



President reaffirms Pakistan's support for Kashmiris' right to self-determination



Wani reminds UN of its legal and moral responsibilities towards Kashmir issue



Investing in youth essential for national progress: Shaza Fatima

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PM directs for expediting measures to provide loans to SMEs on easy terms

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed the relevant institutions to expedite measures for providing loans to small and medium enterprises on easy terms through banks and other financial institutions.

Chairing a meeting regarding Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) here at the PM House, the prime minister commended Special Assistant Haroon Akhtar and SMEDA's newly elected Board of Directors for formulating a practical and effective plan.

"Small and medium enterprises are the backbone of the country's economy," the prime minister said adding that "There is

immense potential to increase the country's exports through the development of small and medium enterprises".

A three-year roadmap for the promotion of small and medium enterprises was presented in the meeting besides a detailed briefing on the problems faced by SMEs and the plan of action to address them, the strategy to include SMEs in the country's exports, and other measures included in the business plan.

A briefing was also given on ongoing measures to further enhance the existing cooperation with various countries to introduce Pakistan's SME sector on a competitive basis in the global market.

The meeting was briefed on enhancing the capacity of domestic SMEs.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding SMEDA.

China says it cannot accept countries acting as 'world judge' after US captures Maduro

PEAK POINT



Nicolas Maduro. "We have never believed that any country can act as the world's police, nor do we accept that any nation can claim to be the world's judge," Wang told his Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar during a meeting in Beijing on Sunday, referring to "sudden developments in Venezuela" without directly mentioning the US. "The sovereignty and security of all countries should be fully protected under international law," China's top diplomat added, in his first remarks since images of the 63-year-old Maduro blindfolded and handcuffed on Saturday stunned Venezuelans. Maduro is in a New York detention centre awaiting a Monday court appearance on drug charges. Beijing has ambition to become a diplomatic heavyweight, a goal it articulated most clearly after brokering a surprise rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran in 2023, pledging to "play a constructive role in global hotspot issues."

BEIJING: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Beijing cannot accept any country acting as the "world's judge" after the United States captured Venezuela's President

Pakistan, China agree to strengthen high level exchanges, deepen strategic communication

PEAK POINT

BEIJING: Pakistan and China agreed to strengthen high-level exchanges and interactions at all levels, deepen strategic communication and coordination of actions, fully implement the action plan for building a China-Pakistan community with a shared future, and strive to achieve a number of early harvest outcomes.

During the Seventh Pakistan-China Strategic Dialogue between Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held here, both countries will advance the development of the upgraded "CPEC 2.0," enhance cooperation in

industry, agriculture, and mining, jointly com-



memorate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations to consolidate the public support for China-Pakistan friendship, unite the Global South to safeguard common interests, uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and oppose bullying acts that infringe upon the sovereignty of other countries, according to a read out issued Sunday night. The two sides also conducted comprehensive and in-depth strategic communication on international and regional issues of common concern and reached a broad consensus. DPM/FM Ishaq Dar conveyed the warm greetings of the Pakistani leadership to the Chinese leaders and congratulated the Communist Party

by Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on

of China on the adoption of the proposals for the 15th Five-Year Plan at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee, stressing that China's path to modernization is an important force for safeguarding world peace and development.

He said that friendship with China is the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy and a consensus shared by all political parties and all sectors of Pakistani society. This year, the two sides will jointly witness 75 years of brotherly and iron-clad friendship.

Ishaq Dar said that Pakistan is willing to carry forward the historic friendship with China, strengthen alignment of development strategies, deepen practical.

CTD foils major terror plot in Karachi, seizes over 2,000kg of explosives

PEAK POINT

KARACHI: The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in Sindh has thwarted a major terrorist plot during a high-risk operation, seizing more than 2,000 kilograms of highly dangerous explosives.

The operation has been hailed as timely and decisive by security agencies, with three terrorists arrested in connection.

