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274 Afghan Taliban Killed as Pakistan Repulses Attacks in Operation Ghazab Lil Haq

ZEESHAN AHMED, NEWS DESK:

Islamabad, Pakistan's armed forces have achieved notable successes in their border security campaign against Afghan Taliban-linked militants, with significant casualties inflicted on attackers while maintaining strict restraint to safeguard civilian lives, according to the military's official media wing.

In a comprehensive media briefing on Friday, Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), confirmed that Operation Ghazab Lil Haq is progressing well and delivering the intended outcomes. Pakistani troops effectively

pushed back insurgent advances at 53 locations along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, dealing decisive blows to the militants.

Lt Gen Chaudhry reported that 274 Taliban operatives were killed and more than 400 sustained injuries in the engagements. Pakistani forces also destroyed 73 militant outposts and secured control of 18 others.

In addition, 115 tanks and armored vehicles deployed by the insurgents were neutralized during the clashes.

The ISPR chief explained that targeted actions took place at 22 sites across Kandahar, Kabul, Pakista and adjacent areas.

These precision strikes focused on dismantling terrorist logistics bases and temporary shelters used by anti-Pakistan

groups.

"Great care was taken throughout to ensure no harm came to civilians, and no civilian damage was reported," he emphasized.

While outlining these gains, Lt Gen Chaudhry acknowledged the human cost on the Pakistani side. Twelve soldiers lost their lives, 27 were wounded, and one remains missing in action, he stated. Turning to the broader implications, the military spokesperson issued a clear message to the Afghan Taliban leadership, condemning their recent hostile statements.

He noted that such rhetoric echoes patterns of aggression seen in the past and warned that Pakistan would respond firmly to any threats.

Pakistan will hold the ruling regime in Kabul fully accountable for any terrorist attack launched from Afghan territory, Lt Gen Chaudhry declared. "If any such incident occurs inside Pakistan, we will take direct action against the Afghan Taliban," he said.

He urged the Taliban authorities to make an unambiguous choice.

The regime must decide between aligning with banned terrorist organizations—including Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Islamic State (Daesh), and Al-Qaeda—or prioritizing stable relations with Pakistan. This position has been repeatedly conveyed by the Pakistani government at the highest levels, he added.

Reaffirming national unity, Lt Gen Chaudhry concluded with a strong message of resolve: Pakistan's security and interests will always remain the top priority.

The country and its defenders have never hesitated to make sacrifices and stand ready to protect the homeland at all costs.

The briefing comes as security concerns along the shared border continue to draw international attention, with Pakistan consistently stressing the need for the Afghan side to curb cross-border militancy.

This operation underscores Pakistan's firm stance on defending its sovereignty while calling for responsible behavior from its western neighbor to ensure long-term regional stability.

Senate passes resolution condemning unprovoked Afghan Taliban aggression, calls on Kabul to cease hostile acts

NEWS DESK:

The upper house of Parliament on Friday unanimously adopted a resolution that condemned the unprovoked aggression by the Afghan Taliban and demanded that the neighbouring country immediately cease all hostile actions and prevent the use of its soil for terrorism or aggression against Pakistan.

The House, through the resolution moved by PPP Parliamentary Leader Sherry Rehman, condemned the recent unprovoked aggression and hostile cross-border actions from Afghanistan, describing them as blatant violations of international law, established diplomatic norms, and the principles of peaceful neighbourly relations.

The Senate declared that any attempt to challenge the sovereignty, territorial integrity or national security of Pakistan constituted a direct affront to the dignity of the nation and would be met with a firm, proportionate, and decisive response.

"For over forty years, Pakistan has borne extraordinary economic, social, and security burdens in hosting millions of Afghan nationals, extending humanitarian assistance, facilitating peace efforts, and consistently advocating for Afghanistan's stability in international forums often at immense cost to its own national development and internal security," it said.

It expressed deep disappointment that instead of reciprocal goodwill, Pakistan continued to face hostile rhetoric, cross-border violations, and the persistent presence of anti-Pakistan terrorist elements operating from Afghan soil, reflecting a troubling pattern of ingratitude and disregard for bilateral understandings. "While Pakistan remains committed to constructive engagement, regional peace, and mutually respectful relations, its patience must not be misconstrued as weakness, nor its desire for stability mistaken for inability to respond decisively," the resolution said.

It demanded that the Afghan Taliban regime immediately cease all hostile actions, prevent the use of Afghan soil for terrorism or aggression against Pakistan, and honour their international obligations and commitments to peaceful coexistence.

The Senate also called upon the international community to take serious note of these developments and to urge the Afghan Taliban regime to adhere to international norms and prevent further destabilisation of the region.

Speaking in the Senate, Rehman said that Pakistan had exercised maximum restraint and upheld all diplomatic avenues, but recent hostile actions from Afghan soil had compelled the state to respond within the framework of the international law.

"The agreements that the Afghan Taliban signed in Doha have now been forgotten. Everyone can see the level of adherence to the commitments made in the presence of important stakeholders," she remarked.

She emphasised that "Pakistan did not close the door on diplomacy at any stage, but was forced to respond".

"Under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, every country has the right to defend itself," she said.

A fundamental question before Afghanistan is whether it accepts responsibility for its own territory or not.

She strongly rejected the mischaracterisation of Pakistan's defensive measures.

Meanwhile, PTI Parliamentary Leader Barrister Syed Ali Zaafar said, "Pakistan always comes first and that the entire Pakistani nation stands united against terrorism."

Balochistan Home Department Imposes Province-Wide Drone Ban Under Section 144

News Desk:

The Government of Balochistan, through its Home Department, has imposed an immediate province-wide ban on the use, possession, and operation of drones, UAVs, quadcopters, camcopters, and all other remote-controlled aerial devices across Balochistan.

According to an official notification, the ban has been enforced due to serious security concerns, including the risk of surveillance, espionage, transportation of prohibited and explosive materials, spreading fear and panic, and disruption of law and order.

The Home Department stated that the decision was essential to ensure public safety and protect sensitive installations, public gatherings, and the movement of important personalities and convoys.

The Additional Chief Secretary (Home) exercised powers under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, to impose the restriction, which has come into effect immediately and will remain in force until further orders. The notification directed the police and Frontier Corps to ensure strict implementation of



the ban. Violators will face legal action under Section 188 of the Pa-

kistan Penal Code and other applicable laws. Deputy Commissioners have been instructed to

submit daily compliance reports to the Home Department. The ban does not apply to

authorized police, Frontier Corps, and other law enforcement agencies performing official duties.

QUET VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Balochistan High Court Opens the Doors of Justice Wider Than Ever Before



Editorial:

The Balochistan High Court's latest initiative — introducing a dedicated WhatsApp number and email address for public complaints — marks a meaningful shift toward openness, accessibility, and public empowerment within the judicial system.

This is not just a procedural reform; it is an invitation for citizens to engage directly with the justice system in ways that were previously difficult, time-consuming, and often intimidating.

For decades, obtaining certified copies of court judgments or dealing for clients and even for experienced lawyers,

Long queues, procedural delays, and administrative hurdles made the process difficult, especially for people from remote districts of the province.

With digital communication now formally integrated, citizens, litigants, and counsel will be able to request and access judgment copies far more easily. This single step reduces barriers that have existed for years and ensures that justice is not only done — but also seen to be done.

Equally important is the ability for citizens to file complaints directly against lower judiciary officials or court staff if they face

misconduct, delays, or unfair treatment. Many people lacked the courage, resources, or channels to raise such concerns.

This mechanism now provides them a safe and accessible option, reinforcing the idea that justice is a right, not a privilege.

The Balochistan High Court deserves recognition for taking a forward-looking approach to judicial transparency.

By embracing technology, the court has empowered the public, strengthened accountability, and made justice more approachable for millions. This is a good step — one that brings the judiciary closer to the people it serves.

Forced Marriage in Islam: A Clear Violation of Women's Rights and Human Dignity

By Musavir Durrani

Forced marriage remains one of the most damaging cultural practices in parts of the Muslim world today. Despite being justified in the name of honor, tradition, or family unity, Islam itself strictly forbids forcing any woman, or man, into a marriage they do not want. Islamic teachings make consent the

core of marriage, while coercion makes a marriage *batal* (invalid).

The Qur'an Clearly Forbids Forced Marriages. Allah states in Surah An-Nisa: "O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will." (Qur'an 4:19)

This verse was revealed to abolish the jahiliyyah practice of controlling or forcing women into marriages.

Islam replaced oppression with dignity, choice, and responsibility.

Prophetic Example: Forced Marriages Declared Invalid.

A woman once came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) complaining that her father had married her without her permission. The Prophet (PBUH) gave her the full right to reject or accept the marriage, proving that consent is mandatory.

Hadith Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 5138. Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1419.



These narrations all confirm that the Prophet (PBUH) allowed the woman to annul her forced marriage.

One narration even states that she chose to remain married but wanted to teach women that fathers have no right to force their daughters.

Parents Can Advise, But They Cannot Force.

Islam highly respects parents, but marriage choice is not their right. They can guide, suggest, and

advise, but they have absolutely no power to force their child into marrying someone. Even if parents think they "know what is best," they cannot override the choice of their daughter or son.

The final decision always belongs to the person getting married.

Statements such as: "If you don't marry this one, who will marry you?" "You have no choice." "Do it for family honor."

These are pure emotional manipulation, and Islam does not allow it. Emotional or Psychological Pressure is Also Haram. Forced marriage is not only when someone is physically

pressured. Even emotional, mental, or family pressure counts as force. Any Nikkah done under fear, pressure, or threats

is invalid (*Batal*) in Islam. This ruling is based on multiple hadith in which the Prophet (PBUH) annulled marriages done without consent.

