

FO rejects Indian FM's 'baseless claims' on AJK, asks to vacate occupied Kashmir

Islamabad (News Desk) The Foreign Office (FO) on Thursday rejected recent remarks made by India's foreign minister on Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) as "baseless claims" while asking his country to vacate occupied areas of the region. The statement comes a day after India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, referring to AJK, said the Kashmir dispute would be solved after the "return of the stolen part of Kashmir which is under illegal Pa-

kistani occupation". Speaking during a session at the Chatham House think-tank in London on Wednesday, Jaishankar had said: "I think the path we are waiting for is the return of the stolen part of Kashmir, which is under illegal Pakistani occupation. When that's done, I assure you, Kashmir [issue is] solved." The comments came in response to a query by a journalist — who said India was occupying Kashmir illegally — about the possibility of India's Prime

Minister Narendra Modi seeking US President Donald Trump's involvement to solve the dispute. "I think we have done a good job solving most of [the problem]," Jaishankar said, insisting that the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 and the polls in the region in October 2024 were part of that. He added that "restoring growth, economic activity and social justice" was another step towards purported efforts to solve the Kashmir issue. Responding to those state-

ments during a weekly press briefing today, FO spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said: "Instead of making baseless claims about Azad Jammu and Kashmir, India should vacate the large territories of Jammu and Kashmir under its occupation from the last 77 years. "We reject the remarks made by the Indian external affairs minister on Jammu and Kashmir during an event held at Chatham House, London, on 5th March 2025," Shafqat stated.



Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awais Leghari calls on PM Shehbaz Sharif on Mar 5, 2025.

Portfolios still not 'official' after PM meets new cabinet inductees

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Nearly a week after more than 21 new members were inducted into the federal cabinet, the government seems undecided about the allocation of portfolios to these newly-minted ministers and advisers.

PM Shehbaz Sharif held a series of meetings with some of the new inductees on Wednesday, but sources say a final decision on who gets which ministry is still awaited.

Insiders claim that being the largest party in the coalition, the PML-N wants to claim first choice on key ministries, including some on which members of allied parties have expressed their interest. Among those who called on the PM on Wednesday were Federal Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik, Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awais Leghari, Ikhtiar Wali and ministers of state Abdul Rehman Kanju and Talal Chaudhry, as well as Special Assistant to the PM Haroon Akhtar. As largest party in ruling coalition, PML-N wants first choice of ministries, insiders say.

Clashes with Afghan forces continue along border



KHYBER: (News Desk) A Pakistani civilian was injured and some houses were damaged as sporadic artillery firing between the border security forces of Pakistan and Afghanistan continued for a third consecutive day, on Wednesday. Civilian sources in the border region told Dawn that Ishaq Khan, a resident of Bacha Maina, received injuries, though not very fatal in nature, when he was hit by shrapnel of a mortar shell fired from the Afghan side.

They said that the injured was first taken to Landi Kotal hospital from where he was referred to a Peshawar hospital. A number of houses were also damaged by the mortars, they added. Pakistani civilian injured amid mortar shelling. Witnesses said that heavy weapons used by both sides mostly targeted checkpoints on the hilltops and military installations on each side. Some buildings on the Afghan side were also destroyed. They said that guns fell silent on late Tuesday night, artillery restarted on Wednesday noon and continued till the evening. Meanwhile, Jamaat-i-Islami leader Shah Faisal Afridi has called upon both Muslim neighbours to immediately stop fighting at Torkham and hold a dialogue to resolve the issue.

Pakistan rises to second in Global Terrorism Index

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Pakistan ranked second in the Global Terrorism Index 2025, with the number of deaths in terrorist attacks rising by 45 per cent over the past year to 1,081.

The Global Terrorism Index 2025 published by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) provides a comprehensive summary of the key trends and patterns in terrorism over the last 17 years.

The report ranks 163 countries (99.7pc of the world's population) according to the impact of terrorism. The indicators include the number of terrorist incidents, fatalities, injuries and hostages.

This is the fifth consecutive year in which an increase in terrorism-related deaths has been recorded and the largest year-on-year increase in the last decade for Pakistan. This trend is mirrored by a rise in the number of terror attacks, which more than doubled from 517 in 2023 to 1,099 in 2024. This is the first year that attacks have exceeded 1,000 since the inception of the Index. TTP emerges as one of fastest-growing terror groups globally, responsible for 52pc of deaths in 2024.