Additional JG CTD Zulfiqar Lark and DIG CTD Azfar Mahesar revealed in a press conference that the terrorists were planning large-scale attacks in Karachi.

SC directs tribunal to decide 72 sugar mills fine case within 90 days

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court, while hearing a petition filed against the Competition Commission's decision regarding fines imposed on 72 sugar mills, ruled that the tribunal must hear the case and deliver its verdict within 90 days. A three-member bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice Yahya Afridi, issued notices to the parties after the hearing and adjourned further proceedings until next Thursday. Counsel for the Competition Commission, Asma Hamid, requested the court to include.

Maduro arrives for first US court appearance after capture

PEAK POINT

NEW YORK: Deposed Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro arrived at a New York court on Monday, just days after being seized in Caracas in a shock US military operation that paved the way for Washington's plans to control the oil-rich country. Maduro, 63, faces narco-trafficking charges along with his wife, Cilia Flores. The pair were forcibly taken out of Caracas in a US assault on Saturday, in which commandos swooped in on helicopters, backed by fighter jets and naval forces, to capture them. On Monday morning, Maduro was escorted by heavily armed law enforcement officers to a courthouse in New York, having been transported by helicopter and armoured car. All eyes are on

Venezuela's response to The Venezuelan military, the swiftly moving events, loyal to Maduro,



and late Sunday, interim leader Delcy Rodriguez stepped back from her initial defiance by offering to work with Trump. "We extend an invitation to the US government to work together on an agenda for cooperation," the former vice president said. Some 2,000 Maduro supporters, including rifle-wielding men on motorcycles, rallied Sunday in Caracas, with crowds shouting and waving Venezuelan flags.

that discussions of Venezuela holding elections following Maduro's ouster were "premature."

When asked what he needs from interim leader Rodriguez, Trump said: "We need total access. We need access to the oil and other things in their country that allow us to rebuild their country."

Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves, and more Venezuelan crude in the market could exacerbate oversupply concerns and add to recent pressure on prices.

But analysts say that alongside other major questions about the South American country's future, substantially lifting its oil production will not be easy, quick or cheap. Oil dipped as investors weighed the impact.

One dead, 7 injured as terrorists target cement factory bus in Lakki Marwat

PEAK POINT



LAKKI MARWAT: An explosion near a private cement factory bus in the Bego Khel area of Lakki Marwat has resulted in one death while seven others, including two women, were injured on Monday.

According to the police, the blast occurred when terrorists targeted the vehicle with an IED close to Nawar khel mor, as it was en route to the factory.

The explosion completely destroyed the vehicle. Officials confirmed that a factory employee lost their life, while seven others, including four factory workers, were injured. Several of the injured are in critical condition.

The wounded were immediately transported to a nearby hospital for medical treatment.



SPORTS



Asian Champions eye another U19 title



PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will aim to clinch another title when they take on hosts Zimbabwe in the U19 tri-series final at the Old Hararians in Harare on Tuesday, January 6.

The first-ball of the match will be bowled at 9.30am local time. Fresh from their title win in the ACC Men's U19 Asia Cup in Dubai, where they defeated India by 191 runs on December 21, Pakistan will be looking to secure back-to-back titles under the leadership of Farhan Yousaf, said a press release.

The 50-over tri-series was organised to help Afghanistan, Pakistan and Zimbabwe prepare for the ICC Men's U19 World Cup, scheduled to take place in Namibia and Zimbabwe from January 15 to February 6.

Pakistan topped the group stage with six points from four matches. Both of their fixtures against the hosts were washed out with only the first innings completed on each occasion.

Zimbabwe finished second with five points, while Afghanistan ended the league series in third position with one point.

For Pakistan, Sameer Minhas, who was named player of the tournament in the recently concluded eight-team ACC Men's U19 Asia Cup, has led the batting charts in the tri-series with 246 runs from four matches at an average of 61.50 and a strike rate of 114.42, including one century and one half-century. 18-year-old Usman Khan is another centurion for Pakistan, scoring 225 runs at an average of 56.25.