Modern Forced Marriages: A New Way of Burying Women Alive. Before Islam, Arabs used to bury baby girls alive. Today, many scholars say: "We no longer bury women in the ground, we bury their

dreams on the day of their Nikkah." When a girl is forced into a marriage, pressured emotionally, or told she has no other choice, we destroy her life while she is still alive.

This is the new form of burying women alive, and Islam came to end this injustice. Completely forced marriage has no place in Islam. It is against the Qur'an, against the Sunnah, and against the dignity that Islam gives to every woman and man.

Parents must love, support, and guide, but never control or force marriage decisions. "Allah gave women this right, and no one can take it away."

How AI Is Making Modern Production Smarter and Faster

Syed Muhammad Waseem

AI is changing the way we create and collaborate, with 41% of brands already using it for video production. Production teams now have to create more content faster than ever.

Staying on track while keeping ideas fresh is a daily challenge. AI is changing how production teams plan, shoot, and edit. It's making the process faster, smarter, and more creative.

As the need for faster content grows, AI is becoming a key tool for modern studios. It helps creators stay up to date with new trends and what audiences want.

Studios are using AI to work faster and save money. According to Deloitte's 2024 report, 42% of executives say it boosts efficiency and productivity.

Let's explore how AI is changing production from planning to editing. You'll learn how it saves time, cuts costs, and boosts creativity. By the end, you'll see how it's making modern production smarter and faster.

The Evolution of AI in Media Production

AI in media production has evolved rapidly over the years. Initially, it served as a basic tool for handling repetitive tasks such as video editing, adding visual effects, and creating computer graphics. Over time, it has transformed into a powerful creative partner that now supports teams at every stage of production.

In the beginning, AI was mainly used for things like video automation, and voice synthesis. These tools helped save time but still required significant human input. Today, AI plays an active role across pre-production, production, and post-production, making the entire process more efficient and consistent.

During pre-production, it assists with scriptwriting, budgeting, and storyboarding. In production, it en-

hances camera tracking, lighting adjustments, and virtual set design. Finally, in post-production, it streamlines editing, color correction, sound design, and even creates advanced visual effects.

Major studios such as Netflix and Warner Bros. are now using AI-driven tools to analyze audience preferences, optimize workflows, and enhance storytelling. As a result, AI has shifted from being a simple technical assistant to becoming an essential force in modern media production.

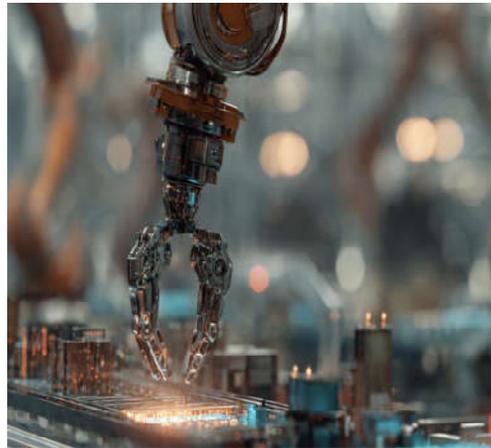
Why Production Houses Are Turning to AI

Production houses are facing rising costs and tighter schedules. Keeping up with deadlines while staying creative has become a major challenge. To stay efficient, many studios are now using AI to manage time and 60% of post-production studios utilize AI-powered editing tools to reduce editing time, reduce expenses.

This trend is growing rapidly as the global AI in media and entertainment market is projected to reach \$34.1 billion by 2027.

The demand for quick content is also increasing. Streaming platforms and networks are releasing new shows faster, putting pressure on production teams to speed up their workflow. AI tools step in to handle repetitive work like cutting scenes or syncing dialogue. This gives creative teams more time to focus on storytelling and innovation while keeping production projects on schedule and within budget.

How Production



Houses Are Using AI

see how scenes might look before filming begins. This makes planning smoother and reduces the need for costly revisions later. AI is also improving casting and budgeting.

Some tools analyze data to predict how well an actor will connect with audiences. AI software like Celtx and StudioBinder helps plan budgets and schedules. These tools make it easier for studios to manage costs, track spending, and stay on time in production.

AI is transforming the way films are shot on set. For example, AI-powered cameras can automatically track actors, adjust framing, and optimize lighting in real time. This helps directors capture perfect shots faster and reduces the need for repeated takes. According to MarketsandMarkets, the use of AI cameras in film production is expected to grow by 22%

annually by 2027.

Virtual production is becoming more common. Tools like Unreal Engine and NVIDIA Omniverse allow filmmakers to create realistic digital environments before filming begins.

These virtual sets save time, cut costs, and give teams more creative freedom, especially for large-scale or fantasy projects.

AI supports crews during filming. Voice recognition systems can follow script lines or adjust camera settings through simple voice commands.

As a result, on-set work becomes smoother, and the crew can focus more on storytelling rather than technical details.

like cutting, syncing, and scene detection. Smart apps can identify key moments and streamline workflows, helping editors focus on storytelling.

AI also improves color grading and sound editing. It can automatically balance colors, refine lighting, remove background noise, and sync soundtracks. Even some free tools can apply complex color grading for a consistent look. These features save time and make the final product polished and professional.

In addition, AI enhances VFX, CGI, and localization. It removes green screens, fills missing frames, and generates realistic effects quickly. Voice tools like Resemble.ai and ElevenLabs speed up dubbing and translations for multiple languages.

The use of AI in video production has reduced production time

by an average of 30%, showing how much it improves efficiency. AI also helps with versioning and distribution. It can create multiple edits for different platforms like social media, TV, or YouTube Shorts. This allows studios to repurpose content easily and deliver it quickly. Overall, AI makes post-production faster, more precise, and more creative.

Case Studies: How AI Is Shaping Modern Production

Case Study 1: Netflix Builds a Cloud-Based VFX Studio

The founders wanted a smarter AI-based way to grade clips.

Working with the Australian Institute for Machine Learning (AIML), they built AI software that could analyze grain samples in seconds. Their system reduced testing time from 24 minutes to just 90 seconds and achieved 98% accuracy. This made the grain supply chain faster and more reliable.

In 2024, Croproy raised \$2 million A/D from investors to expand its technology. Their success proved that AI can bring real value to agriculture by making testing faster, and more consistent.

Falkner advises businesses to focus on real problems first and then see if AI is the right solution.

Case Study 3: What's Next Entertainment's Use of AI in Creative Production

What's Next Entertainment is redefining how film production teams approach creativity and pre-production. To make their workflow smoother and boost creative output, the company uses AI tools like Midjourney and ChatGPT in its daily process.

During the early stages of filmmaking, the team uses Midjourney for storyboarding and visual exploration. It helps them create detailed visual references, test color palettes, and shape the overall look and feel of each scene before production begins. This saves time and improves collaboration among directors, designers, and cinematographers.

Meanwhile, ChatGPT supports ideation and research. The team uses it to study narrative structures and refine their sentence patterns and ideas for better storytelling.

Case Study 2: Croproy's AI Innovation in Grain Grading

In South Australia, Anna Falkner and Andrew Hannan founded Croproy to make grain testing faster and more accurate. Traditional testing relied on human inspection, which often caused mistakes and disagreements.

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Case Studies: How AI Is Shaping Modern Production

Iran urges US to drop 'excessive demands' to reach deal

NEWS DESK:Iran said on Friday that in order to reach a deal, the United States will have to drop its "excessive demands", tempering the optimism expressed after talks seen as a last-ditch bid to avert war.

The Oman-mediated talks follow repeated threats from US President Donald Trump to strike Iran, and with the United States conducting its biggest military build-up in the region in decades.

Trump, on February 19, gave Iran 15 days to reach a deal, and while Iran has insisted the discussions focus solely on its nuclear programme, the US wants Tehran's missile programme and its support for armed groups curtailed.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday that Trump's negotiating team would demand that Iran dismantle its three main nuclear sites and hand over all its remaining enriched uranium to the United States.

Without specifying what demands he was referring to, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Friday told his Egyptian counterpart that "success in this path requires seriousness and realism from



the other side and agreement very seriously, both in the nuclear field and in the sanctions field." He said the next round would take place in "perhaps less than a week", with technical talks at the UN's nuclear agency to begin in Vienna on Monday.

Omani Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi also announced technical discussions were to be held next week in Vienna. "We have finished the day after significant progress in the negotiation between the United States and Iran," he said

in a post on X. Araghchi, in a post on X, called the latest round of talks "the most intense so far". "It concluded with the mutual understanding that we will continue to engage in a more detailed manner on matters that are essential to any deal — including sanctions termination and nuclear-related steps," he wrote.

UN nuclear chief Rafael Grossi joined the negotiations, a source close to the talks told AFP. "Biglies" US President

Donald Trump said in his State of the Union address that Iran had "already developed missiles that can threaten Europe and our bases overseas, and they're working to build missiles that will soon reach the United States of America". He also accused Iran of "pursuing sinister nuclear ambitions", though Tehran has always insisted its programme is for civilian purposes.

The accusations were delivered in the same forum in which then-President George W. Bush laid out the case for the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The Iranian foreign ministry called these claims "big lies". On Wednesday US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that Iran is "not enriching right now, but they're trying to get to the point where they ultimately can", adding that Tehran "refuses" to discuss its ballistic missile programme and "that's a big problem". Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian insisted ahead of the talks that the Islamic Republic was not "at all" seeking a nuclear weapon.

US Vice President JD Vance told the Washington Post on Thursday there was "no chance" that a long-threatened strike on Iran would result "in a Middle Eastern war for years with no end in sight". Paralleling the talks is a dramatic US military buildup in the region, with the USS Gerald R. Ford, the world's largest aircraft carrier, sent to the Mediterranean this week. Washington currently has more than a dozen warships in the Middle East: one aircraft carrier — the USS Abraham Lincoln — nine destroyers, and three other combat ships.

