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# QUETTA VOICE

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**CM Balochistan with Children of Martyred Police Officer in Quetta**

## Terrorism Probe Sees Breakthrough: CM Bugti

### News Desk:

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Sunday said that investigations into recent terrorist incidents have reached a decisive stage, assuring that all terrorists involved and their facilitators will be brought to justice without exception.

The Chief Minister made these remarks while visiting the homes of police officers and personnel who were martyred

in the deadly terrorist attacks in Quetta on January 31.

During the visit, he met the bereaved families, expressed heartfelt condolences, offered Fatheha, and assured them of the government's full support.

Speaking to the families, Mir Sarfraz Bugti said the children of martyrs are not just the responsibility of one household but the collective responsibility of the entire nation.

He reaffirmed that the Government of Balochistan would never abandon the fami-

lies of those who laid down their lives in the line of duty.

Under the existing compensation policy, he announced immediate financial assistance for the families along with two government jobs—one in the Police Department and another in any other government department.

He directed the Additional Chief Secretary Home to issue all appointment orders within one week.

The Chief Minister also announced that the government

would bear all educational expenses of the martyrs' children.

Paying tribute to the bravery of Shaheed ASI Mahmood ur Rehman, the Chief Minister ordered that Sariab Police Station be named after him.

He added that Rs55 million is being provided to the families of police martyrs for house construction and other essential needs, with further support to be arranged if required.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said hos-

tile forces are attempting to destabilize Pakistan and Balochistan through terrorism, but such conspiracies will fail. "Every drop of innocent blood shed on this soil will be accounted for," he said, adding that investigations are being conducted in a transparent and professional manner, with teams working round the clock.

He reaffirmed the government's resolve to eliminate terrorism and ensure that enemies of peace and the state are taken to their logical end.

## NA, Senate sessions ring with condemnation of horrific Islamabad blast

### NEWS DESK:

Routine business was suspended in parliament on Monday as both the National Assembly (NA) and Senate held prayers for those killed in a suicide attack at an imambargah in Islamabad's Tarlai area, with lawmakers moved to take up the incident for debate.

At least 33 people were killed and around 169 others injured when a suicide bomber struck Imambargah Khadijah al-Kubra during Friday prayers last week. The blast occurred as worshippers gathered for Jumma prayers and was accompanied by explosions and gunfire.

The attack was the deadliest in Islamabad in more than a decade and the deadliest nationwide since the Peshawar mosque bombing in January 2023.

Today's NA session began under Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. A motion to suspend the day's agenda was tabled by the federal minister for parliamentary affairs and approved by the lawmakers. Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri led a prayer for the victims.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry told the NA the attack took place at an imambargah in Tarlai, where an assailant opened fire on security guards, entered the mosque area and detonated explosives.

He said 33 worshippers had been killed so far and more than 150 people were injured.

He added that most of those killed were young people, saying the presence of educational institutions in the area meant more students were among the congregation.

Chaudhry said a cousin of Islamabad's police chief had been killed and his uncle injured.

He told lawmakers the attacker had been identified as "Yasir Khan", and said authorities had also learned that another terrorist linked to the incident was a suicide attacker.

He said the Counter-Terrorism Department in Nowshera had arrested four suspected terrorists.

Chaudhry said the attacker received training in Afghanistan, and claimed India trained suicide attackers in Afghanistan and was behind the operation.

He said intelligence agencies had foiled similar plots in the past and that places of worship had security procedures, but added that guards were unable to stop the attacker.

## Punjab CM lauds authorities on organising 'safe Basant'

### NEWS DESK:

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Monday praised authorities for organising a "safe Basant" festival over the weekend in Lahore.

In televised remarks, she expressed gratitude to various authorities for their arrangements and work during the three-day festival to make sure it was a success. "I wish to praise all 15 departments of the Punjab government for arranging a safe Basant with a whole-of-government approach," she said. She made special mention of Punjab Inspector General Rao Abdul Kareem, Lahore Capital City Police Officer Bilal Kamanya, Lahore Deputy Inspector General Operations Faisal Kamran and their teams. CM Maryam also expressed happiness that citizens followed standard operating procedures and installed "safety rods" on their bikes, aimed at preventing motorcyclists from suffering injuries caused by kite strings. "It was a positive change for lots of people, where people saw that citizens in Lahore were abiding by the law and following safety protocols," she added.

### Staff Reporter:

QUETTA: Cancer cases across Balochistan have doubled over the past year, exposing serious gaps in the province's healthcare system and leaving thousands of patients with limited access to treatment.

According to Health Department sources, nearly 10,000 cancer patients were registered at CENAR Cancer Hospital in Quetta in 2024. In the following year, the number rose sharply to around 22,000 cases, marking a worrying 100 percent increase.

Medical officials say the most commonly reported cancers in Balochistan include breast cancer, colon and intestinal cancers, and blood-related cancers. Doctors are particularly concerned that 70 to 80 percent of patients arrive at hospitals in the final stages of the disease, when treatment options are limited and survival chances drop significantly.

Despite the rising burden,



CENAR remains the only fully functional cancer hospital in the province. A dedicated cancer hospital built several years ago within the premises of Sheikh Zayed Hospital, Quetta, is still

not operational.

As a result, patients from remote and underserved districts are forced to travel long distances and endure long waiting periods for care.

Health experts emphasize that early detection, routine medical screening, healthier lifestyles, balanced diets, and a clean environment are essential to reducing cancer-related

deaths. The sharp rise in cancer cases has renewed calls for urgent government action to expand oncology services and improve early diagnosis across Balochistan.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

## Call for Pink Bus Expansion of Pink Bus Service in Quetta



**Editorial:** The Balochistan government's recent approval of the Pink Bus Service in Quetta is a landmark step toward providing women with safe, reliable, and dignified public transportation. Led by Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti and executed by Dr. Faisal Ahmed Khan, Chief of Public-Private Partnership, this initiative marks a first in Balochistan and follows the successful model implemented in Sindh.

Launching this women-only service with three buses is a promising start, but Quetta's growing demand calls for a larger fleet. To effectively address the transportation challenges women face, the government should ex-

pand this service to include at least a dozen pink buses.

A more extensive fleet would significantly enhance women's mobility, providing not only a safe travel option but also empowering access to education, employment, and healthcare facilities.

Female commuters often encounter issues like overcrowding, harassment, and long wait times.

A larger pink bus fleet would offer them timely, comfortable, and safe transportation, reducing the daily struggles they face on public transport. Such an expansion aligns with the

government's agenda for social inclusion and gender-focused urban development, creating

a supportive environment where women can travel freely.

The Pink Bus Service represents more than just transportation; it's an investment in women's empowerment and independence.

By increasing the fleet, Balochistan can set a strong precedent for gender-responsive policies that promote equal access to public spaces.