In the bowling department, right-arm fast bowler Umar Zaib has grabbed five wickets from three matches, while leg-spinner Usman has picked four wickets.

Pakistan U19 captain Farhan Yousaf looking ahead to the final, said, "The tri-series has helped us prepare well for the upcoming mega event. Our batting unit has shown positive intent, while the bowlers have delivered at key moments.

"Playing a final against the hosts will be a good challenge for us. The players are ready and we want to finish the tournament on a positive note and carry momentum into the World Cup." 15-member squad: Farhan Yousaf (captain), Usman Khan (vice-captain), Abdul Subhan, Ahmed Hussain, Ali Hasan Baloch.

Pak-China Friendship Tenpin Bowling Championship from Jan 24

PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: The Sports and Culture Attaché of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, Mr. Cheng Peng, has said that the Pak-China Friendship Tenpin Bowling Championship will further strengthen relations between the two countries. He expressed these views during his visit to the venue of the Pak-China Friendship Tenpin Bowling Championship, Leisure City Bowling Club, Safa Gold F-7 Mazkar, Islamabad. Other officials of the Chinese Embassy, Mr. Zhang and President of the Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation, Ijaz-ur-Rehman, were also present on the occasion. President, Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation, Ijaz-ur-Rehman, while briefing the Sports and Culture Attaché of the Chinese Embassy, Mr. Cheng Peng, regarding the arrangements for the Pak-China Friendship Tenpin Bowling Championship. He said that the preparations for the championship have already been started. The Pak-China Friendship Tenpin Bowling Championship and the 18th National Tenpin Bowling Championship will be held from January 24 to 30. Bowlers from all over the country will participate in the Championship. The colorful events of the championship will be the part of the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of Pak-China friendship. Singers, musicians and actors will perform and show their talents and performance in this event. Ijaz-ur-Rehman said that the aim of the meeting is to further strengthen bilateral cooperation.



Rain plays spoilsport in Pakistan-Zimbabwe U19 tri-series match



PEAK POINT HARARE: Persistent rain forced the abandonment of the sixth match of the ICC U-19 ODI tri-series between Pakistan and Zimbabwe at the Old Hararians Sports Club on Sunday, with no result possible despite multiple attempts to resume play. Zimbabwe were unable to begin their chase in the second innings as continuous rain showers and damp conditions left officials with no option but to call off the contest. Despite the washout, both Pakistan and Zimbabwe have already confirmed their places in the tri-series final, scheduled for Tuesday. Earlier, Zimbabwe produced a disciplined bowling performance to bowl Pakistan out for 208 in 46.3 overs after the visitors won the toss and elected to bat. Pakistan made a steady start through openers Ali Hassan Baloch and Sameer Minhas, but the opening stand of 25 ended when Shelton Mazvitorera dismissed Hassan Baloch for three. Minhas then added stability alongside Usman Khan, with the pair sharing a 63-run partnership that briefly put Pakistan in control.

Leeroy Chiwaula broke the stand by removing Minhas for a well-made 48 off 58 balls, including seven boundaries, leaving Pakistan at 88-2. Chiwaula struck again soon after, dismissing Mohammad Shayan for one, triggering a middle-order slide. Usman Khan contributed 41 off 53 deliveries, striking four fours and a six, before falling to Michael Bignaut. Captain Farhan Yousaf failed to capitalize on his start and was dismissed for 12, reducing Pakistan to 123-5. A recovery effort followed as Huzaira Ahsan and Ahmed Hussain stitched together a crucial 71-run partnership, lifting Pakistan past the 150-run mark. Huzaira scored 34,

Pakistan's top runners to represent country at London Marathon 2026 after Karachi Marathon success



Bangladesh orders indefinite ban on IPL telecast after Mustafizur Rahman row

PEAK POINT BANGLADESH: The Bangladesh government on Monday ordered an indefinite ban on the telecast and promotion of the Indian Premier League (IPL) following the controversy surrounding the removal of Bangladesh fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman from the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) squad, The Daily Star reported.

