence in Lahore's winter skies, Basant is set to return, cautiously and tightly regulated, as the Punjab government prepares to celebrate a festival once synonymous with colour, rooftops and springtime renewal, yet long shadowed by tragedy and controversy.

Punjab has granted special permission for Basant celebrations from 6 to 10 February, during the festival exclusively to Lahore under a comprehensive set of legal, administrative and safety measures aimed at preventing the fatalities that had earlier prompted its ban. The Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) issued on Wednesday said heavy kite flying is expected in Lahore, particularly during aircraft take-off and landing phases at low altitude.

"Due to Basant celebrations, pilots are advised to exercise extra caution during approach and take-off," the NOTAM said.

According to the alert, the warning will remain in effect from midnight on Thursday until midnight on February 8.

Basant is traditionally observed on the fifth day of the month of Magh in late January or early February, marks the arrival of spring and has historically been celebrated across Punjab, including in India and among Punjab diaspora communities, with kite flying at the heart of the festivities.

In Pakistan's Punjab, however, the festival acquired a darker reputation during the early 2000s, as celebratory gunfire, glass-cutter sticks and rooftop accidents resulted in numerous deaths, prompting authorities to impose a blanket ban in 2007. This year's revival follows the promulgation of the Punjab Kite Flying Ordinance 2025, which allows kite flying for Basant while placing unprecedented restrictions on every aspect of the festival, from kite dimensions and string material to sound systems and rooftop access.

Under official notifications issued by the Lahore district administration on the instructions of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

### Bhati Gate case suspects remand extended

#### NEWS DESK:

A judicial magistrate on Wednesday extended the physical remand of two persons accused of killing a mother and her minor daughter who fell into an open manhole near Bhati Gate.

On completion of the previous four-day probe, the demands of the police and all five accused before the court and sought a further 10-day remand.

Magistrate Shafqat Abbasi, the investigating officer (IO) what progress had been made during the four days of remand.

The IO told the court that the suspects had not disclosed anything so far during the investigation.

Advocate Ahmad Chiecher, the defense counsel, argued that the site work had been completed and handed over to Wasa.

He said his clients were the representatives of the contractor company and they had nothing to do with the incident at the site after the completion of the project. He said not a single official of any government department had been arrested by the police so far.

## 216 Terrorists Killed, Internet to Be Restored Today: Shahid Rind

#### News Desk:

At least 36 security personnel and 22 civilians were martyred during recent terrorist violence in Balochistan, while 216 terrorists were killed in a sustained counterterrorism operation, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Media and Political Affairs Shahid Rind said while briefing the media in Quetta.

Shahid Rind said banned militant groups launched coordinated attacks on multiple locations, including sensitive government installations.

He added that the swift and effective response by security forces prevented the attackers from achieving their objectives and protected civilians in targeted areas.

Operation Radd-ul-Fitrna-1 Intensified

Following the attacks, security forces intensified Operation Radd-ul-Fitrna-1, targeting terrorist hideouts, leadership,



and support networks.

According to officials, the operation severely damaged

militants' command-and-control structures and disrupted their ability to operate across the province.

Law enforcement agencies have detained several sus-

pects during ongoing search and cleanup operations.

Authorities urged citizens to cooperate with security institutions by reporting suspicious activity to help prevent future attacks.

Situation Returning to Normal

Shahid Rind stated that the overall security situation in Balochistan has improved significantly, with normal life resuming in most areas.

Educational activities and public health campaigns are continuing as planned, reflecting a gradual return to normal.

Reaffirming the government's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism, Shahid Rind said no leniency would be shown to militants, their facilitators, or supporters.

He stressed that all institutions remain united in their efforts to ensure lasting peace and security in Balochistan.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

## Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Defense Pact – A Historic Milestone in Bilateral Relations

## Editorial:

For over eight decades, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have enjoyed close political and cultural ties based on faith, friendship, and mutual cooperation. The recent visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Saudi Arabia has further strengthened these historic ties, marking a new chapter in the relationship between the two brotherly nations.

## Unprecedented Event

The signing of a Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was unprecedented. For the first time, both states have formally pledged that an attack on one will be considered an attack on both. This landmark pact is not only a testament to their shared commitment to peace and security but also a reflection of the growing geopolitical importance of

Pakistan in the wider Middle East and South Asia. Over the years, Saudi Arabia has provided political support to Pakistan, extending support in critical times, whether financial, diplomatic, or strategic.

Pakistan has successfully maintained to maintain positive ties with Saudi Arabia, despite its role in a region often marked by divisions. It has upheld its commitment to upholding regional cooperation and maintaining a balance of power in the region. Such developments assure the people of Pakistan that their country's role in the region is being shaped in the future of regional security and cooperation.

The defense pact is indeed a National Achievement.

This historic step deserves to be celebrated as a national achievement. It is a reflection of Pakistan's enduring diplomacy and its ability to transform long-standing friendships into strategic partnerships.

Today, major statements like the West Pakistani

## Quetta's Traffic Chaos: Urgent Reforms Needed to Fix the Crisis

## Anjela Kaynat:

Quetta, once a city known for its peaceful ambience, now faces an escalating traffic crisis. Every day, thousands of commuters struggle through hours of gridlock, navigating congested roads, reckless drivers, and deteriorating infrastructure. From rickshaws and motorcyclists to private cars, the overwhelming number of vehicles clogs major roads, while encroachments and illegal parking worsen the situation.

The city's transport system is on the brink of collapse, demanding immediate intervention from both authorities and residents. This article explores the root causes of Quetta's traffic woes, identifies the most affected areas, and outlines urgent solutions to restore order to the roads.

The Strain on Quetta's Road Infrastructure

Quetta's road network, originally designed during the colonial era, was never intended to accommodate the city's rapid population growth and rising number of vehicles. Al-

though the city was rebuilt after the 1953 earthquake, its road capacity has remained largely unchanged, struggling to support over 1.2 million residents and the thousands of vehicles added each year.

Key roads such as Jamia Road, Sarabia Road, and Zarghoon Road have become perpetual bottlenecks, choked by illegal encroachments, unregulated parking, and an ever-increasing number of vehicles.

Without a structured urban transport model, Quetta's roads, like Jamia Road and Liaquat Bazaar (Traffic Study Report, 2019) and Safe City 2023), worsen the gridlock, affecting daily life and economic activity.

