

## Iran Rejects Pressure as Nuclear Talks with US Intensify

Tehran, February 21: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Saturday that Iran would not bow to pressure from world powers as negotiations with the United States over its nuclear programme continue.

In remarks aired on state television, Pezeshkian said external powers were trying to force Iran into submission but vowed the country would resist despite mounting challenges.

The statement follows comments by US President Donald Trump, who said he was considering a limited military strike on Iran and had set a deadline for Tehran to reach a deal.



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## Dar, Azerbaijan FM discuss Board of Peace in phone call



Islamabad, February 21: The inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace came under discussion during a telephone call between Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov.

According to a statement posted by the Foreign Office on X, Dar spoke with Bayramov while in London. The two leaders reviewed bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on regional and international developments, including the inaugural Board of Peace meeting in Washington, which both attended.

Pakistan and Azerbaijan are among the founding members of the Board of Peace, formed after the administration of US President Donald Trump, in coordination with Qatar and Egypt, brokered a ceasefire in October to halt two years of Israeli military operations in Gaza.

At the Washington meeting, Trump pledged \$10 billion in support, while Morocco, Albania, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Kosovo reportedly offered funding and troops for Gaza under the initiative's framework.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, addressing the gathering, emphasised the need to end ceasefire violations in Gaza, calling it essential for durable peace in the conflict-hit territory.

# US envoy says Israel taking large parts of Middle East 'would be fine'

Washington, February 21: US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee said he would not oppose Israel taking over large parts of the Middle East, describing such a scenario as "fine" during an interview with former TV host Tucker Carlson.

Referring to biblical boundaries stretching from the Euphrates to the Nile, Huckabee initially appeared to endorse expansion but later called his remarks "hyperbolic." He added that any territorial gains following a war would be a separate matter.

Appointed by US President Donald Trump, Huckabee has previously questioned the viability of an independent Palestinian state. The State Department clarified that policy decisions rest with the White House.

In 2024, the International Court of Justice ruled Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories illegal and called for it to end.



# Pakistan, US seek to boost trade and investment ties



Washington, February 21: Pakistan and the United States agreed to enhance cooperation in trade and investment during a meeting between Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and US Commerce Secretary Howard A. Lutnick in Washington.

The finance ministry said both sides discussed US investment interest in ICT, mining, minerals and energy, and reaffirmed plans to deepen engagement in the coming months.

Earlier, the two countries signed an MoU on cooperation regarding the future of the Roosevelt Hotel.

# India, Brazil sign critical minerals pact during Lula visit

New Delhi, February 21: India and Brazil on Saturday signed an agreement to strengthen cooperation on critical minerals and rare earths following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Modi said the pact would help build resilient supply chains, while Lula described increased cooperation in renewable energy and critical minerals as central to the agreement. Details of the deal were not disclosed.

Nine additional agreements were also finalised, covering digital cooperation, health and entrepreneurship, according to officials.

Brazil is India's largest trading partner in Latin America, with bilateral trade exceeding \$15 billion in 2025.

# Sindh Assembly Adopts Resolution Against Any Move to Separate Karachi

Karachi, February 21: The Sindh Assembly on Saturday passed a resolution declaring Karachi an integral and inseparable part of Sindh and rejecting any move to create a separate province comprising the metropolis.

The resolution, tabled by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, condemned what it termed conspiracies aimed at dividing Sindh and reaffirmed that no change in provincial boundaries could occur without the consent of two-thirds of the assembly, as required under the Constitution.

The move follows repeated calls by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement – Pakistan for greater federal intervention in Karachi. MQM-P lawmakers opposed the resolution, calling it unconstitutional, while members from other parties supported it.

Addressing the House, the chief minister said Karachi could not be separated from Sindh and warned against divisive rhetoric. He recalled that similar resolutions were passed in 1994 and 2019, including with MQM-P's support at the time.

The resolution also cited Sindh's historical identity and constitutional safeguards, asserting that any attempt to detach Karachi would undermine provincial unity and national cohesion.