The development comes after KKR said on Saturday they had released the Bangladesh bowler after being told to do so by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Bangladesh are scheduled to play three T20 World Cup matches in Kolkata next month, with the February 7-March 8 tournament being co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

On Sunday, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) said after an emergency meeting that it had "formally requested" the International Cricket Council (ICC) shift its team's games to Sri Lanka.

A statement from the ministry's assistant secretary Firoz Khan.

"There is no logical reason for this decision of the Indian Cricket Board and such a decision has distressed, shocked and angered the people of Bangladesh," the government statement further said, according to India Today.



Head hits back for Australia after Krot's majestic 160 in fifth Ashes Test



istry of information and broadcasting said that it had "noted that no reason was communicated for the decision behind Mustafizur Rahman's exclusion [from the IPL]" and that the development had "caused distress among the people of Bangladesh", Daily Star reported.



Ministerial no-whow sparks senate Revolt, ETPB review halted in protest

NADEEM TANOLI
ISLAMABAD: A Senate sub committee meeting meant to scrutinize the finances, assets, and governance of the Evacuee Trust Property Board collapsed into open protest after senior ministers failed once again to appear before lawmakers, triggering warnings of escalation to the Chairman Senate and the Privileges Committee. The meeting of the Sub Committee of the Senate Functional Committee on Problems of Less Developed Areas, convened by Senator Dinesh Kumar, was called to examine revenue collection, expenditure mechanisms, policies, and the complete asset profile of the Evacuee

Trust Property Board, an institution that controls some of the country's most valuable religious and evacuee properties. Instead of answers, the committee was met with empty chairs. The absence of the Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and the Minister of State for Religious Affairs drew sharp criticism from senators, who described the no-show as a serious breach of parliamentary accountability. Convener Senator Dinesh Kumar, supported by Senator Nadeem Bhutto, declared that any meaningful discussion on ETPB's finances and assets was impossible without ministerial presence. Members noted that this was not an isolated lapse, as the

same ministers had skipped the previous meeting as well, despite repeated notices and the sensitivity of the agenda. In a rare and pointed move, the committee formally deferred the entire agenda as a mark of protest, signaling growing frustration within Parliament over what senators view as sustained executive indifference. Senator Dinesh Kumar warned that if the concerned ministers fail to attend the next meeting, the issue will be raised before the Chairman Senate and formally referred to the Privileges Committee, a step that could trigger disciplinary proceedings for breach of parliamentary privilege. The committee also turned its fire on procedural violations, tak-

ing serious notice of the failure to provide mandatory working papers at least 48 hours before the meeting. Senators said the lack of documentation crippled oversight and suggested either gross negligence or deliberate obstruction. All concerned departments were directed to strictly comply with legal requirements for advance submission of papers in future sessions. Despite the uproar, the Secretary of the Ministry of Religious Affairs attempted to justify the minister's absence by informing the committee that the Federal Minister had recently undergone surgery. However, this explanation failed to defuse concerns, with members

emphasizing that parliamentary scrutiny cannot be suspended indefinitely, especially when questions surround the management of public and trust properties. The committee decided that the next meeting will demand complete province wise details of ETPB properties, including income streams and expenditure patterns, indicating that lawmakers intend to pursue a far deeper probe once ministerial accountability is enforced. Officials were put on notice that future sessions would involve detailed line by line scrutiny of assets and financial controls. While the Chairman of the Evacuee Trust Property Board joined the meeting

online, senators made it clear that technical participation could not substitute for political responsibility. With the agenda shelved in protest, the session ended on a confrontational note, underscoring a widening rift between Parliament and the executive over transparency and respect for legislative oversight. The episode marks yet another flash point in Senate executive relations, raising uncomfortable questions about who is willing to answer for institutions managing billions of rupees in public and trust assets and who continues to evade the chamber meant to hold them accountable.