UN says Israel aims to bring about demographic change in Palestine

NEWS DESK:Israel's actions in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip seem aimed at creating "permanent demographic change", UN rights chief Volker Turk said on Thursday.

"Taken together, Israel's actions appear aimed at making a permanent demographic change in Gaza and the West Bank, raising concerns about ethnic cleansing," Turk said in a speech before the UN's Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Turk pointed in particular to an ongoing, year-long Israeli military operation in the West Bank's north that has caused the displacement of 32,000 Palestinians. Elsewhere in the West Bank, entire Bedouin herder communities have been displaced by increasing harassment and violence from Israeli settlers, including near Mikhmas to the east of Ramallah, and Ras Ein al-Ajia, in the Jordan Valley, since the start of the year.

In addition to roughly three million Palestinians, more than 500,000 Israelis live in settlements and outposts in the West Bank, which are considered illegal under international law. Far-right minister Smotrich vows to encourage "emigration" from the Palestinian territories in February.

from Palestinian territories Israel has approved a series of initiatives this month backed by far-right ministers, including launching a process to register land in the West Bank as "state property" and allowing Israelis to purchase land there directly, in a move condemned by several countries as well as Hamas.

Israel's current government has accelerated settlement expansion, approving a record 54 settlements in 2025, according to Israeli settlement watchdog NGO Peace Now. Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967.

"Maximum land, minimum Arabs" — In the Gaza Strip, most of the territory's 2.2 million inhabitants have been displaced at least once since the start of the conflict on October 7, 2023. "Intensified attacks, the methodical destruction of entire neighbourhoods and the denial of humanitarian assistance appeared to aim at a permanent demographic shift in Gaza," the UN human rights office said in a report last week.

Israeli far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich also vowed to encourage "emigration" from the Palestinian territories in February.



Trump Iranian missile claim unsupported by US intelligence, say sources

NEWS DESK:US President Donald Trump's claim that Iran will soon have a missile capable of striking the United States is not supported by US intelligence reports and appears to be exaggerated, according to three sources familiar with the assessments.

This casts doubt on part of his case for a possible attack on the Islamic Republic. In his State of the Union address to Congress on Tuesday, Trump began setting out his case to the American public for why the US could launch a strike against Iran, saying Tehran was "working on missiles that will soon reach" the United States.

However, there have been no changes, two sources said, to an unclassified 2025 US Defense Intelligence Agency assessment that Iran could take until 2035 to develop a "militarily viable intercontinental ballistic missile" (ICBM) from its existing satellite launch vehicles (SLVs). "President Trump is

absolutely right to highlight the grave concern posed by Iran, a country that chants 'death to America', possessing intercontinental ballistic missiles," said White House spokesperson Anna Kelly. One source said that even if China or North Korea — which do not cooperate with Iran — provided technological assistance, Iran would probably take up to eight years at the earliest to produce "something that is actually ICBM-level and operational". The



sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence, said they were unaware of any US intelligence assessments indicating that Iran was developing a missile capable of striking the US mainland in the near term, though they did not rule out the possibility of a new assessment of which they were unaware. The New York Times first reported that US intelligence agencies believe Iran is probably years away from possessing mis-

siles that can strike the United States. Trump's claim about Iran's missile capability came as representatives from the US and Iran negotiate over Tehran's nuclear programme, with no sign of a breakthrough that could avert potential US strikes and a significant military build-up in the region. The US president has offered little public explanation as to why he might lead the US into its most aggressive action against the Islamic Republic since the 1979 revolution.

China said it was "deeply concerned" by the fighting and called for a ceasefire. China "calls to remain calm and exercise restraint... achieve a ceasefire as soon as possible and avoid further bloodshed", foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a regular press briefing. The foreign ministry and China's embassies in Pakistan and Afghanistan are "working with relevant parties in both countries on this matter", she added.

8,000 died or vanished on migrant routes in 2025: UN

NEWS DESK: At least 7,667 people died or went missing last year on migration routes around the world, but the true death toll is likely higher, the UN's migration agency reported on Thursday.

The figure was down on 2024 when almost 9,200 deaths were recorded, but the UN's International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said numbers nonetheless reflected the "global scale" of the crisis faced by migrants.

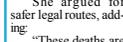
"The continued loss of life on migration routes is a global failure we cannot accept as normal," said IOM Director General Amy Pope. She argued for safer legal routes, adding: "These deaths are

not inevitable." Funding cuts for aid groups, crackdowns on humanitarian NGOs and limited access to data are making it more difficult to accurately track deaths, the UN agency said.

Sea crossings such as the perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea from Africa to Europe

remain among the deadliest routes for migrants, the report said. At least 2,108 people went missing while trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2025, and another 1,047 died or vanished while trying to cross to Spain's Canary Islands, according to the IOM.

The actual figures are "likely higher", it said. The first two months of 2026 have already seen "an unprecedented number of migrant deaths" in the Mediterranean, the agency warned, with 606 people recorded dead on the crossing as of Tuesday — even as arrivals in Italy decline sharply.



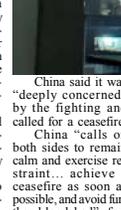
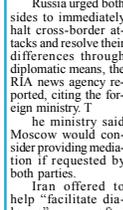
Russia, China, Iran urge restraint as Pakistan strikes Afghanistan

NEWS DESK: Russia, China, Turkey and Iran called for restraint and dialogue on Friday as the airstrike escalated between Pakistan and Afghanistan following Pakistani airstrikes and the seizure of border posts.

Russia urged both sides to immediately halt cross-border attacks and resolve their differences through diplomatic means, the RIA news agency reported, citing the foreign ministry. Turkey's ministry said Moscow would consider providing mediation if requested by both parties.

Iran offered to help "facilitate dialogue" after Islamabad declared "open war" on the Taliban government and carried out airstrikes on Kabul following border clashes. "The Islamic Republic of Iran stands ready to provide any assistance necessary to facilitate dialogue and to enhance understanding and cooperation between the two countries," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a post on X.

China said it was "deeply concerned" by the fighting and called for a ceasefire. China "calls to remain calm and exercise restraint... achieve a ceasefire as soon as possible and avoid further bloodshed", foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a regular press briefing. The foreign ministry and China's embassies in Pakistan and Afghanistan are "working with relevant parties in both countries on this matter", she added.



Turkey called Pakistan and Afghanistan on negotiation table. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan "discussed the conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan in separate calls" on Friday with counterparts from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkish diplomatic sources said.

Security sources said Pakistani forces had targeted key military installations of the Afghan Taliban regime in Kabul, Kandahar and Paktia through airstrikes early Friday. Pakistan also took control of five Afghan posts in the Paktia region, opposite South Waziristan, and raised the Pakistani flag, security sources said. Two posts were located in Shawal, two in Angoor Adda and one in Zarmelan.

The Pakistan Army destroyed the Afghan terminal at Angoor Adda, the Afghan Charlie post and the Afghan Babri post were also destroyed, according to security sources. The Pakistan Air Force launched airstrikes under "Operation Ghazab Lili Haq", targeting militant infrastructure in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, security sources said.

During the latest operations, two brigade headquarters in Kabul were destroyed, security sources added. The Pakistan Army also destroyed the Afghan Taliban's core headquarters in Kandahar.

PAF commemorates 7th anniversary of Operation Swift Retort

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) commemorated the 7th anniversary of Operation Swift Retort at Air Headquarters, marking a landmark demonstration of resolve, professionalism and collective response in modern warfare.

Addressing the ceremony, Air Chief Marshal Zabeer Ahmed Babar Siddiqui, Chief of the Air Staff, stated that "Pakistan is a responsible country

which desires peace with honour". He recalled that seven years ago, the aggressor miscalculated Pakistan's resolve and capability by challenging its sovereignty under the cover of darkness, said a press release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

PAF's measured broad daylight response re-established credible deterrence against a numerically superior adversary.

Highlighting the complex global and regional security environment and evolving character of warfare, the Air Chief underscored that since March 2021, decisive fiscal constraints, PAF has pursued comprehensive modernization and indigenous Unmanned Systems, Electronic Warfare, Space and Cyber assets, establishing a unique home-grown multi-domain main Kill Chain. Referring to Marka-e-Haq in May 2025, he stated that

the peace and security of the country. He said our armed forces are fully capable of defeating aggressive designs. Shehbaz Sharif said under the leadership of the Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Syed Asim Mumin, the Armed Forces of Pakistan are performing their duties with national spirit. He said the Armed Forces of Pakistan are equipped with professional capabilities, quality training and effective defensive strategy and are fully capable of dealing with any internal or external challenge.



RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is being briefed on the Pakistan-Afghanistan situation by the Military leadership.

NAB recovers Rs11.56 trillion in five years, Senate told

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Senate was informed on Friday that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had recovered Rs11.56 trillion during the last five years through direct recoveries, plea bargains, voluntary returns, settlements and retrieval of state land. Responding to a question raised by Senator Talha Mahmood, Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarrar said the total recoveries amounted to Rs11,565,257.62 million and were achieved through coordinated efforts of NAB with the support of Federal and provincial governments.

The minister said large tracts of state land — including forest land — that had remained under illegal occupation for decades in various provinces, particularly Punjab and Sindh, were retrieved and handed over to the relevant provincial authorities. He added that the recovered land was duly en-

Crackdown intensifies against profiteering, substandard food

KOHAT (INP): Authorities across Kohat Division have intensified enforcement actions during the holy month of Ramadan to curb profiteering and the sale of substandard food items, aiming to provide maximum relief to the public.

In Parachinar, Deputy Commissioner Kurram Ashfaq Khan conducted surprise inspections of major markets, checking official price lists and sanitation conditions at bakeries, poultry shops, general stores, and fruit and vegetable stalls.

