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## PM Shehbaz Sharif arrives in Qatar on two day official visit

E.G REPORT

**QATAR:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Monday arrived in Qatar on a two-day official visit at the invitation of the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

The Prime Minister was received at the King Hamad International Airport in Doha by Qatar's Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi, Pakistan's ambassador to Qatar, Muhammad Amir, and diplomatic staff. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar, and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Tariq

Fatemi, are also accompanying the Prime Minister. During his visit to Qatar, the Prime Minister will hold bilateral meetings with the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, to discuss enhancing cooperation in the areas of economic and energy partnership, and people-to-people exchanges.

The two sides will also discuss ways to further advance cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, infrastructure development, and manpower export.

The Prime Minister's visit reflects the deep brotherly ties between the two countries and highlights their shared commitment to further strengthen multilateral cooperation.



**DOHA:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is being received by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of State of Qatar, H.E Dr Muhammad bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi at King Hammad International Airport, as he arrives in Qatar on two day official visit.

## Iran says any US attack including limited strikes would be 'act of aggression'

PEAK POINT



**IRAN:** Iran said on Monday that any attack by the United States, including limited strikes, would be an "act of aggression" that would precipitate a response, after US President Donald Trump said he was considering a limited strike on Iran.

"With respect to your first question concerning the limited strike, I think there is no limited strike," foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said at a briefing in Tehran attended by an AFP journalist.

"An act of aggression would be regarded as an act of aggression. Period.

"And any state would react to an act of aggression as part of its inherent right of self-defence ferociously so that's what we would do."

Trump said on Friday he was considering a limited strike if Tehran did not reach a deal with the US.

"I guess I can say I am considering that," he replied following a question from reporters. The two countries concluded a second round of indirect talks.

## Opposition leaders hold sit-in outside SC, demand immediate scheduling of Imran's cases

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD:

Members of the opposition protested outside the Supreme Court (SC) on Monday to demand that the cases of incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan be immediately scheduled for hearing and that he be allowed to meet his family. Imran, imprisoned since August 2023, is serving a 14-year sentence at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail in a £190 million corruption case and was convicted in another case regarding state gifts recently. His health has been garnering attention in recent days, with his family and party raising concerns since his eye ailment — right central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO) — came to light

in late January. Senate Opposition leader Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) on X.



Allama Nasir Abbas and PTI leader Salman Akram Raja participated in the protest, as well as other members of the assembly, including Amir Dogar, Shafiqullah Jan, Muhammad Hussain and Shahid Khattak. The protest participants also demanded that "a complete medical examination be conducted through his personal doctors", according to a

video shared by the TTAP showed the parliamentarians sitting on the lawn outside the SC and talking amongst themselves.

Imran's family and associates had been barred from visiting him for several weeks until the SC's intervention earlier this month led to PTI lawyer Salman

Safdar being allowed to visit him. Following his report to the SC, which said only 15 per cent vision was left in the PTI founder's right eye, prompting outrage and protests from the opposition against his treatment.

The TTAP had held a sit-in at the Parliament House the previous week for the fulfillment of its demands for Imran's treatment and examination, eventually calling it off after five days in deference to the holy month of Ramadan.

Meanwhile, PPP leader Sharjeel Inam Memon on Sunday said that Imran Khan's release was "in his own hands" as it depended on his party's "attitude".

## 3 Federal Constabulary men martyred in terrorist attack in KP's Karak

PEAK POINT

LAKKI MARWAT:

Three Federal Constabulary men were martyred in a terrorist attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Karak district on Monday, according to officials. In a statement, Karak police spokesperson Shaukat Khan said terrorists initially carried out a quadcopter attack on the Federal Constabulary fort in the Dargah Shaheedan area. Karak District Police Officer Saood Khan said that as the injured were being transported to the hospital via an ambulance, the vehicle was also ambushed by terrorists, leading to the martyr.

## Govt delegation, Achakzai likely to meet this week

PEAK POINT

**ISLAMABAD:** A meeting between the government delegation and Opposition Leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai is expected to take place later this week, with key issues such as electoral reforms on the agenda.