UNCIP resolution of Jan 5 reaffirms Kashmiris' Right to Self-Determination: Experts

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a high-level roundtable on Monday underscored that the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) resolution of January 5, 1949 remains the legal and moral foundation of the Kashmiris' right to self-determination, stressing that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute is still alive on the United Nations agenda and demands an early and just resolution.

The roundtable, titled "5 January: The Call for Self-Determination in Jammu and Kashmir," was organised by the India Study Centre at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in collaboration with the Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) and the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), to commemorate and highlight the significance of the historic UNCIP resolution, said a press release.



Speaking at the occasion, Chairman Board of Governance, ISSI, Ambassador, Khalid Mahmood said that the 5 January 1949 resolution established the principle that the fate of Jammu and Kashmir would be decided by the people of Jammu and

Kashmir through a free and impartial plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations (UN). India used to claim that Jammu and Kashmir is a bilateral issue, and lately, it has started saying that it is an internal issue, as it is an integral part of India. This position is not acceptable for Pakistan, Kashmiris and the international community, who believe that Jammu and Kashmir is not a territorial issue but a matter of the right

of self-determination of the people. He highlighted that it was India itself that took the matter to the UN. The UN prescribed the solution which India accepted but later on backtracked. India sometimes says this issue should be settled bilaterally and sometimes says it has already been settled. Pakistan believes that apart from bilateralism, under the UN Charter there are several other peaceful methods of resolving the dispute.

Opinion & Editorial

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Export decline

THE trend is unmistakable. The sharp fall of 20.4pc in Pakistan's export shipments last month underscores that the slump stems from structural factors and should no longer be dismissed as a temporary setback. Trade data shows that December marks the fifth consecutive monthly export decline — and the sharpest one — in the first half of the present fiscal. The sustained export contraction heightens the risks to the nation's external sector recovery as growing imports threaten to erode the gains achieved through demand compression over the past two years. Imports crossing the \$6bn mark last month for the first time during the current fiscal year signal that a policy shift towards trade normalisation and liberalisation have revived import demand faster than anticipated. In absolute terms, the \$118m boost in imports is quite modest given the country's size and consumption trends. But when juxtaposed with the sharp contraction in exports, it pushes the monthly trade deficit up by 25pc to \$3.7bn. The six-month cumulative picture of trade imbalance is even more worrisome. The \$19.2bn trade deficit posted in the July-December period is 35pc higher than last year. Pakistan's poor export performance has always remained the weakest link in its external sector stability chain.

The story of Pakistan told in milestone years

SHAHID JAVED BURKI
There are several ways of writing history. The most common way is to follow the chronological order when writing about a nation or an individual. For the countries under discussion, the starting date is picked, and the story is told, going from one notable event to the next. For Pakistan, the starting date is not necessarily 1947, when the country won independence, or 1906, when British India's large Muslim population formed the All-India Muslim League to focus on protecting the rights of the followers of their distinct faith. The choice of the starting date can be controversial. For the United States, should 1776 be the beginning of the story when a group of leaders issued what came to be called the Declaration of Independence? With that as the starting date, the country is getting ready to celebrate its 250th birthday in 2026. Or, as some historians have argued, the starting date should be much earlier, when the first boat carrying slaves arrived from Africa to the eastern shores of America. The argument for choosing the earlier date is that the country's black population was to play a critical role in developing it. For some historians, migration becomes the dominant feature of the entire history of a nation. For Alexander Gershenkron, who taught me economic history