Expanding this service in Quetta can serve as a model for other cities, creating a safer, more inclusive environment for women across the province.

Let's call on the Balochistan government to enhance this project by committing to a dozen buses, meeting the demand for decent and secure transportation for women in Quetta.

**Amber Munir** Malnutrition in Balochistan shared in Quetta Voice on Wednesday, April 14, 2021 page04. The article highlights the role of essential nutrients in human resource development along with a brief introduction of malnutrition, characterization of malnutrition, procedure of taking measurements of SAM and MAM cases, medical complications, community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM), infant and young child feeding (IYCF), etc.

**Background:** Surveys regarding National Nutrition Survey (2001-2002): The National Nutrition Survey conducted in 2001-2002 assessed the nutritional levels and health status of mothers and children in Pakistan. Data was collected through a questionnaire consisting of four modules including a household questionnaire, biochemical and clinical questionnaires, and a dietary form. Additional biochemical samples including serum retinol, serum ferritin, and zinc, were collected from mothers and children under-5. Urine samples were collected from mothers and children ages 6-12 years for iodine deficiency. The survey sampled 10,656 households from 700 primary sampling units.

National Nutrition Survey (2011): The NNS 2011 covered all provinces: Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Sindh, Punjab, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). This included 1,500 enumeration blocks (EBs)/villages and 30,000 households, with a 49% urban and 51% rural distribution.

National Nutrition Survey (2018): The 2018 Pakistan National Nutrition Survey (NNS 2018) is the largest national nutrition survey carried out in Pakistan. It is designed to provide policymakers, program managers, and academicians a unique set of nutrition-related data including environmental, anthropometric, and biochemical indicators.

National Nutrition Survey (2019): The aim of NNS 2018-19 is to undertake a field survey and generate district-specific nutrition information related to malnutrition (both undernutrition and overnutrition) and micronutrient deficiencies among women and children in Pakistan.

Malnutrition status in Balochistan Balochistan is the most under-developed of Pakistan's provinces, with a high proportion of children under five years of age who are stunted (52%) and 16 percent of who are wasted. Moreover, the prevalence of anemia among children in this age group is 57%

and nearly 49% among women of childbearing age. Numerous factors are thought to contribute to child undernutrition in Balochistan, including sub-optimal infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices; frequent child infections (especially diarrhea diseases and measles); maternal nutritional deficiencies and/or illness and death; absence/inadequacy of micronutrient supplementation; and household food insecurity and gender inequity.

A survey conducted by the National Nutrition Cell revealed that 49% of women in Balochistan were suffering from malnutrition. Moreover, the ratio of maternal anemia was 49%, anemia among children below five years was 57% and iodine deficiency among women was 29%.

Balochistan Nutrition Program for Mother and Children (BNPMC)

In response to the challenging nutrition situation in the province, the Department of Health (DoH) launched the Nutrition Program for Mothers and Children (BNPMC) in 2016. They implemented nutrition activities among the rural and urban population of seven selected districts. The total population of these districts is 1,654,613, of which estimated target populations include 152,369 pregnant and lactating women (PLW). Stakeholders include the DoH, Peoples Primary Healthcare Initiative (providing health services at Basic Health Units in the districts), and local NGOs.

The total cost of the above project was 1,492.62 million PKR (US\$14.21 million) of which 80% were provided by the World Bank and 20% by the Government of Balochistan. A major part of the funding

(41%) was allocated to strengthen institutional arrangements which include staffing, technical assistance for capacity building, strengthening coordination mechanisms, addressing malnutrition among children and PLW (37%), and addressing micronutrient malnutrition (13.6%).

**Future Plans** The aforesaid program ended in December 2019 and was limited to seven districts; whereas the malnutrition situation continues to exist in 22 districts of Balochistan.

Therefore, the Government of Balochistan has assigned DoH and PPHI to extend nutrition intervention in 22 districts for which project proposals are ready; implementation is expected from July 2021.

The author is a program officer in PPHI



## South-West Asia and the War Against Narcotics: Where Does Pakistan Stand?

By Dr. B. Sultan

Lady Macbeth once remarked that "a little water clears us of this deed" after the assassination of the King. Yet, with time, she remained haunted, obsessively rubbing her hands in an attempt to cleanse the imagined stains of blood. The persistence of narcotics production and trade in South-West Asia resembles this unending struggle—a dark reality that cannot be easily washed away.

Afghanistan has long been recognized as the world's largest producer of opium, with its roots tracing back to the early 1900s. Over the decades, the repercussions of this industry spilled into neighboring Pakistan and Iran. In the late 2000s, Taliban leader Mullah Omar imposed a strict ban on poppy cultivation through threats, forced eradication, and severe punishments. However, as revealed by the UNODC Opium Survey 2007, the ban primarily targeted cultivation while the trade continued. After the fall of the Taliban, opium again became a major source of funding for logistics, weapons, and militia payments.

In 2022, the Taliban leadership once again announced a ban on poppy cultivation, with Hibatullah Akhundzada officially declaring significant reductions. Some



Western reports, supported by satellite imagery, showcased declining poppy fields in southern Afghanistan. However, this raises critical questions: Can Afghanistan realistically abandon such a central economic resource while facing sanctions? And what consequences does

this shift have for Pakistan? While certain international outlets hastily claim that Pakistan has become a new hub for narcotics, such narratives ignore key realities. The issue is not a simple matter of "shifting sands" but a complex regional security challenge. The porous border between

Pakistan and Afghanistan, coupled with cross-border networks of drug traffickers, means temporary shifts in cultivation are often strategic rather than permanent. Moreover, Afghanistan's pivot towards methamphetamine production—highlighted by satellite

evidence of expanded opium processing hubs—reflects adaptive strategies of traffickers rather than genuine eradication.

In Pakistan, however, the situation is markedly different. Since 2001, the country has largely maintained its "poppy-free" status, despite spo-

radic spillovers from Afghanistan. Following the Taliban's 2022 ban, some illicit cultivations did emerge in border areas, particularly within Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Yet, these were swiftly addressed through Pakistan's Poppy Elimination Campaign

(PEC-2025). This multi-agency effort, led by the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and provincial administrations, successfully destroyed thousands of acres of illegal poppy fields. Over 250 FIRs were registered, dozens of arrests were made, and awareness campaigns

were launched across educational institutions. Importantly, independent surveys after March 2025 confirmed the effectiveness of these eradication drives.

Pakistan's determination to combat narcotics often remains under-reported internationally, overshadowed by outdated or selective portrayals.

The fact remains: Pakistan continues to fight this menace not only for its own stability but also for global security.

What is urgently needed is greater recognition of these efforts by the international community and enhanced cooperation from agencies such as the UNODC.