Source aid the discussion will focus on important matters, including the potential for early elections. Opposition leader Achakzai has already informed PTI leadership about the contacts with the government. Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has not been consulted on these ongoing political talks yet.

## Security forces kill five terrorists, including suicide bomber, during IBO in Balochistan's Pishin: ISPR

PEAK POINT

**RAWALPINDI:** Security forces killed five terrorists, including a suicide bomber, during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Balochistan's Pishin district, said a statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Monday.

The military's media wing said the terrorist taskforce (formation) was engaged with multiple weapons. "After an intense fire exchange, suicide bomber Kharij cowardly blew himself up and four other Indian sponsored Kharij were hunted down and sent to hell."

were recovered from the killed terrorists, National Action Plan by security forces and



said the ISPR, and added that the militants were "actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area". "Sanitisation operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Indian-sponsored terrorists found in the area. Relentless counter-terrorism campaign under vision 'Azm-i-Istehkam' (as approved by Federal Apex Committee on

law enforcement agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country." The spokesperson for Balochistan's Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) also confirmed the IBO and the losses suffered by the terrorists in an earlier statement. He added that the

terrorists had "planned to attack the police lines and Cadet College Pishin".

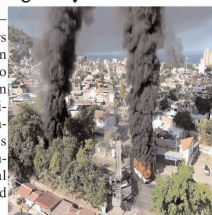
President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in their separate statements, commended the security forces for their successful operation against terrorists, state-run Radio Pakistan reported.

The president said the IBO "against the Indian-backed Fitna al Khawarij reflects the nation's resolve in the fight against terrorism". He said the war against terrorism will continue until the "complete eradication of this menace". In his statement, PM Shehbaz highlighted that the security forces were making great

## Mexican drug lord killing sparks revenge attacks; cars and businesses set ablaze, highways blocked

PEAK POINT

**MEXICO:** Within hours of the killing of Mexican drug lord Nemesio Oseguera, better known as El Mencho, in a military raid on Sunday, gunmen suspected to be his supporters blocked highways across several states and set cars and businesses ablaze.



In some towns, tourists and residents were urged to stay indoors, while truckers were advised to take safe routes or return to their depots until the violence abated.

Several airlines, including Air Canada, United Airlines and Aeromexico, on Sunday cancelled flights to Puerto Vallarta, a beachside resort town where stunned tourists filmed plumes of smoke rising into the sky from fires.

The burst of violence across more than half a dozen states painted a familiar scene for Mexicans who have spent two decades watching successive governments wage war on drug cartels, ravaging broad swaths of the country.

A member of Oseguera's Jalisco New Generation Cartel told Reuters that the blazes and sporadic gunfire were carried out in revenge for the government.



# SPORTS



## T20 World Cup: Pakistan warn England's flaky batting to expect a trial by spin

## PSL: Sialkot Stallions owner steps down amid major share sale



PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday warned England's inconsistent batting line-up to expect a trial by spin when the teams clash in the T20 World Cup Super Eights.

Pakistan batsman Sahibzade Farhan told reporters that England struggled to 146-9 against Sri Lanka's spinners on Sunday.

Farhan said that England can expect more of the same from Pakistan's spinners when they meet on the same Pallekele ground in Kandy on Tuesday night.

Pakistan desperately need a win after their first match against

New Zealand was washed out.

A defeat would put England, who skittled Sri Lanka for 95 to win by 51 runs, through to the semi-finals with a game to spare.

Pakistan would then need to beat Sri Lanka in their final Super Eights match and hope other results go their way to reach the last four. "What we saw in the Sri Lanka-England game was that the ball was gripping and England struggled against spin," said the in-form opener Farhan on Monday. "Sri Lanka have one or two spinners but we have five in all so we will give England a tough time on a pitch that looks

good and will grip," said Farhan. Pakistan's spinners have taken 26 wickets in the four matches so far. Their seamers have dismissed only seven batsmen.

History will be against Pakistan as they have never beaten England in the three previous Twenty20 World Cup clashes.

"We are confident and our morale is high," said Farhan, who scored an unbeaten 100 against Namibia in Pakistan's final group match.

"We are focused on this match to win and progress."

Farhan, who tops the T20 World Cup run-scoring chart with

220, said he was ready for the threat of England's express pace bowler Jofra Archer.