at Harvard University, migration — or generally the large-scale movement of people — is the defining feature of the lives of nations. He was a Russian Jew who had first left his country and gone to France, from where he moved to the United States. He encouraged me to look at the large movements of people that followed the decision by Britain to leave its large colony by dividing it into two parts — a predominantly Hindu India and a largely Muslim Pakistan. Under his guidance, I came up with an estimate of 14 million people who had left their homes and moved to the country where they wanted to be citizens. Eight million Muslims came from India to Pakistan, and six million Hindus and Sikhs moved in the other direction. I have been telling the story of a Pakistan now for several years. I have published books on the country. In telling the story again today, I will adopt a different approach. I will identify the twelve years that matter for the story of Pakistan and then very briefly indicate why I regard these years as important historical milestones. The years are 1947, 1951, 1958, 1962, 1971, 1978, 1908, 1988, 1991, 2001, 2023 and 2025. What follows is a brief indication of why I attach significance to these thirteen years in telling the Pakistan history. 1947 is the year the British left their large Indian

colony over which they had ruled for almost two centuries. They arrived as traders and stayed as the rulers. They were pressed to leave by the Indian nationalist leaders of whom the most important were MK Gandhi and MA Jinnah. The former adopted a non-violent approach to send the British home while the latter campaigned for the establishment of a Muslim state in the parts of the colony in which the followers of the Islamic faith were in majority. The second important year was 1951 when Liaquat Ali Khan, the country's first prime minister, was assassinated while addressing a public meeting in an open ground in Rawalpindi that now carries his name. What followed the killing was political turmoil that encouraged the General Ayub Khan, the commander-in-chief of the army, to remove in 1958 the civilian leadership and establish the first of five military rules in the country. There were four military presidents while most of the power today is in the hands of the chief of the armed forces. The fourth year on my list of twelve is 1962, when the military ruler introduced a new constitution based on a system of local governance that he called Basic Democracies. This was a multi-tiered arrangement in which the lowest tier was made up Union Councils, which had ten directly elected representatives. Courtesy Tribune

A lost decade

UMAIR JAVED
STUDENTS of late-20th-century politics and history might recall that the term "Lost Decade" is used to describe the 1980s in both Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Though of qualitatively different consequences, economic crises induced by an inability to service foreign debt eroded incomes and crashed growth rates in these two regions. In Africa, poverty rates went up and poor countries faced stark consequences of disease and malnutrition. In Latin America, the expected transition to upper middle- and high-income status never transpired. Deindustrialisation and stagnant incomes became the norm, leading to what economists now call the "middle income trap". It is of some note that this decade also coincided with entrenched authoritarianism (of the military dictatorship variant) and heightened state repression in both regions, much of it in service of US imperial interests. While Pakistan's economy is no stranger to boom-bust cycles, a prolonged period without adequate real income growth has been a rarity. It is true that since the early 2000s, Pakistan's economy has failed to grow at the same pace as comparator economies. It is also true that much of this lag is tied to domestic political economy dysfunction, given how others in the region appear to be doing better. But the general crisis has been of comparatively sluggish growth (ie, averaged out spurts and troughs), rather than none at all, especially in labour incomes. That is until this preceding decade (2015-2025). Analysis of recently released Labour Force Survey (LFS) data by economist Ahmed Pirzada and others shows that the last 10 years have seen no labour income growth in real terms. From a baseline of 2015, inflation-adjusted labour incomes (wages) rose by about 15 per cent over a four-year period till 2019 and have since then crashed back to 2015 levels in the subsequent six years. Courtesy Dawn

President reaffirms Pakistan's support for Kashmiris' right to self-determination



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: President, Asif Ali Zardari, on Right to Self-Determination Day reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering moral, political and diplomatic support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, urging the international community to play an effective role in ensuring the implementation of United Nations resolutions on the dispute. In his message issued on the occasion, the President said that on January 5, the people of Pakistan stood in solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir to commemorate the adoption of a 1949 UN resolution that recognised the disputed status of the territory and affirmed the