As South-West Asia remains at the heart of global narcotics trade routes, Pakistan's role is both frontline and decisive. Balochistan, in particular, holds the potential to transform from a vulnerable transit zone into a hub of opportunity, stability, and resilience. Just as Lady Macbeth's imagined guilt could not be washed away with water, the global community cannot absolve itself of responsibility by ignoring Pakistan's sacrifices and achievements in this ongoing struggle. The fight against narcotics requires collective recognition, support, and action—not selective narratives.

## New Zealand's Christchurch mosque killer appeals conviction

**NEWS DESK:** A white supremacist who shot and killed 51 worshippers at two New Zealand mosques in 2019 launched an appeal Monday seeking to overturn his conviction.

Brenton Tarrant, an Australian former gym instructor, admitted carrying out New Zealand's deadliest modern-day mass shooting before being sentenced to life in jail in August 2020.

Now, the convicted killer argues that his "torturous and inhumane" detention conditions during his trial made him incapable of making rational decisions when he pleaded guilty, according to a court synopsis of the case.

Tarrant is being held in a specialist unit for prisoners of extreme risk at Auckland Prison, seldom interacting with inmates or other people. "I did not have the mind frame or mental health required to be making informed decisions at that time," Tarrant told the court, according to the New Zealand Herald. Tarrant said his



state of mind was such that he had considered trying to implicate President Donald Trump in the crime. "What I said at the time is 'perhaps I could go out and say there was a second shooter on the roof, perhaps I could say it was Donald J Trump,'" he

said, according to national broadcaster RNZ. If the Court of Appeal in Wellington upholds Tarrant's conviction, it would hold a

separate hearing later in the year to consider an appeal against his sentence. His penalty of life imprisonment without parole was the stiff-

est in New Zealand history. Armed with an arsenal of semi-automatic weapons, Tarrant attacked worshippers at two mosques in

Christchurch on March 15, 2019. He published an online manifesto before the attacks and then livestreamed the killings for 17 minutes.

His victims were all Muslim and included children, women and the elderly. Not prepared 'There are heavy restrictions on who can be in court during Monday's appeal hearing, with only counsel, media and court officials allowed.

Families and friends of those killed or wounded in the attacks have been invited to watch proceedings in Christchurch remotely by video with a one-hour delay. Members of the public are also able to watch the hearing by video link with a one-hour delay at a separate courtroom in Wellington.

Aya Al-Umari, whose brother Hussein was killed by Tarrant inside the Linwood mosque, told Christchurch's The Press newspaper she had thought "this is the end of it" when Tarrant was sentenced. "Little did you know that you are allowed to do this six years later. I was not prepared to do this," she said.

## Thousands rally across Australia against Israeli president's visit

**NEWS DESK:** Thousands gathered across Australia on Monday to protest the arrival of Israeli President Isaac Herzog, who is on a multi-city trip aimed at expressing solidarity with Australia's Jewish community following the Bondi Beach shooting last year.

Herzog is visiting Australia this week following an invitation from Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in the aftermath of the December 14 shooting at a Hanukkah event at Sydney's Bondi Beach that killed 15.

The visit has attracted the ire of many people in Australia, who say Herzog is complicit in the genocide in Gaza. Pro-Palestine groups have organised protests

in cities and towns across the country on Monday evening. In Sydney, thousands gathered in a square in the city's central business district, listening to speeches and shouting pro-Palestine slogans.

"The Bondi massacre was terrible but from our Australian leadership there's been no acknowledgement of the Palestinian people and the Gazans," said Jackson Elliott, a 30-year-old protester from Sydney. "Herzog has dodged all the questions about the occupation and says this visit is about Australia and Israeli relations, but he is complicit."

There was a heavy police presence with a helicopter circling over-

head and officers patrolling on horseback. About 3,000 police personnel will be deployed across Sydney during Herzog's visit to the city.

Herzog commemorates Australian lives lost. Herzog began his visit at Bondi Beach, where he laid a wreath at a memorial for the victims of the attack. He also met survivors and the families of 15 people killed in the shooting. "This was also an attack on all Australians. They attacked the values that our democracies treasure: the sanctity of human life, the freedom of religion, tolerance, dignity and respect," Herzog said in remarks at the site.

In a statement, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry Co-

Chief Executive Alex Rychnin said Herzog's visit "will lift the spirit of a pained community." There are Jews who oppose the visit, as the Jewish Council of Australia released an open letter on Monday signed by over 1,000 Jewish Australian academics and community leaders, urging Albanese to rescind Herzog's invitation.

Police deploy special powers. Authorities in Sydney have declared Herzog's visit a major event and have been authorised to use rarely invoked powers during the visit, including the ability to separate and move crowds, restrict their entry to certain areas, direct people to leave and search vehicles.

The Palestine Action Group organising the protest failed in a legal challenge in a Sydney court on Monday against restrictions placed on the expected demonstration. "We're hoping we won't have to use any powers, because we've been liaising very closely with the protest organisers," New South Wales Police Assistant Commissioner Peter McKenna told Nine News on Monday. "Overall, it is all of the community that we want to keep safe... we'll be there in significant numbers just to make sure that the community is safe."



## Iran arrests at least four reform front politicians

**NEWS DESK:** The Islamic Iran Union Party sought the release of secretary-general Azar Mansouri, the Sharh newspaper said on Monday, after her arrest along with other members of the Reform Front, an umbrella body of Iranian reformists and moderates.

A campaign of mass arrests and intimidation has led to the arrests of thousands as authorities seek to deter further

protests after last month's crackdown on the bloodiest unrest since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

On Sunday, state media said three senior figures from Iran's Reform Front were arrested, among them Ebrahim Asgharzadeh, Mohsen Aminzadeh, and Azar Mansouri, who acts as the front's head.

Sharh said at least two more Reform Front members were asked to

report to the prosecutor's office in Tehran's Evin prison on Tuesday.

The Reform Front's spokesperson, Javad Emam, was also arrested, Mansouri's lawyer, Hojjat Kermani, said on Monday, adding that it was unclear what charges faced those detained.

"We basically don't know what caused these arrests, because the Reform Front has not yet

issued a statement about the recent events (protests)," Kermani told the Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA).

"Individuals may have commented on their own."

On Sunday, the judiciary's media outlet Mizan said "four important political elements supporting the Zionist regime" and the United States were indicted, but gave no details.

Tehran has blamed unrest-related violence on "rioters and armed terrorists" it says were backed by its key enemies, Israel and the United States.

Past Reform Front statements have been highly critical of authorities.

After the 12-day war against Israel, its members warned that "incremental collapse" awaited the country if it did not adopt fundamental reforms.

Kermani said the recent arrests were not related to a judicial case launched against the Front after that statement, however.