"Facing Archer will not be difficult because I have faced similar bowlers in Pakistan," said Farhan. "So if he has plans against me, I also have plans against him."

Pakistan are likely to bring in spinner Abrar Ahmed in place of seaming all-rounder Faheem Ashraf.

England may name an unchanged side for the fifth match in succession with Liam Dawson, Will Jacks, Adil Rashid and Jacob Bethell providing their spin options.



PEAK POINT

SIALKOT: In a significant development in the Pakistan Super League (PSL), Kamil Khan, owner of the newly inducted franchise Sialkot Stallions, has formally announced his departure from the team.

In a post on social media platform X, Khan said that he took charge of the Sialkot Stallions out of his deep love for Pakistan cricket and carried out his responsibilities with sincerity and commitment.

He highlighted that despite a short span of time, the franchise achieved notable milestones, including signing Australian star Steve Smith, appointing former Australia captain Tim Paine as head coach, and securing a partnership with global sportswear brand New Balance.

Khan stated that his decision to step away followed careful consideration of recent administrative decisions.

Although he had made up his mind some time ago, he wanted to ensure the franchise was left in safe hands before formally announcing his exit.

He also extended his best wishes to the team for future success.

In another major development, reports indicate that more than 90 percent of the shares of the Sialkot Stallions are being sold to a new investor group.

## Diamond Paints/Master Paints clinch Allied Bank 97th Punjab Polo Cup trophy



PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Diamond Paints/Master Paints clinched the Allied Bank 97th Punjab Polo Cup 2026 trophy after edging out FG Polo by 5-4 in a thrilling final at the Lahore Polo Club ground on Sunday. In a nail-biting encounter that kept spectators on the edge of their seats until the final moments, Diamond Paints/Master Paints edged out FG Polo with a narrow 5-4 margin. With this win,

the team secured the prestigious 141-year-old trophy, widely regarded as one of the oldest sporting trophies in the world. The final was a showcase of international talent and tactical prowess.

For the winning side, Iranian sensation Amirreza Behbudi led the charge with a hat-trick of goals, while Facundo Retamar added two crucial goals to the tally. FG Polo put up a formidable fight, led by Raul Laplacette,

goal performance. Selina, owned by Sufi Muhammad Haroon, was recognised as the best-performing polo pony of the final. Earlier in the day, the Lahore Polo Club team secured the third position by thumping BN Polo with a convincing 7-3 scoreline.

The event was graced by Husnain Mirza, Group Head CRBG Allied Bank Limited, as chief guest. Also in attendance were Lahore Polo Club President Malik Azam Hayat Noon, executive committee members, senior club members, and a large gathering of families and polo enthusiasts, reflecting the deep-rooted passion for the 'Game of Kings' in Lahore.

## Pakistan team trains ahead of T20 World Cup Super 8 match



## Unbeaten Karachi region Blues to qualify for National T20 Cup

PEAK POINT

KARACHI: Karachi Region Blues qualified for the final of ABS Developers University of Lahore National T20 Cup to be played on February 24 as well as the National T20 Cup 2026, as they remained unbeaten in Pool A in the T20 tournament at the Gaddafi Stadium on late Sunday night. Earlier, Karachi Region Blues and Quetta Region secured victories against Islamabad Region and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Region, respectively, as the Pool A fixtures of Qualifier ended. The win ensured Karachi Blues' berth from Pool A in the National T20 Cup 2026, set to be played in March, with four wins in as many games. They have also qualified for the final of the tournament, which is scheduled to take place on 24 February. The remaining two Pool

B fixtures will take place on Monday, with the second qualifier and finalist team yet to be decided as FATA, Bahawalpur, and Hyderabad are locked in at four points each with one game to go.

In the first match of the

er-batter Muhammad Ghazi Ghorri (28 retired hurt, 24b, 4x4s) and Wahaj Riaz (21 not out, 14b) ensured Karachi Blues posted a competitive total on the board. For Islamabad, Arsal Sheikh picked up two for 28 in his



ninth round, Karachi Blues opted to bat first and posted 161-4 in their 20 overs on the back of opening batter Ahsan Ali's 33-ball 45 laced with six fours. Ahsan also shared a 56-run partnership for the second wicket with Mohammad Taha (25, 21b, 2x4s, 1x6).