The number of countries recording a terrorist attack increased from 58 to 66, according to the 12th

annual Global Terrorism Index (GTI) released on Wednesday.

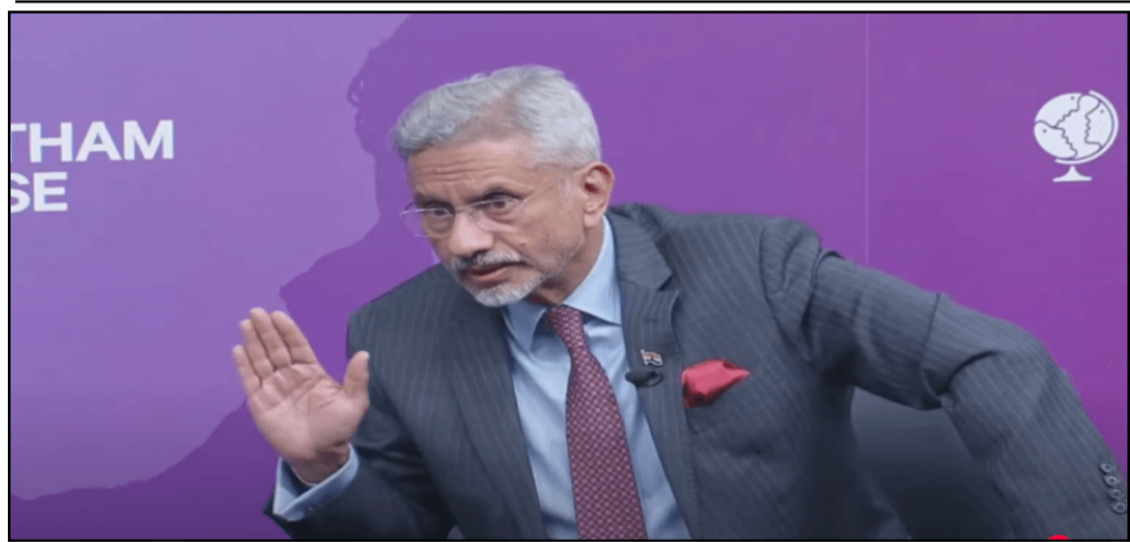
This reverses nearly a decade of improvements, with 45 countries deteriorating and 34 improving. The four deadliest terrorist groups intensified their violence in 2024, driving an 11 per cent rise in fatalities. In the West, lone wolf attacks now dominate, accounting for 93pc of fatal attacks over the past five years.

The Gaza conflict has intensified instability in the Middle East and is fueling hate crimes in the West, while terrorism deaths surged in Iran. Global terrorism deaths remained constant in 2024. The

most deaths from terrorism were in Burkina Faso, Pakistan and Syria. Burkina Faso is responsible for one-fifth of all deaths globally.

The banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) emerged as the fastest-growing terrorist group, with 90pc increase in attributed deaths. The TTP remains the deadliest terrorist organisation in Pakistan for the second year. It was responsible for 52pc of deaths in Pakistan in 2024.

Last year, the TTP carried out 482 attacks, resulting in 558 deaths, an increase of 91pc from the 293 deaths in the preceding year.



India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (R) speaks during a session at Chatham House in London on March 5, 2025.

Chilas protesters lock Wapda offices over delay in Bhasha dam talks

GILGIT: (News Desk) The ongoing protest in Chilas intensified on Wednesday as some enraged protesters barged into the offices of Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) and private companies working on Diamer-Bhasha Dam and threatened the officials to suspend their

activities and vacate the buildings before locking them. They warned the authorities that construction work would remain suspended until their charter of demands was fully implemented, as their sit-in entered its 18th day. The Gilgit-Baltistan government asked the Centre to settle

the issue on a priority basis before the situation worsens. Addressing a press conference in Chilas, Hazratullah, who heads the "Give Rights Build Dam" movement, said that people continued their protest sit-in for nearly three weeks to press the authorities for implementation of their charter of demands. He

said the federal committee formed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to address grievances of the people affected by the Diamer-Bhasha Dam project under the chairmanship of Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Amir Muqam held meetings in Islamabad on Feb 26.