## Russia's Lavrov sees no 'bright future' for economic ties with US

**NEWS DESK:** Russia remains open for cooperation with the United States but is not hopeful about economic ties despite Washington's ongoing efforts to end the Ukraine war.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in an interview published on Monday.

Speaking to Russia-based media outlet TV BRICS, Lavrov cited what he called the United States' declared aim of "economic dominance."

"We also don't see any bright future in the economic sphere," Lavrov said.

Russian officials, including envoy Kirill Dmitriev, have previously spoken of the prospects for a major restoration of economic relations with the United States as part of any eventual Ukraine peace settlement.

But although President Donald Trump has also spoken of reviving economic cooperation with Moscow and hosted his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin,

on US soil since returning to the White House, he has im-

posed further onerous sanctions on Russia's vital energy sector. Lavrov also cited Trump's hostility to the BRICS bloc, which includes Russia, China, India, Brazil and other major developing economies.

"The Americans themselves create ar-

tificial obstacles along this path (towards BRICS integration)," he said.

"We are simply forced to seek additional, protected ways to develop our financial, economic, logistical and other projects with the BRICS countries."



## Hong Kong tycoon Jimmy Lai sentenced to 20 years in jail after national security trial

**NEWS DESK:** Hong Kong's most prominent media tycoon Jimmy Lai was sentenced on Monday to 20 years in jail on national security charges, including two counts of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces and one of publishing seditious materials.

The sentence ends Hong Kong's highest-profile national security trial and a legal saga that has spanned nearly five years.

Lai, founder of the feisty shuttered Apple Daily newspaper, was first arrested in August 2020 and was convicted last year.

Lai's sentence of 20 years was within the harshest penalty "band" of 10 years to life imprisonment for offences of a "grave nature" and is the most severe punishment meted out yet.

The three national security judges said Lai's sentence was enhanced by the fact that he was the "mastermind" and driving force behind "persistent" foreign collusion conspiracies.

They cited prosecution evidence that the conspiracies had sanctions, blockades and other hostile acts from the US and other countries while involving a web of individuals, including Apple Daily staff, activists and

foreigners. Besides Lai, six former senior Apple Daily staffers, an activist and a paralegal were sentenced to jail terms ranging between six and 10 years.

"In the present case, Lai was no doubt the mastermind of all three conspiracies charged and therefore he warrants a heavier sentence," the judges said.

"As regards the others, it is difficult to distinguish their relative culpability."

The 78-year-old, a British citizen, has denied all the charges against him, saying in

court he is a "political prisoner" facing persecution from Beijing.

Lai's plight has been criticised by global leaders, opens new tab including US President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, spotlighting a years-long national security crackdown in the China-ruled Asian financial hub, following mass pro-democracy protests in 2019.

Those concerns reflected in part Lai's long-standing international profile as a pro-democracy critic of China's Communist Party leadership and his extensive

political connections, particularly among U.S. Republicans - ties that prosecutors cited during the case.

At the height of the protests in July 2019, Lai met then-US Vice President Mike Pence and then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Washington.

"The rule of law has been completely shattered in Hong Kong," said Jodie Ginsberg, CEO of the Committee to Protect Journalists. "Today's egregious decision is the final nail in the coffin for freedom of the press in Hong Kong."



## Congress starts campaign for restoration of Kashmiri people's political rights

JAMMU (INP): The Congress Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir chapter has launched a mass contact campaign titled "Har Ghar Dastak, Ghar Ghar Dastak" to mobilise public opinion for the

immediate restoration of full statehood and to highlight the deepening socio-economic and democratic crisis in the territory.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the campaign was formally

launched from Jammu with the objective of reaching out to people at the grassroots level and exposing what the party described as the failures of the present governance framework imposed after the illegal

revocation of occupied Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

Addressing the gathering, Congress IJK President Tariq Hameed Karra said the Congress has taken upon itself the respon-

sibility of standing shoulder to shoulder with the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their legitimate struggle for democratic rights. He said the continued denial of statehood has led to excessive centralisation

of authority, erosion of accountability, weakening of democratic institutions and growing alienation among the people. "Statehood is not a concession or charity; it is a constitutional right of the people

of Jammu and Kashmir," Karra said, adding that repeated assurances given by Modi government on the floor of Parliament must be honoured without further delay. Karra warned that continued postponement of these

promises has deepened mistrust and uncertainty. "The people have waited patiently. Any further delay will only widen the democratic deficit and further erode faith in constitutional governance," he said.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses the inaugural ceremony of AI Indus Week being organized by Ministry of Information Technology.

## China-Pakistan boosts Citrus Industry for Changing Climate

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's citrus growers, scientists and students have gathered for a two-day international workshop aimed at strengthening one of the country's most important agricultural sectors.

The event, titled "Prospects of Climate Smart Citrus Production: Adaptive Strategies for a Changing World," was held at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad (UAF), from February 4 to 5, according to a report carried by Qwador Pro on Monday.

The workshop was jointly organized by UAF's Institute of Horticultural Sciences and the Huazhong Agricultural University (HZAU)'s China-Pakistan Horticulture

Research and Demonstration Center in Wuhan.

The second annual event builds on last year's successful workshop and focuses on practical knowledge sharing to help Pakistan's citrus industry grow and compete globally.

Citrus is Pakistan's leading fruit crop, making the country the world's 15th largest producer and 6th largest exporter. However, with less than 1.3% of the global export market, there is significant room for growth.

A major exhibition at the workshop showcased 25 different varieties of citrus, including mandarins, sweet oranges and grapefruits, highlighting the

potential for diversity and quality improvement.

A key focus of the workshop was the transfer of practical agricultural knowledge. Professor Liu Yongzhong from HZAU led hands-on training for local growers on advanced pruning techniques aimed at maintaining tree health and boosting annual yields.

He also highlighted the successful introduction of nine high-quality Chinese citrus cultivars into Pakistan last year, which have been propagated and will be transplanted during the upcoming monsoon season.

Professor Dr. Zulfikar Ali, Vice Chancellor of UAF, expressed appreciation for the ongoing

collaboration, stating that such exchanges are essential for modernizing Pakistan's agriculture and enhancing the competitiveness of its citrus sector.

The event builds on multiple existing agreements between the two universities, including the establishment of the China-Pakistan Horticultural Demonstration Center and a joint laboratory focused on germplasm innovation in Wuhan.

Through continued partnerships in research, training and technology transfer, China and Pakistan are working together to strengthen food security, improve farmer livelihoods and foster sustainable agricultural development in the region.

## Perpetual arrest warrants issued for Ali Amin Gandapur, Omar Ayub

ISLAMABAD (INP): A district and sessions court in Islamabad on Monday issued perpetual arrest warrants for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders Ali Amin Gandapur and Omar Ayub Khan in connection with two Azadi March cases, declaring both proclaimed offenders.