After Taha and Ahsan were dismissed, wicketkeep-

four overs. In reply, Islamabad were bowled out for 135 in 19.2 overs as they fell 26 runs short. Arsal, who walked in after Islamabad slipped to 81-5, top-scored with a 25-ball 34, featuring three fours and a six, while wicketkeeper-batter Rizwan Ali made 26 off 30 balls after arriving in the middle with 23-2 on the board.



KARACHI: Female footballer attend practice camp in Leyari Football Ground here on Monday.



# Digital Dashboard Launch: Benazir Nashonuma Programme marks new era in nutrition management

## PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Syed Imran Ahmad Shah Monday said that over 4.3 million mothers and children had benefited from the Benazir Nashonuma Programme so far and that the government was determined to eliminate malnutrition and stunting from Pakistan.

The minister stated during the launch of the Digital Dashboard for real-time monitoring of Benazir Nashonuma programme in a ceremony held at the BISP.

The ceremony was held in

collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP). The minister said Pakistan was facing a grave challenge of malnutrition, with national surveys confirming that over forty percent of children under the age of five were stunted.

He warned that stunting was not merely a health issue but a direct blow to the nation's future, as no country could progress on the shoulders of a generation robbed of its physical and mental potential. "The real foundation of poverty alleviation is human development, and our government's commitment to this



cause is unwavering," he said. Imran Shah said the Benazir Nashonuma Programme provided health and nutrition-linked financial assistance to ensure deserving mothers and children received both cash support

through real-time data, enabling swift and informed policy decisions.

He said the government viewed social protection not as charity but as a long-term investment in human capital, adding that BISP would continue to uphold transparency, quality and accountability across all its programmes. He extended gratitude to WFP, UNICEF and WHO for their invaluable technical assistance in making the programme a success.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairperson BISP, Senator Rubina Khalid reaffirmed the government's strengthened

commitment to the millions of mothers and children at the heart of the programme.

She said that since joining BISP, she had made field visits a personal priority, believing firmly that the real hardships of people in remote areas could never be grasped from Islamabad and had to be seen firsthand. She stressed the need for full coordination across all government departments, saying the vision of the President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for national progress could only be achieved when all institutions worked as one.

# Rs 2.4 Billion for PTV Sports upgrade as officials admit dependence on foreign crews for PSL coverage

## NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: The Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting was informed that Pakistan Television (PTV) is seeking Rs 2.4 billion under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2026-27 to establish a Virtual Studio and modern Field Operations for PTV Sports, after officials admitted that the state broadcaster currently lacks international standard equipment and remains dependent on foreign crews for major sporting events. The proposed

project, titled "Establishment of a Virtual Studio and Field Operations of PTV Sports," is planned for a duration of two years with an estimated cost of Rs 2.4 billion. Officials presenting the scheme described it as a comprehensive modernization initiative aimed at equipping PTV Sports with advanced broadcasting technology, including the acquisition of an Outside Broadcasting (OB) Van and a complete high definition production setup capable of covering multiple sports across Pakistan. During the briefing,

a Committee member of the committee directly questioned the existing state of sports broadcasting. She asked whether any proper system currently exists for sports coverage or whether PTV operates without a modern technical framework. In response, a senior official acknowledged that PTV does not possess international standard cameras and broadcasting equipment required for high quality sports production. The official further admitted that for major events, including the Pakistan Super League

(PSL), broadcasting equipment and technical crews are brought in from abroad. He stated that PTV remains dependent on foreign rental services and outsourced production teams due to the absence of its own advanced infrastructure. Defending the Rs 2.4 billion proposal, the official argued that the new setup would be a "once and for all" investment that would eliminate recurring rental costs and reduce dependence on external service providers. He emphasized that the project would not be limited to cricket cov-

erage but would expand PTV Sports' capacity to professionally broadcast a wider range of domestic sporting events. Committee members also sought clarification regarding project feasibility and financial planning. A Committee member specifically asked whether a formal feasibility study had been conducted. The official confirmed that a complete PC-1 (Planning Commission Form 1) had been prepared, containing technical, financial, and operational details of the proposed scheme. He offered to provide the detailed PC-1

to committee members for comprehensive review before budget approval. The discussion highlighted a significant structural gap in Pakistan's public sports broadcasting infrastructure, as lawmakers weighed whether a multi-billion rupee investment would deliver long term cost savings and technological independence or require further scrutiny. The committee is expected to review the detailed PC-1 documentation before making final recommendations under the 2026-27 PSDP allocations.