Kashmiri people's right to determine their future through a free and impartial plebiscite. He noted that more than seven decades later, the commitment made by the United Nations remained unfulfilled, adding that the passage of time had neither weakened the validity of UN resolutions nor diminished the legitimacy of the Kashmiri people's demand for self-determination. The continued denial of this right, he said, was in clear contradiction to the UN Charter and international law. President Zardari expressed serious concern over the prevailing situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, pointing to restrictions on political activity and freedom of expression, prolonged detentions and the use of coercive laws, which he said had created an atmosphere of fear and impunity. He added that civilians continued to suffer, with families displaced and livelihoods disrupted. The President also highlighted emerging challenges related to control over rivers originating in Jammu and Kashmir, warning that India's unilateral suspension of the Indus Waters

Treaty was a grave development with serious implications for the lives of Kashmiris and regional stability. He termed the move an attempt to weaponise water, threatening livelihoods, food security and peace for millions dependent on shared resources. Reiterating Pakistan's position, President Zardari said the Jammu and Kashmir dispute was rooted in the aspirations of the Kashmiri people and could not be resolved through force or unilateral actions.

He stressed that lasting peace in South Asia was possible only through dialogue and the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions, without prejudice to the recognised positions of the parties.

Calling upon the United Nations and the wider international community to move beyond expressions of concern, the President urged concrete steps to enable Kashmiris to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and to address ongoing human rights violations. He concluded by reaffirming that Pakistan would continue to stand with the people.

Maktab launch signals national resolve for digital transformation in higher education: Ahsan Iqbal

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Monday said the launch of Maktab, an integrated digital platform introduced under the Higher Education Commission (HEC), was a clear message of Pakistan's national resolve to transform higher education through digital governance, transparency and performance-based systems. Addressing the online launching ceremony of Maktab, the minister said Pakistan's universities were moving away from cumbersome paper-based processes towards modern, efficient and data-driven performance management systems. "From now on, decisions in higher education institutions will not be based on assumptions but on data, evidence and measurable



outcomes," he remarked. Highlighting the strategic importance of higher education, Ahsan Iqbal said that in the 21st century, the real strength of nations lay in strong institutions and a well-trained human resource base. "World-class universities are not built merely through impressive buildings; they are shaped by transparent governance, effective management and accountability," he added. The minister said that nations do not progress accidentally. "Development is the result of planning, discipline, continuity and sustained reforms," he said.

NA speaker says opposition has not made formal contact for initiating talks

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said on Monday that the opposition had not yet made formal contact for initiating talks with the government.

He made the remarks while speaking to the media, according to a handout issued by the NA Secretariat. It quoted him as saying that "opposition had not yet made any formal contact to initiate a dialogue". "My role in the talks is only that of a facilitator," he said. Sadiq further stated that the committee system in the lower house of Parliament was fully functional as per constitutional requirements, adding that he was "completely independent" in his position. On the topic of the appointment of the NA opposition leader, Sadiq said that four letters had been sent to the opposition's chief whip in this regard. He said that after the fourth letter, the opposition had submitted a certified copy of their decision. "The constitutional process for the appointment of the next opposition leader will be initiated in the next parliamentary ses-

sion," Sadiq said.

He added that the process will move forward "after checking and verification of the signatures of the opposition members".

Last month, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had reiterated his offer for talks with the opposition but also emphasised that dialogue between the two sides could only proceed on "legitimate matters".

Subsequently, at a recent national conference organised by the Tehreek-i-Tahafuz-i-Ayin-i-Pakistan (TTAP) opposition alliance, participants had agreed that the door for dialogue must never be closed in a democracy.

The same day, political leaders from across the spectrum, including stalwarts from the ruling PML-N, called for dialogue and restraint to achieve stability in the country, saying that political confrontation was causing instability and violence.

However, the PTI later said that it would not engage in negotiations with the federal government.

Investing in youth essential for national progress: Shaza Fatima

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Calling youth empowerment the cornerstone of Pakistan's digital and economic future, Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Monday said that sustained investment in young talent is essential for national progress. She was addressing the closing ceremony of the 19th Buraq Space Camp organized by OIC-COMSTECH at the COMSTECH Secretariat. The minister attended the event as the chief guest and lauded the initiative for nurturing scientific curiosity, innovation, and leadership among students.