Judicial Magistrate Mubashir Hassan Chishti heard the cases at the District and Sessions Court, Islamabad.

Both Gandapur and Ayub failed to appear in court despite repeated summons.

The court, noting their continued absence, declared the

two PTI leaders proclaimed offenders and issued perpetual arrest warrants against them.

Earlier, during the previous hearing, the court had directed the initiation of proceedings to declare Ali Amin Gandapur a proclaimed offender.

Two cases have been registered against Ali Amin Gandapur and others at Barakahu police station in connection with the Azadi March.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court today rejected a petition seeking permission for an immediate meeting with PTI founder and former prime minister Imran Khan, ARY

News reported. relief could be granted.

A two-judge bench comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan heard 13 petitions related to Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi.

During the hearing, the bench dismissed the petition for a meeting with Imran Khan, filed by senior PTI leader Latif Khosa. The SC observed that such an order could not be passed without first issuing notice to the government.

Chief Justice Afridi said the petition must overcome objections regarding maintainability before any relief could be granted. The Supreme Court subsequently issued a notice to the government for Tuesday to respond to the matter.

Chief Justice Afridi noted that the matter pertained to an order dated August 24, 2023, and observed that the case was no longer maintainable. The apex court also took up the government's petitions challenging the acquittal of Imran Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the cipher case. The SC ordered the formation of a three-judge bench to hear the appeals.

## PTI founder, Mahmood Achakzai meeting expected soon, claims Ikhtiar Wali

ISLAMABAD (INP): A meeting between the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and Pashitunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mahmood Achakzai is expected in the coming days, according to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Ikhtiar Wali Khan, who indicated the engagement could take place within one to two weeks.

Speaking in a private TV channel program, Ikhtiar Wali Khan suggested that the interaction with Imran Khan may occur before Achakzai's anticipated meeting with the prime minister, adding that political matters had been moving toward resolution before recent developments altered the course of events.

Commenting on the nationwide strike call, he claimed the shutdown saw little response in Sindh and Punjab, while Islamabad and Rawalpindi remained unaffected, with no wheel-jam or shutdown activity reported. He added that business activity continued across several divisions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The PMLN leader alleged that incidents in parts of the province involved attempts to forcibly close shops, claiming attacks were carried out on open businesses and that related video evidence existed.

He further stated that in Malakand, local residents reacted after efforts were made to shut markets, leading to confrontations with PTI processions.

According to Ikhtiar Wali Khan, the strike call was pushed by what he described as second-tier PTI leadership, asserting that some figures insisted on the move

despite differing circumstances on the ground. He also alleged that expectations of a nationwide shutdown did not materialise and that many citizens rejected the call.

On dialogue prospects, he maintained that any negotiations would remain within constitutional limits, stressing that demands for fresh elections would not be accepted.

He added that engagement with PTI would proceed under the framework of law, leaving the decision to negotiate to the party itself.

## SC turns down plea for immediate meeting with Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Monday rejected a request for an immediate meeting with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Founder Imran Khan. The request by PTI founder's lawyer Latif Khosa to meet his client was denied by the Supreme Court, which instead issued a notice to the government for a decision tomorrow.

Chief Justice Yahya Afridi stressed that no order could be issued without notifying the other party.

During the hearing, Afridi noted that the admissibility of the application must be addressed first and reminded that related cases are still pending in other courts.

He added that, in the court's view, the case may have become ineffective due to a previous order issued on

August 24, 2023.

The court clarified that it would review whether the case can continue. Khosa argued for permission to meet his client, but Afridi said a decision on the meeting would also require notice to the other party.

The hearing was subsequently adjourned until tomorrow.

The Supreme Court also ordered the creation of 3-member benches to hear appeals regarding the acquittal of the PTI founder and Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the cipher case.

Additionally, the bail application of the PTI founder in the Al-Qadir Trust case was dismissed due to ineffectiveness. Applications to cancel the bail of the PTI founder and Bushra Bibi in the Toshakhana case were also dismissed on similar grounds.

## Pakistan made meaningful progress in restoring economic stability: Aurangzeb

ISLAMABAD (INP): Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said Pakistan has made meaningful progress in restoring stability through disciplined macroeconomic policies, institutional reforms and proactive debt management.

He made the remarks at a high-level roundtable on "Addressing Sovereign Debt Vulnerabilities" at the AUIA Conference for Emerging Market Economies 2026, jointly organized by Saudi Arabia and International Monetary Fund.

The Finance Minister said Pakistan has remained on track to contain and better manage public debt. He said our efforts have contributed to a decline in the debt-

to-GDP ratio to around 70 percent from about 74 percent over the past three years.

M u h a m m a d Aurangzeb also highlighted progress in domestic resource mobilization, noting that Pakistan has raised its tax-to-GDP ratio, which is now moving around 12 percent from single-digit levels in earlier years, supported by tax reforms, digitization, and base-broadening measures.

In addition, the Finance Minister also drew attention to Pakistan's efforts to align debt management with climate and development objectives, including the issuance of a Green Sukuk and the establishment of a Sovereign Sustainable Financing Framework.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony Sardar Muhammad Yousof addressing the participants of Ulema and Mashaiikh conference.

## Moody's revises Pakistan's banking sector outlook to stable as economy recovers gradually

ISLAMABAD (INP): Global rating agency Moody's, in a key development for Pakistan's banking sector, has revised country's banking sector outlook to stable from positive, citing a gradual economic recovery and an improving fiscal and external position.

The Moody's on Monday said "We have changed our outlook on Pakistan's banking system to stable from positive."

Moody's noted that the operating environment continues to recover, but only gradually, supported by the country's slowly improving economic and fiscal outlook and strengthening external position. "However, banks' financial performance will be stable over the next 12-18 months as they continue to face asset quality and profitability challenges."

The sector outlook also aligns with that of the Govern-

ment of Pakistan (Caal stable), given banks' substantial holdings of government securities, which account for around half of total banking assets. Pakistan's long-term debt sustainability remains uncertain, because of its still weak fiscal position, high liquidity external vulnerability risk," it said.

Moody's forecasted Pakistan's real GDP growth of around 3.3% for 2026, up from 3.1% in 2025, supported by ongoing reforms that are improving confidence and gradually strengthening economic activity. Headline inflation fell to 4.5% in 2025 from 23% during 2024. Moody's expects inflation to rise to around 7.5% in 2026, in part due to base effects.

It noted that the improving economic outlook and lower inflation have contributed to easing monetary policy rates.

"Lower borrowing

costs will boost credit demand and keep problem loan ratios broadly unchanged. At the same time, margins will remain steady after a decline following rate cuts, but higher business volumes, non-interest income and stable costs will support profits and safeguard capital buffers."