# Opinion & Editorial

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## Ukraine's Existential Struggle for Freedom and Independence



February 24 marks four years since the beginning of Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. For the fifth consecutive year, Ukraine has been resisting the invasion, exercising the inherent right of self-defence enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter. The war has already lasted longer than the 1941-1945 conflict between the Nazi Third Reich and the USSR—a sobering historical parallel that underscores both its duration and its magnitude. From the outset, Russia's actions have constituted a flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, which prohibits the acquisition of territory by force. On 2 March 2022, 141 UN member states adopted the UN General Assembly Resolution "Aggression against Ukraine," unequivocally condemning Moscow's invasion. Yet condemnation alone has not halted the violence. The human cost is staggering. According to expert assessments, Russia's losses in killed and wounded have exceeded one million people. What has Russia achieved at such an enormous cost? Over the past two years, Russian forces have occupied approximately 1.5 percent of Ukraine's territory. In many sectors, their daily advance has been measured in tens of meters—slower than during trench warfare in the First World War. The inability to break Ukraine's resistance has exposed the limitations of the Russian military machine. Despite vast material and human resources, Moscow has failed to achieve its strategic objectives: the destruction of Ukraine's statehood and independence. Meanwhile, Ukraine has demonstrated resilience and operational effectiveness. It now possesses the largest land army in Europe and ranks among the world's twenty most powerful armed forces. Its defence-industrial complex has shown unprecedented growth under wartime conditions, significantly strengthening national defence capabilities.

The driving force behind this war remains Vladimir Putin's obsession with imperial greatness and his disregard for human life. Russian citizens are paying with their lives for the ideological illusions of their leadership. At the same time, the war has accelerated the erosion of Russia's geopolitical position—from Central Asia and the Caucasus to the Middle East and Latin America. For Ukraine, the price has been immense: tens of thousands of lives lost, children abducted, millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, and large-scale destruction of civilian and industrial infrastructure. During the winter of 2026, as temperatures fell below minus twenty degrees Celsius, Russia intensified massive missile and drone attacks against Ukraine's critical energy infrastructure. Millions were left without electricity, heating or water in freezing conditions. Such deliberate targeting civilians fall within the scope of Article II(c) of the Genocide Convention. In 2026, Russia continues to target maternity hospitals, residential buildings, markets, schools, passenger trains and buses—further expanding its record of war crimes and crimes against humanity. On the battlefield, Russian forces have also used ammunition containing dangerous chemical agents, including CS and CN gas grenades, more than 12,000 times since the start of the full-scale invasion. In January 2026 alone, at least 224 such incidents were documented. These actions constitute grave violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Ukrainian law enforcement agencies have opened 216,090 investigations into war crimes and crimes of aggression committed by Russia. These cases include the killing of at least 16,784 civilians, among them 684 children, and the wounding of 40,178 civilians, including 2,367 children. According to UN data, in 2025 alone, at least 2,514 civilians were killed and 12,142 injured—the highest annual civilian toll since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. Ninety-seven percent of these casualties resulted from deliberate Russian strikes on residential areas and civilian infrastructure. Justice is indispensable to a comprehensive and lasting peace. On 25 June 2025, an agreement establishing the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine was signed in Hague. This Tribunal is the first international judicial body since World War II mandated to prosecute the crime of aggression regardless of the official position of the suspects.

