



## On-screen marking software handed over.

A special ceremony was held today at the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Peshawar, in which the representatives of all educational boards of the province were formally handed over the On-Screen Marking (OSM) software.

Detailed story on Page 2

## KP Under-21 Games begin

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Under-21 Games, a mega sports event of the province commenced with a grand and colorful opening ceremony at the Peshawar Sports Complex.

— Story on Page 7

# The Province

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Wisdom Quote!



With faith, discipline and selfless devotion to duty, there is nothing worthwhile that you cannot achieve.

— Muhammad Ali Jinnah

## News DIGEST

### Zero tolerance for delays, mismanagement in Kohat development projects: Shafi Jan

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister's Special Assistant for Information and Public Relations, Shafi Jan, said on Tuesday that delays, negligence and lack of transparency in development projects in Kohat would not be tolerated, warning of strict action against officials found responsible.

This he said while chairing a high-level review meeting at the Deputy Commissioner's Office in Kohat to assess ongoing and planned development schemes and address public issues. The meeting was attended by the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Muhammad Nawaz Wazir along with heads of all line departments, who briefed the Special Assistant on the progress, timelines and challenges of various projects.

Shafi Jan reviewed the pace, quality and transparency of each development scheme and directed the officials to ensure completion of all projects within stipulated deadlines. He stressed that development initiatives were not merely administrative exercises but involved public funds, leaving no room for substandard work or mismanagement.

He directed the officers to remain present in the field, strengthen monitoring mechanisms and ensure prompt redressal of public complaints.



QUETTA: Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir visits injured security personnel at CMH Quetta, Balochistan on Wednesday. — PHOTO: ISPR

## No terrorist, facilitator will be spared, vows CDF Munir

Field Marshal Munir receives briefing on prevailing security environment, internal security ops during Quetta visit

STAFF REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Defence Staff (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir on Wednesday vowed that no terrorist or facilitator would be spared as he visited Quetta following recent terror attacks across Balochistan, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement.

During his visit, the military's media wing said that Field Marshal Munir received a comprehensive operational briefing on the prevailing security environment and internal security operations.

"The briefing covered recent terrorist attacks orchestrated by India-backed internationally-designated terrorists of Fitna al-Hindustan and the prompt aggressive response of security forces, which failed their ulterior motive of compromising peace, stability, and de-



velopment in Balochistan," read the communique.

His visit follows the recent coordinated attacks by India-sponsored Fitna al-Hindustan terrorists across parts of Balochistan, which resulted in the martyrdom of 22 security personnel and 36 civilians, said security sources.

Terrorists struck civilians in Quetta, Mastung, Nushki, Dalbandin, Kharan, Panjgur, Tump, Gwadar, and Pasni on January 31. A sweeping counterterrorism crackdown has since left 197 militants dead in the province, sources said.

During Field Marshal Munir's visit, the ISPR said discussions were also held on measures being undertaken to further strengthen the writ of the state and ensure protection of the populace and critical infrastructure.

"The COAS and CDF remarked that no terrorist and its facilitator will be spared

and all will be dealt strictly as per law and that no one can rationalise violence and terrorism on any pretext," the ISPR stated.

Field Marshal Munir also appreciated the professionalism, valour, and sacrifices of officers and troops of all law enforcement agencies in thwarting nefarious anti-Pakistan designs and maintaining law and order.

He, along with the Balochistan chief minister, also visited Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Quetta, where he met the injured personnel of the Pakistan Army, FC Balochistan and police.

The COAS lauded the security personnel's high morale and "commended their bravery and steadfastness" in protecting the motherland from foreign-sponsored terrorists.

Earlier on his arrival, Field Marshal Munir was received by Commander Quetta Corps.

## President Tokayev's arrival in Islamabad marks new chapter in Pak-Kazakh ties

NADEEM FAISAL BAIGA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan – The President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, commenced a pivotal two-day state visit to Pakistan on Wednesday, receiving a ceremonial welcome at the Prime Minister's House ahead of high-level talks aimed at strengthening the strategic partnership between the two nations.

Ceremonial Welcome and Bilateral Engagement Upon his arrival, President Tokayev was received by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the entrance of the PM House, where a formal reception was held. The national anthems of both countries resonated as the two leaders stood on the saluting dais. President Tokayev then reviewed a guard of honour presented by a smartly turned-out contingent of the Pakistan Armed Forces.

PM Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif ad President of Kazakhstan Kassym – Jomart Tokayev introducing their respective delegations at the official arrival ceremony held at PM House Islamabad.

Accompanied by a high-level delegation of senior cabinet members and officials, President Tokayev's visit—his first state visit to Pakistan—comes at the invitation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Following the introductions of their respective delegations, the leaders proceeded for a one-on-one meeting, which was followed by comprehensive delegation-level talks.

Agenda: Deepening Ties and Signing Agreements The discussions are centered on a full-spectrum review of bilateral relations, with a focus on identifying new avenues for enhanced cooperation. Key sectors of mutual interest include trade, energy, logistics, and regional connectivity. The dialogue is expected to culminate in the signing of several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and formal agreements, laying a concrete foundation for future collaboration.

In a symbolic gesture of enduring friendship, President Tokayev planted a commemorative sapling in the lawns of the Prime Minister's House. The capital city marked the occasion with Kazakh and Pakistani flags adorning major avenues and the motorcade route, alongside portraits of the visiting dignitary. Expanding the Diplomatic and Economic Dialogue The President's itinerary also includes a meeting with President Asif Ali Zardari and a keynote address at the Pakistan-Kazakhstan Business Forum.

## Kurram visit

## CM raises relief packages for operation victims to Rs 230,000



STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister (CM) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi, on Wednesday announced an increase in the relief package for victims of the operation in Kurram district, raising the amount from Rs 110,000 to Rs 230,000.

The CM also announced that displaced persons currently residing in host families' homes will be provided with the same relief package.

Addressing the issue of tribal displaced persons,

Sohail Afridi said that the long-standing problem of dual addresses would be resolved to ensure transparent and fair distribution of assistance.

He further stated that all affected people would be provided relief on the same pattern as that given to the victims of Khyber district.

Emphasizing unity and progress, the CM said that Pakistanis must move forward like civilized nations by setting aside mutual and sectarian differences and focusing on development and stability.

#79YearsOfIllegalOccupation

Our Promise, Our Faith  
Kashmir Will Become Pakistan

February 5  
Kashmir Solidarity Day

RAISING THE EMBLEM OF FREEDOM  
A SALUTE TO THE KASHMIRIS

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

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING  
GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

GOVT OF PAKISTAN | GOVT OF PAKISTAN | GOVT OF PAKISTAN | GOVT OF PAKISTAN | GOVT OF PAKISTAN

URAAN PAKISTAN



## The SPACE

### Sony Raziq successfully defended her MPhil dissertation



STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: Sony Raziq, MPhil Scholar in Department of Biotechnology, University of Malakand has successfully defended her MPhil dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Muhammad Aasim and Co-Supervision of Dr. Tariq Khan, Assistant Professor, Department of Biotechnology, University of Malakand. The External Examiner was Dr. Muhammad Ali, Associate Professor, Quaid I Azam University, Islamabad. The Chairperson, Department of Biotechnology, University of Malakand Prof Dr Syed Muhammad Jamal & Faculty Members Congratulated the MPhil Scholar & Research Supervisors in this regard.

### Dr. Yasar Khan elected President as People's Doctors Forum LRH elections conclude

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: The elections of the People's Doctors Forum (PDF) at Lady Reading Hospital (LRH), Peshawar, have been successfully concluded, with Dr. Yasar Khan elected as President by a heavy majority. The official results were announced by the Provincial President of the People's Doctors Forum, Dr. Janbaz Afridi. According to the results, Dr. Zaidullah was elected as General Secretary, while Dr. Daniyal and Dr. Tehmina were elected as Vice Presidents, along with other office-bearers. Congratulating the newly elected leadership, Dr. Janbaz Afridi praised Dr. Yasar Khan and his team for their victory and expressed hope that they would actively work for the welfare of doctors and the improvement of healthcare services. In his address, Dr. Yasar Khan thanked the members for their confidence and pledged to come up to the expectations of doctors while serving with dedication and responsibility.

## On-screen marking software handed over to all provincial boards

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: A special ceremony was held today at the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Peshawar, in which the representatives of all educational boards of the province were formally handed over the On-Screen Marking (OSM) software. In the light of clear directives from the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Chief Secretary, this software was developed to ensure the gradual elimination of manual marking, enhanced security of examination papers, transparency in digital evaluation, and the complete removal of human error. Fulfilling this responsibility, the expert IT team of the Peshawar Board successfully developed a modern, secure, and comprehensive on-screen marking software within just 60 days. During the ceremony, it was also shared that the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had assigned the task of developing the E-Answer Sheet to the



Peshawar Board, which was completed successfully. All boards across the province were not only provided training on the E-Answer Sheet and on-screen marking system, but live testing sessions were also conducted. In addition, the server configuration process for all boards was completed to ensure the implementation of a uniform, transparent, and secure digital marking system throughout the province. Officials of the Peshawar Board stated

that this initiative is a memorable and revolutionary milestone in the history of education. The objective is to align the examination system with modern technology and make it transparent, reliable, and in accordance with international standards. The Board assured that it remains fully prepared to provide technical support to all educational boards and institutions at all times, in order to secure a bright and prosperous future for students.

### QEC, Women University Mardan holds Training on RIPE framework

OUR CORRESPONDENT

MARDAN: The Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC), Women University Mardan, organized a one-day training session on the Review of Institutional Performance Enhancement (RIPE) at the Main Campus to strengthen institutional quality assurance practices. Ms. Mahwish Asmat Ullah, Deputy Director QEC, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University (SBBWU) Peshawar, served as the Resource Person and delivered an in-depth session on the RIPE framework, its standards, and effective implementation strategies. Administrative section heads and faculty members from various departments actively participated in the training. The session was organized by Dr. Monazza Serwar, Coordinator QEC, Women University Mardan, under the patronage of Professor Dr. Razia Sultana, Vice Chancellor, Women University Mardan.