Major Traffic Challenges and Severe Congestion on Key Roads

Traffic congestion is worst in commercial hubs such as Liaquat Bazaar, Jamia Road, and Zarghoon Road, where vehicles move at a snail's pace during peak hours.

With no alternative routes or bypasses, all traffic is funnelled through these roads, causing massive delays. Key intersections, including Balochistan University Chowk, Meem Chowk, and Park Road, frequently experience severe traffic jams.

The Surge of Non-Custom Paid (NCP) and Unregistered Vehicles

With an unchecked influx of non-custom paid (NCP) and unregistered vehicles, the compounded the traffic crisis.

A 2010 report estimates over 50,000 vehicles on Balochistan's roads, contributing to an annual loss of Rs 15 billion to the national exchequer.

Although the government has surged to nearly 80,000, with a significant concentration in Quetta (Excise and Taxation Department, 2024).

Financial constraints have delayed the construction of major infrastructure projects, leaving residents without an efficient alternative to private transport.

Encroachments and Illegal Parking

Commercial stalls and illegal parking encroachments nearly 30% of road space in busy commercial zones such as Prince

City and Jamia Road.

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## Fishing Net donation ceremony held at Gwadar Port

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Embassy of People's Republic of China held fishing net donation ceremony at Gwadar Port, donating 675 fishing nets for local fishermen.

Shah Fahad, Assistant Director Fisheries and Local Resources, received the nets on behalf of the local fishermen. Representatives from China Overseas Ports Holding Company arrived in Gwadar

(Pakistan) Ltd. (COPCH) and local fishermen attended the ceremony.

Total number of packages includes 45 packs of net, 1 bundle of orange rope, 6 bundles of small rope. Each package will be

used by 5-6 fishermen in group. Donation received will be used by the Coast Guard and the local fishing community in the coming months.

In the past, Gwadar fishermen were gifted

small engines, fishing nets, special incubators, feeding kits, and other fishing materials from the Chinese Consulate in Karachi at a donation ceremony. Gwadar Fishermen were gifted

Association official expressed gratitude to the people of Gwadar for the efficient distribution of the supplies to the fishermen will help them meet their ends efficiently.



PHNOM PENH-CAMBODIA: Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani in a meeting Sultana Mahra Rathasapha Thipadei Khun Sudary, President of the National Assembly of Cambodia.

### Security Forces successfully conclude Operation Radd-ul-Fitna-1

RAWALPINDI (INP): Security forces have successfully concluded Operation Radd-ul-Fitna-1 in Balochistan.

ISPR, under a series of coordinated, swift, and intelligence-driven operations were conducted against Indian sponsored terrorist elements seeking to disrupt peace and development by targeting innocent civilians, including women and children.

It mentioned that

operations, carried out on 29th of last month in Panjgur and the outskirts of Harnai and District after credible and verified intelligence confirmed the presence of terrorist elements posing an imminent threat to local public. During this phase, Security Forces undertook operations against identified terrorist hideouts, resulting in the elimination of forty one terrorists affiliated with Indian proxy networks.

Subsequently, aggressive and steadfast support by the brave security forces effectively thwarted the desperate attacks of Firdai al Hindustan to destabilize the peace of Balochistan. Sequel to these a broader series of intelligence-driven operations were launched in multiple areas to dismantle terrorist sleeper cells sustained

combing and sanitization operations.

Through meticulous planning, action-oriented intelligence, and Pakistan's Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies with support of Intelligence Agencies under Operation Radd-ul-Fitna-1 responded with precision and resolve.

As a result of these well-coordinated engagements and subsequent clearance operations, the terrorist elements, including women and children, have been killed, significantly degrading the leadership, command-and-control structures and operational capabilities of terrorist networks.

The ISPR in its statement said that a substantial cache of foreign-origin weapons, ammunition, explosives and equipment has also been recovered during the operations.

President's post-analysis indicates systematic external facilitation and logistical support to these extremist proxies. During the operations, thousands of non-civilians, including women and children, embraced shahada, while twenty two brave Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies personnel made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of Pakistan's territorial integrity and the protection of its citizens.

The President said that the Pakistan's Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies personnel who sacrificed their lives in the service of the nation, their sacrifice stands in solidarity with the families of fallen martyrs.

The ISPR stated that the Pakistan's Armed Forces and their affiliated in their resolve to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations under the ambit of National Action Plan (NAP) and Armed Forces.

ISPR said that Operation Radd-ul-Fitna-1 stands as a testament to Pakistan's and particularly Balochistan's people's unwavering commitment to always prefer peace over violence, and their resolve to ensure the safety and development of their nation.

President Asif Ali Zardari has commended security forces and law enforcement agencies over the successful completion of Operation Radd-ul-Fitna-1 in Balochistan. In a statement, he noted that the timely action of security forces against the various attempts of Firdai al Hindustan to disrupt peace in Balochistan.

He said that the cowardly terrorist's malicious attempt to destabilize the peace of Balochistan by targeting innocent civilians would always be crushed.

The President said

that the success of Operation Radd-ul-Fitna-1 in Balochistan during the Phase I of the operation.

President emphasized that Pakistan nation can never forget the sacrifices of its martyrs. He urged the people of Balochistan to continue their struggle for the cause of peace and development in the region.

He said that the security forces and law enforcement agencies have been instrumental in ensuring the safety of citizens.

Food stalls and drum performances have been arranged for the three-day Basant Festival. On the final day, the Administrator DHA, citizens will get to see the biggest Basant Mela in DHA.

Artists including Nasir Lal, Arif Lohar, Numan Mir, Raga Boys, Alif Zafar and others will perform.

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HYDERABAD: Workers of Jamat-e-Islami hold a rally to express solidarity with Kashmir on Kashmir Day outside Hyderabad Press Club (HPC).

### Peace with India possible only on equal terms, says PM Shehbaz

MUAZZAFARABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that Pakistan desires peace, but stressed that peace can only be sustained on the basis of equality, warning that Pakistan would respond to India in the same language it chooses to use. Addressing a special session of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on the occasion of Youm-e-Kashmir, the prime minister said that the region would remain elusive unless India abandons its aggressive designs.

He said that the Kashmiri people were willing to sacrifice even their children but would never relinquish their right to freedom, adding that values for independence were echoing from every corner of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). The prime minister praised Deputy Prime Minister Ishrat Dar for effectively highlighting the Kashmir issue at international forums, calling his efforts commendable.

Shehbaz Sharif accused India of sponsor- ing terrorism in Pakistan through proxy elements and said that during the recent war in 2025, Pakistan had inflicted a humiliating defeat on India.