Ukraine continues to cooperate closely with the International Criminal Court to ensure accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Russia's aggression has also generated destabilizing global effects. By disrupting supply chains, Moscow has pushed at least 70 million people worldwide to the brink of starvation. Despite being at war, Ukraine remains a reliable guarantor of global food security through the humanitarian initiative "Grain from Ukraine," launched by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. More than 520,000 tons of agricultural commodities have been delivered to 18 countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, supporting approximately 20 million people. In 2025, Pakistan became a recipient of this initiative. With the support of Spain and the Czech Republic, Ukraine delivered 2,000 tons of wheat, 100 tons of vegetable oil, and 200 tons of peas—assistance valued at approximately two million US dollars. These supplies were distributed among 26,000 people affected by floods in Sindh.

Diplomatic efforts continue. Ukraine seeks peace and remains open to diplomacy. However, peace requires political will and readiness for compromise on both sides—conditions that are currently absent in Moscow. The unjust rhetoric of Russian officials and the continued strikes against civilians reveal the aggressor's true intentions. Ukraine's red lines remain unchanged: full respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; the

sovereign right to choose alliances; and no externally imposed limitations on Ukraine's defence capabilities. All security-related decisions concerning Ukraine must be made with Ukraine's full participation. Draft peace proposals that legitimize Russian occupation or annexation are perceived by Ukrainians as appeasement of aggression, with grave consequences not only for Ukraine but for the integrity of the international legal order. Such arrangements would preserve a criminal regime, normalize territorial conquest, and incentivize further expansionism. There is no credible reason to believe that this would produce a safer or more stable world. The international community appears disoriented. Instead of a renewed and equitable order, we are witnessing the emergence of an era defined by arbitrary dominance and intensified competition among major powers. Law is increasingly being supplanted by force. Despite immense suffering, Ukraine will not surrender. This war is existential for us. Yet our struggle extends beyond national survival. By containing an aggressive and terrorist regime, Ukraine makes a decisive contribution to European and global security. Support for Ukraine is not charity; it is a national investment in shared stability. Ukraine expresses appreciation for the consistent efforts of the United States aimed at ending the war and for the steadfast support of its European partners. We are equally grateful to Pakistan for its principled position in support of sovereignty and territorial integrity, and for its commitment to a just and lasting peace. As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Pakistan holds significant potential to contribute to advancing a just settlement.

Ukraine does not ask neutral states to choose between geopolitical blocs. Neutrality in great-power rivalry is understandable. However, neutrality must not become indifference to aggression and war crimes. Those who seek peace for their own societies cannot remain passive observers when the foundations of international law are under assault.

Ukraine firmly aspires to be part of a united Europe—a normative alternative to imperialism and autocracy. For its own defense and prosperity, Europe must continue to strengthen itself militarily and politically and be prepared, when necessary, to respond to global challenges in the language of power. Ukraine sees itself as a pillar of this stronger Europe.

Four years of war have passed. The path to a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace remains arduous. Yet Ukraine calls on its friends and partners to remain resolute and united. Our resilience today is an investment in a more secure tomorrow—for Ukraine, for Europe, and for the international community as a whole.

**Markan Chuchuk**  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

## Delayed appointment

THE recent appointment of a chief election commissioner for Azad Jammu & Kashmir has once again shone a spotlight on the continuing delay in the appointment of a new CEC for the Election Commission of Pakistan. While the appointment was made more than a year after the office fell vacant, and uncomfortably close to general elections in the territory scheduled for July this year, the AJK process shows that constitutional offices can be filled smoothly when the state recognises its responsibility. It also raises the question: why has the federal government failed to do the same? Sikandar Sultan Raja's five-year term expired on Jan 26, 2025. Although the 26th Constitutional Amendment allows an incumbent to continue until a successor is appointed, this provision was ostensibly aimed at preventing disruption in the ECP's important functions, not justify prolonged inaction. Article 215(4) of the Constitution envisages that such vacancies should be filled within 45 days. That deadline passed about a year ago. The continued extension of the CEC's expired tenure has only weakened the institutional credibility of the ECP and solidified perceptions that constitutional requirements have been rendered optional instead of binding.

## 'National security is non-negotiable': Parliamentary secretary on Afghanistan strikes



**ISLAMABAD:** Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Danyal Chaudhry on Monday stressed that national security was "non-negotiable" after Pakistan carried out strikes on terrorist targets in Afghanistan, killing over 80 terrorists.