## ANP announced formation of interim cabinet for Tehsil Takht.E. Nasrati

RAUF KHATTAK

KARAK: The Awami National Party (ANP) has formally announced the formation of its interim cabinet for Tehsil Takht.E. Nasrati, a decision made by Tehsil President Arif Jan Lala after internal organizational consultations. In the newly formed cabinet, Zahid ullah has been appointed as General Secretary, while Muhammad Ghani will serve as Senior Vice President. Chairman Noor Nawab has been designated as First Vice President, Muhammad Arif as Second Vice President, Kashmir Khan as Additional General Secretary, and Dr. Sabir Shah as Joint Secretary. Speaking on the occasion, Arif Jan Lala stated that the formation of this interim cabinet is an important step toward strengthening, organizing, and revitalizing the party's structure within the tehsil. He added that the objective is to ensure



effective representation of public issues and to continue the party's political struggle with consistency and dedication. He further clarified that the remaining office-bearers will be announced later in accordance with party policy and mutual consultation to make the organizational setup even more comprehensive and efficient.

### Traditional Jirga

## Girls' School expansion issue in Nowshera Kalan resolved

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NOWSHERA: A sensitive issue related to the expansion of Government Girls High School, Nowshera Kalan, has been amicably resolved through a traditional jirga. Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Nowshera, Ms. Sara Tawab, played a key role in the resolution process. Under the supervision of the district administration, the issue of encroachment was peacefully settled through mutual consultation and trust-building among the concerned parties, paving the way for the renovation and expansion of the school. Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Sara Tawab stated that resolving issues while respecting traditional values not only promotes social harmony but also strengthens trust between the public



and the administration. She expressed satisfaction that the matter was resolved without any conflict and remarked that public trust is her greatest achievement. According to administrative sources, the initiative will enable the provision of improved educational facilities for female students of the area, while local residents have termed the development a positive step toward educational progress and social harmony.

## Zero-tolerance policy adopted against criminals



AKHUNZADA FAZLE HAQ

MARDAN: District Police Officer (DPO) Mardan, Masood Ahmed Bangash, has stated that comprehensive lists of individuals involved in underplay gambling activities and illegal money lending have been prepared, and indiscriminate legal action will be taken against all such elements across the district. He emphasized that a zero-tolerance policy has been adopted against ice (crystal meth) drug trafficking and aerial firing, adding that no one will be allowed to take the law into their own hands under any circumstances. The DPO expressed these views while talking to journalists during his visit to the Mardan Press Club. He said that ensuring a safe and peaceful environment for citizens is the top priority of the police.

Regarding traffic management, DPO Bangash said that illegal U-turns across the city have been closed to improve traffic flow, which has already started yielding positive results. Highlighting the importance of media, he remarked that journalism is the fourth pillar of the state, and that police and media must work together for social reform and the maintenance of law and order. He appreciated the role of journalists, stating that responsible journalism plays a vital role in raising public awareness. Sharing performance statistics, the DPO informed that during the month of January, Mardan Police arrested 295 proclaimed offenders and 212 drug dealers through effective operations. He added that a large cache of weapons was also recovered, including 41 Kalashnikovs, 8 Kalakovs, 18 rifles, and 727 pistols.

### PBC Director Programs reviews Radio Pakistan Kohat

OUR CORRESPONDENT



KOHAT: Musarrat Shah Rukh, Director Programs, Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC), visited Radio Pakistan Kohat to evaluate its programming, technical operations and public outreach efforts. During the visit, Station Director Javed Afridi briefed her on locally produced programs, regional language broadcasts, and awareness campaigns on education, health and social issues. Musarrat praised the station's role in delivering accurate information to remote communities and emphasized enhancing program quality to better serve public needs. She directed prioritizing modern standards and audience engagement in future programs and assured prompt resolution of technical and administrative challenges.

## Public complaint, prompt action by Excise Minister Syed Fakhar Jehan

Officials suspended on illegal gratification allegations; transparent inquiry launched

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control, Syed Fakhar Jehan, has taken immediate notice of a public complaint regarding alleged involvement in illegal gratification by certain officials of the Excise Police Station Squad at the Pir Zakori Bridge, Peshawar, and ordered strict action in this regard. During the Public Day held in connection with the Excise Department, complainants present on the spot identified the allegedly involved officials. On the directions of the Provincial Minister, the concerned officials were suspended with immediate effect, while orders were also issued for the initiation of a transparent and comprehensive inquiry into the matter. Speaking in this regard, Syed Fakhar



Jehan stated that a zero-tolerance policy is being strictly implemented against corruption and illegal activities in the Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Department.

He said that in line with the vision of the founding Chairman Imran Khan and Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi for a corruption-free and drug-free Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, no form of corruption or misuse of authority within the department will be tolerated. The Provincial Minister urged the public to report departmental complaints without fear or hesitation, assuring that prompt and impartial action will be taken on all genuine grievances. He further directed all officers and officials of the department to maintain a polite, courteous and dignified attitude towards the public and to strictly implement the policy of "First Salam, then Kalam." The Minister emphasized that public services will be provided in a respectful and efficient manner, no inconvenience for the public shall be caused unnecessarily, and any official found involved in violations of the law or unlawful activities will be dealt with strictly in accordance with the prescribed rules and regulations.

## 6th international public health conference commences at KMU

Experts Emphasize Prevention of NCDs and Strengthening of Health Systems

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: The 6th International Public Health Conference (PHCON-26), organized by the Institute of Public Health & Social Sciences (IPH&SS), Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar, commenced with its first plenary session focusing on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and the strengthening of health systems. Prof. Dr. Khalid Rehman, Director IPH&SS and Chief Organizer of the conference, welcomed national and international experts, speakers, and participants, highlighting the urgent need for collaborative efforts to address Pakistan's growing public health challenges. Addressing the plenary session, renowned cardiologist and former Vice Chancellor KMU, Prof. Dr. Mohammad Hafizullah, stated that according to the

Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study, deaths from cardiovascular diseases in Pakistan nearly doubled between 1990 and 2019. He noted that Pakistan's mortality rates are higher than several other South Asian countries and stressed the importance of hypertension control, prevention of obesity and diabetes, strengthening health systems, improving primary healthcare, raising public awareness, and developing a comprehensive national policy framework. Former Federal Minister for Health and President of the Pakistan Association of Lifestyle Medicine, Prof. Dr. Zafar Mirza, spoke on NCDs and Lifestyle Medicine, identifying tobacco control, healthy nutrition, physical activity, and reduction of air pollution as key priorities. He emphasized taxation on tobacco



and sugar-sweetened beverages, strict advertising regulations, and adoption of the six pillars of healthy living: balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate sleep, stress management, avoidance of harmful substances, and positive social connections. Consultant Endocrinologist at KMU Hospital & Research Center, Prof. Dr. Sobia Sabir Ali, highlighted the prevention of diabetic foot complications, noting that up to 85% of cases can be prevented through timely screening, patient education, appropriate footwear, and early medical intervention. She underscored the impor-

tance of integrated, team-based care and early risk detection to reduce disability and amputation rates. Head of Oncology at RMI, Prof. Dr. M. Fawad Ul Qamar, addressed cancer prevention from a public health perspective, stating that nearly 40% of cancers are preventable. He identified tobacco use, infections, obesity, and environmental factors as major risks and emphasized the need for screening programs, vaccination initiatives, mobile screening units, effective policy measures, and the growing role of artificial intelligence in cancer prevention and control.

## Commissioner launches drive to plant saplings

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Mutaasim Baalallah Shah, chaired a high-level meeting with all divisional Deputy Commissioners, District Police Officers, and intelligence representatives to review law and order, internal security and administrative matters. Preparations for Kashmir Solidarity Day and Ramadan were also discussed in detail. Strict security measures, including deployment of additional personnel and enhanced monitoring, were ordered for sensitive locations, government buildings, processions, and public gatherings during the Kashmir Solidarity Day. Authorities also emphasized intelligence-based operations, impartial action against narcotics and awareness campaigns in educational institutions. Ahead of the Ramadan, officials reviewed plans to ensure adequate supply of essential goods at government rates, curb hoarding and profiteering and maintain security, traffic management



and sanitation in markets and places of worship. Price lists will be displayed at all shops, and complaint counters will be set up for prompt resolution of public grievances. On the same day, Commissioner Motaasim Billah inaugurated the 2026 Spring Tree Plantation Campaign by planting olive and other fruit-bearing trees. He stressed the importance of maximizing tree planting and ensuring their long-term protection, while encouraging environmental awareness among the youth and promoting greenery in public buildings.





ISLAMABAD: Workers of Capital Development Authority (CDA) seized goods of shopkeepers during Anti-Encroachments Operation at Karachi Company area in Federal Capital. — PHOTO: ONLINE

News BRIEFS

Lal Dino Mari Baloch urges world to end silence on Kashmir

TP REPORT



ISLAMABAD: Lal Dino Mari Baloch, founder of the Pakistan Front Movement (PFM) and Chairman of the Baloch International Congress Trust (BICT), in his message on Kashmir Solidarity Day being observed today, stated that lasting peace in South Asia cannot be achieved by suppressing the legitimate and democratic aspirations of the Kashmiri people. He emphasized that peace imposed through force, coercion, and denial of basic rights is neither sustainable nor just.

He said that India's actions in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir have crossed all moral, legal, and humanitarian limits, marked by systematic human rights violations. Despite this grave situation, he regretted that the international community has largely remained a silent spectator, failing to take meaningful steps to stop the suffering of the Kashmiri people. Baloch stressed that the people of Kashmir must be granted their internationally recognized right to self-determination, in accordance with United Nations resolutions. He maintained that only by allowing Kashmiris to freely determine their own political future can durable peace and stability be ensured in the region.

He further blamed India for sponsoring and facilitating terrorist activities inside Pakistan with the aim of destabilizing the country and disrupting regional peace.