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## Kidnapping case filed after Canadian PhD student goes missing in Lahore

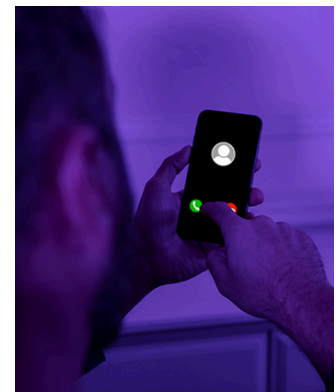
Lahore, February 21: Police have registered a kidnapping case against unidentified suspects after Canadian national Hamza Ahmad reportedly went missing in Lahore on February 19.

Ahmad, who arrived in Pakistan on February 13 to work on his doctoral research, had left his friend Yousif Rasheed's residence in DHA Phase 10 around 1–2am and did not return. The FIR was filed by Rasheed at a local police station.

Lahore Deputy Inspector General Faisal Kamran confirmed that the police are investigating and trying to locate Ahmad, though the motive remains unclear.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan expressed concern over the

disappearance and urged authorities to ensure Ahmad's safe recovery. Academics, activists, and the opposition alliance Tehreek-i-Tahafuz-i-Ayin-i-Pakistan highlighted the importance of academic freedom and called for his protection.



# Lieutenant Colonel, soldier martyred in Bannu suicide attack



Bannu, February 21: A lieutenant colonel and a sepoy were martyred on Saturday in a suicide attack during an intelligence-based operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

The attack targeted a security convoy and was carried out by a vehicle-borne suicide bomber linked to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, referred to by the military as Fitna al Khawarij. Five terrorists were killed in the operation.

The martyred soldiers were 43-year-old Lt Colonel Shahzada Gul Faraz from Mansehra and 28-year-old Sepoy Karamat Shah from Peshawar.

ISPR accused terrorists of using Afghan soil to launch attacks and reaffirmed that counter-terrorism operations under the Azm-i-Istehkam vision will continue.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attack, expressing grief over the martyrdoms and pledging to pursue the perpetrators.

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# Islamabad court reissues arrest warrant for KP Chief Minister Afridi



Islamabad, February 21: A local court in Islamabad on Saturday reissued a non-bailable arrest warrant for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi after he failed to appear in a case over derogatory remarks against state institutions.

The case, filed by the National Cyber Crime Investigation Authority on November 9, 2025, under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, alleges that Afridi made false and defamatory claims, including accusations about security forces disrespecting mosques in KP.

This marks the fourth non-bailable warrant issued against Afridi, with previous ones in January and February. Senior Civil Judge Muhammad Abbas Shah ordered his immediate arrest and production, noting Afridi's repeated failure to respond to multiple summons.

The court adjourned the hearing until March 9. Investigators allege that Afridi circulated misleading content on social media to malign state institutions, incite unrest, and threaten national security.

# PIA was sold at Rs 10bn, Punjab purchases a single aircraft at Rs 11bn

Jhelum, February 21: Former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry criticized the Punjab government on Saturday for purchasing an aircraft worth Rs 11 billion rupees, while saying whole PIA was sold at Rs 10 bn .

Speaking on a private TV channel, Chaudhry said the government could have chosen a suitable aircraft instead of buying a luxury plane. He added that the number of seats on the plane corresponds to the number of seats the ruling party won in the last election.

Chaudhry further alleged that the country is functioning under a monarchy-like system, with government resources being used for personal luxuries. He claimed that elites treat public funds as inherited wealth, spending them at will.



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## NADRA launches operation against Afghan nationals holding fake Pakistani IDs



Rawalpindi, February 21: Authorities have discovered the presence of hundreds of Afghan nationals in Pakistan's family tree records, prompting the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to launch a decisive operation against suspected individuals holding fraudulent Pakistani identity cards.

According to NADRA sources, notices have been issued to 833 individuals in Rawalpindi, instructing them to appear within seven days for verification. The suspects are alleged to have used falsified documents to register themselves in the family trees of Pakistani citizens.

NADRA has contacted these individuals via phone calls and messages to inform them of the operation. Officials said that those who fail to present themselves will have their Pakistani citizenship revoked.