"Pakistan has always chosen the path of dialogue and peaceful coexistence. But when Afghan soil continues to be used for proxy attacks, we have no choice but to defend our homeland. National security is non-negotiable," Chaudhry said in a statement.

The PML-N MNA affirmed that the people of Pakistan "stand firmly" with their armed forces in the fight against terrorism.

He urged the Afghan government to take "decisive action to prevent its land from being used for cross-border militancy", warning that lasting peace in the region depended on the "complete dismantling of terrorist sanctuaries". Noting that the recent operation "successfully neutralised militants involved in attacks on Pakistani soil", Chaudhry stressed: "This action was aimed solely at those responsible for violent attacks inside Pakistan. Every precaution was taken to protect innocent lives."

He also pointed to Afghanistan's emergence as a "sanctuary for multiple terrorist groups". Referring to a United Nations report, he noted that militants from 21 terror outfits were operating from Afghan territory, posing a serious threat to regional stability.

He specifically called out India's "continued support for terrorist net-

works". "India is actively funding and training these groups, equipping them to carry out cross-border attacks against Pakistan. Such elements deserve no concessions," the parliamentary secretary asserted.

His remarks came after Pakistan carried out airstrikes on Afghanistan in a retaliatory operation targeting groups responsible for recent suicide bombings in Pakistan.

The strikes killed "more than 80 terrorists", according to security sources.

The strikes were conducted in retaliation for a series of suicide attacks in Islamabad, Bajaur, and Bannu that had claimed the lives of Pakistani security personnel and civilians. Authorities described the operation as intelligence-based and proportionate, aimed solely at those responsible for the attacks. "Decisive struggle against terrorism" Separately, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi asserted that the country

## Pakistan, US discuss trade and investment opportunities during Washington meeting



**WASHINGTON:** Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb held a meeting with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick in Washington to discuss ways to enhance trade and investment between the two countries.

According to a statement from the Ministry of Finance, both leaders expressed interest in promoting American investment in Pakistan's IT, mining, minerals, and energy sectors. They reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening economic cooperation

and welcomed the upcoming US-Pakistan Trade and Investment Forum scheduled for March 31, 2026.

The forum is expected to host leading companies from both countries, along with ministerial-level participation. Finance Minister Aurangzeb may also take part in the US Department of Commerce's sessions during the forum.

Officials noted that both sides agreed to maintain continued engagement on investment in large-scale projects.

## Punjab Governor praises orphan students' achievements at Pakistan Sweet Home

**ISLAMABAD:** Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan praised the talent and academic accomplishments of orphaned children during the annual Iftar dinner hosted by Pakistan Sweet Home.



Addressing the ceremony attended by students, donors and community members, he urged philanthropists to broaden their support for vulnerable youth, highlighting the importance of collective efforts to nurture their future.

The governor said he was deeply impressed by the abilities of the children, noting that they had excelled across diverse fields of education. He also paid tribute to the administration and staff working behind the scenes to provide care, edu-

cation and training to the children. He described Pakistan Sweet Home's educational, training, medical and welfare initiatives as exemplary, urging affluent individuals to actively participate in supporting the organization's programmes to ensure sustainable opportunities for underprivileged children.

Speaking on the occasion, Pakistan Sweet Home Patron-in-Chief Zamurad Khan said many of the institution's students are currently enrolled in leading universities as well as medical, IT and engineering colleges across the country.

He reaffirmed that supporting orphaned and destitute children remains his life's mission, pledging to continue working for their welfare "until his last breath." He added that the organization's outreach now extends from North Waziristan to Azad Kashmir and Sukkur, reflecting its expanding national footprint.

Zamurad Khan further said that Pakistan Sweet Home is currently running ten mega projects for providing shelter.

## President Zardari praises security forces for anti-terror operation in Pishin

**ISLAMABAD:** President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday

paid tribute to the security forces for carrying out a successful operation against the terrorists of Fitna al-Khawarij in Pishin district of Balochistan.

The president, in a statement, said that the intelligence-based operation against the Indian-backed Fitna al-Khawarij manifested the nation's collective resolve to wipe out terrorism.

He reiterated that the war against terrorism would continue till the elimination of the scourge in toto.