Sikh Journalist alleges harassment during U.S. visa interview in Islamabad



STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani Sikh journalist and minority rights activist has lodged a formal complaint over what she describes as harassment and intimidation during her visa interview at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad.

Mishaal Kaur, known as Pakistan's first Sikh journalist and a women's rights advocate, appeared at the embassy on \*27 January 2026\* for a \*B-2 visit visa. She had been invited to attend a roundtable conference organized by the \*\*International Religious Freedom (IRF)\* forum in the United States and was also nominated for an award in recognition of her work for women's empowerment.

According to her complaint, Kaur arrived at the embassy at around \*7:30am\* and initially faced a routine interview with a foreign consular officer. She was later asked to wait and was called again at around \*12 noon\* to \*Room No. 1\*, where a second interview was conducted by a Pakistani female visa officer.

Kaur alleged that during the second interview, the questioning turned aggressive and unrelated to her visa application. She claimed the officer repeatedly accused her of working with a "consultant" and levelled serious allegations against \*Anila Ali\*, co-chair of IRF, including claims that Ali had taken money from her or promised asylum or U.S. citizenship.

"These allegations are baseless and untrue," Kaur stated, adding that she categorically denied any exchange of money or promise of asylum. She said her interaction with Anila Ali was purely professional and limited to participation in IRF events.

The complaint further alleges that despite her repeated clarifications, the officer continued pressuring her with repetitive questions and made threatening remarks, including warnings that contacting anyone could lead to serious consequences and that negative remarks in her file could damage her career.

Kaur said the interview caused severe psychological distress and amounted to coercion. She maintained that if her visa application was to be refused, it should have been done without intimidation or personal attacks. She also expressed concern that the questioning appeared biased against individuals associated with IRF.

In addition, Kaur highlighted that her husband and two-year-old daughter were made to wait outside the embassy from \*7:00am to 3:30pm\* in harsh weather conditions, causing unnecessary hardship to her family.

She has called for a formal inquiry into the conduct of the visa officer and clarification on whether such interrogation practices are in line with U.S. embassy procedures and international norms. The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad has not yet issued an official response to the complaint.

Kashmiris struggling for their fundamental human rights for several decades: Fazal

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Public Health Engineering, Fazal Shakoor Khan, in his message on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, said that February 5 is a day to reaffirm wholehearted solidarity with the people of Kashmir, to support their just struggle for freedom, and to raise a strong voice against the atrocities being inflicted upon

them.

He said that the people of Kashmir have been struggling for their fundamental human and democratic rights for several decades.

However, the continued oppression by Indian occupying forces in Kashmir, gross violations of human rights, and atrocities against innocent civilians remain a serious challenge to the conscience of the world.

Mr. Fazal Shakoor Khan said that the people of Pakistan stand shoulder to shoulder with their Kashmiri brothers and sisters and will continue to extend moral, political, and diplomatic support to their legitimate struggle at every forum. He emphasized that the Kashmir issue must be resolved in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations and in line with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

The Provincial Minister further said that Kashmir Solidarity Day provides an opportunity to renew the commitment to stand firmly with the oppressed people of Kashmir and to ensure that their sacrifices are never forgotten. He urged the international community to take serious notice of human rights violations in Indian-occupied Kashmir and to play its due role in granting the Kashmiri people

their right to self-determination.

In his message, he expressed confidence that the freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people will one day achieve success, and that the day is not far when the people of Kashmir will witness the dawn of freedom.

He reiterated that the people of Pakistan will continue to express their unwavering solidarity with the Kashmiri people at all levels.

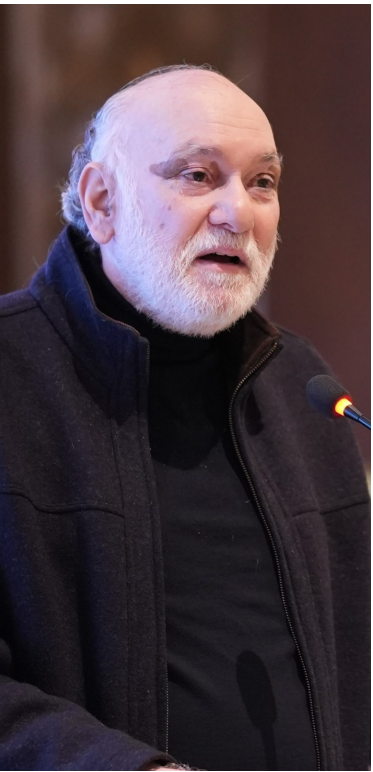
PEC Chairman reaffirms solidarity with Kashmiris on Kashmir Solidarity Day

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, Chairman Pakistan Engineering Council, Engr. Waseem Nazir, on behalf of the Pakistan Engineering Council and the entire engineering community of Pakistan, reaffirmed firm and unwavering solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

He stated that for decades, the Kashmiri people have endured systematic oppression, denial of their fundamental rights, and serious human rights violations. Their legitimate struggle for the right to self-determination, as guaranteed under the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, remains unresolved despite the passage of time.

Highlighting the role of engineers as nation-builders and custodians of sustainable development, the Chairman PEC emphasized that peace, progress, and prosperity cannot coexist with injustice and suppression. He reiterated that the engineering community of Pakistan stands shoulder to shoulder with Kashmiri brothers and sisters in



their peaceful struggle for dignity, freedom, and justice.

On this solemn day, he strongly appealed to the international community, the United Nations, and global human rights organizations to move beyond statements and take meaningful and practical steps to end the ongoing human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He stressed that the world must ensure the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions and hold the perpetrators of injustice accountable.

The Chairman further reaffirmed that the Pakistan Engineering Council and the engineering fraternity of the country will continue to raise their voice at all forums in support of Kashmir and remain committed to all lawful and peaceful efforts for a just, lasting, and honorable resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

He concluded by expressing hope that the steadfastness and sacrifices of the Kashmiri people will soon be rewarded with freedom, peace, and prosperity.

Pakistan Zindabad  
Kashmir Banay Ga Pakistan

Journalists holds meeting with DC Jhelum

MAKHDOOM HUSSAIN CHAUDHRY

JHELMUM: A delegation of journalists held an important meeting today with Deputy Commissioner Jhelum Mir Raza Ozgen, during which the overall situation of the district was discussed in detail.

The media fraternity appreciated the Punjab government's ongoing development projects and expressed satisfaction over the tireless efforts of the Deputy Commissioner and the effective performance of the district administration. The journalists acknowledged that round-the-clock administrative engagement has contributed positively to governance and public service delivery in Jhelum.

The journalists' delegation was led by Jhelum Press Club President Dr. Suhail Imtiaz Khan. On the occasion, senior journalist Riyaz Gondal also offered constructive suggestions to the administration and termed strong, coordinated relations between the media and the administration as a vital need of the time.

Senior journalist Makhdoom Hussain Chaudhry could not attend the meeting due to personal commitments. However, representing him, Raja Jahanzaib, Chief



Reporter of KTV Television, requested appropriate representation of journalists in all district-level committees. The Deputy Commissioner Jhelum responded positively and assured cooperation in this regard.

The meeting witnessed full representation from the Jhelum Press Club. Speaking on the occasion, Press Club Chairman Raja Noubahar drew the Deputy Commissioner's attention towards providing appropriate representation and special relief for journalists at the Gymkhana Club.

The Deputy Commissioner reaffirmed the administration's commitment to maintaining close coordination with the media and welcomed constructive input from journalists for the betterment of governance and public welfare in Jhelum.

SBBWU celebrates 20th and 21st Foundation Day with grandeur & enthusiasm

SBBWU signed 14 MoUs with various organizations and 3 public sector universities, strengthening academic and professional linkages to enhance research, training, and career opportunities for students

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University celebrated its 20th and 21st Foundation Day with grandeur and enthusiasm, in collaboration with Majestic Event Planner, a startup initiated by one of its distinguished alumnae. The celebration highlighted the university's journey of academic excellence, community engagement, and empowerment of women through education.

The ceremony commenced with a warm welcome address by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Safia Ahmad, who reflected on the

university's remarkable progress over the past two decades. She emphasized the institution's commitment to fostering innovation, research, and leadership among women, while acknowledging the collective efforts of faculty, staff, and students in shaping SBBWU's legacy. Prof. Dr. Safia Ahmad expressed deep gratitude to the faculty, staff, alumni, and students for their unwavering commitment to the university's mission. She stated, "SBBWU has always been a beacon of hope and empowerment for women. Today, as we celebrate our 20th and 21st Foundation Day, we honor not only our past achieve-

ments but also the bright future that lies ahead through collaboration, innovation, and the success of our alumni."

The Chief Guest, Secretary Higher Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Muhammad Israr, commended the university's role in empowering women through quality education and appreciated its efforts in building strong partnerships with academia, industry, and public sector organizations.

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University signed 14 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with various organizations and 3 public sector universities, strengthening academic and professional linkages to enhance research, training, and career opportunities for students. Zainab Waheed, an alumna from the Department of Psychology, shared her inspiring success story, reflecting the university's impact on shaping confident and accomplished graduates.



The Vice Chancellor appreciated the dedication of faculty members and distributed awards among the Best Department and Best University Researcher. Commendation Awards were also presented to Administration Staff, Class III and Class IV employees, acknowledging their invaluable contributions to the university's growth and operations.

Ms. Momina, an alumna of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, was recognized for her entrepreneurial journey in establishing Majestic Event Planner, which collaborated with the university to organize this landmark celebration.

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Peshawar, is the first public sector women's university in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Since its inception, it has been dedicated to providing quality education, fostering research, and empowering women to become leaders in diverse fields.



A New Chapter in Pakistan–Kazakhstan Ties

JUNAID KAISER



Geography has always presented Pakistan and Kazakhstan with an opportunity that goes far beyond the limited scope of their current economic ties. One country is nestled in the heart of Central Asia, brimming with resources but cut off from the sea. The other lies at the western edge of South Asia, enjoying direct access to some of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. For years, this natural synergy was recognized but seldom acted upon. However, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev’s recent visit to Islamabad marks a shift from mere acknowledgment to meaningful action.