Moody's noted that the recent floods are likely to weigh on agricultural output, but activity in the industrial and services sectors should remain robust. It shared that sector-wide nonperforming loans stood at 18% and 22.1%, respectively, up from 17% and 21.5% a year earlier and well above the regulatory minimum.

"Although financing growth will rise in 2026 on the back of lower rates, Pakistani banks will continue to increase their holdings of government securities, which do not carry

subsidized interest rates, further supporting capital metrics.

"Borrower delinquencies will persist nonetheless, particularly in more vulnerable sectors such as agriculture and energy, but lower borrowing costs and higher credit demand will maintain broadly stable problem loan ratios, measured by Moody's as Stage 3 loans over gross loans, at around 8% for the Pakistani banks we rate."

Moody's shared that as of September 2025, the system's Tier 1 and total capital to risk-weighted assets (RWAs) ratios stood at 18% and 22.1%, respectively, up from 17% and 21.5% a year earlier and well above the regulatory minimum.

"Although financing growth will rise in 2026 on the back of lower rates, Pakistani banks will continue to increase their holdings of government securities, which do not carry



ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce, Rana Ihsan Afzal Khan, holding a welcoming meeting with H.E. Cham Nimol, Minister of Commerce of Cambodia, as both sides reaffirm commitment to strengthening bilateral trade and investment cooperation ahead of the 2nd Pakistan-Cambodia Joint Trade Committee (JTC).

## CM Bugti Orders Action Over Policemen's Violence During Strike

**NEWS DESK:** Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has taken strict notice of an alleged incident of police violence against a citizen arrested during a strike and ordered immediate, transparent, and impartial legal action against the police official involved.

In an official statement, the chief minister strongly condemned the reported act in which a police officer allegedly slapped a detained citizen, terming it inhuman and unprofessional. He said violations of the law would not be tolerated under any circumstances and stressed that law enforcement officials must operate strictly within the legal framework.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that the protection of citizens' dignity and fundamental human rights is the state's core responsibility.



The chief minister directed the relevant authorities to ensure swift and unbiased proceedings against the officer involved to meet the ends of justice and prevent similar incidents in the future. Reaffirming his stance, he said the Balochistan government remains committed to upholding the rule of law, ensuring transparency, and maintaining public trust by holding all officials accountable without exception.

He made it clear that unnecessary delays in development schemes

structured officers not to compromise on quality and to ensure transparency and merit at every stage of project execution.

## Balochistan Secretary Local Government Reviews Development Projects in Lasbela District

**LASBELA:** Secretary Local Government and Rural Development, Government of Balochistan, Abdul Rauf Baloch, paid a detailed

visit to Lasbela district to review the progress, quality, and transparency of ongoing development projects.

During the visit, he inspected the District Council Lasbela headquarters and Uthal Bazaar, and conducted on-site reviews of various development schemes being implemented under the supervision of District Council Lasbela and Municipal Committee Uthal.

Secretary Local Government Board

detail on the progress of ongoing projects, technical and administrative challenges, and completion timelines. Issuing directives

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**WHO Polio Officers Meet Deputy Commissioner Kalat to Review Polio Campaign Performance**

**KALAT:** District Polio Officer (DPO) of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Ghulam Mujtaba Bajoi, along with WHO Tehsil Polio Officer Umar Baloch, met with Deputy Commissioner Kalat, Munir Ahmed Durrani.

During the meeting, the district polio officers discussed the overall performance of polio teams in the previous polio campaign, challenges faced in the field, and other important administrative and operational matters.

Deputy Commissioner Kalat expressed confidence that the newly appointed District Polio Officer would play a positive and effective role in the risk zones for the eradication of polio.

He stated that the district administration Kalat and WHO would jointly work to successfully implement polio policies and achieve the goal of a polio-free society.

Shujaat Ali, Chief Officer District Council Lasbela (Ayaz Gorgi), Assistant Director Local Government Asif Rind, Chief Officer Municipal Committee Uthal Khan Muhammad, Assistant Engineer Fida, and Ghaffar Ahmed accompanied him.

Concerned officers briefed the secretary in

with relevant officials of the Secondary Education Department.

**QUETTA:** Two important review meetings were held to assess the progress of ongoing development projects of the Secondary Education Department and

with relevant officials of the Secondary Education Department.

Chief Secretary Home Hamza Shafiq, along with senior officials of the Home Department and the C&W Department.



the Home Department of Balochistan.

The meetings focused in detail on the pace of work, construction quality, transparency, and timely completion of projects.

On this occasion, Additional Chief Secretary Hamza Shafiq stated that the timely completion of key development projects is crucial, as these projects are directly linked to public facilities and the law and order system.

The review meeting regarding development projects of the Secondary Education Department was chaired by Secretary Secondary Education Asfand Yar Kakar.

He directed that the pace of work on development schemes in remote areas of the province be accelerated to prevent further difficulties for students and teaching staff.

He directed the concerned departments to ensure close coordination and effective monitoring so that projects are completed on time and the public can benefit from them at the earliest.

He added that upgrading educational infrastructure in line with modern requirements

concerned officers to complete all public welfare projects within the stipulated timeframe, with special emphasis on expediting education-related development schemes.

He warned that any negligence or lapse in construction work would not be tolerated.

## Provincial Minister Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran Visits Basti Sengali, Holds Public Meeting

**QUETTA:** Provincial Minister Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran visited Basti Sengali as part of his public outreach campaign,

projects, and the provision of basic facilities.

Local residents described Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran as a people-friendly, sincere leader and a true voice of all



where he met local residents and interacted directly with the public.

During the visit, citizens presented their issues and concerns to the provincial minister, which he listened to attentively on the spot.

They stated that such leaders genuinely understand public problems and play a practical role in resolving them.

The provincial minister also held a public gathering (open sitting) during which detailed discussions were held on regional issues, ongoing and proposed development

their genuine problems would be resolved on a priority basis and that practical steps would be taken for the development of the area.

At the conclusion of the visit, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran once again assured

the people that he would continue to raise his voice for the rights of the people of Basti Sengali at every forum.

During the visit, the provincial minister distributed sweets among children, creating an atmosphere of happiness and enthusiasm.

The public warmly welcomed him and raised slogans in his support.

## SSP Kech Zohaib Mohsin Holds Open-Door Meeting with Citizens in Turbat

**TURBAT:** As part of a public outreach initiative, SSP Kech Zohaib Mohsin met with citizens from various areas at his office on Monday.

public, and the prompt resolution of public grievances is the police's top priority.

He emphasized that if any citizen feels their



During the meeting, residents presented their issues, complaints, and suggestions, which the SSP listened to with great attention, patience, and seriousness.