He paid tribute to every soldier, citizen and member involved in the Kashmir freedom struggle and expressed deep sorrow over the passing of former president of Azad Kashmir Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry. The prime minister announced that a service centre on the model of Islamabad would be established in Muzaffarabad and Islamabad, and the government was also planning to build a state-of-the-art Danish University in the city. Addressing the session, Azad Jammu and Kashmir had

## Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail Highlights Role of NGOs in Public Welfare

QUETTA : Governor of Balochistan, Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, has said that alongside government departments, private development organizations also play a vital role in public welfare, and that both sectors can strengthen mutual co-operation to bring real and positive change in society for the service of the people.

He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of Muslim Hands, led by Regional Head Maha Naeara.

During a meeting at the Governor House, Quetta, Attaullah Durriani and Jameel Ahmed were also present on the occasion.

The Governor appreciated the efforts of Muslim Hands in various districts of Balochistan, particularly in the fields of education, healthcare, and provision of clean drinking water, terms



ing their initiatives commendable and impactful.

Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail said that Balochistan has a sparse and widely

scattered population, making the provision of basic facilities a challenging task.

He urged international organizations and non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) to extend their support and guidance in delivering essential services to the people of the province, especially in remote and underdeveloped areas.

He emphasized that development partners should expand their welfare and humanitarian activities to rural regions, so that the people living there may also benefit from the outcomes of development initiatives and enjoy improved living standards.

## Grand Rally Held at Pakistan House Sui to Express Solidarity with Kashmir and Pay Tribute to Pakistan Army

SUI : A grand rally was organized today at Pakistan House, Sui, under the leadership of District Chairman Dera Bugti and tribal leader Wadera Ghulam Nabi Bugti, renowned tribal leader Wadera Shah Murad Khan Bugti, and Wadera Mid Muhammad.

The rally was held to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day (February 5) and to pay tribute to the courageous efforts of the Pakistan Army against terrorism in Balochistan.

The rally started from Pakistan House Sui and concluded at the central bazaar of Sui.

A large number of political figures, youth, and patriotic members of the Bugti tribe participated enthusiastically, sending a clear message of unity and national solidarity.

Participants reiterated that they stand firmly with the oppressed people of Kashmir and are shoulder to shoulder with the Pakistan Army against enemies of peace in Balochistan.

Speakers praised the Pakistan Army for its bravery, sacrifices, and unwavering determination, stating that its successful fight against terrorism is a source of pride for the entire nation.

During the rally, participants raised slogans in favor of Pakistan, Kashmir, and the Pakistan Army, while strongly condemning India-sponsored terrorism.

They affirmed that the people of Balochistan and the Baloch nation stand united with Pakistan and will continue to do so at all times.

## District Administration Holds Rally to Express Solidarity with Kashmiris

KHUZDAR : The District Administration Khuzdar, under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq Sasoli, organized a solidarity rally with the people of Kashmir to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day. The rally was attended by SSP Khuzdar Umar Abbas Babar, Assistant Commissioner Hafiz Ghulam Ali, District Education Officer Abid Hussain Baloch, District Manager PPHI Munir Ahmed Baloch, the President of Anjuman-e-Tajran Khuzdar, district elders, representatives of the Hindu Panchayat, and people belonging to various walks of life.

Participants of the rally raised slogans of "Kashmir Banay Ga Pakistan" and "Pakistan Zindabad". The rally started from the DC Office Khuzdar, passed through Mauana Muhammad Umar Deen



Puri Library, and concluded at the DC Office. Addressing the participants, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq Sasoli said that Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan and can never become a part of India. He said that India has turned Kashmir into a military garrison, yet has failed to win the hearts of the Kashmiri people, whose hearts, he said, beat with Pakistan.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's moral and diplomatic support for the Kashmiri cause.

The Deputy Commissioner urged the in-

ternational community to take serious notice of the situation in Kashmir and to play their role by pressuring India to allow Kashmiris their legitimate right to self-determination.

He concluded by saying that India can never trace Pakistan's love from the hearts of the people, whose hearts, he said, beat with Pakistan.

He emphasized that India will one day be free, while India will ultimately face failure.

## DC Major (R) Ilyas Kubzai Chairs Evening Review Meeting on Final Day of Polio Campaign



SIBI : An evening review meeting on the final day of the polio vaccination campaign was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Sibi, Major (R) Ilyas Kubzai.

The meeting con-

ducted a detailed review of cases involving still-missed children with field teams to personally oversee coverage of missed children and ensure the administration of polio drops.

Assistant Com-

missioner Sibi, Mansoor Ali Shah, visited various areas with field teams to provide strict instructions that all missed children, including those of refusals, must be vaccinated the same day after providing proper awareness to this regard.

During the meet-

ing, it was decided that re-vaccination teams would be dispatched immediately to ensure that all missed children are administered polio drops without delay. In

this regard, Assistant Com-

missioner Sibi, Mansoor Ali Shah, visited various areas with field teams to personally oversee coverage of missed children and ensure the administration of polio drops.

## DC Mansoor Qazi Reaffirms Pakistan's Firm Support for Kashmiris on Kashmir Solidarity Day

PISHIN : Deputy Commissioner Pishin, Mansoor Qazi, on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, said that Pakistan has always been a strong supporter of the long-standing rights of the Kashmiri people and remains firmly committed to raising its voice at the global level for their freedom and right to self-determination.

He emphasized that India can never erase Pakistan's love from the hearts of Kashmiris.

He said that Pakistan

sured that teams were immediately sent to their homes to vaccinate the children.

The Deputy Com-

missioner made it clear that a zero-toler-

ance policy would be adopted for polio

eradication and that 100 per-

cent vaccination cov-

erage must be ensured

across the district

administration's firm

commitment to

achieving a polio-free

Pakistan.

During the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Major (R) Ilyas Kubzai issued strict instructions that all remaining children, including those of refusals, must be vaccinated the same day after providing proper awareness to this regard.

Assistant Commissioner Sibi, Mansoor Ali Shah, visited various areas with field teams to personally oversee coverage of missed children and ensure the administration of polio drops.

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## District Administration Holds Kashmir Solidarity Rally by DC Abdul Qudoos Achakzai

ZIARAT : The District Administration Ziarat, under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Abdul Qudoos Achakzai, organized a solidarity rally with the people of Kashmir in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day.