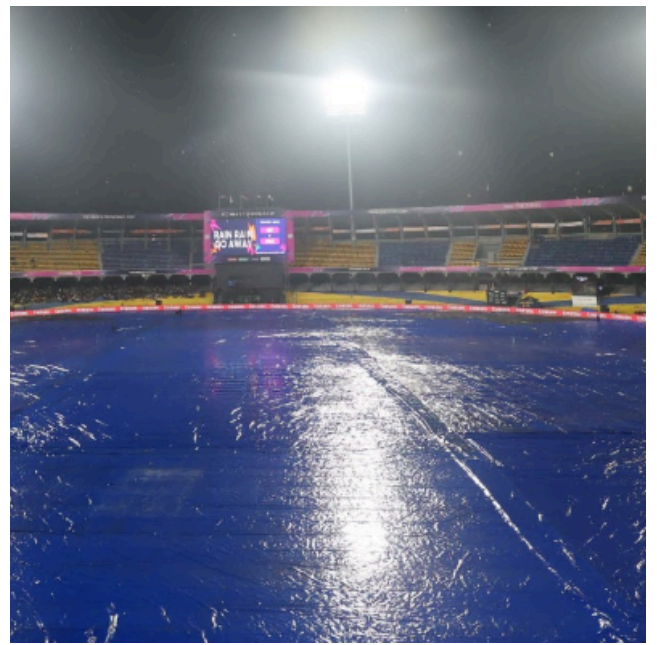
The operation is part of a broader crackdown on identity fraud, aiming to maintain the integrity of Pakistan's citizen registry and prevent misuse of official records.

# T20 World Cup: Rain forces end of Pakistan vs New Zealand match

Colombo, February 21: The Super 8 match between Pakistan and New Zealand in the T20 World Cup was abandoned due to persistent rain.

Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha had won the toss and opted to bat, but no play was possible, and the umpires called off the game. Both teams were awarded one point each.

Tomorrow, England will face Sri Lanka, while India will take on South Africa in the Super 8 stage. Pakistan is scheduled to play its next Super 8 match against England on February 24.



# T20 World Cup: Pakistan and India could meet in semi-final or final

Colombo, February 21: With the Super 8 stage of the T20 World Cup underway, questions have arisen about the possibility of Pakistan and India facing each other again in the knockout rounds.

Both teams can potentially clash in the semi-final or final, depending on their performance in the Super 8 stage. The Super 8 features the top eight teams from the group stage, divided into two groups of four, with each team playing three matches within their group.

Group One includes India, South Africa, West Indies, and Zimbabwe, while Group Two has Pakistan, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, and England. India defeated Pakistan by 61 runs in their group stage encounter in Colombo, extending Pakistan's poor record against India in T20 World Cups, with India winning eight out of nine matches.

Under the tournament's crossover semi-final format, the first-placed team from one group faces the second-placed team from the other group. This means a Pakistan-India semi-final is possible if one team finishes first in its group and the other second. If both teams finish in the same position in their respective groups, a semi-final clash would not occur.

The first semi-final is scheduled for March 4 in Colombo or Kolkata, while the second will take place on March 5 in Mumbai. If Pakistan qualifies for the semi-final, its match will be played in Colombo.

A final between Pakistan and India is also possible on March 8 in Ahmedabad or Colombo.



# Priyanka Chopra explains why she moved from Bollywood to Hollywood



Mumbai, February 21: After years in Bollywood, actress Priyanka Chopra has finally opened up about her decision to work outside the Indian film industry. In a recent interview, Chopra clarified that she never actually intended to leave Bollywood, but external pressures and the search for diverse opportunities led her to explore projects abroad. She described the move as a way to find more challenging and interesting roles than those available in India.

“Bollywood was never something I wanted to abandon, but I felt limited by the roles offered to me and was under pressure. I started looking for opportunities that would excite me as an artist, which led me to Hollywood and international projects,” she said.

Chopra, 43, has worked on multiple projects in Hollywood while simultaneously filming in India. She is currently shooting for filmmaker Raja Mukherjee’s project in India and promoting her latest film, *The Bluff*, in New York.