The two-day visit wasn’t just about symbolism, even though the ceremonial welcome at Nur Khan Airbase showcased how much Pakistan values this relationship. The joint reception by President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif sent a strong political message: Kazakhstan is now seen not just as a friendly Central Asian ally, but as a key economic partner. The involvement of senior cabinet members highlighted that this collaboration spans diplomacy, trade, and long-term regional strategies.

At the heart of the discussions was a mutual recognition that the relationship between Pakistan and Kazakhstan hasn’t quite lived up to its potential. Even with years of friendly diplomacy and collaborative efforts through platforms like the OIC, ECO, and SCO, trade between the two nations has remained surprisingly low. However, that’s starting to change, with a focus now on taking action rather than just dreaming big. Tokayev’s involvement in the Pakistan–Kazakhstan Business Forum highlighted Astana’s eagerness to dive into joint ventures, especially in areas like food processing, agricultural value chains, and pharmaceuticals—industries where both countries can truly thrive.

In parallel talks, Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan and Kazakhstan’s Minister of Trade and Integration, Arman Shaqqaliev, adopted a more straightforward and pragmatic approach. They both recognized that the real issue has been a lack of connectivity, not just good intentions. Railways, roads, and multimodal corridors were discussed as vital economic infrastructure rather than mere regional concepts. Kazakhstan’s estimate that better connectivity could unlock up to \$5 billion in trade and investment really underscores the significant opportunities at play.

For Kazakhstan, deeper engagement with Pakistan offers reliable access to warm-water ports and markets beyond Central Asia. For Pakistan, enhanced links to Kazakhstan and the wider region provide diversification at a time when overdependence on limited trade corridors has become a strategic liability. Islamabad’s emphasis on routes through Turkmenistan and Afghanistan reflects ambition tempered by realism, with both sides openly recognizing the security and geopolitical constraints that must be managed rather than ignored.

The breadth of sectors under discussion points to a more mature economic relationship. Beyond agriculture and pharmaceuticals, talks covered textiles, sports goods, leather, mining and minerals, energy, and infrastructure development. Pakistan’s invitation for Kazakh investment under its investment facilitation framework signals a willingness to back rhetoric with policy support. Equally important was the agreement that business-to-business engagement must be strengthened, with trade bodies acting as facilitators rather than gatekeepers.

Perhaps the most consequential outcome was the decision to work toward a structured framework document outlining priority sectors, trade targets, and a clear roadmap of activities. Past engagements have suffered from a lack of follow-through. This time, both sides appear determined to anchor cooperation in timelines, institutional coordination, and measurable outcomes, supported by non-binding but practical minutes of meeting.

Beyond economics, the visit carries regional significance. As global trade routes fragment and middle powers seek resilience through diversified partnerships, Pakistan and Kazakhstan are positioning themselves as connectors rather than bystanders. Coordinated engagement in regional and international forums, combined with economic interdependence, offers a quieter but more sustainable path to stability.

Ambitious targets—\$1 billion in near-term trade and far higher in the long run—will not materialize automatically. Infrastructure gaps, regional volatility, and domestic economic pressures remain real obstacles. However, the tone and substance of this engagement suggest that both sides are prepared to do the hard work required to overcome them.

Kashmir Solidarity Day

A Symbol of Unity and Strength



Beyond politics, Pakistan describes its relationship with Kashmir as deeply cultural, religious, and historical, fostering a strong sense of shared identity and generational solidarity

Since 1947, Pakistan has positioned the Kashmir issue as central to its national identity, security outlook, and moral responsibility, shaping its foreign policy around support for Kashmiri self-determination in line with UN resolutions. It presents its administration of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan as evidence of a rights-based and representative approach, while contrasting this with what it describes as repression, human rights abuses, and instability in Indian-administered Kashmir, particularly after the revocation of Article 370. Within this framing, Pakistan portrays its stance as historically grounded, ethically driven, and geopolitically significant, emphasizing empowerment and political rights for Kashmiris.

Beyond politics, Pakistan describes its relationship with Kashmir as deeply cultural, religious, and historical, fostering a strong sense of shared identity and generational solidarity. This connection is publicly reaffirmed each year through Kashmir Solidarity Day on February 5, observed nationwide and by diaspora communities through rallies, prayers, educational events, and political statements. Despite heightened repression in Indian-occupied Kashmir since 2019, shifting global attention, and efforts to marginalize the issue internationally, the annual observance is presented as a powerful symbol of enduring unity and resolve. It underscores Pakistan’s claim that time, geopolitical pressure, and disinformation have not weakened its commitment or Kashmiri resistance, but instead have intensified collective determination and kept the issue alive in international diplomatic discourse.

The demonstrative national unity so prominently, intentionally, and meticulously displayed on Kashmir Solidarity Day also reflects, for any astute observer, a broader, more transcendent historical and moral truth: that the foundational relationship between Pakistan and the Kashmiri people is intrinsically rooted in a common, civilizational quest for justice, security, and the preservation of identity, nurtured by shared values and historical experiences, not in the transient calculus of state convenience or the crude mechanics of state coercion. It demonstrates to a watching world that the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination, far from being extinguished, remains vibrantly alive in the hearts, minds, political discourse, and collective memory

of millions across South Asia and its diaspora, and that Pakistan, irrespective of its own internal political changes, economic challenges, or shifts in regional alliances, will continue to stand diplomatically, morally, and politically by the Kashmiri people at every relevant international forum and in every conceivable circumstance, as a matter of stated national doctrine. As long as Kashmiris are denied their fundamental, UN-mandated right to a free and fair plebiscite and are subjected to a regime of systematic oppression, demographic change, and political disenfranchisement, Pakistan’s voice of advocacy, its diplomatic missions, and its moral suasion, it is consistently vowed by leaders across the spectrum, will not fall silent, waver, or be bargained away.

In the face of formidable and growing adversity, including India’s rising international stature as an economic and strategic partner to the West, Pakistan’s own acute economic vulnerabilities, and the frequent relegation of the Kashmir issue in global media priorities, this unique, historically forged unity between the people of Pakistan and the people of Kashmir serves as an indispensable, internal source of ideological strength, political purpose, and external hope. It reassures the besieged, traumatized Kashmiri population that they are not alone, forgotten, or abandoned in their long and painful struggle, and it reminds the often-distracted, interest-driven international community that unresolved historical injustices, sustained violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and the denial of foundational democratic principles cannot be permanently erased or legitimized through the unilateral application of military force, legal sophistry, demographic engineering, or strategic silence. The shared, solemn, and massive annual observance of Kashmir Solidarity Day thus serves to reaffirm, in the most public manner possible, a simple but politically potent and enduring truth: that Pakistanis and Kashmiris are bound together by inextricable threads of shared history, common faith, contiguous geography, and an unshakeable collective belief in the ultimate, inevitable triumph of justice over force, and that no future attempt to divide them through physical barriers like the LoC fencing, military dominance, information warfare, or economic inducements will ever truly succeed in its ultimate objective of severing this deep, affective, and politically charged connection.

An Unfulfilled Right

MUHAMMAD MOHSIN IQBAL



Conflicts among human societies are as old as civilisation itself. Differences of belief, territory, power, and perception have repeatedly pushed nations and communities into confrontation. History shows that such disputes are resolved in only a few recognised ways: through the imposition of force, through reconciliation by mutual consent, or through impartial mediation supported by law and moral authority. Where none of these paths is followed with sincerity, conflicts harden with time, embedding themselves into collective memory and passing unresolved from one generation to the next. Since the middle of the twentieth century, the world has witnessed only a few disputes of such longevity, notably the division of the Korean Peninsula, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the unresolved dispute over Jammu and Kashmir between Pakistan and India. Among these, Kashmir remains one of the most morally troubling, for it is anchored in clear international commitments that have remained unfulfilled for more than seven decades.

The legal and moral foundation of the Kashmir dispute lies in the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan in 1948 and 1949. These resolutions affirmed a simple yet powerful democratic principle: the future of the State of Jammu and Kashmir was to be determined by the free and impartial will of its people, expressed through a plebiscite conducted under United Nations supervision. Both Pakistan and India accepted

these resolutions, which laid down detailed safeguards to ensure fairness, including demilitarisation, the withdrawal or neutralisation of armed forces, the appointment of an internationally respected Plebiscite Administrator, the release of political prisoners, the protection of minorities, freedom of expression and assembly, and the complete absence of coercion or intimidation. A ceasefire came into effect on 1 January 1949, raising hopes that a just settlement was within reach. Yet the plebiscite was never held. Disagreements over procedure, coupled with political reluctance and shifting strategic calculations, froze the process, while the promise itself remained outstanding.

Despite the passage of time, Kashmir continues to figure on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council, a rare acknowledgment that the dispute has neither been resolved nor rendered obsolete. Meanwhile, realities on the ground have steadily deteriorated. In Indian-administered Kashmir, generations have grown up amid heavy militarisation, prolonged states of emergency, restrictions on political activity, and recurring cycles of unrest and repression. The revocation of the region’s special status in 2019 further deepened Kashmiri anxieties, particularly fears of demographic engineering and the erosion of cultural and political identity. Allegations of human rights violations, curbs on religious practices, and restrictions on communication have reinforced the sense of collective grievance and alienation.

For Pakistan, Kashmir has never been merely a territorial dispute. It occupies a central place in the country’s ideological, historical, and strategic consciousness. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s description of Kashmir as the “jugular vein of Pakistan” was not a rhetorical flourish but an articulation of an existential reality. The Muslim majority of Kashmir, its cultural and religious affinities with Pakistan, and the logic underpinning the Partition of 1947 made its unresolved status a profound anomaly. The Two-Nation Theory, which formed the basis of



The United States, while offering humanitarian aid with one hand, has continued to supply weapons with the other.

Pakistan’s creation, rested on the recognition of distinct religious, cultural, and political identities. The continued denial of self-determination to the people of Kashmir stands in stark contradiction to that principle and remains a source of enduring instability in South Asia.