The rally was attended by Assistant Commissioner Ziauddin Rehman, district officers, and people from various walks of life. Participants of the rally raised slogans of "Kashmir Banay Ga Pakistan" and "Pakistan Zindabad".

The rally started from the DC Office

turned Kashmir into a military garrison, it has failed to win the hearts of the Kashmiri people, whose hearts, he said, beat with Pakistan.

He said that the purpose of observing Kashmir Solidarity Day across the country is to convey a clear message to the world that Pakistan stands firmly with the Kashmiri people and will continue to support them until they are granted their right to self-determination.

He emphasized that India can never erase Pakistan's love from the hearts of Kashmiris.

He said that Pakistan has always been a strong supporter of the long-standing rights of the Kashmiri people and remains firmly committed to raising its voice at the global level for their freedom and right to self-determination.

In his message, Mansoor Qazi emphasized that the struggle and sacrifices of the Kashmiri people will always be remembered in history, adding that feelings of solidarity with Kashmiris live in the heart of every Pakistani.

He said that the people of Balochistan are united with their Kashmiri brothers and sisters and continue to raise their voice for the protection of Kashmiri rights.

He paid tribute to the brave Kashmiri people, saying that despite decades of oppression, they have not been treated from their struggle for freedom, and their resilience and sacrifices deserve the highest respect and salute.

The Deputy Commissioner stated that Kashmir Solidarity Day is not limited to a single day.

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## Kashmir Solidarity Day Rally Held Under DC Capt (R) Zulfiqar Ali Karrar

NASIRABAD : On occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, and in compliance with the directives of the Chief Minister Balochistan and Chief Secretary Balochistan, a solidarity rally was organized under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Nasirabad, Captain (Retd) Zulfiqar Ali Karrar. The rally was taken out from the Deputy Commissioner Office Dera Bugti and Jumla. Participants carried placards and banners inscribed with slogans against Indian atrocities in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The air echoed with chants condemning the oppression by Indian forces, while slogan of "Kashmir Banay Ga Pakistan" resonated throughout the area.

The rally was attended by Assistant Commissioner Bahadur Khan Khosar, other government officers, political and social figures,

and a large number of schoolchildren, who actively participated to express solidarity with the Kashmiri people.

Participants, Deputy Commissioner Captain (Retd) Zulfiqar Ali Karrar said that a just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute remains central pillar of Pakistan's foreign policy.

He added that Pakistan will continue to support the Kashmiri people until they achieve their right to self-determination.

He stated that last peace in the region can only be achieved when the Kashmiri issue is resolved in accordance with the wills of the people.

He said that the Indian forces are still present in the region and continue to violate the fundamental rights of innocent Kashmiris through oppression and brutality. However, he said that India's true face can no longer be hidden from the world.

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## Pakistan must create 30m jobs over next decade: World Bank president

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan must create up to 30 million jobs over the next decade to turn its youth bulge into an economic dividend, through economic and outward migration. World Bank President Ajay Banga has stressed.

Pakistan is entering the implementation phase of its seven-year Country Partnership Framework (CPF) deal agreed with the World Bank last year, while also working with the International Monetary Fund to stabilise its economy. But Islamabad is still facing mounting pressure to deliver sustained growth and jobs.

"We're trying to move forward with a whole framework of projects to the idea of outcomes," Banga said in an interview with Reuters in Karachi during a visit to Pakistan this week. "Job creation is the North Star."

"Generational challenge"

Pakistan needs to generate 2.5m to 3m jobs a year between now and 2030 over the next decade — as millions of young people come of age, Banga said.

Failure to do so could fuel "illegal migration and social instability". Banga said Pakistan's population

dynamics mean employment creation will remain a binding constraint on growth over the long term, rather than a secondary policy goal.

"This is a generational challenge," he said. The CPF commits around \$4 billion a year in combined public and private financing from the World Bank, with roughly half expected to come from private-sector operations led by the International Finance Corporation.

Banga said a reliance on private capital reflects a country where the government has limited spending capacity and 90 per cent of jobs are created in the private sector. Banga said a Pakistan job strategy rests on three pillars: investment in human and physical infrastructure, business-friendly regulatory reforms and expanded access to finance and insurance, particularly for small firms and farmers that typically lack bank credit.

Infrastructure, particularly in health, tourism and small-scale agriculture, were labour-intensive sectors with the greatest employment potential, he said, adding that farming alone could not meet the needs of a third of the jobs Pakistan needs to create by 2030.

A growing pool of freelancers also highlights the need for entrepreneurship, but they need better access to capital, infrastructure and support scale into job-creating businesses, he said.

Nearly 4,000 doc-



top solar adoption, while easing energy costs for households and businesses, risks creating grid instability if distributed reforms are not accelerated.

Electricity is fundamental to everything — health, education, business and jobs."

"Climate by design" — climate resilience should also be embedded into mainstream development spending rather than treated as a standalone agenda. Pakistan is among the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, hit repeatedly by floods, heatwaves and erratic monsoons.

Banga said climate-resilient investments should be integrated into infrastructure, housing, water management and agriculture to support jobs while reducing long-term risks.

"The moment you start talking about climate as separate from housing, food or irrigation, you create a false debate."

Just build resilience into what you're already doing."

Asked how Pakistan fits into the World Bank's global portfolio, Banga said he does not view the country through the lens of fragility or crisis, but as a long-term job-creation opportunity.

## Gold, silver plunge in international market on firm dollar, broad market sell-off

**NEWS DESK:** Gold and silver prices fell sharply in a broader market sell-off as the dollar advanced in the dollar to a near two-week high and signs of easing US-China trade tensions added further pressure on the precious metals, while oil prices fell 2.5 per cent to \$838.81 per ounce, as of 0535am GMT (1035am local time), retreating from a near one-week high hit earlier in the session.

Gold futures for April delivery dropped 1.9pc to \$4,855.60 per ounce.

"The dollar received a new lease of life with the (Kavanaugh) nomination (as Federal Reserve chief), and the currency has been able to keep making forward progress ... traders are more circumspect now on gold," light of recent extreme volatility," Tim Waterer, KCM chief trade analyst, said.

The dollar rose to a near two-week high Thursday, making greenback-priced gold more expensive for other currency holders.

Sentiment (has)

turned soggy across most asset classes, including equities and regional equities, with losses feeding into one another and creating a self-reinforcing feedback loop amid thin market liquidity," said Christopher Wood, a strategist at OCBC.

Asia stocks faltered, tracking their US peers as concerns about the exploding costs of the tech sector bounded the tech sector.