According to ISPR, five terrorists, including a suicide bomber, were killed during an intelligence-based operation in the Pishin. After an intense fire exchange, a suicide bomber blew himself up, and four other Indian sponsored Khwarji were killed during the operation.

## Turkish Ambassador announces 200 scholarships for AFI students

**RAWALPINDI:** The Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey, Dr. Irfan Neziroglu has announced 200 higher education scholarships for students of Anjuman Faiz-ul-Islam (AFI) during his visit to the institution's Faizabad campus.

Expressing affection for the orphaned children residing at AFI, the ambassador described himself as their "uncle" and reaffirmed that Pakistan and Turkiye remain steadfast friends who stand by each other in times of difficulty and natural disasters.

The envoy attended an Iftar dinner organized by the Turkish Red Crescent for the children of AFI's "Apna Ghar."

The ceremony was attended



by AFI President Professor Dr. Riaz Ahmed, General Secretary Group Captain (R) Pervez Akhtar, embassy officials and other office-bearers, along with a large number of resident children.

During a briefing session, President Dr. Riaz Ahmed highlighted the historical and humanitarian role of the organization. He said AFI was established in April 1943 on the directives of Muhammad Ali Jinnah to support orphaned children from Bengal who had lost their parents.

## Democracy strengthens through dialogue, not deadlock: Rana Sanaullah

**ISLAMABAD:** Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah Khan on Monday said that democracy is strengthened through dialogue rather than confrontation and deadlock.

Responding to various points raised by Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Raja Nasir Abbas, he urged the opposition to actively participate in the political process to help resolve national issues and reinforce democratic institutions.

He said the incumbent government had consistently invited the opposition to come forward and settle matters through dia-



logue. The government wants the opposition to play an effective role in the democratic process, he added. However, he regretted that the opposition was not willing to become part of the political process, leading to repeated deadlocks.

Regarding the provision of health facilities to the PTI founder, he said all entitled facilities were being provided.



**ISLAMABAD:** Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain chairs the 6th meeting of the National Wheat Oversight Committee to review wheat procurement arrangements, stock availability, and price stability measures across the country.

## Powerful winter storm shuts schools, disrupts travel across US Northeast

**NEW YORK:** Children across parts of the US Northeast will stay home on Monday as a powerful winter storm forced school closures and pushed offices and transit systems onto emergency schedules, with officials across the region warning of heavy snow, strong winds and dangerous travel conditions.

The storm has already snarled travel along the East Coast from Washington to New England, with airlines cancelling thousands of flights and officials urging people to stay off the roads. Winter weather in the

Northeast may also slow the processing, transport and delivery of mail and packages, the US Postal Service said.

New York City, the nation's largest school district, ordered all public school buildings closed for a traditional snow day, with no remote instruction and all after-school programmes cancelled.

Mayor Zohran Mamdani declared a state of emergency and ordered non-essential vehicles off city roads from Sunday night to noon Monday, saying plows and emergency crews needed the streets clear as snowfall intensified. The city is under



its first blizzard warning since 2017. City offices will close for in-person services, and non-essential municipal employees may work remotely. "I'm urging every New Yorker to please stay home," Mamdani said. New York Governor Kathy Hochul said she had

activated 100 National Guard members to assist in Long Island, New York City and the Lower Hudson Valley - areas expected to bear the brunt of the heavy snow and coastal winds. The storm also forced closure of the UN headquarters complex in Manhattan on Monday.

Parts of the Northeast could see up to two feet of snow and wind gusts could reach 70 mph, raising the risk of falling trees and power outages, according to the Department of Homeland Security. In an update on Sunday, the agency said despite its ongoing funding lapse, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's disaster-response work continues uninterrupted, including staff travel, emergency operations, and critical assistance for people affected by active disasters, with life safety and property protection remaining top priorities. Last week, Reuters

reported that President Donald Trump's administration had ordered FEMA to suspend the deployment of hundreds of aid workers to disaster-affected areas around the country while the DHS is shut down.

Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey declared an emergency and told state workers to stay home. Connecticut barred commercial vehicles from limited-access highways Sunday evening, exempting only emergency and essential deliveries.

New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill declared a statewide emergency effective noon Sunday.