Several shopkeepers were issued notices for overcharging and poor hygiene, while strict legal action was warned against violators. The deputy commissioner also visited the district price monitoring desk, reviewed complainant registers and met citizens to hear concerns regarding rising prices.

He urged the public to report profiteering promptly, assuring swift action by the administration.

Meanwhile, in Karak district, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Sahibzada Samuallah, along with teams from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Halal Food Authority, conducted inspections at Mithakel Bazaar, Niazi Stop Culvert and Jail Chowk.

During the inspections, the quality of cooking oil and ghee used in preparing popular Ramadan food items including kababs, samosas and pakoras was examined for stability. Two vendors were fined on the spot for using harmful oil, while contaminated supplies were confiscated and destroyed.

Officials warned traders to strictly adhere to government price lists and hygiene standards, stressing that public health and consumer relief remain top priorities.

No compromise on defence of country: President, PM

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif have expressed the resolve that there will be no compromise on the defence of the country and every aggression will be met with a befitting response. In their statements, they said the State of Pakistan will not compromise on its peace, stability and territorial integrity.

The President said no one should have the misconception that Pakistan will be cowed by pressure or intimidation. He further said that today Pakistan nation and our brave armed forces stand like a rock wall to protect the integrity of the motherland and its borders.

The President said the response capability of our armed forces is comprehensive, timely and decisive, and they have the full capacity to uphold the evil intentions of the enemy.

Asif Ali Zardari said we do not want confrontation, but if anyone considers Pakistan's peace as weakness, he will face a strong response.

He said for the last five years, the ungrateful Taliban regime has been engaged in terrorist acts against its benefactor Pakistan through its TTP terrorists.

He said all our diplomatic efforts and brotherly countries have failed to bring this criminal gang to the correct

path. The President said this criminal and cowardly group crossed the international border and challenged the integrity of Pakistan.

Asif Ali Zardari said Pakistan, as a responsible state, adopted diplomatic channels and made serious efforts to bring this criminal gang to the path of moderation with the help of brotherly countries, but no positive progress could be made.

The Prime Minister said the people and the Armed Forces of Pakistan are always ready to protect the country's security, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He said the Armed Forces of Pakistan are committed for not allowing any kind of threat

KPC CM assures border area protection, condemns provocation amid Pak-Afghan tensions

PESHAWAR, Feb 27 (INP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sohail Afridi on Friday chaired a high-level meeting to review the overall law and order situation in the province amid tensions on Pak-Afghan border.

Afridi praised the provincial government's closely monitoring the situation while remaining in constant contact with relevant authorities and that the protection of citizens' lives and property remains the top priority.

Addressing the meeting, the chief minister said safeguarding every inch of Pakistan is a collective national responsibility and vowed

Punjab receives export orders of 500,000 tons potatoes

LAHORE (INP): With the sincere efforts of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Punjab has received orders for export of more than 500,000 tons of potatoes. Chairing an important meeting Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz announced important steps to make farmers self-reliant including recovery of barren lands in Punjab, hydroponics, agricultural exports, tractors, super seeders, solarization, Anna Khet, Anna Rozgar and stipends. The meeting took major decisions that will change the fate of farmers from traditional farms to modern agriculture. Maryam Nawaz decided to connect youth with agriculture and agriculture interns will now

Senate unanimously condemns aggression from Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Senate on Friday unanimously adopted a resolution condemning unprovoked aggression and hostile cross-border actions originating from the territory of Afghanistan, terming them violations of international law and established diplomatic norms.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the resolution was presented by Senator Sherry Rehman and adopted by the House in the presence of Senate Chairman Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani.

The resolution declared that any attempt to challenge Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity or national security would be considered a direct affront to the nation's dignity and would be met with a firm, proportionate and decisive response.

The House paid tribute to the bravery, professionalism and sacrifice of Pakistan's armed forces and law enforcement personnel for remaining vigilant in the defence of the country's borders.

Recalling Pakistan's decades-long engagement with Afghanistan, the Senate noted with profound regret that the country had borne significant economic, social and security burdens for some 40 years by hosting millions of Afghan nationals, extending humanitarian assistance, facilitating peace efforts and advocating for Afghanistan's stability in international forums.

The resolution stated that these efforts were often undertaken at immense cost to Pakistan's own national development and internal security.

Expressing disappointment over what it termed a lack of reciprocal goodwill, the House referred to hostile rhetoric, cross-border violations and the persistent presence of anti-Pakistan terrorist elements operating from Afghan soil, describing the situation as a troubling pattern undermining bilateral understanding.

The Senate demanded that the Afghan Taliban regime immediately cease all hostile actions, prevent the use of Afghan territory for terrorism or aggression against Pakistan, and honour international obligations and commitments to peaceful coexistence.

At the same time, the resolution reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to constructive engagement, regional peace and mutually respectful relations, while cautioning that the country's patience must not be misconstrued as weakness, nor its desire for stability mistaken for inability to respond decisively.

The House also called upon the international community to take serious note of the developments and urged the Afghan authorities to adhere to international norms and prevent further destabilisation of the region.

Concluding the resolution, the Senate declared that it stood united beyond political divides in defence of Pakistan's sovereignty and supported all necessary measures undertaken by the state to safeguard its territorial integrity and national honour.



ISLAMABAD: Mary Cummins, Team Leader of Mustekham Parliament (MUP), calls on Chairman Senate, Yousaf Raza Gilani, at Parliament House.

UN leaders, Russia call on Pakistan, Afghanistan to cease fire

ISLAMABAD (INP): Top UN officials have expressed concern over the cross-border clashes between Taliban militants and Pakistan security forces, and called for dialogue and diplomacy to resolve their differences while China and Russia called on both countries to cease firing.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres following the situation with concern, his spokesperson said Thursday.

In a note to correspondents, Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said the secretary-general urges relevant parties to comply with their obligations under international law and to ensure the protection of civilians.

Commending mediation efforts by several Member States in recent months, the Secretary-General urges the parties to continue to seek to resolve any differences

through diplomacy, and on political grounds against persons perceived as 'allies of girls and women'."

Russia has urged Pakistan and Afghanistan to halt cross-border attacks immediately and resolve their differences through diplomatic means, the RIA news agency reported on Friday, citing the foreign ministry.

Iran offered to help "facilitate dialogue" to resolve conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan after Islamabad declared "open war" on the Taliban government and carried out air strikes on Kabul following border clashes.

Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry said the two leaders exchanged views on regional security and efforts to reduce tensions in the broader region.

The diplomatic outreach came amid claims by Islamabad that its armed forces had carried out extensive retaliatory strikes following unpro-



HYDERABAD: Senior Provincial Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sindh Sharjeel Inam Memon talking to media at HPC.

Governor Balochistan Praises Bolan Medical University's Rapid Growth and Expansion of Academic Programs

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jafar Khan Mandokhail met with Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Shabbir Ahmed Lehi of Bolan University of Medical and Health Sciences, Quetta at the Governor House.

The meeting focused on the university's recent achievements and overall progress in the province's higher education sector.

The Governor commended the university's remarkable performance, noting that its ranking has improved from 15% to 58.5% in just two years—a historic accomplishment.

He highlighted that student enrollment has now reached 4,000, reflecting the university's commitment to expanding its academic programs last year, including Nursing, Dental, and recently launched Aesthetic Surgery.

Governor



Mandokhail also praised the introduction of 12 new academic programs last year, including Nursing, Dental, and recently launched Aesthetic Surgery.

courses, which are aligned with contemporary professional requirements.

He emphasized that equipping youth with globally recognized medical skills will

create overseas employment opportunities and help combat unemployment.

He reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring a strong balance between medical education and modern research,

aiming to establish Bolan Medical University as a leading and distinguished institution in the future of higher education.

Balochistan High Court Seeks Progress Report on Science College-Sariab Road Project, Orders Timely Completion

QUETTA: A two-member bench of the Balochistan High Court, comprising Chief Justice Muhammad Kamran Khan Mullahkhalil and Justice Muhammad Najmuddin Mengal, has sought a detailed progress report regarding the construction of the road and related infrastructure from Science College, Hockey Chowk to Sariab Railway Crossing, directing the concerned authorities to complete the project within the stipulated timeframe.

During the hearing, Additional Chief Secretary (Development) Zahid Saleem informed the court that the project is 98 percent complete. Out of 15,905 meters, 15,675 meters have been completed, leaving only 230



meters pending. Similarly, the asphalt base course has largely been completed; however, delays in the relocation of gas pipelines at certain points are causing obstacles.

Upon the court's inquiry, officials of Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL), including Makhdoom-ur-Rehman (Manager Liaison) and Engineer Sameer Ali, assured that the gas line relocation

would be completed promptly. The court directed the Project Director to conduct an immediate site visit along with SSGCL officials to resolve excavation and technical matters without further delay.

The court was further informed that restrictions on stone crushing and asphalt plants around Quetta due to judicial orders had caused difficulties. However, an asphalt plant has been established at Kach/Hanna Road for the project. Following certain complaints and obstacles highlighted by the SHO Cantt Police Station, the court directed the Advocate General's Office to ensure that no hindrance is tolerated in the execution of the project.

The DIG Police Quetta Range was also instructed to ensure compliance with court directives. The bench ordered

Annual Results and Parents' Day Celebrated at Manjhi Pur High School, DC Farida Tareen Encourages Students

NASEERABAD (SOHBAT PUR): In line with the effective educational initiatives of Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti, a grand ceremony was held at Government Boys High School Manjhi Pur on the occasion of the annual results announcement and Parents' Day.

Deputy Commissioner Sohbat Pur Farida Tareen attended the event as the chief guest.

The ceremony aimed to promote academic activities, encourage students and strengthen coordination between parents and teachers.

The district administration emphasized



recognizing and motivating students who demonstrated outstanding performance.

A large number of local dignitaries, par-

ents, teachers, and community members attended the event.