Spot silver plummeted another 14.9pc to \$74.94 an ounce.

Last week, the precious metal touched a record high of \$121.64

"The industrial demand has waned at the higher levels."

Most of the industrial metals have stopped buying silver, and even solar panels in China are looking for alternatives," said added.

On the political front, Iran and the US have agreed to hold talks in Oman on Friday, officials on both sides said.

China is considering buying more US-farmed soybeans,

US President Donald Trump said, after what he called "very positive" talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, on Wednesday.

The National Electricity Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has called a public hearing on Feb 17 at the request of ex-Wapda distribution companies (Discos) to fix the price of Rs10.82 billion from consumers under

The quarterly tariff adjustment (QTA) mechanism. The recovery plan is estimated to be a positive QTA of about 42 paise per unit over three billing months.

It may be noted that consumers are currently paying about 33 paise per unit positive QTA on account of similar higher costs (Rs6.06bn) of the first quarter (July-September 2025) since December and expires by the end of the current month.

That would be replaced by fresh QTA for the following three months.

The Discos sought an increase of amount of capacity charges paid to power producers during the second quarter (October-December) of FY26.

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Transmission and distribution losses on monthly fuel costs and variable operations & maintenance charges for the 2nd quarter of FY25 (1st October to December 2024).

The total additional impact of capacity charges comes to about Rs24.25bn for the said quarter.

However, these are partly compensated through negative ad-

justments on account of almost all other factors, including variable O&M (Rs1.655bn).

Use of service charges (Rs3.9bn), impact of increasing QTA package (Rs7.5bn) and FCA impact of system losses (Rs1.2bn), bringing down the total additional amount chargeable to consumers to Rs10.83bn.

Three out of eleven Discos have sought ad-

ditional QTA for the sec-

ond quarter.

These include Hyderabad, Peshawar and Quetta Electric Supply companies, seeking an additional QTA of Rs3.5bn, Rs5.1bn and Rs4.1bn, respectively.

On the other hand,

Multan Electric has demanded a higher increase of Rs1.9bn followed by Rs4.8bn for Gujranwala, Rs4.1bn for Islamabad, Rs3.7bn for Lahore, Rs2.9bn for Sukkur, and Rs1.9bn for Faisalabad Electric.

Newly created Discos Tribal Electric and Hazara Electric have sought Rs303 million and Rs140m additional recovery.

Once approved, the QTA would also apply to K-Electric.

However, the Quar-

terly Tariff Adjustments (QTAs),

the Debt Service

Surcharge (DSS), and negative FCAs are not applicable to eligible consumers of the government-announced special tariff package for incremental consumption.

## Fertiliser CPPs hit as govt extends gas levy

**NEWS DESK:** The gas exploration companies and utilities are facing a setback after the government imposed a levy on captive power plants (CPPs) operated by the fertiliser industry.

Industries, including textile and fertiliser, have long consumed natural gas to run CPPs for generating electricity for their own use.

As part of an International Monetary Fund-backed reform programme, the govern-

ment introduced the Off the Grid (Captive Power Plants) Levy Act, 2025, empowering the federal government to impose a levy on natural gas-based CPPs.

Earlier, the levy had been imposed on gas supplied by third parties to CPPs and was also applied to CPPs operated by the textile industry.

Sources said the imposition of the levy on fertiliser plants using

domestic gas or liquefied natural gas (LNG) to operate captive power plants to meet their electricity requirements.

According to an official memorandum issued by the Petroleum Division of the Petroleum Act, the Act defines a captive power plant as an industrial undertaking or unit engaged in power production.

With or without generation, for self-consumption or for sale of surplus power to a distribution company or a bulk power consumer.

generation in the fertiliser industry. According to an official memorandum issued by the Petroleum Division of the Petroleum Act, the Act defines a captive power plant as an industrial undertaking or unit engaged in power production.

The latest increase in yields could make T-bills attractive.

Foreign investors

have shown some interest in domestic bonds this fiscal year, but the uncertain geo-political situation remains the biggest obstacle hampering inflows.

## Returns on T-bills raised up to 39bps

**NEWS DESK:** In the first auction after a surprise status quo in the monetary policy, the cut-off yields on the treasury bills were increased on Wednesday by up to 39 basis points, bringing the returns close to the State Bank's policy rate of 10.5pc.

Before the monetary policy announced on Jan 26, returns on T-bills had mostly fallen to single digits, raising hopes of an interest rate cut of up to 100bps.

However, the interest rate remained unchanged, and some bankers cited that for

foreign investors were seeking high-yield bonds despite the high-risk rates.

The auction results show that the largest increase in T-bill rates was observed for the 12-month par, with a 39bps increase to 10.39 per cent.

Foreign investors

have shown some interest in domestic bonds this fiscal year, but the uncertain geo-political situation remains the biggest obstacle hampering inflows.

The same was true of foreign direct investment, which fell sharply during the first half of this year.

The auction results show that the largest increase in T-bill rates was observed for the 12-month par, with a 39bps increase to 10.39 per cent.

Similarly, the benchmark six-month papers offer 10.32pc, up from 9.94pc in the previous auction, increasing returns by 38bps.

The cut-off yields on three-month and one-month were increased by 30bps each to 10.19pc.

The government received total bids of Rs2.354 trillion, while it picked Rs823bn, including Rs318bn from the non-bidding proce-

dure. The target for the auction was Rs650bn while the maturity amount was Rs697bn.

Financial experts

said higher T-bill rates would increase the government's burden, as interest payments would rise further.

The interest payment for FY26 would be around Rs8tr, the largest share of the budget for the current fiscal year.



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## Steve Smith becomes most expensive player in PSL history

**NEWS DESK:** Steve Smith has become the most expensive cricketer in HBL PSL history.

The new franchise, Sialkot Stallions, will pay him over Rs140 million, which is twice the amount Babar Azam receives.

As per details, the 11th edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) will be held in March.

This time, the PCB allowed each franchise to sign one foreign player directly, provided that the player was part of last year's PSL.

The new team, Sialkot Stallions, has signed Australian star batter Steve Smith. Sources say he will be paid over 500,000 US dollars, which converts to more than Rs140 million, making him the highest-paid player in PSL history.

Another franchise was also willing to offer him \$500,000, but on record.