She expressed happiness at being able to freely choose her projects and enjoy working in both industries. “I love working in India and abroad, and I don’t want to choose between the two. Both industries are very different, just like cultures, and I enjoy the diversity they offer,” Chopra added.

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# Hania Amir speaks out on harassment allegations in Pakistani showbiz



Lahore, February 21: Amid ongoing controversies in Pakistan’s showbiz industry, actress Hania Amir has broken her silence, asserting a clear stance against harassment and exploitation.

Following social media debates triggered by former model Mahnoor Rahim’s criticism of an actress allegedly linked to a producer facing harassment allegations, several screenshots and claims circulated online, drawing widespread attention.

Responding via Instagram, Hania Amir clarified that she had no prior knowledge of the matter and was not involved in any way. Without naming anyone, she emphasized that any behavior undermining the dignity and safety of women is unacceptable and must be treated with seriousness and respect.

She voiced support for women who have come forward with complaints and stressed the need for safe working environments across all professions, including showbiz. Considering the ongoing concerns, Hania announced she has decided to distance herself from the implicated producer, stressing that personal or professional associations should not be interpreted as condoning anyone’s actions

# Reviving Pakistan's Education System — A National Imperative



Education is the backbone of any progressive society. For Pakistan, a country with immense youth potential where a large majority of the population is under the age of 30, quality education should be at the heart of national development. Yet despite years of policy discussions and development targets, Pakistan's education system continues to face serious challenges that hinder social mobility, economic progress, and human development.

Alarming, over 25 million children aged five to sixteen are currently out of school nationwide. Punjab, the most populous province, has the highest number with around 9.6 million out-of-school children. In Sindh, approximately 7.8 million children are not attending school, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reports about 4.9 million and Balochistan about 2.9 million out-of-school children. Even the federal capital has nearly 89,000 children without formal education. Of the national total, about 20 million have never attended school at all, highlighting widespread exclusion.

These figures illustrate deep regional disparities and reflect systemic failures in ensuring that every child has access to basic education.

In Sindh, recent initiatives under the leadership of Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah show that focused measures can begin to address some of these gaps. The Sindh government has introduced the Student Attendance Monitoring and Redress System (SAMRS) to track school and teacher attendance, student enrolment, and learning outcomes through digital monitoring. This system aims to improve accountability and provide reliable data for timely policy responses.

Sindh has also expanded access through the establishment of non-formal education centres, which are designed to reach children who cannot attend regular schools due to poverty, geographic isolation, or other barriers. These centres offer flexible learning opportunities with the goal of bringing more children into the education system.

Scholarship programmes have been strengthened with digitised administration to reduce delays and improve transparency. A significant number of these scholarships are reserved for girls to promote gender equity in higher education. Furthermore, the Sindh Education Foundation reported enrolling over one million students through various programmes, and a portion of funding has been allocated to support teacher salaries, which can help improve instruction quality.

These efforts are important steps, but the scale of the challenge remains large. Pakistan as a whole continues to underinvest in education. The education budget has often fallen below the internationally recommended levels, resulting in inadequate school infrastructure, teacher shortages, and outdated teaching methods that emphasize memorization rather than analytical thinking.

Teacher quality and accountability remain central challenges. Many teachers, especially in rural areas, lack modern training, and some are frequently absent from classrooms. Curricular reform is also essential to shift the focus toward critical thinking, creativity, practical skills, and digital literacy — competencies needed in a rapidly changing global economy.

Technical and vocational education remains underdeveloped, even though it offers vital pathways to employment and economic resilience. By equipping youth with skills in areas such as information technology, healthcare support, and trades, Pakistan could address the twin challenges of unemployment and skills mismatch.

A comprehensive way forward requires both national and provincial governments to increase education funding, ensure merit-based teacher recruitment, and expand access to quality learning for all children. Community engagement is also vital. Parents, civil society, and local leaders must be involved in monitoring and supporting schools at the grassroots level.

Education is not merely a sector; it is the foundation of Pakistan's future. If the nation wishes to overcome poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, and social exclusion, it must adopt an unwavering commitment to quality education for all. The recent initiatives in Sindh under Minister Sardar Ali Shah show that concrete progress is possible, but sustained effort and broader national commitment are essential for lasting change.