Beyond ideology and history, Kashmir’s importance is inseparable from Pakistan’s economic and environmental security. The great rivers that sustain Pakistan’s agriculture and economy—the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab—originate in the Himalayan region of Kashmir. These waters irrigate fields, generate electricity, and provide drinking water to millions. Control over their sources, therefore, carries implications far beyond cartography. Repeated disputes over water management and challenges to the Indus Waters Treaty have heightened fears that water, one of the most vital resources of life, could become a tool of political pressure. In this sense, Kashmir is not simply a contested territory; it is a lifeline whose stability directly affects Pakistan’s survival and prosperity.

The strategic dimension of Kashmir further complicates the dispute. Its geography places it at the crossroads of South and Central Asia, making it vital for regional trade, security, and defence. The Line of Control remains one of the most militarised and volatile borders in the world, where even minor incidents carry the risk of escalation between two nuclear-armed states. The continued instability of the region not only threatens bilateral relations but also undermines broader regional peace.

Every year on 5 February, observed in Pakistan as Kashmir Solidarity Day, the people of Pakistan, Kashmiris on both sides of the Line of Control, and members of the global diaspora reaffirm their support for the Kashmiri right to self-determination. Rallies, seminars, and official statements recall the unfulfilled United Nations resolutions and call upon the international community to honour its commitments. These expressions are peaceful and lawful, rooted in international norms. Yet a sobering question

persists: can a people be expected to commemorate an unkept promise indefinitely, carrying the weight of unfulfilled justice from one generation to another?

India maintains that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of its territory and that the matter is purely bilateral. Pakistan, supported by international law and United Nations resolutions, maintains that the dispute is international in character and that the right to self-determination is inalienable and cannot be nullified by the passage of time or unilateral actions. So long as this fundamental contradiction remains unresolved, peace in South Asia will continue to rest on fragile ground.

Recent regional developments have subtly altered diplomatic perceptions. Pakistan’s conduct during periods of heightened tension, particularly in 2025, demonstrated restraint and responsibility, reinforcing its image as a mature and credible state. Acknowledgements by major international actors regarding ceasefire facilitation underscored this shift. Emerging from internal challenges, Pakistan today speaks with greater confidence and dignity on the world stage. This renewed standing places an added responsibility upon its leadership to move beyond symbolic remembrance and to pursue a principled, sustained, and effective diplomatic campaign for Kashmir.

Kashmir is not merely a political dispute, nor solely a strategic concern. It is a question of justice for a people denied the right to choose their destiny, a test of moral credibility for the international community, and an unfinished chapter of history that continues to shape the future of South Asia. Justice delayed for more than seventy-five years is not only justice denied; it is a continuing indictment of an international order that pledged fairness but failed to deliver it. Until the voices of the Kashmiri people are finally heard, the promise of peace in the region will remain incomplete, and the conscience of the world will remain unsettled.





## Priyanka breaks silence on Bollywood comeback

ISLAMABAD: After establishing herself as a global star in Hollywood, international actress Priyanka Chopra has shared her thoughts on returning to Indian cinema. The mother of one, who has led several major Hollywood productions, recently expressed her excitement regarding the next phase of her career. In an interview with ScreenRant, the 43-year-old actress remarked, "I am so happy to be coming back and, you know, making this movie in India, because if there was any other—any way to come back into Indian cinema—it was this." When asked about rumours regarding her potential return to the Don and Krrish franchises, she remained cautious, stating, "I don't know if I can talk about either of them at all." Priyanka's upcoming projects include the Hollywood film *The Bluff*, which is set for a digital release on February 25, 2026, followed by *Varanasi*, scheduled for release the following year. Earlier this year, Priyanka Chopra was one of the rare Indian stars to carve a place for herself in Hollywood. But behind the glamour and global fame, her transition was not as easy as it appeared, as she had to start from scratch despite her immense popularity back home. Speaking on *The Ok Sweetie Show*, her longtime manager Anjula Acharia recalled the early struggling days of Chopra's transition to the West, describing moments that were emotionally difficult to witness. Despite being one of the biggest stars in India, Chopra had to reintroduce herself in Hollywood. "I remember dying inside. Imagine you are with the Beyoncé of a country and nobody else knows she is the Beyoncé—just you. And you're walking into a magazine she's already been on the cover of many times, and she's introducing herself, saying, 'You don't know who I am, but I am Priyanka Chopra.' I am meeting the assistant of the assistant in a cafeteria with her. I was suffering heartbreak for her. But she was so fabulous—she had no ego," she recalled.



LAHORE: A large number of people are buying kites from shop at Mochi Gate Market, during preparation to celebrate "Basent Festival" in Provincial Capital, while Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have intensified their crackdown against kite sellers and flyers, registering 93 cases and seizing more than 17,000 kites and over 12,000 hazardous chemical strings as part of a zero-tolerance policy against the deadly practice. PHOTO: ONLINE

## Service Chiefs, Armed Forces reaffirms support for resilient people of IIOJK

STAFF REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: On the solemn occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF; Admiral Naveed Ashraf, NI, NI (M), T Bt, Chief of the Naval Staff; and Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, NI (M), HJ, Chief of Air Staff, on behalf of the Armed Forces of Pakistan, reaffirm their unwavering support for the resilient people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) in their epic struggle for self-determination.

The Pakistan Armed Forces strongly condemn grave violations of human rights in IIOJK, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and attempts to alter the demographic and political landscape of the region, with blatant disregard for international law.

We reiterate that a just and peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, remains essential for lasting peace and stability in South Asia. The international community must take concrete and meaningful action to alleviate the suffering of the Kashmiri people.

The Armed Forces of Pakistan remain steadfast in their duty to safeguard Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and unwavering in their solidarity with their Kashmiri brothers and sisters in their rightful quest for freedom and dignity.

Long live Pakistan! Long live Kashmir!

# Pakistan will not play India in T20 World Cup: PM

*Premier urges support for Bangladesh, emphasises Pakistan made decision after much deliberation*

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif confirmed on Wednesday that Pakistan will not play against India in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, emphasising that the decision was made after much deliberation.

"Politics should have no place in the field of sports," the prime minister said while explaining Pakistan's stance on the 20-team tournament. He made the statement while addressing the federal cabinet meeting. He further stressed that the country should stand with Bangladesh in the matter.

Pakistan had decided to boycott the

February 15 match against arch-rivals India to show solidarity with Bangladesh, which the International Cricket Council (ICC) kicked out of the tournament after rejecting Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) request to move their matches to a venue outside India.

The cricketing body then replaced Bangladesh with Scotland in the tournament, stating that it was not feasible to revise the schedule so close to the February 7 — start of the World Cup.

Meanwhile, multiple other factors influenced Pakistan's decision to boycott the match, including ICC's perceived biased stance towards Bangladesh playing a central role, with government sources noting

that the Pakistani team was instructed not to take the field against India on February 15 as "a form of protest".

The sources said that ICC chief Jay Shah's partial decisions had effectively turned the International Cricket Council into an extension of the Indian cricket board. They further said that these biased decisions have undermined the principles of fairness and equality, accusing the ICC of applying different standards to different countries on its platform.

Since then, the ICC, in its statement, has expressed hope that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) would work towards a "mutually acceptable resolution".

While recognising the prerogative of

national governments, the ICC publicly urged the PCB to reconsider, arguing that the decision harms the sport and its global fanbase.

The council encouraged the Pakistani board to pursue a mutually acceptable solution that protects the interests of all stakeholders in the game, saying that the boycott decision was not "in the interest of the global game or the welfare of fans worldwide, including millions in Pakistan".

Currently, the national team is present in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to partake in the highly anticipated T20 World Cup, scheduled to be co-hosted by Sri Lanka and India from February 7 to March 8.

## Only authorized firms to get Ziarat visas

NAEEM FAISAL BAIGA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousuf on Tuesday presided over a ceremony for the issuance of accreditation certificates to 86 newly registered Ziarat Group Organizers (ZGOs), marking a significant expansion of the government's regulated pilgrimage system.

Addressing the ceremony, the minister announced that the total number of Ziarat Group Organizers registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs has now reached 260. He said that the complete list of authorized companies has been uploaded on the ministry's official website and urged pilgrims to verify registration status before making travel arrangements.

Minister Yousuf revealed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been directed to instruct all relevant embassies to issue visas exclusively to authorized Ziarat companies, a move aimed at elimi-

nating illegal operators and protecting pilgrims from fraud and exploitation.

He also announced the introduction of a digital monitoring system, being developed in collaboration with the National Information Technology Board (NITB), to ensure effective oversight, transparency, and compliance of registered companies.

"As envisioned by the committee, significant steps have been taken to better coordinate the pilgrimage system for Iran and Iraq," the minister said, appreciating the role of Federal Secretary Dr. Sajid Chauhan and the Pilgrimage Department for the timely implementation of reforms.

The minister emphasized that all registered operators must ensure the best possible facilities and services for pilgrims traveling to Iran and Iraq, reiterating the government's commitment to pilgrim welfare and a transparent, streamlined religious tourism framework.

# KP Govt moves to clear Newspaper advertisement arrears through Supplementary Grant: KP Advisor Finance Muzzammil Aslam

The newspaper dues have been pending since 1987: Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting was held yesterday in the Committee Room of the Finance Department under the chairmanship of Advisor to the KP Chief Minister on Finance Muzzammil Aslam, with the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) and the Information and Public Relations Department. The meeting was attended by Secretary Information and Public Relations Muhammad Bakhtiar

Khan, Special Secretary Finance Khalid Iqbal, Director General Information and Public Relations Muhammad Imran, officers from various departments, as well as representatives of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society.

The agenda of the meeting included a review of the long-pending advertisement dues of newspapers and measures for their immediate resolution. While briefing the meeting, Secretary Information and Public Relations Muhammad Bakhtiar

Khan informed that the newspaper dues have been pending since 1987, and that the Information Department has completed the necessary homework and worked out the matter.