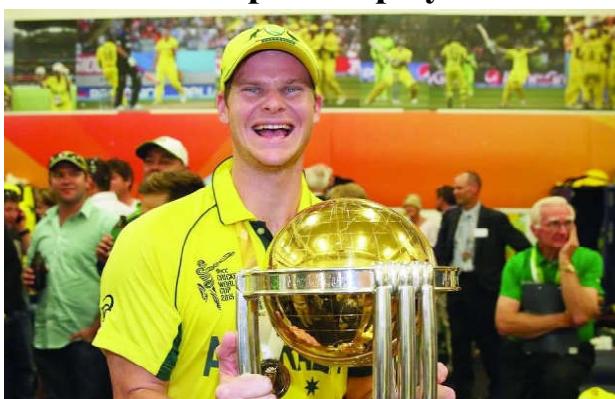
eventually, a deal was finalized with Sialkot, which would see a deal of Rs70 million, so Smith will be earning double that amount.

Meanwhile, with the inclusion of two new teams, the PCB has reduced the retention quota for old franchises to four players to four, allowing them to retain one player from each of the four categories.

Recently, the list of retained players was released, followed by the details of their salaries.

Four out of five franchises have announced Rs7 crore as the salary for their platinum-category players, with others also receiving significant sums.

However, sources revealed that some franchises are being paid more than the declared figures, though only the officially announced amounts will be shown on record.



The addition of two new franchises this year has increased player demand, and many cricketers used offers from other

teams to negotiate higher pay with their current franchises.

Mutafizur joins Qalandars Defending champion

of Lahore Qalandars in Bangladesh pace bowler Mustafizur

Rahman as a direct

signing for the PSL 11.

The signing was agreed at Rs6.44 crore.

"Once a Qalandar, always a Qalandar.

Mustafizur is not just

a player; he's a brother,

a key part of our family who never left," said Sameer Rao, Owner, Lahore Qalandars.

"We are thrilled to welcome him back to our dressing room.

His talent, experience, and dedication will be invaluable as we aim to defend our title and make a statement in PSL 11."

Earlier, Qalandars had retained captain Shaheen Afridi, key batter Abdullah Shafique, dynamic all-rounder Sikandar Raza, and skilled youngster Mohammad Nabi.

This strategic move strengthens the team's core ahead of the big auction and sets the stage for a strong campaign.

With these signings, Lahore Qalandars aim to maintain their legacy of excellence in PSL 11, determined to defend their title and give fans another season of high-quality cricket and unforgettable moments.

## Liverpool in 'good place' for years to come

**NEWS DESK :** Liverpool's recruitment of rising stars is paying off, which is sure to continue for years to come, according to manager Arne Slot despite a difficult season for the Premier League champions.

The Reds sit sixth in the Premier League after a difficult start to life at Anfield for a number of new recruits in a near £450 million (\$616 million) spending spree in the transfer window market. Highly-rated French defender JeremyJacquet will also join for the start of next season after Liverpool agreed a deal with Rennes worth up to £60 million for the 20-year-old.

"Such a big talent and another example of the model we're using at this club," Slot said on Thursday.

"Young, very talented players, some careers or sometimes already a little bit a few years into their career, but always players that are young and can improve, and also definitely in the long term."

"We've signed a lot of them recently and the mid-long term future of this club, and even the short term, is in a very good place."

Ekitike and Florian Wirtz are two of the club's big money signings that are beginning to deliver returns on the near £200 million invested in the team from the Bundesliga.

Ekitike scored twice in a 4-1 win over Newcastle last weekend for the season to 15, while Wirtz

has netted six times in 10 matches since ending a 22-game wait for his first Liverpool goal.

"As a manager, even if he is struggling a little bit at the start, you have to keep playing him because that is the only way he can improve," Slot said.

"He didn't improve that much on the ball because from the start he was good."

Maybe now he has a better connection with his teammates because they've played more and together.

Slot is keen to make improvements for his side's 3-0 defeat to City on November 1.

"They were the better team and I think we want to show a different side of us this time."

Manchester City on Sunday in a match with the same ramifications for the title race and for the battle to qualify for next season's Champions League.

City trail leaders Arsenal by six points and could find themselves in the drop zone if they kick off with the Gunners hosting Sunderland on Saturday.

Liverpool could also be four points outside the top five, which should secure a place in the Champions League, should Manchester United and Chelsea win on Saturday.

Slot is keen to make improvements for his side's 3-0 defeat to City on November 1.

"They were the better team and I think we want to show a different side of us this time."

**NEWS DESK:** Captain Salman Agha said on Thursday that Pakistan will seek advice if they reach the knockout phase of the T20 World Cup and meet arch-rivals India.

An acrimonious political build-up has marred the tournament, after Bangladesh were kicked out and Pakistan refused to face co-hosts India in their Group A match.

However, a semi-final or final show-down between the uneasy South Asian neighbours is still a possibility.

"The India game is not in our control. It was the government's decision and if we have to play them in the semi-final or the final, we will go back to them and act on their

advice," Agha told reporters in Colombo.

Bangladesh refused to play India, citing security concerns, as relations soured and were kicked out of Group C by the International Cricket Council, to be replaced by Scotland.

Pakistan's backed Bangladesh's plea to have their games moved to Sri Lanka.

The government cleared the national team to take part but ordered them not to play in the marquee group match against India on February 15.

"It's sad

Bangladesh are not here. They have a very good side.

Hopefully, they will support us," Agha said.

Pakistan and India have not played bilat-

eral cricket for more than a decade, and meet only in multilateral events.

"They will face Namibia, the Netherlands and the United States in the group stage.

"We're excited to play in this tournament.

We lost to USA in the last World Cup and we are determined to put that disappointment behind us and put a few things right," Agha said.

Pakistan will not only be concerned for forfeiting their India match but will also take a big hit to their net run rate.

Even losing one of their group games to bad weather could make it difficult for Pakistan to qualify.

"We know the margin for error is

small, but we can't control the weather. We are here to play good cricket and we're not bothered by the conditions," Agha said.

Pakistan, the 2009 champions, arrive after a 3-0 whitewash of Australia at home.

"We've been playing really good cricket. We haven't lost a series since the Asia Cup last year.

Everything is coming along nicely and we're confident of doing well," Agha said.

As of Pakistan's games, they played in Sri Lanka, where they toured in January.

"Very happy to play in Sri Lanka — it's a second home for me. This is my sixth visit, we know the conditions and we get a lot of support," Agha said.