First FIR for speeding registered in Punjab in bid to reduce motorway accidents

Lahore (News Desk) A First Information Report (FIR) was registered against a driver for speeding on the M-4 motorway near Multan as Punjab increases efforts to reduce motorway accidents, an official said on Thursday. The National Highways and Motorway Police had warned motorists of lodging FIRs for exceeding speed limits to 150 kilometres per hour. The police were instructed to give a clear warning to

the drivers that they would have to face criminal cases for reaching or exceeding the speed limit on motorways. FIRs would be registered against the drivers, and the vehicle would be impounded. Generally, the speed limit on motorways is 120 km/h for cars, jeeps and LTV vehicles and 110 km/h for heavy transport vehicles. Motorway Police Spokesperson Syed Imran Ahmed said, "The first

FIR was registered for speeding on the motorway, and the driver had been arrested." "A speeding incident occurred on the motorway near Multan when a vehicle was travelling at an illegal speed of 173 kilometres per hour on the M-4 motorway." He further said that a case was registered at the Badli-e-Sant Police Station, Multan, under the provisions of negligence and speeding.

he driver was taken into custody and handed over to the local police, the spokesperson added. He also said that strict measures against speeding will continue. Fatal road accidents on highways occur frequently in Pakistan, mainly due to overspeeding, hazardous overtaking, and disregard for traffic rules. At least eight passengers lost their lives, and 41 were injured after the bus they were travelling in



met an accident on Islamabad-Lahore Motorway near Neelah-Dullah Interchange on Friday. On Jan 22, one person died and 1

others were injured after a fatal accident occurred near Nooriabad on the M-9 Karachi-Hyderabad motorway.

PTI leaders decry economic downturn, intelligence failures

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) As the government celebrated one year of its performance, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leaders on Wednesday alleged that the economy, service sector and law and order situation were deteriorating due to government mismanagement and intelligence failures.

They insisted that conditions would not improve unless governance was handed over to the "true representatives of the people".

Speaking at a press conference, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan claimed the federal government owed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rs1.2 trillion. Omar Ayub Khan also blamed the PML-N government for setting up independent power producers (IPPs), leading to annual capacity payments of Rs2tr.

Tensions ease around Lal Masjid amid signs of rapprochement

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Tensions began to ease around Lal Masjid in the G-6 sector of Islamabad on Wednesday after the blockade of roads leading to the mosque was relaxed by the capital police following an apparent patch-up between the government and the mosque management led by Maulana Abdul Aziz.

Not only Maulana Abdul Aziz has toned down his 'jihadist' rhetoric against the government but the followers of his wife Ume Hassan have also apparently turned their faces from the root cause of the trouble that led to her arrest, sources said.

Mr Aziz said a day earlier that the operation by the Capital Development Authority (CDA), which razed portions of the Jamia Hafsa seminary adjacent to Lal Masjid, was part of a deal for the release of Ume Hassan and around eight of her students.

The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Islamabad on Wednesday granted bail to Ume Hassan and others in a case related to interference in government affairs and intimidating government officials. During the hearing, the accused were presented before the ATC Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra.

The police requested an extension of the remand for further investigation, but the court rejected the request and instead ordered judicial custody.

PM Shehbaz reiterates govt's resolve to purge country of poliovirus

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday reiterated the government's resolve to purge the country of poliovirus and said that the downward trend in February this year evidenced the effectiveness of the polio vaccination campaigns in the country.

Presiding over a meeting on polio vaccination drive, the prime minister appreciated the administrations of all provinces for their efforts to timely identify polio cases which has led to gradual downward trend, said a PM Office press release.

PM Shehbaz said that the cooperation between the federation and the provinces was inevitable to eradicate poliovirus.

Appreciating the cooperation extended by security personnel during polio campaigns, he directed digitisation of polio data and strict monitoring.

Welcomes Arab League's Gaza reconstruction plan The participants of the meeting were informed that the polio vaccination campaign is going on with full momentum in all provinces.

The meeting was informed that in polio vaccination drive in February this year, 42.5 million children were administered polio drops and nearly 90 per cent of the child population in the polio-affected districts was vaccinated.

The meeting was further informed that six polio cases have been reported so far this year.

The meeting was told that three polio campaigns during the first six months was part of the plan.