He stated that as of June 2025, the total outstanding amount stands at Rs. 1.4 billion, after which reconciliation of bills was carried out with various departments. Of this amount, bills worth Rs. 798 million have been reconciled, while verification of bills amounting to Rs. 571 million is still unreconciled.

Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan further informed that out of the reconciled funds, Rs. 94 million have already been paid to



newspapers, while the remaining amount is yet to be paid. Advisor to the KP Chief Minister on Finance Muzzammil Aslam stated that payment of outstanding dues to newspapers is the responsibility of the government and this issue has persisted for a long time and should not be delayed any further.

The Advisor directed the Finance Department and the Information Department to immediately submit a summary for supplementary grants for the payment of newspaper advertisement dues, so that timely approval may be obtained from the Provincial Cabinet and the issue of newspapers may be resolved.

## Spot ON

### CS KP leads key PSB meeting in Peshawar

TP REPORT

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, is presiding over the meeting of the Provincial Selection Board (PSB) held today in Peshawar. The board convened to review appointments, promotions, and postings of senior provincial officers across various departments, ensuring merit-based selections in line with government policies.

During the session, Shahab Ali Shah emphasized the importance of transparency, efficiency, and adherence to established rules and regulations in all decisions made by the board.

### Lahore records 160 average AQI

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE: The city recorded an average Air Quality Index (AQI) of 160, placing air conditions in the unhealthy category. At the same time, the concentration of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) was measured at 13.8 times higher than the World Health Organization's annual guideline value, indicating a serious level of air pollution. Such conditions pose significant health risks, particularly for children, the elderly, and individuals with respiratory or cardiovascular diseases, and highlight the growing need for effective air quality management and pollution control measures.

### Himalayan Ibex with 40 inches horns hunted in Chitral

PESHAWAR: A Himalayan ibex has been hunted in Upper Chitral, with officials reporting that its horns measured 40 inches in size. According to the Wildlife Department on Wednesday, a local hunter named Jameel Ahmad successfully hunted the ibex from a distance of 160 meters, under the supervision of wildlife authorities. Officials stated that the hunting activity was carried out strictly in accordance with the approved rules and regulations, ensuring that wildlife conservation measures and legal hunting procedures were properly followed.

### 718,060 grams of narcotics recovered in District Khyber

STAFF REPORTER

Peshawar: Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Department has achieved a major success in the ongoing province-wide crackdown against narcotics. A large-scale operation was conducted in the remote areas of District Khyber, during which an attempt to smuggle a huge quantity of different narcotics was successfully foiled. During the operation, a total of 718,060 grams of narcotics were recovered and seized, including 615,500 grams of bhang, 18,100 grams of ice, 1,160 grams of heroin, 13,300 grams of opium, 70,000 grams of charas, and 18 ecstasy tablets.

## Funeral prayer for Shaheed Captain Abbas offered

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: The funeral prayers of Captain Abbas Khan Shaheed, martyred while performing operational duty in the Bara area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, were offered in Peshawar today.

The ceremony was attended by Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Corps Commander Peshawar, the martyr's relatives, and senior civil and military officials in large numbers, paying tribute to his bravery and sacrifice.

Following the prayers, the mortal remains of Captain Abbas Khan Shaheed were sent to his native place, where he will be laid to rest with full military honors.



The immortal sacrifices of martyrs like Captain Abbas Khan further strengthen the unwavering resolve of Pakistan's security forces to defend the homeland and uphold national security.



## US renews trade subsidy pact with African countries

WASHINGTON: The United States on Tuesday renewed the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) through the end of the year, an agreement that allows many African countries to access the US market duty-free. US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement that President Donald Trump had signed into law a reauthorization of the trade preference program through December 31, 2026, with retroactive effect from September 30, 2025 -- the date it had expired.

“AGOA for the 21st century must demand more from our trading partners and yield more market access for US businesses, farmers, and ranchers,” Greer said. Trump has used trade and tariffs -- which he has called his “favorite word” -- as a carrot and a stick to reshape international relations, as he sees fit. In a statement, Greer vowed to “work with Congress over the next year to modernize the program to align with” current US policy.

A cornerstone of US-Africa trade relations for 25 years, the AGOA has allowed the United States to buy billions of dollars of duty-free cars, clothes and other items from select African countries each year. But the deal, which operates in 32 African nations, expired last September, affecting thousands of jobs and forcing exporters to absorb high tariff duties. — DNA

## A reframing of trade policy needed in South Asia

ISLAMABAD: Trade has been used as a tool for economic protectionism globally. The competitive pressures in trade not only overlap but highlight South Asia's enduring trade paradox, i.e., irregular regional trade and contesting regional integration. In an event organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), titled “FTA Strategy in Key South Asian Countries: Implications for Pakistan”, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem emphasized Pakistan's vigilant policies to create a stable trade environment through partnerships with friendly countries and key initiatives for investment and market expansion.

Dr. Ishrat Husain, former Advisor to the Prime Minister on Institutional Reforms and Austerity, in his Keynote address, emphasized that Asia benefited from globalization compared to the US and Western countries. Despite US tariffs, China and other Asian countries gained economic stimulus. Dr. Ishrat stressed that Pakistan needs to emerge from an inward-looking economic approach.

Dr. Nadeem ul Haque, former Vice Chancellor of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), stressed on diversifying exports and overcoming over-regulation to create a favorable business environment amid rising regional trade competition, exposing asymmetrical trade capacities between Pakistan and India. — DNA



GUJRANWALA: Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce, presenting an award to a distinguished achiever at the GBC Excellence Awards 2026, recognising outstanding contributions to Pakistan's industrial growth, exports, and economic development. PHOTO: PID

By mid-year

# Pakistan’s mobile phone industry braces for 5G rollout

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's fast-growing mobile phone industry is preparing to benefit from the expected launch of next-generation 5G services by the middle of the year, as manufacturers step up readiness on both hardware and software fronts. Over the past few years, the country's mobile phone industry has emerged as a success story in South Asia, with more than 30 local assembly units now producing around 30 million handsets annually.

“Local assembly and manufacturing capabilities have strengthened significantly, and manufacturers—particularly those producing leading brands—have already aligned their roadmaps with next-generation technologies,” Zeeshan Mianoor, Chief Executive Officer of Inovi Telecom, told Wealth Pakistan.

Zeeshan said 5G readiness is a shared responsibility across the broader ecosystem. “While handset manufacturers are largely prepared, the full benefits of 5G will depend on timely spectrum allocation, a phased network rollout and consumer affordability,” he said. “When these elements move in tandem, Pakistan can fully capitalise on 5G, especially in the mobile phone sector.”

He noted that many smartphones currently assembled or sold in Pakistan already support key 5G frequency bands expected to be deployed locally. However, such devices are largely positioned in the mid- to high-price segment, starting at around Rs75,000. Zeeshan said demand for 5G-compatible handsets is likely to grow gradually rather than surge immediately.

“Initial adoption will come from early users in major urban centres such as

Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad, where 5G coverage is expected to be introduced first,” he said. “Broader adoption will follow once consumers clearly experience faster speeds and lower latency, and when affordable 5G devices and financing options become widely available,” he said, pointing out that Pakistan's young, digital-first population offers strong long-term demand potential, though uptake will scale in phases.

On the transition from older technologies, Zeeshan clarified that 5G cannot be enabled through software updates alone. “It requires specific hardware, including 5G-capable chipsets, antennas and RF components,” he explained.

He said manufacturers will roll out new or upgraded 5G models while continuing to offer 4G devices for price-sensitive consumers. “This dual strategy ensures

inclusion and consumer choice during the transition period,” he added, noting that production volumes would align with network rollout timelines and market demand.

Zeeshan also stressed that widespread 5G adoption will depend not only on handset availability but also on spectrum readiness, rollout frameworks and regulatory clarity, noting that alignment across these areas is critical for smooth adoption and long-term sustainability.

He said that local production of 5G-capable devices could enhance Pakistan's competitiveness in regional and emerging markets where 5G adoption is already underway. “With consistent quality standards, certifications and cost competitiveness, 5G manufacturing can strengthen Pakistan's position in the global supply chain over time,” he said.

## PMEX and Meskay & Femtee Trading Company sign landmark agreement

STAFF REPORTER

KARACHI: In a landmark development for Pakistan's agricultural sector, Pakistan Mercantile Exchange Limited (PMEX), the country's only regulated commodities futures exchange, has signed a strategic agreement with Meskay & Femtee Trading Company, one of Pakistan's leading agri-commodity traders and exporters.

For the first time in Pakistan's history, agricultural commodities - starting with wheat and rice - will be traded on a formal, documented, and transparent exchange-based platform, enabling credible price discovery and supporting free-market operations in the agri economy. Pursuant to this agreement signing, the exchange expects the trading of enlisted agri-futures contracts to commence later this month.

By integrating major agricultural trade flows onto PMEX's platform, the initiative is expected to deliver broad-based benefits across the value chain, enabling farmers to access transparent price signals, while traders and exporters benefit from standardization and effective risk management. Importers, processors, and investors gain reliable price benchmarks and documented, regulated transactions. The collaboration will commence with



deliverable wheat and rice futures.

As an Agri Market Maker on PMEX, Meskay & Femtee Trading Company will provide continuous two-way quotes and bring sizeable agri-commodity volumes onto the Exchange, deepening liquidity, improving price discovery, and reducing volatility for market participants. Market makers play a critical role in ensuring depth and continuity in futures trading by actively participating on both the buy and sell side.

Established in 2006, Meskay & Femtee Trading Company is one of Pakistan's leading agri-commodity exporters, with a strong focus on rice alongside wheat,

corn, and sesame. The company is amongst the top 2 largest millers in the country and also the largest farm mechanization company, covering procurement, processing, warehousing, and exports, and maintains significant storage and logistics infrastructure all over Pakistan.

At the signing ceremony, the management of PMEX and Meskay & Femtee Trading Company commented that this partnership aligns with a mutual objective of strengthening Pakistan's agricultural commodities market ecosystem by actively connecting physical agri-commodity supply chains with exchange-traded products.