## Brook predicts record 300-plus scores at T20 World Cup

**NEWS DESK:** England captain Harry Brook said on Thursday that he believes it could be a record-breaking T20 World Cup with fans treated to a batting blitz and 300-plus scores.

Sri Lanka's 260-6 in 2007 remains the highest total in the nine previous editions of the men's tournament.

The 2026 T20 World Cup begins Saturday, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, and England will play all their Group C matches at the Wankhede stadium and Kolkata's Eden Gardens, both renowned as high-scoring venues.

"There are plenty of grounds in India that have been a score of 300-plus," Brook told reporters on the captain's media day in Mumbai, when asked if he thought such lofty totals were possible.

The wickets are

quite good, with rapid outfields and fairly short boundaries. "So, yeah, you've just got to go out there be fearless, not

worry about getting out and keep on trying to attack the ball."

England come into the World Cup heartened by a 3-0 T20 series win in Sri Lanka this week.

In the preceding ODI series against the same opposition, the explosive Brook bludgeoned 136 off just 66 balls. His team are expected to make the Super Eights from a Group C that also features two-time winners West Indies, debutants Italy,

## Algerian boxer Khelif says she is open to genetic testing by IOC for 2028 Olympics

**NEWS DESK:** Algerian boxer Imane Khelif said she will consider genetic testing requirements as long as the tests are conducted by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), to be able to participate in competitions.

Khelif won gold in the women's welterweight division at the Paris Games in 2024 amid a gender dispute over her eligibility, after the International Boxing Association (IBA) prohibited her from the 2023 World Championships based on sex chromosome tests. World Boxing, which will oversee boxing competitions in the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles after being granted provisional recognition by the IOC, last May announced mandatory sex testing for all box-

ers in its competitions. Khelif, who lodged an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) over World Boxing's decision barring her from events unless she undergoes genetic sex testing, said she would

only undergo the testing if it is administered by the IOC.

"Of course, I would accept doing anything I'm required to do to participate in competitions," Khelif told CNN. "They should pro-

tect women, but they need to pay attention that while protecting women, they shouldn't hurt other women."

"I'm not transgender. I'm a woman. I want to live my life. Please do not exploit me in your political/agendas."

The 26-year-old was hopeful of getting justice from the CAS.

"I will not surrender until I have justice because I know justice is on my side above all else," she said.



Nepal and Scotland.

Brook would not be drawn when asked whether the 2010 and 2022 champions England were favourites for the title ahead of their opening match against Nepal at the Wankhede stadium on Sunday. "We'll take it game by game and see where we land," he said.



## UN rapporteurs alarmed by Imaan, Hadi convictions

**NEWS DESK:** Five United Nations experts have expressed alarm at the conviction of human rights activist Advocate Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazar and her husband, Advocate Hadi Ali Chatha, on multiple charges in a case pertaining to controversial social media posts under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca).

On Jan 24, an Islamabad sessions court sentenced Ms Mazari and Mr Chatha to jail.

In a joint statement issued on Wednesday, UN special rapporteurs Margaret Satterthwaite, Ben Saul, Mary Lawlor, Irene Khan and Gina Romero noted that the two were convicted on multiple criminal charges, resulting in lengthy prison sentences "for simply exercising rights guaranteed by the international human rights law."

"Lawyers, like other individuals, are entitled to freedom of expression. The exercise of this right should never be conflated with criminal conduct, especially not terrorism," they were quoted as saying, while also emphasising the vague definition of terrorism-related offences under Pakistan's counter-terrorism framework. "Doing so risks undermining and criminalising the work of lawyers and human

rights defenders across Pakistan and has a chilling effect on civil society in the country," the experts stated.

The experts observed that these were not the first prosecutions against the two lawyers, "who have been the subject of 10 criminal complaints since 2022, some of which remain pending," but were never previously convicted of wrongdoing.

"This pattern of prosecutions suggests a systematic use of the legal system as an instrument of harassment and intimidation in order to punish them for their work advocating for victims of alleged human rights violations," they added.

The experts observed, "International standards provide a set of procedural guarantees that must be made available to persons charged with criminal offences, but they appear to have been undermined in this case. These violations seriously threaten the fairness of the trial and conviction."

UN special rapporteurs are independent experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council to report their findings. They do not speak behalf of the United Nations.

According to the experts, the UN experts "have contacted Pakistan regarding their concerns".

## Ex-AJK premier questions govt mandate, warns of legal action

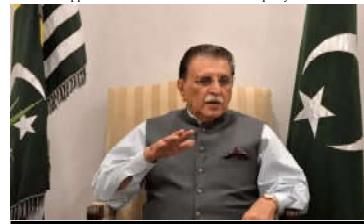
**NEWS DESK:** Former Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) prime minister and PML-N parliamentary leader Raja Farooq Haider on Wednesday accused the PPP government of overstepping its mandate, saying it was meant to function like a caretaker setup to facilitate elections but had instead indulged in political interference and patronage.

Talking to reporters in the opposition chamber of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Haider said that despite having 22 ministers, the government's "hunger for power has not diminished" that he claimed was evident from "undue interference in opposition constituencies and the replacement of elected representatives with party workers". "This approach is

neither justified nor acceptable," he said.

Raja Farooq Haider irked by alleged sidelining of leaders by PPP ministers

Mr Haider maintained that the PML-N had secured thousands of votes from every constituency in AJK and questioned why its ticketed candidates were being sidelined in constituencies where PPP MLAs exist, consultations should also be held with PML-N ticket-holders," he demanded. Raising concerns over government, the former premier called for the criteria for appointments to Grade-5 to be made public. He also questioned the government's decision to launch development projects worth billions of rupees while claiming a shortage of funds.



## Field Marshal Reaffirms Unwavering Support for Kashmir During Muzaffarabad Visit

**NEWS DESK:**

Field Marshal Sved Asim Munir NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, visited Muzaffarabad today, the military's media wing said. Paying homage to the martyrs of the freedom struggle, he laid wreath at the Jamnu and Kashmir Martyrs Monument and offered rich tributes to the Shaheed of Kashmir movement, acknowledging the enduring legacy of valor and selfless sacrifice, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) stated.