During the program, students presented recitation of the Holy Quran, Naat,

Urdu and English speeches, national songs, tableaux, and various sports demonstrations, which were highly appreciated by the audience.

DC Zulfiqar Ali Karar Chairs Cluster Committee Meeting to Improve Education System in Naserabad

NASEERABAD: Deputy Commissioner Naserabad Zulfiqar Ali Karar chaired an important meeting of the Cluster Committee to review educational affairs across the district.

The meeting was attended by District Education Officer and Committee Secretary Hafizullah Khoso, Focal Person Abdul Hakeem Farman Magi, Jaz Ali Sasaki, DC's PS Manzoor Shirazi, and other members. Participants conducted a detailed review of the functioning of government schools, the performance of the cluster system, and the challenges faced by educational institutions in the



district. It was informed during the session that 42 clusters have been established for 631 govern-

ment schools in District Naserabad to streamline academic administration, resource distribution, and monitoring

mechanisms. Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner and Committee Chairman Zulfiqar

Ali Karar directed that demands based on cluster requirements should be prepared in a timely manner and that the tendering process must be accelerated while ensuring transparency.

He emphasized that there should be no delay in providing essential facilities to schools so that the educational environment can be improved. He stated that the improvement of the education sector remains one of the top priorities of the district administration. Teachers, officers, and related staff were urged to work in close coordination to further enhance educational standards.

Positive Results Emerge from Measles-Rubella Outbreak Response in Remote Areas of Kalat

KALAT: Positive results have started to emerge from the outbreak response against measles-rubella in remote villages of Suro and Lound in Sheikhi area, UC Skalko, district Kalat.

With the support of the district administration, District Health Officer (DHO) Kalat, and Deputy DHO, the team voluntarily reached the security-compromised villages of Suro and

The collected blood samples, after centrifugation, are being sent to the National Institute of Health laboratory in Islamabad for testing. District Health Officer Kalat, Dr. Anjum



Acting promptly on reports of a suspected measles-rubella outbreak in farming and high-risk security areas of Kalat, Deputy Commissioner Munir Ahmed Durrani dispatched a Rapid Response Team (RRT) to the affected region to control the spread of the disease.

Despite difficult terrain and security challenges, the RRT carried out operations on a war footing.

The team was led by Mir Bilal, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, EPI Kalat, and included Mufti Ali Hassan, Najeebullah Mengal, Mir Nazar Khan Jafak and WHO vaccinator Muhammad Hafeez, who remained actively engaged in community

Lound. The team conducted case investigations in farming and cluster investigations. A total of 13 measles-rubella (MR) cases were reported on the EPI Pakistan application.

Blood samples from four suspected measles cases were collected, while unfortunately one death was recorded.

To contain the outbreak, 24 children aged between 6 months and 8 years were vaccinated with the MR vaccine and administered Vitamin A capsules. Case investigation forms were completed and successfully uploaded to the application.

Two health camps were also established in Lound and Suro villages, where outpatient services were provided to men and women of all ages.

Medicines supplied by the DHO were distributed, and community members were counseled on the importance of EPI vaccines and vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs). Efforts were made to generate vaccine demand within the community.

Divisional Consultation Held in Loralai on Balochistan Rangeland Management Policy 2025-2035

LORALAI: A divisional-level stakeholders' consultation was held at the Municipal Committee Hall Loralai to deliberate on and improve the draft of the Balochistan Rangeland Management Policy 2025-2035 (Version 3.0).

The session was organized by a European Union-funded project and chaired by Muhammad Yousaf Kakar, Project Manager, engaged in detailed discussions on actionable proposals for the sustainable use, conservation, and effective management of rangelands.

The chief guest on the occasion was Commissioner Loralai Division Wali Muhammad Bareech.

Among others present were Assistant Commissioner Bori Nadeem Akram Baloch, Chief Officer Municipal Committee Mohibullah Baloch, Conservator Forest Muhammad Amin Mengal.

ADC General Noor Ali Kakar, officials from the Agriculture and Forestry Department, members of the farming and livestock communities, representatives of the Livestock Movement, senior journalist Pir Muhammad Kakar, as

well as a large number of farmers and citizens. The event commenced with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by formal proceedings.

In his keynote address, Commissioner Wali Muhammad Bareech stated that Balochistan's vast rangelands form the backbone of the province's economy and livestock sector.

He emphasized that protecting rangelands is not merely an environmental requirement but an effective management of rangelands.

He further highlighted that the Government of Balochistan is taking serious measures to restore rangelands, improve management practices, and involve local communities to strengthen the livestock sector and enhance employment opportunities in rural areas.

During the workshop, experts elaborated on the objectives of the

policy, underscoring that rangelands are the backbone of the rural economy and that conservation of land and water resources is fundamental to sustainable development.

Former Chief Conservator Forest (South) Syed Ghulam Muhammad delivered a comprehensive briefing on challenges and opportunities in rangeland management across Balochistan, while Conservator Forest Jafar Ali Baloch discussed key features of the policy and future strategies in detail.

Participants were divided into four groups to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities within the draft policy and formulate practical recommendations.

Discussions focused on ground realities, climate change impacts, climate change restoration, efficient water utilization, and community participation.

During the session-and-answer session, valuable suggestions were presented regarding policy implementation, monitoring mechanisms, and equitable resource distribution.

TENDER NOTICE

The Executive Engineer, Public Health Engineering & M Division Quetta invites the bidders for the approved Government Contractors.

Tender Fee 1000 and Bid Security 2% in shape of Call deposit for each work

| Sl | NAME OF WORK | Estimated Cost | TSE NO |
|----|---|----------------|---------------|
| 1 | Construction of WSS at Miri, Sheikhi Area | 5,174 (Rs) | TSE-2020R3003 |
| | | 4,734 (Rs) | TSE-2020R3004 |
| 2 | Construction of WSS at Miri, Sheikhi Area | 5,174 (Rs) | TSE-2020R3005 |
| | | 4,734 (Rs) | TSE-2020R3006 |
| 3 | Construction of WSS at Miri, Sheikhi Area | 5,174 (Rs) | TSE-2020R3007 |
| | | 4,734 (Rs) | TSE-2020R3008 |
| 4 | Construction of WSS at Miri, Sheikhi Area | 6,400 (Rs) | TSE-2020R3009 |
| | | 5,800 (Rs) | TSE-2020R3010 |
| 5 | Construction of WSS at Miri, Sheikhi Area | 6,400 (Rs) | TSE-2020R3011 |
| | | 6,400 (Rs) | TSE-2020R3012 |

The procurement shall be carried out in accordance with Balochistan Public Procurement Regulatory Authority rules, 2014. ELIGIBILITY: a. Three Years Relevant Work Experience in PHE Department. b. Over of at least three years showing financial capacity of the firm. The contractor must have registration with tax authorities (a NTN Sales tax department and Balochistan Revenue Authority(BTR)) valid registration with Pakistan Engineering Council in relevant category who have deposited minimum revenue for the year 2020-2026. Tender fee deposited in head of account C-2725-02 through green channel form original in State Bank of Pakistan/National Bank of Pakistan Quetta Rs. 1000 each work detail given as above. e. The detail of each work are available on E-PPRA website. Method of Procurement: Single stage, one-step procedure will be adopted. Bidding/Tender documents: 4. Issuance: The tender forms/documents will be issued to bidders/contractors on publishing of notice in newspapers on 13.03.2020 11:00 AM from the presentation of requisite documents at tender fee (Non-Transferable). Bid Security/ Earned money 2% in shape of call deposit. The bidders will be open in presence of all bidders/terms. Bidders/terms: Last date for submission is 13.03.2020 at 11:00 AM. Opening: The tender will be opened on 13.03.2020 at 12:00 P.M. Place of issuance, submission, inquiry and opening will be: Address: Office of the Executive Engineer PHE & M Division Quetta. E-mail address: KNS@phed.gov.pk/ksns@gmail.com. It may be noted that no pay order will be accepted/entertained and Firm complete title name should be written on call deposit. Only original contractor are allowed to participate in the tenders with original CNIC. Agent/Representative will not be allowed. CONDITIONS: All the terms and conditions of the detail works can be seen/obtain from the office of the undersigned in any office hours.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING & M DIVISION QUETTA.

PHO No. 38627/02-2020

Tensions slow Pakistani investment in Dubai real estate

NEWS DESK: Rising tensions in the Gulf have slowed Pakistani investment in Dubai's property market amid fears that US military strikes on Iran could trigger a sharp fall in prices, property dealers in Dubai and Karachi said.

Pakistanis have long been among the largest investors in Dubai real estate, with the emirate also regarded as a safe haven for illicit funds. In 2023, Pakistan ranked as the second-largest investor in Dubai properties, while in 2025 it slipped to fourth place.

Growing fears of conflict in the Gulf have created uncertainty across the region, with investors from Pakistan, India and other Gulf countries concerned about the safety of billions of dollars invested in Dubai's property market.

Dubai-based property dealer Asif Chakwal said he was not overly concerned and did not expect war or any direct threat to Dubai.

Investors fear US-Iran conflict may trigger sharp correction in emirate's property market. "There is definitely



concern about tensions in the Gulf, but things are apparently normal. There is no report shaking confidence in Dubai properties. We are in good shape," Mr Chakwal told Dawn.

However, property dealers in Karachi who trade in Dubai real estate expressed caution, though they said prices had not declined so far. Discussions with dealers and investors still doubted a full-scale war would break out in the region.

Imran Memon, a dealer with extensive experience in Dubai, said there would be no harm to Dubai "as it is the best shelter for the rich of the world, like Switzerland."

"Not only are Indians and Pakistanis investing in Dubai properties, but the Russian-Ukrainian war has also pushed wealthy individuals to buy properties there," Mr Memon said, adding that the conflict had prompted investors from Eastern Europe to shift capital to Dubai.