## Japan hands over conservation equipment to Taxila Museum

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan, through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), has successfully completed the provision of exhibition and conservation equipment to the Taxila Museum under the Grant Assistance project titled “Improvement of Equipment for Exhibition and Conservation of the Taxila Museum.” The assistance, amounting to 48.8 million Japanese Yen, reflects Japan's continued commitment to the preservation of cultural heritage in Pakistan.

On this occasion, H.E. Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi underscored the historical and spiritual importance of Taxila as the centre of Gandhara civilization and highlighted its close cultural connection with Japan. He expressed hope that this initiative will open doors for further collaboration, including archaeological projects, and emphasised that Japan would like to continue efforts in line with the vision of Dr. Satoshi Naiki, a professor at Aichi Prefectural University and an expert on Gandhara civilization, to revive archaeological missions in Pakistan to discover, preserve, and promote Gandhara heritage.

On behalf of Mr. Zaheer, Director



General of Archaeology, Government of Punjab, Mr. Maqsood Ahmed Malik Chief Conservationist Punjab Archaeology, conveyed sincere appreciation to the Government of Japan and JICA for their generous assistance. He stated that the newly provided equipment will enhance the museum's capacity for modern exhibition, scientific conservation, and long-term preservation of valuable artefacts, while also supporting academic research and public education.

Mr. Miyata, Chief of JICA Pakistan Office,

emphasized that museums play a vital role in preserving cultural heritage and promoting mutual understanding among nations. He expressed confidence that the project will contribute to improved conservation standards, cultural tourism, and sustainable heritage management.

The handover ceremony reaffirmed the strong and enduring partnership between Japan and Pakistan and their shared commitment to promoting cultural cooperation, heritage conservation, and people-to-people exchange.

## PATA–FATA industry on verge of collapse, chambers warn government

JAVED UR REHMAN

CHAKDARA: Presidents of various Chambers of Commerce from PATA and FATA regions have categorically stated that they have no connection with the protest scheduled for February 8, while strongly criticizing the encashment of pay orders and delay in quota releases for industries in the region.

These views were expressed during a joint press conference by Malakand Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Inamullah, Bajaur Chamber President Haji Lali Shah, Dir Chamber President Syed Noor Alam, along with Bacha, Zohaib Khan, and Sajjada Hamad.

The chamber leaders said that the Chief Commissioner Regional Tax Office (RTO) Peshawar is deliberately using delaying tactics in the release of raw material quotas for PATA and FATA industries, which has resulted in the closure of factories and unemployment of hundreds of workers. They warned that continued delays are

not only harming businesses but also causing significant revenue losses to the government.

They alleged that the Chief Commissioner RTO rejects previously utilized quotas of factories and proceeds with the encashment of pay orders (guarantee bonds) without justification. As a result, crores of rupees have been deposited into the government treasury under the guise of pay order encashment, which they termed a grave injustice to the industrial sector.

The chamber presidents further highlighted that despite the availability of cheap hydropower in Malakand, electricity tariffs stand at Rs 28.24 per unit during the day and Rs 36.68 per unit during peak hours. In addition, due to soaring diesel prices, transportation charges for goods to Karachi have reached Rs 28 per kilogram, making production costs uncompetitive and bringing the PATA–FATA industrial wheel to a standstill.

They said the government earns billions of rupees from PATA–FATA indus-

tries through 10 percent raw material duty, while crores of rupees are collected monthly through electricity bills. Despite this, they lamented that the region's industries are being treated “like a stepchild.”

Expressing strong reservations over the policies of the Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and particularly the Chief Commissioner RTO Muhammad Taqi Qureshi, the chamber leaders demanded immediate intervention by both the federal and provincial governments. They warned that businesses and industries in FATA and PATA are “taking their last breaths.”

An important meeting was held at Fishing Hut, Chakdara, chaired by Malakand Chamber President Inamullah. Presidents of chambers and industrialists from Swat, Bajaur, Dir, Waziristan, Kurram, Khyber, Chitral, and other districts attended in large numbers.

The meeting reviewed the deteriorating condition of industries in the tribal districts and strongly criticized the perfor-



mance and policies of the RTO and FBR. Participants agreed to launch a legal and constitutional struggle, in coordination with parliamentarians, to resolve the issues faced by industrialists.

Inamullah said that most industries in FATA and PATA, including Malakand, have

already shut down, adding that dreams of business growth and development cannot be realized under the current circumstances. He further revealed that although a committee was formed by the Chairman FBR comprising seven representatives from FATA and PATA industries, no meet-

ing or consultation has ever been held. He warned that continued deprivation of rights would not be tolerated and announced that if the issues remain unresolved, the chambers would be left with no option but to launch a full-scale protest.



# KP Under-21 Games begin with colorful opening

More than 5,000 athletes from 7 regions and 36 districts participating

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Under-21 Games, a mega sports event of the province commenced with a grand and colorful opening ceremony at the Peshawar Sports Complex. Athletes from various districts presented an impressive march-past while traditional folk dances from different parts of the province added vibrant cultural colors to the ceremony.

Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sohail Afridi formally inaugurated the Under-21 Games. On this occasion, Provincial Minister for Excise and Taxation Syed Fakhar Jahan, Advisor for Sports and Youth Affairs Taj Muhammad Tarand, Secretary Sports Muhammad Asif Khan, Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Sanaullah, Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tashfeen Haider, Additional DG Sports Rasheeda Ghaznavi, Director Merged Districts Umar Arshad Khan, along with other dignitaries were present.

Addressing the ceremony Chief Minister Sohail Afridi said that in line with the vision of the founding leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf special focus is being given to the promotion of sports, development of infrastructure and expansion of sports activities across the province. He expressed hope that Pakistan Super League matches would be hosted in Peshawar during the current year.

He added that like cricket players from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa possess immense potential to represent Pakistan in other sports as well. The Chief Minister urged athletes to participate in the competitions with passion and enthusiasm and to further polish their skills, assuring that the provincial government would continue its support for the promotion of sports.

Speaking on the occasion Advisor for Sports and Youth Affairs Taj Muhammad Tarand stated that the Under-21 Games are being organized under the auspices of the Directorate General of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with participation of more than 5,000 athletes from 7 regions and 36 districts of the province. He said that competitions are being held in 38 sports for men and 18 sports for women.

According to him men's competitions will take place at the Peshawar Sports Complex, Hayatabad Sports Complex, Kohat Sports Complex and Mardan Sports Complex while women's events will be held at Abdul Wali Khan Sports Complex Charsadda, Peshawar Board Ground and



## McCullum praises 'tough lad' Brook



LONDON: England head coach Brendon McCullum is impressed with white-ball captain Harry Brook for his deft handling of a recent controversy and leading the team to a series victory in Sri Lanka ahead of their campaign in the upcoming Twenty20 World Cup.

Brook has been in the eye of a storm since news emerged of his altercation with a nightclub bouncer in New Zealand late last year. The 26-year-old apologised last month for the October 31 incident, which he felt caused embarrassment to him and his team.

Under Brook, England won the one-day international series in Sri Lanka 2-1 and swept the T20 series 3-0, a timely boost as they build toward the global tournament.

"He's had a hard time of late off the field, but he's a tough lad to be able to put that aside and still lead these boys in the manner that he did, and show the tactical nous that he has as a cricketer was outstanding," McCullum said after England's victory in the final T20 match on Tuesday.

"I do sometimes think that people think that Brooky's not that clever. I couldn't disagree with that more. He wears his intelligence lightly. He's got a very good tactical cricket brain."

McCullum said Brook, who has been fined by the English cricket board for his conduct in New Zealand, needed to improve his behaviour but stressed the mental-health pressures players face in a relentless schedule.

"He's a work in progress off the field," the coach said. "He's not alone with that and that's our job to help shepherd him through. But on the field, he's certainly excelling at the moment"

"Cricket is such a unique game because it's 12 months of the year ... It can be challenging mentally for a lot of guys and cricket's got a history of issues in that space. So, our job as leaders and our job at English cricket is to make sure we look after these boys."

England will begin their campaign for a third 20-overs World Cup title with a Group C match against Nepal in Mumbai on Sunday.

## National ranking table tennis tournament begins in Islamabad



STAFF REPORTER

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

The event is being hosted by the Islamabad Table Tennis Association, in collaboration with Tibhar Table Tennis Academy.

Top-ranked men's and women's players from across Pakistan will participate in this prestigious tournament, making it a highly competitive national event.

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

He also briefed the media on the arrangements for the event and shared that the tournament has received an overwhelming response, with remarkable entries and encouragement from players nationwide.

He further stated that the introduction of a structured national ranking system will elevate the game to world-class standards by ensuring fair, transparent, and unbiased results, paving the way for the development of international-level table tennis in Pakistan.

# India thump Afghanistan to reach U19 World Cup final

India chase down 311-run target in 41.1 overs for the loss of three wickets



HARARE: India will take on England in Friday's ICC U19 World Cup final after a dominant seven-wicket win over Afghanistan in the second semi-final at Harare Sports Club, Zimbabwe, on Wednesday.

Opting to bat first, Afghanistan registered a formidable total of 310-4 in 50

overs, courtesy of centuries from Faisal Shinozada and Uzairullah Niaza, who shared a 148-run partnership for the third wicket.

Shinozada remained the top-scorer with a 93-ball 110, laced with 15 fours, while Niaza made an unbeaten 101 off 86 deliveries, hitting 12 fours and two

sixes. The duo was provided a decent platform by openers Osman Sadat and Khalid Ahmadzai, who made 39 and 31, respectively.

For India, Deepesh Devendran and Kanishk Chohan bagged two wickets each.

Set to chase a daunting 311-run target, the former champions comfortably amassed the total for the loss of just three wickets and 53 balls to spare.

Leading the way for India was opener Aaron George, who top-scored with a blazing century, making 115 off 104 deliveries, studded with 15 fours and two sixes.

His opening partner, Vaibhav Sooriyavanshi, however, gave India a flamboyant start with a swashbuckling 68 off 33 deliveries, smashing nine fours and four sixes.