Interacting with the notables and veterans, the COAS & CDF reiterated Pakistan's unwavering political, moral, and diplomatic support for the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). He noted that Indian atrocities, unabated violations of



human rights, and Hindutva-driven excesses have failed to suppress the legitimate struggle and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Reaffirming Pakistan's steadfast support for the people of IOJK, COAS & CDF stated that Kashmir would soon witness the

dawn of freedom, in accordance with the will and destiny of the people of Kashmir. He further emphasized that Pakistan would continue to highlight all relevant international forums, in complete solidarity with our Kashmiri brothers and sisters, till a just resolution of the dispute is achieved according to the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The COAS & CDF commanded the unwavering dedication, high morale, professional excellence, and combat readiness of officers and soldiers deployed in Kashmir despite challenging operational

conditions. He emphasized the imperative of maintaining peak operational preparedness, vigilance, and seamless synergy across all domains to effectively deter and decisively respond to any hostile provocation.

The COAS & CDF also visited a forward post, where he interacted with troops deployed on the frontlines. During the visit, he reiterated that any act of aggression would be instantaneously met with a swift and befitting response. He underscored that the Armed Forces remain fully prepared to counter both conventional and hybrid threats in an evolving security environment.

Earlier upon arrival, the COAS & CDF were received by the Commander Rawalpindi Corps.

## KP apex committee deems 'cooperation' with Centre, political parties vital for successful counter-terrorism policy

**NEWS DESK:** The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa apex committee has termed "consultation, cooperation and coordination" with the federal government and political parties "essential" for the success of a comprehensive counter-terrorism policy, it emerged on Thursday.

Interior Minister

Sohail Afridi chaired the provincial apex committee's first meeting of the provincial apex committee since assuming office on Wednesday.

The panel discussed the general rise in terrorism incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and an action plan to eradicate the menace. Fitna-al-Khawarij and established and state-owned media outlets reported the meeting, as well as a press release issued by the KP CM's office today.

Fitna-al-Khawarij is a term the state uses to describe the rise in terrorism incidents in the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

During the meeting,

the press release said,

the committee agreed

that "joint consultation,

mutual cooperation, and

resolution of the dis-

putes" is essential for the success of a comprehensive counter-terrorism policy.

The committee hoped that the "long-term strategy would identify all the causes of terrorism and eliminate them, and as a result, end the rest of the problems of the country." It also hoped that the government and the public can work together for the country's progress.

The apex committee "firmly resolved that the KP government will utilise all its resources, including the armed forces, police, CID (Central Investigation Department) and other institutions, to combat terrorism and will not hesitate to make any sacrifices."

The committee hoped that the "long-term strategy would identify all the causes of terrorism and eliminate them, and as a result, end the rest of the problems of the country." It also hoped that the government and the public can work together for the country's progress.

The apex committee also announced that the provincial government's agenda is

that only good govern-

ment can end the scourge of terrorism," read the meeting's press release.

Under this agenda, it was decided that in the areas affected by terrorism, all

settlements will be converted into model good governance districts.

It further said "all government resources will be utilised to ensure the welfare of the people in the provision of development, social services and economic growth" in terrorism-afflicted areas.

The committee also

stressed that the provincial government

package to provide security, communication, health, education, employment, basic amenities and other services in these areas under an organisational structure.

The government decided that the government will ensure complete care, rehabilitation, and the provision of basic needs for the welfare of the people of KP in areas affected by terrorism, and where temporary relocation took place for sustainable stability, so that this temporary difficulty can form the base for a long-term development and prosperity in the future," the statement read.

"Their dignified return is top priority for the [KP] government," it stressed.

The federal and KP governments have recently traded barbs over who authorised the evacuation process after hundreds of Tirah residents vacated their homes ahead of a planned military action against terrorists.

Speaking during the meeting, CM Afridi stressed that the provincial government

## Kashmir Solidarity Day: Pakistani leadership reaffirms support for Kashmiris' just struggle

**NEWS DESK:** The nation is observing Kashmir Solidarity Day today with a renewed pledge to support the just struggle of the Kashmiri people for their inalienable right to self-determination.

The day will feature

rallies, demonstrations

and seminars throughout the country. Human

chains will also be formed at all entry points of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

One-minute silence

was observed across

the country at 10am to

pay homage to the

martyrs of the Kashmir

freedom movement,

state radio Pakistan reported.

In his message to

mark the occasion, Presi-

dent Asif Ali Zardari re-

iterated Pakistan's

firm support for the

Kashmiris' just

struggle.

The president said

the people of Pakistan

across the globe stand

united with their

Kashmiri brothers and

sisters in their just

struggle.

He recalled that the

observance of Kashm-

ir Solidarity Day was ini-

tiated and organized by

former Benazir Bhutto

following the historic

Kashmiri uprising of

1989, a movement that

continues to this day.

President Zardari urged the international

community to press India to end human rights violations in held Kashmir.

He said India had intensified efforts to entrench its control through "administrative and legislative measures, curbing media freedom, general Kashmiri leadership and attempting to alter the demographic composition of the territory."

The president highlighted what he described as "the suppression of digital freedoms, including the blocking of thousands of social media ac-

counts, reflected attempts to conceal the realities on the ground".

The message of the occasion, he said, was that the Minister Shehbaz Sharif called for the dispute's resolution in accordance with UNSC resolutions.

He urged the international community to play an effective role in getting the Kashmiri people their inalienable right through a free and impartial plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations.

He also announced that the government has increased the monthly per capita subsistence allowance of Kashmir refugees to Rs5,000.

The government of Pakistan is conducting a pilot project to construct 750 residential houses at a cost of Rs3 billion," PM Shehbaz said. The premier said

the AJK government has provided land for the construction of these houses, exclusively meant for Kashmiri refugees settled in the territory.

He said complete rehabilitation of the refugees of Jammu and Kashmir is a matter of high priority and Pakistan will stand with the Kashmiris until they achieve their right to self-determination.

PM Shehbaz visited Muzaffarabad to address the special session of the AJK Legislative Assembly. APP reported. Addressing the AJK Legislative Assembly, Mr Zardari said, "Today, we have gathered here to stand in solidarity with our brothers in [occupied] Kashmir on behalf of the Pakistani people and the Pa-

kistani leadership. "Soon, the freedom and nation of our Kashmiri brothers and sisters [...] Kashmir will become a part of Pakistan."

The prime minister paid tribute to leaders of the Kashmiri freedom movement, including Burhan Wani, Asia Andrabi, Yasin Malik and All-Parties Hurriyat Conference Chairman Mirwais Umar Farooq.

"History has shown that the people can sacrifice themselves or their children but will not compromise on their freedom," PM Shehbaz noted.

Kashmiris show the world every day the mirror of reality. They announce every day that Kashmir has never been a part of India, it is not, and it will never be," he further said.



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