He said Chinese and Iranian investors had also invested heavily in the emirate, including overseas Iranians.

A Pakistani businessman, who declined to be named, said he was concerned because a large number of affluent Pakistanis had investments in Dubai. He recalled that during the 2007-08 global financial crisis, Dubai's property market suffered a steep downturn and Pakistanis lost billions of rupees as prices plunged.

It is widely believed that a substantial amount of illicit money from Pakistan has flowed into Dubai, although many legitimate businesses and technology companies have also relocated there to avoid corruption and bureaucratic hurdles at home.

According to a list issued by Dubai's Real Estate Market on Sept 24, 2025, India ranked first among the top 10 countries investing in Dubai real estate, followed by the UK, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, Türkiye, Germany, Russia, China and the United States.

The United Arab Emirates is Pakistan's second-largest trading partner after China and has substantial investments in Pakistan, particularly in the financial sector.

Hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis work in the UAE, and the country is the second-largest source of remittances to Pakistan.

Political analysts in Pakistan believe Israel could attack Iran with US support, potentially triggering a regional conflict with serious economic consequences.

Govt awards 11 oil, gas exploration blocks

NEWS DESK: The Petroleum Division on Thursday signed petroleum concession agreements and granted exploration licences for 11 onshore blocks, marking a significant step forward in advancing oil and gas exploration activities across the country.

The signing ceremony was held in Islamabad, where Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik was also present.

The awarded blocks include eight in Balochistan, two in Sindh and one in Punjab.

The successful joint venture partners are Oil and Gas Development Company (OGDC), Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL),

Mari Energies, Pakistan Oilfields Ltd (POL) and Prime Global Energies. Speaking on the occasion, the minister for petroleum termed the signing of agreements a significant milestone in the government's efforts to boost domestic exploration, attract investment and reduce reliance

on imported energy. "The agreements demonstrate strong investor confidence in Pakistan's upstream potential,"

the minister remarked and expressed confidence that recent discoveries would lead to further investments in development and production, create employment opportunities, stimulate economic activity in those regions and contribute meaningfully to reducing reliance on imported energy.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to facilitating exploration activities and ensuring a stable investor-friendly environment for sustainable development of indigenous energy resources.

Mari Energies will serve as the operator of six blocks. It has secured 100% working interest in five blocks — Padag, Chagai, Dalbandin, Merui and Merui West — and will lead the Ahmad Wali block as the operator with a 60% working interest, alongside OGDC having 40% interest.

PPL emerged as the highest bidder for the Kalat South block and will operate it with a 40% working interest in partnership with OGDC (30%) and Mari Energies (30%).

POL secured the Jherruk block with 100% working interest. OGDC, Pakistan's largest exploration and production company, signed agreements for five new exploration blocks awarded in the bidding round held on April 30, 2025.

In the Ahmed Wali block in the Nushki district of Balochistan, the company holds a 40% working interest, while Mari Energies will serve as the operator with a 60% share.

In the Kalat South block, also in Balochistan, OGDC has acquired a 30% stake, with PPL acting as the operator with a 40% interest and Mari Energies holding the remaining 30%.

The block covers Kalat, Khuzdar and Jhal Magsi districts.

The minimum committed investment by the successful bidders exceeds \$31 million (Rs8.66 billion) over the next three years.

In addition, more than Rs276 million has been committed to social welfare initiatives in the respective areas.

In the Naing Sharif block in Jamshoro district of Sindh, OGDC will hold an 80% working interest as the operator, alongside Prime (20%).

Meanwhile, OGDC secured interests in two additional blocks as a non-operator.

In the Ahmed Wali block in the Nushki district of Balochistan, the company holds a 40% working interest, while Mari Energies will serve as the operator with a 60% share.

In the Kalat South block, also in Balochistan, OGDC has acquired a 30% stake, with PPL acting as the operator with a 40% interest and Mari Energies holding the remaining 30%.

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Banks earn Rs671bn profits in 2025

NEWS DESK: The banking sector reported cumulative profits of Rs671 billion in CY25, reflecting 11 per cent year-on-year growth, said a research report of Topline Securities.

Earnings expansion was primarily driven by a sharp decline in interest expenses, which more than offset the reduction in interest income

amid a low policy rate environment, resulting in an overall increase in NII.

United Bank Ltd led the charge, recording its highest ever profit-after-tax (PAT) of Rs130bn, followed by Meezan Bank Ltd, recording a profit of Rs90.7bn and National Bank of Pakistan with a PAT of Rs85bn.

In terms of earnings growth, NBP

achieved a significant 227pc YoY increase, due to increased NII and other supportive factors like one-off pension charge recognized in CY24.

Meanwhile, UBL achieved earnings growth of 73pc YoY, followed by Bank of Punjab at 18pc YoY.

The top dividend paying banks in CY25 were MCB Bank (Rs36 per share),

NBP (Rs35), UBL (Rs29.5) and Meezan Bank (Rs28).

Has Bank Ltd recorded the highest deposits of Rs5.5 trillion, followed by UBL (Rs5.1tr) and MEBL (Rs3.3tr).

On the deposit growth front, UBL led with 96pc YoY increase in deposits, followed by Faysal Bank (37pc) and MEBL (28pc).



Petrol, diesel prices likely to rise by Rs7 for next fortnight

NEWS DESK: The prices of all petroleum products were estimated to increase by Rs4.50 to Rs7 per litre on Saturday for the next fortnight ending March 15, owing to a slight upward trend in the international market.

Official sources said the benchmark crude prices had slightly moved up this week in view of regional tensions.

Therefore, the price of all products, including petrol, high speed diesel (HSD), kerosene and light diesel oil (LDO) were inching up and set to significantly impact the pricing pattern on February 28 for the following fortnight.

Based on existing tax rates, the sources said the ex-depot prices of petrol, HSD, LDO and kerosene had been estimated to go up by about Rs4.50 per litre, Rs4.70, Rs7, and Rs5 per litre, respectively, depending on final calculations on Saturday.

The ex-depot petrol price set by the government currently stands at Rs258.17 per litre but is sold at more than Rs259.30 per litre at retail stations.

The official prices for HSD currently stands at Rs275.70 but is sold



in the retail market on the higher side of Rs77 per litre.

The kerosene and LDO rates currently stand at Rs180.53 and Rs161.72 per litre, respectively. However, kerosene oil is nowhere sold below Rs190 per litre in the open market.

Together with customs duty, the petroleum levy and the climate support levy, the government is currently charging about Rs105 per litre taxes on petrol and about Rs98 on HSD.

Petrol is mostly used in private transport, small vehicles, rickshaws and two-wheel-

ers and has a direct bearing on the budget of the middle and lower-middle class.

While the heavy transport sector runs on HSD, its price is considered inflationary as it is mostly used in heavy transport vehicles, trains and agricultural engines like trucks, buses,

tractors, tube-wells and threshers, and particularly adds to the prices of vegetables and other eatables.

Besides the petroleum levy, the government is also charging about Rs17.18 per litre custom duty on petrol

and HSD, irrespective of their local production or imports.

In addition, about Rs17 per litre distribution and sale margins are going to oil companies and their dealers.

Petrol and HSD are the major revenue spinners with their monthly average sales of about 700,000-800,000 tonnes compared to just 10,000 tonnes for kerosene.

The government recovered about Rs1.161 trillion through the petroleum levy alone in FY2025 and expects this to jump by about 27pc to Rs1.47tr during the current fiscal year.

Fuel cost adjustment row erupts over PM's power package

NEWS DESK: In a befitting response to industrialists' claims about the erosion of the prime minister's Rs40 per unit tariff relief package, the government on Thursday said it had provided Rs15 billion in free working capital to industry for 90 days and was now seeking to recover it through a Rs1.78 per unit fuel cost adjustment (FCA) in March.

This is not an additional cost. You were enjoying Rs15bn in free working capital for 90 days. Now cost recovery is being done through the FCA," said Rehman Akhtar, representing the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPA) of the Power Division, at a public hearing at the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra).

He was responding to a trade by representatives of the business community from Karachi and Lahore — Rehman Javed, Tanveer Barry and Aamir Sheikh — who said the prime minister's Rs40 per unit tariff reduction had been partly offset by a Rs1.78 per unit higher FCA for electricity consumed in January and recovered in March. They said the



tariff rebasing from a fiscal year to a calendar year had no change in the cost of power supply in either case. The resulting higher FCAs because of a lower base rate.

Mr Javed said the FY26 reference fuel cost for January would have resulted in only 54 paise per unit in additional FCA instead of Rs1.78 per unit if the base tariff had not been shifted to the calendar year starting Jan 1, thereby imposing an additional Rs1.24 per unit burden. He feared the trend would be disastrous in June for all consumers.

Industrialists claim tariff relief has eroded, govt insists Rs1.78 'free' working capital is being recovered.

Mr Akhtar said there was no change in the cost of power supply in either case. The resulting higher FCAs because of a lower base rate.

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Industrialists claim tariff relief has eroded, govt insists Rs1.78 'free' working capital is being recovered.

net additional FCA of Rs1.50 per unit. This would lead to a Rs2.55 per unit negative adjustment in the quarterly tariff after two months.

Mr Akhtar also explained that 46 per cent of industrial consumers and 57pc of agricultural consumers had availed themselves of a cheaper international package, including nuclear, LNG and coal-based plants — were on forced outage for technical reasons, relatively more expensive plants, including furnace oil-based ones, were utilised to meet demand, leading to a higher FCA.

Real Madrid face Man City, PSG draw Chelsea in Champions League last 16

NEWS DESK: Real Madrid and Manchester City will face off in a Champions League knockout tie for the fifth season running after being drawn Friday to play each other in the last 16, while reigning champions Paris Saint-Germain will take on Chelsea.