She informed the audience that the Buraq Space Camp commenced on December 29, 2025, and 40 shortlisted students successfully completed their intensive training. "Children like you are the most precious asset of our country and the architects of our future," she said, emphasizing that Pakistan urgently requires young leadership to navigate emerging national and global challenges. She stressed.

Wani reminds UN of its legal and moral responsibilities towards Kashmir issue

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) Altaf Hussain Wani on Monday urged the UN to play its much-needed role to help resolve the Kashmir dispute in line with the Kashmiris' wishes and aspirations.

Reminding the UN of its legal and moral responsibilities towards the Kashmir dispute, the KIIR chief said that it was quite unfortunate that the Kashmiri people were reeling under India's illegal occupation despite the passage of decades.

Referring to the deteriorating political and human rights situation in the region, he said that Indian occupation forces



have broken all records of barbarism and brutality in the region.

"The silence of the international community has encouraged India to pursue such policies which are now threatening the very existence of the people of occupied Kashmir," he said, adding that the international community, particularly the United Nations, has a responsibility towards the people of Kashmir.

Mashhood reiterates Pakistan's unwavering political, moral, diplomatic support for Kashmiris

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) Chairman, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan reiterated Pakistan's unwavering political, moral and diplomatic support for the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination.

On the Right to Self-Determination Day, he reminded the world of the United Nations Security Council resolution of January 5, 1949. The resolution guaranteed Kashmiris the right to decide their future through a free and impartial plebiscite.

Chairman PMYP also announced that the PMYP would intensify youth-led advocacy at



national and international levels. The aim is to highlight India's violations of international law in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

In a message, Rana Mashhood said the Kashmir issue is not a frozen chapter of history. He called it a bleeding reality for millions. Khan said decades had passed since the world pledged justice.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Whip Opposition Benches Malik Muhammad Amir Dogar called on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq to hand over the letter regarding appointment of Leader of Opposition at Parliament House.

KP CM Sohail Afridi calls on lawyers to stand up for independence of judiciary

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Monday called on lawyers in Islamabad to stand up for an independent judiciary as he continued his efforts to rally support for the PTI's street movement.

The KP CM made the remarks while addressing the legal fraternity at an event organised by the Islamabad Bar Association. After completing a three-day visit to Lahore, Afridi has announced Karachi as his next destination.

"If you do not stand up for the supremacy of the Constitution and the law and for an independent judiciary, then future generations will spit on us and you as well," Afridi said.

He urged them to announce a lawyers' movement, adding that the youth will support them. "Long live resistance," the chief minister said.

"You must support the PTI founder [Imran Khan] against oppression and barbarity. Whose conscience is even one per cent alive will stand against the 26th and



27th Constitutional Amendments, as well as unfair trials — whether of journalists or politicians — and will demand the release of all political workers who are wrongfully in jail," Afridi said.

CM Afridi also stressed

that Imran did not seek his release, but rather a fair trial. "A convicted person was received at the airport," the PTI leader said, apparently referring to ex-premier Nawaz Sharif landing in Islamabad after he returned to Pakistan in October 2023.

During his address, Afridi also praised Advocate Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazri, who was among the audience.

"Imaan Mazari has created a new history of resistance. The youth receive encouragement from her," Afridi said.

He also mentioned that some journalists were recently sentenced after their "trials in absentia".

"Arshad Sharif had to leave his country to save his life because he was not getting justice and security here, but he was not spared

even abroad," the KP CM said, referring to the journalist being shot dead in Kenya on Oct 23, 2022.

Afridi cautioned the lawyers that while the PTI was facing "oppression and fascism today", it could be their turn tomorrow. "You will not be able to tolerate what the PTI has," he said.

Afridi once again lamented that he was repeatedly being denied a meeting with Imran, who is incarcerated at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail. "Three judges [of the IHC] issued orders for [my] meeting with the PTI.