Speaking on the occasion, SSP Kech Zohaib Mohsin stated in clear terms that the district police is always available to serve the

issue is not being addressed at any level, they may approach his office directly without hesitation, adding that his office doors are always open to the public.

The SSP further said that trust and strong coordination between the police and the public are the true guar-

antees of law and order.

He reaffirmed that District Police Kech will continue to fulfill its responsibilities with complete honesty to protect

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

Selected public tender on form "B-1 & B-2" as per schedule "A" are invited from the approved Government Contractor/Firm of Public Health Engineering Department Balochistan and registered with BPPRA who are entitled to renew their name for the current financial year 2025-26 for the following works:

No.	Name of Work	Qty	Estimated Cost	Eligibility	Time Limit
1	Drilling and Development of Bore up to 1500 feet Depth	1,000	6,419,814/-	2%	One Month
2	Supply & Installation of Solar System 50 KW (25000/25000)	1 Set	6,384,000/-	2%	One Month
3	Supply of HDPE Pipe (100mm)	200000	118,000/-	2%	One Month
4	Construction of Pump House 1000 Liter Storage Tank 10000 Gallon & Laying, joining of Pipe Line (Civil Work)	1,000	4,307,000/-	2%	30-06-2028
5	Drilling and Development of Bore up to 1500 feet Depth	1,000	6,048,110/-	2%	One Month
6	Supply & Installation of Solar System 50 KW (25000/25000)	1 Set	6,171,510/-	2%	One Month
7	Supply of HDPE Pipe (100mm)	400000	1,445,000/-	2%	One Month
8	Construction of Pump House 1000 Liter Storage Tank 10000 Gallon & Laying, joining of Pipe Line (Civil Work)	1,000	4,168,000/-	2%	30-06-2028
9	Drilling and Development of Bore up to 1500 feet Depth	1,000	7,077,000/-	2%	One Month
10	Supply & Installation of Solar System 50 KW (25000/25000)	1 Set	6,191,110/-	2%	One Month
11	Supply of HDPE Pipe (100mm)	700000	2,406,100/-	2%	One Month
12	Construction of Pump House 1000 Liter Storage Tank 10000 Gallon & Laying, joining of Pipe Line (Civil Work)	1,000	2,713,000/-	2%	30-06-2028
13	Drilling and Development of Bore up to 1500 feet Depth	1,000	5,118,000/-	2%	One Month
14	Supply & Installation of Solar System 50 KW (25000/25000)	1 Set	6,779,640/-	2%	30-06-2028

The Chief of the Executive Engineer (PHE) District Meeting invites technical proposal of Contractor/Firms along with sealed financial proposals (Single Stage-One Envelope) for above mentioned works. All interested bidders are required to submit documents as per following briefs in support of their technical/financial proposal. The procurement shall be carried out in accordance with the Government Public Procurement Regulatory, Rules 2014 and Pakistan Engineering Council By-Laws BASIC ELIGIBILITY. The Contractor must have valid registration (i.e. 2025-26 with Pakistan Engineering Council in required Category) or relevant discipline (specifically code and fresh registration with an authority i.e. PHE, Baloch Department and BPPRA) as well as with BPPRA where applicable. The bidder must complete similar return assignment mention in the bidding documents. METHOD OF PROCUREMENT: (Single Stage -One Envelope) Bidding Procedure will be adopted. BIDDING / TENDER DOCUMENTS: Issuance: The bidders can obtain the bidding document from the address mention above on production of proper Cheque form for an amount of 15000/- and (Non-refundable) for each work shown against each deposited in the head of account C-02725-2 Civil works Through Govt. Treasury National Bank of Pakistan Mastung or can be downloaded from the website of BPPRA (www.bppra.gov.pk) during working hour. from the date of publication of this invitation in newspapers till one day prior to the last date of submission. The contractor/firms who obtain bidding documents by downloading them from BPPRA website will also be required to procedure deposited green Cheque form of above mentioned Fee. The bids must accompanied bid security "Technical Bid" for each work in the form of call deposit are bank guarantee of amount specified above in the office name of the order signed from a scheduled bank. No any Bank Drafts & Banker Check will be acceptable. Deadline of submission: Technical and financial proposals from intending contractor/firms, sealed in one separate envelope clearly marked with Work title & type of proposal must be delivered by hand or through registered mail to the address mentioned below before 28 February 2020 at 11:00 AM. Opening: The address containing "Technical Bids" will be opened on the same day 28 February 2020 at 12:00 PM before procurement committee in the presence of bidders or their authorized representatives who choose to attend with authority letter. Bids Validity: Ninety (90) days. Place: The place of issuance, inquiries and opening will be: The Office of the Executive Engineer PHE District Mastung. Email: headcon10071967@gmail.com. CONDITIONS: All the terms and conditions can be seen in the Office of the undersigned in any office hours.

**PRO No. 368209-02-2020**

**Executive Engineer, Public Health Engineering, District Mastung**

## Pre-Ramazan spike pinching consumers

**NEWS DESK:** The prices of tomatoes, onions, potatoes, and other vegetables have started creeping up ahead of the start of Ramadan, after hitting rare seasonal lows, thanks to a winter production glut, while prices of flour varieties and fruits have risen.

As the holy month will get underway from the third week of this month, fruit vendors have already started charging higher rates for the most sought-after items like banana, apple and guava. In the flour industry, retailers blame millers for raising rates, while flour millers flatly reject the claim.

As the new Sindh wheat crop will arrive in March, a random market survey ahead of the holy month reveals a price hike in a 20 kg bag of wheat flour to Rs2,500-2,700 from Rs2,400-2,600 two weeks back, followed by a Rs141 per kg increase in fine flour, up from Rs133 per kg.

The Sensitive Price Index, ending Feb 4 revealed a slight jump in the price of a 10kg bag of wheat to Rs1,100 from Rs1,050 two weeks back. Vegetable, fruit and flour prices rise ahead of holy month.

Roti makers also complained about a price hike of Rs450 per 50 kg in the fine flour bag, from Rs6,000 to Rs6,450,



which may result in a price jump in Roti varieties if the fine flour bag crosses Rs7,000 per 50 kg. Currently, roti makers have kept the rates of various roti varieties unchanged. Consumers believe that some tandoor operators have reduced the weight of roti varieties while keeping prices unchanged.