The Spanish giants, record 15-time European champions, will host City in the first leg at the Santiago Bernabeu next month before travelling to England for the return the following week.

The clubs have already played each other this season, with Pep Guardiola's City winning 2-1 in Madrid in December during the league phase, in which the Premier League club finished eighth and Real ninth.

That allowed City, Champions League winners in 2023, to advance straight to the last 16 while Madrid had to come through the knockout phase play-offs, in



which they beat Benfica 3-1 on aggregate.

This is the eighth season in which the teams have played each other since 2012.

Real beat City in the knockout phase play-offs last season, and in the quarter-finals on the way to winning the trophy in 2024.

They also emerged victorious at the same stage the following year. PSG will be at home

to Chelsea in the first leg after qualifying for this stage with a 5-4 aggregate win over Ligue 1 rivals Monaco in the play-offs. Chelsea pro-

gressed straight to the last 16 after finishing sixth in the league phase.

The sides played each other in the knock-

out stages in three consecutive years from 2014 to 2016.

with Chelsea winning the first of those confrontations in the quarter-finals and PSG triumphing in the last 16 in the following two.

Their last encounter came in July's Club World Cup final in the United States, when Chelsea won 3-0 against last season's European champions.

Chelsea have been coached since January by Liam Rosenior, who had previously come up against PSG in Ligue 1 as coach of Strasbourg.

Manchester United will take on Barcelona with the first leg at St James' Park - the Spanish side won 2-1 there during the league phase in September.

There is a record total of six English clubs in the last 16. Liverpool will have a rematch against Galatasaray, the Turkish giants having

defeated the Anfield club 1-0 in September in the league phase.

Arsenal will come up against Bayer Leverkusen and Tottenham Hotspur were drawn to play Atletico Madrid.

German champions Bayern Munich will play Atalanta, the sole Italian club left in the competition.

while Norwegian upstarts Bodo/Glimt's reward for knocking out Inter Milan is a last-16 tie against Sporting of Portugal.

The first legs will take place on March 10 and 11, with the second legs a week later.

The teams who qualified directly for this stage after finishing in the top eight in the league phase will all be at home in the return matches.

This season's Champions League final will take place at the Puskas Arena in Budapest on May 30.

T20 World Cup: India aim for 'fearless cricket' ahead of West Indies showdown

NEWS DESK:India defended their T20 World Cup campaign with their "fearless" brand of cricket ahead of a winner-takes-all decider against the West Indies for the last semi-final berth.

Hot favourites to defend their title on home soil, India thrashed Zimbabwe by 72 runs in Chennai on Thursday to bounce back from their heavy defeat against South Africa in their Super Eights opener India's batting, led by opener Abhishek Sharma's blistering 55 and an unbeaten 50 by Hardik Pandya, piled up 256-4, the second-highest total in the history of the tournament.

In a brutal show of power hitting, the Indian batters demolished the opposition bowling with 17 sixes and 17 fours at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium.

India face the West Indies, who went down to South Africa by nine wickets, in Kolkata on Sunday to decide the second semi-finalist from Group 1.

"We want to play fearless cricket, the brand of cricket we played today and we played since last year," batter Filak Varma said.

"The same intent



we want to keep in the next game as well. And going ahead in the tournament, we take the same intensity (forward)."

The left-handed Varma hit 194 ball 44 as he put together an unbeaten 84-run stand with Pandya, who capped off the innings with two sixes to raise his fifty.

It all came together for India after they rejigged their opening combination with the return of Sanju Samson, who handed the team a quick start with his 24 off 15 balls.

The left-handed Abhishek hit form with his first T20 World Cup

fifty after he struggled in the tournament with three ducks in four innings.

"It's important when the openers give us a good start, the same confidence follows to number three, four and five," said Varma.

"And we discussed that whatever the situation is, (even) if we lose three-four wickets in powerplay, we will bat with the same rhythm," he added.

"And we want to show the fear in opposition bowlers, that these guys are ready to hit each and every ball." Keep that inten-

tion, India, the world's top-ranked T20 team, came into the World Cup on the back of huge totals in bilateral contests and was tipped to cross the 300-run mark at the tournament.

But their batting had looked fragile and, including by mimos the United States, who reduced them to 77-6 in their opener.

Varma remains cautious of his team's plans against the West Indies, who posted 254-6 against Zimbabwe in their Super Eights opener.

Palace battle into Conference League last 16

NEWS DESK:Crystal Palace moved into the UEFA Conference League last 16 with a 2-0 win over Zrinjski Mostar, while Fiorentina survived a huge scare against Jagiellonia Bialystok on Thursday.

Palace were held to a disappointing 1-1 draw by Bosnian side Zrinjski in the first leg of their play-off tie last week.

But Oliver Glasner's team avoided an embarrassing exit thanks to goals from Maxence Lacroix and Evann Guesnard in the play-off second leg at Selhurst Park. Playing their first European knock-out tie in the main stage of a tournament, Palace's 3-1

aggregate victory eased the pressure on the under-fire Glasner.

After a poor recent run in the Premier League and a stunning FA Cup exit against sixth-tier Macclesfield, Glasner, who has confirmed he will leave at the end of the season, had been subjected to chants for his sacking.

Glasner earned some breathing space as Palace struck in the 36th minute when Adam Wharton's free-kick picked out Lacroix and the defender headed home from close range.

Guesnard, who scored Palace's winner against Wolves last weekend, drilled into the

far corner from Brennan Johnson's pass in stoppage time.

"It means a lot. We didn't have many easy weeks," Glasner said.

"I always said, since day number one, we've had a great relationship with the fans. Yes, they were a little bit critical but they can be critical when the results and performances are not that well."

Palace face German outfit Mainz or AEK Larnaca of Cyprus in the last 16.

Fiorentina were on the verge of humiliation before earning a dramatic 5-4 aggregate victory over Polish team Jagiellonia.

Paolo Vanoli's side blew their 3-0 first leg lead as Bartosz Mazurek's hat-trick for Jagiellonia forced extra time at the Artemio Franchi stadium.

Alkmaar run riot in the second leg of their play-off tie thanks to Nicolò Fagioli's strike and Taras Romanchuk's own goal.

Fiorentina finally regained control of the second leg of their play-off tie thanks to Nicolò Fagioli's strike and Taras Romanchuk's own goal.

Jesus Imaz's 118th-minute strike made Fiorentina sweat, but Jagiellonia's Bernardo Vital was sent off for a second booking in the final seconds of a 4-2 win that wasn't enough for the Poles.

Currently languishing in 16th place in Serie A, Fiorentina's main concern is fighting to avoid relegation.

But they have reached two Conference League finals, losing to West Ham and Olympiakos, and one semi-final, in the last three editions.

The Italian club, whose lone European trophy is the 1961 UEFA Cup, remain on course for another deep run.

Dutch club AZ Alkmaar beat Armenian side Noah 4-0, overturning a 1-0 first leg deficit to secure a last 16 clash against Czech side Sparta Prague or Greek club AEK Athens.



Bezzecchi beats Marquez in practice

NEW DESK:Marco Bezzecchi set a new track record to finish fastest ahead of defending world champion Marc Marquez in practice for the season-opening Thailand MotoGP on Friday.

Aprilia's Bezzecchi roared round the Buriram course in 1 min 28.526 sec to top the timesheets, 0.421 sec in front of Ducati's second-placed Marquez.

Marquez is launching his bid for a record-equalling eighth world title this weekend after dominating the competition last season.

But Bezzecchi proved he will be a force to be reckoned with in a practice session that somehow stayed mostly dry despite ominous dark clouds and rumbles of thunder. The Italian came through at the end of the session to update his own track record, which he set in pre-season testing last week. He was also fastest in the morning's free practice. VR46's Fabio Di Giannantonio was third-fastest in the afternoon session, followed by KTM's Pedro Acosta. Aprilia's Jorge Martin and Gresini's Alex

Marquez.

Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia, the 2022 and 2023 world champion, finished 15th, forcing him into Saturday's first qualifying session.

His teammate Marc Marquez was also struggling until he surged up the timesheets with around 20 minutes of the session to go.

The Spaniard began the practice session suffering the effect of a shoulder injury that forced him to miss the final four races of last season. He said on Thursday that the injury had forced him to change his riding style

until he returns to full fitness.

Turkey's Toprak Razgatlioglu, a three-time Superbike world champion making his MotoGP debut, finished the practice session 21st out of 22.

Martin, whose defence of his title last season was wrecked by injuries, crashed 10 minutes into the morning free practice session. Trackhouse's Ai Ogura also came suffering the effect of a shoulder injury that forced him to miss the final four races of last season. He said on Thursday that the injury had forced him to change his riding style

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Amorim axe could cost Man Utd £16mn

NEWS DESK: Manchester United's decision to sack Ruben Amorim as their manager could end up costing the Premier League giants almost £16 million according to financial figures released by the club.

Amorim's turbulent 14-month reign came to an end on January 5, following the Portuguese boss's public attack on United's hierarchy, with his five coaches also following him out of Old Trafford.

A United filing to the New York Stock Exchange on Thursday disclosed the possible settlement of profit or loss during the second half of the year ending 30 June 2026.

It has been reported the maximum amount of £15.9 million depends on certain factors, such as Amorim's appointment getting a new job within a specific time frame.

The accounts showed United have also paid Sporting £6.3 million, which is what they owed the Portuguese club in compensation for



hire Amorim. United confirmed in a similar November 2024 filing they were paying Sporting £10 million to hire Amorim to replace Erik ten Hag, whose Old Trafford exit cost £10.4 million.

The total bill for Amorim's appointment could cost United £37.3 million.

Amorim won 25 of his 63 games in charge, finishing 15th in the Premier League in what was United's worst performance since being relegated from the top

flight in the 1973/74 season.