Captain Ayush Mhatre played an anchoring role after Sooriyavanshi's dismissal with a 59-ball 62, featuring five fours and four sixes, until falling victim to Nooristani Omarzai in the 27th over.

Omarzai was the pick of the bowlers for Afghanistan, taking two wickets for 64 runs in his 10 overs, while Wahidullah Zadran could claim one.

## T20 World Cup

# ICC seeks 'backchannel talks' after Pakistan boycott India match

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE: In the aftermath of Pakistan's announcement against playing their T20 World Cup 2026 match against India, the International Cricket Council (ICC) has asked its Deputy Chairman Imran Khwaja to hold back-channel negotiations with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), NDTV reported on Wednesday.

Khwaja, who represents the Singapore Cricket Association and is seen within the ICC as a neutral figure who can talk to all sides, has been asked to convince Pakistan to play their T20 World Cup 2026 group match against India on February 15 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, reported Firstpost. The report comes as the Pakistani government, on Sunday, announced that it would participate in the T20 World Cup 2026 but would boycott the match against arch-rival India.

The ICC had rejected the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) request to move their matches to a venue outside India. The BCB had sought the change following the removal of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the Indian



Premier League (IPL) on the instructions of the Indian cricket board, a move that sparked widespread outrage in Bangladesh. The cricketing body then

replaced Bangladesh with Scotland in the tournament, stating that it was not feasible to revise the schedule so close to the February 7 — start of the World Cup.

# Barcelona edge past Albacete to reach the Copa del Rey semi-finals

Lamine Yamal and Ronald Araujo scored in 2-1 victory

BARCELONA: Lamine Yamal and Ronald Araujo goals helped Barcelona reach the Copa del Rey semi-finals with a nervy 2-1 win at Albacete on Tuesday.

The record 32-time cup winners were pushed to the end in a tight quarter-final clash by their second division opponents, who stunned Real Madrid in the previous round.

Yamal fired Barca ahead just before half-time and Araujo headed home the second early after the break on his first start since taking a month-long mental health break at the end of last year.

Albacete created several chances in the last half hour and Javi Moreno headed home with three minutes to go to give Hansi Flick's Barca a scare.

"The last few minutes... it's normal, they got a goal, the cup is like this," Araujo told Barca's media channel.

"I'm very happy (to start again), it was an important step... a hug to the coach, he helped me a lot."

Holders Barca spurned some fine chances, just as they did in their win over Elche in La Liga on Saturday.

"It was a tough match at the end, it was very hard. We could have made it much easier for ourselves, we missed many chances, but I think also we deserved (to win)," said Flick.

"I'm happy, proud of the team and we're in the semi-finals, and that's the best thing."

Barcelona controlled the game in the

first half but could not easily break down Albacete's resistance.

Marcus Rashford spurned a couple of decent openings in the opening few minutes, and after that the hosts shut up shop against Flick's side.

Spanish champions Barcelona's brightest player was, as usual, teenage star Yamal, and he struck in the 39th minute.

Rashford pressed well to win the ball back, and Frankie de Jong's pass bobbed into Yamal's path for the 18-year-old to curl home.

Antonio Puertas got in behind Barcelona's defence at the other end but took a heavy touch and goalkeeper Joan Garcia was able to snag the loose ball.

The stopper accidentally gave away a corner as he walked off the pitch with it



to pat Araujo on the head, in a comical moment before the break.

Dani Olmo should have doubled Barca's lead early in the second half

when Rashford put the ball on a plate for him but his shot was blocked.

Puertas's volley deflected off De Jong and just over Garcia's goal as the hosts threatened sporadically.

Araujo headed in Rashford's corner as Barcelona doubled their lead and seemed set to cruise to victory, before some late Albacete resistance threatened an upset.

## Holding on

Jefte Betancor, who scored Albacete's stunning winner against Real Madrid, cut inside Araujo and whipped a shot just wide.

Puertas put the ball in the back of Barca's net with seven minutes to go but there was an offside earlier in the move and it was disallowed.

Albacete finally scored in the 87th

minute when Moreno's powerful header from Jose Lazo's free-kick flew past Garcia, but they could not find another to force the game to extra-time.

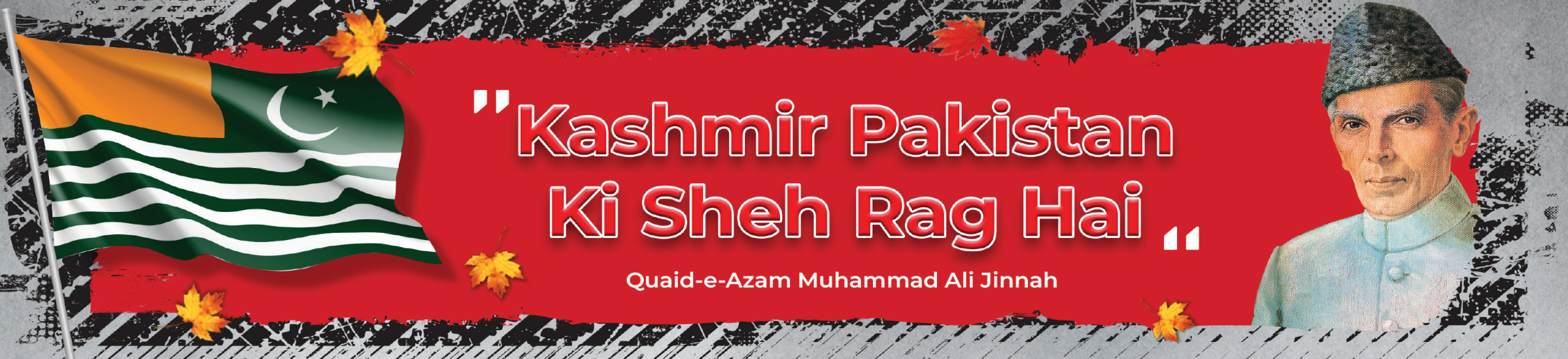
Gerard Martin headed Fran Gamez's effort off the line as Barca endured a nervy five minutes of stoppage time to triumph.

"We have to finish with more conviction," said Flick, who said he was happy that Araujo netted on his return to the starting line-up.

"He scored a very important goal for us, it could help him to get more confidence and believe in himself," added the German coach.

In the other quarter-finals Valencia welcome Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad visit Alaves on Wednesday, while Atletico Madrid travel to face Real Betis on Thursday.





				
<b>Asif Ali Zardari</b> The President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan	<b>Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif</b> Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan	<b>Mohammad Ishaq Dar</b> Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister	<b>Amir Muqam</b> Minister of Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan, States and Frontier Regions	<b>Rana Muhammad Qasim Noon</b> Federal Minister and Chairman, Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir

The people of Pakistan across the globe observe Kashmir Solidarity Day to reaffirm our unwavering moral, diplomatic and political support for our Kashmiri brothers and sisters in their just cause to achieve the right to self-determination as enshrined in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. It was Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto who began the observance of this day 36 years ago, following the historic uprising of the Kashmiri people in 1989, a struggle that continues to this day.

For nearly eight decades, the valiant Kashmiri people have stood tall against the illegal Indian occupation and have rendered countless sacrifices. On this day, we pay solemn tribute to their indomitable spirit and resilience.

The situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) remains a matter of grave concern for global conscience. Since the illegal and unilateral actions of 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019, India has intensified its efforts to consolidate its occupation through administrative and legislative manipulation. By muzzling the media, incarcerating the Kashmiri leadership and attempting to dilute the Muslim majority through demographic changes, India seeks to disempower the Kashmiri people in their own land.

Indian occupation forces also continue to commit countless human rights violations in IIOJK. The findings of recent international reports highlight the alarming rise in arbitrary detentions and collective punishment. The use of punitive house demolitions and the ongoing suppression of digital freedoms, including the blocking of thousands of social media accounts, are clear attempts to hide the reality in IIOJK.

The recent profiling of mosques and mosque management committees in IIOJK constitutes deliberate intimidation by the Indian authorities, aimed to obstruct the free exercise of religion by the Muslim majority population. Such actions form part of a broader pattern of religious persecution under the extremist Hindutva framework. The Kashmiri people have the inalienable right to practice their religion without fear, coercion or discrimination.

The dangerous military escalation initiated by India in May 2025 serves as a stark reminder that true and durable peace in South Asia remains impossible unless the core dispute of Jammu and Kashmir is resolved.

I urge the international community to move beyond mere expressions of concern for the Kashmiri people and persuade India to stop the human rights violations in IIOJK, allow unfettered access to international human rights observers and grant the Kashmiri people their promised right to self-determination.

On this day, I reiterate that we will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Kashmiri people until they realize their right to decide their own future through a free and impartial plebiscite.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As we observe the Kashmir Solidarity Day today, Pakistan reiterates its firm and unwavering support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their just struggle for the right to self-determination. Under illegal Indian occupation, the Kashmiri people remain deprived of their fundamental rights. Yet, their resilience testifies the legitimacy of their just cause.

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

The situation on the ground in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) has moved beyond episodic violations to a sustained system of repression. Since the unilateral and illegal actions of 5 August 2019, India has dismantled legal safeguards, weakened local institutions, and imposed measures aimed at consolidating its permanent occupation of the disputed territory, including artificially altering the demographic composition to change Muslim majority into minority, forcing media to follow the official line, and criminalizing any form of dissent. Under the Hindutva-driven framework, people in IIOJK face constant discrimination. The recent profiling of mosques in IIOJK where religious functionaries are forced to give their personal details, photographs and sectarian affiliations show the extent of institutionalized Islamophobia.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On this day, the entire Pakistani nation expresses its unwavering solidarity with its Kashmiri brothers and sisters.

Kashmir Solidarity Day is a reaffirmation of our pledge that Pakistan stands shoulder to shoulder with the Kashmiri people in their just and legitimate struggle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Ameen.**

Pakistan stands with Kashmiris in their struggle for freedom.



Our relationship with Kashmir is not for just one day, but a soul-and-heart relationship.