United were sixth in the Premier League when Amorim was sacked, having had a reported major argument with director of football Jason Wilcox days before his final game at Leeds.

But under caretaker boss Michael Carrick the club have moved up to fourth following a run of five wins and a draw that has given United renewed hope of playing in next season's Champions League. AFP



Security tightened at Punjab shrines, mosques

NEWS DESK: Security arrangements at shrines and major mosques across Punjab have been tightened, with enhanced measures put in place to ensure the safety of worshippers and visitors.

In Lahore and other cities, security has been increased at prominent shrines, including Data Darbar, Bibi Pak Daman, Baba Farid Ganj Shakar Shrine, and Shrine of Bahauddin Zakariya, as well as at the historic Badshahi Mosque and other large mosques.

According to sources, walk-through

gates have been installed at entrances to shrines and major mosques, and visitors are being thoroughly screened with metal detectors before being allowed entry.

Special security arrangements have also been made for worshippers attending Taraweeh prayers during the holy month. Authorities have imposed a complete ban on the entry of private vehicles into the premises of Data Darbar.

People coming for Taraweeh prayers at the adjoining mosque will also not be permitted to bring vehicles inside the shrine's compound.

Previously, certain visitors were allowed vehicle access with permission from the Auqaf Department, but the facility has now been withdrawn due to heightened security concerns.

Similar security measures have been enforced at other major shrines across Punjab, including Shrine of Sultan Bahu, Shrine of Shah Rukn-e-Alam, and other revered sites.

Security duties are being jointly performed by Auqaf Department guards and district police personnel.

SC objects to PTI's plea seeking Imran's transfer to hospital of his choice

NEWS DESK: The Supreme Court on Friday raised objections to a plea seeking the transfer of PTI founder Imran Khan to a hospital.

The application was filed by PTI lawyer Sardar Latif Khosa on February 25, pursuant to Order XXXV Rule 6 of the Supreme Court Rules 2025, after Imran underwent government-facilitated follow-up treatment for his eye ailment.

PTI lawyers Khosa, along with Naeem Panjotra, appeared before SC Chief Justice Yahya Afridi on Friday, seeking the scheduling of PTI's application.

However, CJP Afridi told the lawyers that the "application was returned with objections a day earlier."

"Your petitions will remain pending until further orders," he said to the lawyers.

"There is no such application at the moment, on which proceedings can be held," he added.

Khosa informed CJP Afridi that the PTI counsels had requested an early hearing, adding that the court had ordered the former premier's treatment.

At this, CJP Afridi said that the court had not issued an order; rather, it was the government that had given assurances for the treatment. "You should read the court's decision against the health issue is not pending," CJP Afridi remarked.

Khosa informed the court that the transfer

application was made "not on legal or political but humanitarian grounds." In response to this, CJP Afridi held that the former premier's recent medical check-up was carried out on "humanitarian grounds."

"Please try to understand what I am saying," Khosa insisted, at which Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan remarked, "I have known you since 1992, I understand everything you are saying."

"Khosa sahib, you are a senior lawyer, you understand the procedure," the CJP said, directing Khosa to meet the SC registrar.

"If the SC registrar does not give a copy of the objections, then you may come to court," CJP Afridi said.

"If the order was issued yesterday, then how did no one inform us?" Khosa said.

As per a source, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan also met CJP Afridi and sought the transfer of the incarcerated former premier to a hospital, citing family and party concerns about his health.

However, he was told that SC would not interfere while his cases remained pending before the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

Imran's health, who is imprisoned at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail, has been garnering attention in recent days, with his family and party raising concerns since his eye ailment — right central retinal vein oc-

PM underscores Pakistan's resolve to provide secure environment for Chinese personnel, investments

NEWS DESK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday underscored Pakistan's resolve to provide a secure environment for Chinese personnel and investments in the country, according to a handout by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The development comes after Pakistan's security forces launched an operation, dubbed Ghazab lil-Haq, against the Afghan Taliban after the latter launched unprovoked attacks along the border between both countries on Thursday.

According to the PMO handout, PM Shehbaz held a meeting with Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong at the Prime Minister's House.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest, agreeing to maintain close coordination and consultation to contribute to peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and beyond.

The statement said that PM Shehbaz underscored Pakistan's resolve to "provide a secure and conducive environment for Chinese personnel, investments, and institutions in Pakistan."

During the meeting, the prime minister reaffirmed the enduring all-



weather strategic cooperative partnership between Pakistan and China, characterised by deep mutual trust, iron-clad friendship, and shared commitment to mutual support on core interests, it added.

The prime minister conveyed his warm greetings and best wishes to President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang, and the Chinese leadership and people, particularly on the occasion of the Chinese New Year, the handout said.

It stated: "He expressed appreciation for China's consistent and steadfast support to Pakistan on economic, security, and developmental fronts, particularly

through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which remains a flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative and a cornerstone of bilateral cooperation."

While highlighting the importance of accelerating ongoing CPEC projects, the handout said the prime minister stressed the need to enhance cooperation in agriculture, IT, and mining and minerals.

The handout said that Ambassador Zaidong briefed PM Shehbaz on recent developments in China-Pakistan relations and conveyed the warm greetings from the Chinese leadership.

"He reiterated China's firm support for Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and socio-economic development."

China calls for Pakistan-Afghanistan ceasefire

Earlier on Friday, China had called for a ceasefire between Pakistan and Afghanistan, adding it was talking to both sides to try to end clashes that have left Beijing "deeply concerned."

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said China was "deeply concerned about the escalation of the conflict" after Pakistan carried out air strikes in Afghanistan,

including the capital Kabul. She said that China "calls on both sides to remain calm and exercise restraint... achieve a ceasefire as soon as possible, and avoid further bloodshed", she told a regular press briefing.

"China has consistently mediated the conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan through its own channels and is willing to continue playing a constructive role in easing tensions."

The ministry and China's embassies in Pakistan and Afghanistan were "working with relevant parties in both countries on this matter", she said.

Lahore court dismisses post-arrest bail plea of Canadian national in cybercrime case

NEWS DESK: A judicial magistrate at the district court on Friday dismissed the post-arrest bail petition of a Canadian national pursuing doctorate research in Pakistan in a cybercrime case. Magistrate Naeem Wattoo announced the decision on the bail plea of Hamid Ahmad Khan, after the court was satisfied by the prosecution and the defence.

Khan was booked by the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) for targeting state institutions and leadership through "disseminating misinformation and disinformation" under sections 20 (offences against the dignity of a natural person), 24 (cyber stalking), and 26A (spoofing) of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act. During the proceedings, the investigating officer (IO) told the court that the suspect had been uploading

"derogatory posts against the state functionaries and state institutions with the intention to harm the reputation of the state functionaries." On behalf of the petitioner, Advocate Asad Jamal argued that the suspect had been falsely implicated in the case.

He said the case was based on digital evidence, which required "concrete proof". He said that keeping the petitioner behind bars was unwarranted.

In the order, the judicial magistrate said, "Allegations of such derogatory and malicious campaigns directed against the heads of institutions of state and constitu-

tional functionaries cannot be treated as trivial or casual matters." The order said that in the digital era, the dissemination of inflammatory content through social media platforms produced instantaneous and far-reaching consequences.

"Statements aimed at undermining the dignity

and authority of state leadership have the potential to erode public confidence in constitutional institutions, fuel polarisation, create unrest and instability within the country," it added.

The order maintained that these allegations required serious judicial consideration and could not be brushed aside lightly. While dismissing the bail plea, the magistrate said, "I am not inclined to extend the concession of bail to the accused."

Hamza, who arrived in Pakistan on Feb 13 to pursue his doctorate thesis, went missing from Lahore on Feb 19. The police also registered a first information report into his disappearance. However, on Feb 23, it emerged that he had been taken into custody by the NCCIA for posting anti-state content on social media platforms.

Govt, TTAP initiate talks on negotiation framework amid political tensions

NEWS DESK: The federal government and opposition alliance Tehreek-e-Tahafuz-e-Ain Pakistan (TTAP) have initiated formal contacts amid ongoing political tensions, with the first high-level engagement held at Parliament House on Friday, sources privy to the matter informed The Express Tribune.

Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Mahmood Khan Achakzai met Prime Minister's Advisor for Political Affairs Rana Sanaulah in the Parliament House to discuss the current political situation, opposition demands, and a potential negotiation framework, sources said.

The leaders also consulted on the agenda for a possible meeting between the prime minister and the opposition leader, focusing on building mutual trust, reducing political tensions, and strengthening parliamentary processes, they added.

A high-level meeting is expected in the coming days,



kistan Tehreek-e-Ain (TTA) four members were also discussed, with the opposition raising concerns and the government reiterating its commitment to advancing the negotiation process.

Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry attended the meeting and played a role in bridging differences between the two sides, sources said.

A high-level meeting is expected in the coming days, where a formal negotiation agenda is likely to be finalised, they added.

A day earlier, the opposition alliance had decided to give a positive but conditional response to the government's offer for dialogue, sources said on Wednesday.

A high-level consultative meeting was held in Islamabad.

The session focused on the current political situation, recent government statements, and a possible framework for negotiations.

Sources said participants reviewed the government's offer in detail, with particular attention to statements made by Sanaulah, and assessed the environment for meaningful dialogue.

The huddle agreed that any talks should uphold constitutional supremacy and democratic principles, according to sources.

During the meeting, it was proposed that the alliance's designated leaders formally engage with the government to advance the negotiation process.

Following consensus, Achakzai and Abbas were given full authority to lead the negotiations.

Sources added that the TTAP leadership plans to contact government leaders during Ramadan to discuss the agenda, procedures, and potential timelines for talks.

Opposition circles stressed that their priority is constitutional integrity, political stability, and the restoration of democratic processes.