Naan and Chappati are available at Rs25 and Rs15 per piece, respectively. Disagreeing over the price rise in flour, Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA), Sindh Zonal Chairman Abdul Junaid Aziz said that the 100kg wheat bag rate has declined to Rs10,900 from Rs11,600. As a result,

the ex-mill rate of flour No 2.5 and fine is Rs104 and Rs114 from December 2025. "There is no price increase or any shortage of wheat or flour varieties in the markets," he said, claiming that the Association mainly focuses on flour No 2.5 instead of the commercially popular fine and

maida (super fine flour) rates. The Sindh government in December 2025 reduced the wheat issue price to Rs8,000 per 100 kg bag from Rs9,500 to stabilise prices for five consumers and provide grain to the millers and traders. "Millers are lifting wheat from the open market at the rate of

Rs11,600 per 100 kg bag for blending with the government's wheat of the 2022-2024 crop," Junaid said, showing some concerns over the government's wheat quality, as a lack of gluten usually results in low protein and also creates problems in making a soft roti. As a result, millers procure new

wheat crops from the open market for blending with old wheat to maintain quality. On high rates of branded flour, he said the association cannot control the rates charged by branded flour makers, which are very few in number, and that their market share is only 5 per cent.

One of the reasons for the high prices of branded flour is their prime quality and the bag cost alone, which hovers between Rs80-100 per bag in 5 kg and 10 kg packs, he said.

Karachi Wholesalers Grocers Association Chairman Rauf Ibrahim said the rates of black gram, Kabuli channa (white gram) and basen is Rs205, Rs310 and Rs205, while in retail markets, they are being sold at Rs250-280, Rs350-400 and Rs350-400 per kg.

Rauf said the rates of masoor, moong and gram pulse have been unchanged at Rs240-300, Rs360-400 and Rs240-280 per kg as against a slight increase in mash pulse to Rs380-460 from Rs360-420 prevailing two weeks back.

Potato and onion rates have risen to Rs40-70 and Rs50-80 per kg, respectively, over the last two weeks, as against a sharp rise in tomato prices to Rs70-100 from Rs30-40 two weeks back. Sugar rates, as per SPI data, fell to Rs145-160 per kg from Rs150-170 per kg.

"The city government should focus on the retail side during Ramadan, where consumers face real hardship at the hands of retailers," Rauf said.

## Gold, silver prices extend gains at start of trading week

**NEWS DESK:** Gold and silver prices recorded further gains in both international and domestic markets on the first trading day of the week.

In the international bullion market, the price of gold rose by \$53 per ounce to reach \$5,020. Following the global uptrend, gold prices in the local market also increased. The price of gold per tola surged by Rs5,000 to reach Rs24,762, while the price of 10 grams of gold rose by Rs4,544 to Rs49,898.

Similarly, silver prices moved higher, with the rate per tola increasing by Rs296 to Rs8,615. The price of 10 grams of silver also climbed by Rs296 to Rs7,385.

Spot gold rose 1.1% to \$5,012.76 per ounce by 0502 GMT after a 4% climb on Friday. US gold futures for April delivery gained 1.1% to \$5,033.80 per ounce.

Spot silver climbed 4.6% to \$81.54 per ounce after a near 10% gain in the previous session. It hit an all-time high of \$121.64 on January 29.

Spot platinum edged 0.3% lower to

\$2,090.13 per ounce, while palladium gained 1% to \$1,723.41. Earlier on Saturday, after a one-day pause, gold and silver prices rose in international and local markets.

In the international bullion market, the price of gold per ounce increased by \$117 to reach \$4,907. The price of gold per tola also rose by Rs11,700 to Rs19,462, and the price of gold per 10 grams increased by Rs10,030 to Rs44,354. The price of silver per tola went up by Rs444 to Rs8,269, and the price of silver per 10 grams increased by Rs381 to Rs7,089.

The price of silver also recorded a downward trend, with per tola silver decreasing by Rs1,430 to Rs7,825, whereas the price of 10 grams of silver declined by Rs1,226 to Rs6,708.

On Friday, gold prices witnessed a sharp decline in the local market as the price of 24-karat gold per tola decreased by Rs21,400 to settle at Rs507,762, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

Likewise, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold fell by Rs18,347 to Rs435,324, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold dropped by Rs16,819 to Rs399,061. The price of silver also recorded a downward trend, with per tola silver decreasing by Rs1,430 to Rs7,825, whereas the price of 10 grams of silver declined by Rs1,226 to Rs6,708.

Moody's projects Pakistan's GDP growth at 3.5 per cent in 2026 but noted that concerns over external financing and inflation remain. Additionally, risks associated with policy implementation could affect the outlook.

Earlier, Moody's Ratings upgraded to

## Moody's revises Pakistan banking sector outlook from positive to stable

**NEWS DESK:** International credit rating agency Moody's has revised Pakistan's banking sector outlook from positive to stable.

According to Moody's outlook report, Pakistan's economic conditions are gradually improving, although the pace of recovery remains slow. The report states that banks' performance is expected to remain stable over the next 12 to 18 months.

The report also highlights that high interest rates and credit risk pressures persist in Pakistan. Moody's identified government financial challenges as a major risk for the banking sector.

Moody's projects Pakistan's GDP growth at 3.5 per cent in 2026 but noted that concerns over external financing and inflation remain. Additionally, risks associated with policy implementation could affect the outlook.

Earlier, Moody's Ratings upgraded to

Caal from Caa2 the local and foreign-currency long-term deposit ratings of five Pakistani banks, namely Allied Bank Limited (ABL), Habib Bank Limited (HBL), MCB Bank National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) and United Bank Limited (UBL).

"We have also upgraded the baseline credit assessments

(BCAs) and adjusted MCB and UBL to Caal from Caa2, and for NBP to Caa2 from Caa3," the rating agency said in a statement.

The outlook on long-term deposit ratings of all banks has been changed to stable from positive.

"We have also upgraded the baseline credit assessments

grade the government of Pakistan's local and foreign currency issuer and senior unsecured debt ratings to Caal from Caa2 from Caa3," the rating agency said in a statement.

The outlook on long-term deposit ratings of all banks has been changed to stable from positive.

"We have also upgraded the baseline credit assessments

Moody's said that the decision to upgrade Pakistan's ratings reflects the country's improving operating environment, as captured by the raising of its Macro Profile for Pakistan to "very weak" from "very weak".

The government of Pakistan's improved capacity to support banks in case of need, as indicated by the sovereign rating upgrade; and banks' own resilient financial performance.

The revised Macro Profile score is underpinned by Pakistan's improving external position, supported by its progress in reform implementation. Nonetheless, it said, Pakistan's external position remains fragile. Its foreign exchange reserves remain well below what is required to meet external debt obligations, underscoring the importance of steady progress with the IMF programme to continually unlock financing.



## New IPP power deals could save Pakistan Rs1.4tr, says Mishaal report

**NEWS DESK:** Mishaal Pakistan has released its Pakistan Reforms Report 2026, saying the country has made large-scale progress on governance reforms over the past year, and that the energy sector led the reform effort, accounting for 40% of the total.

The report says more than 600 reforms were implemented across 135 institutions, describing this as a fivefold increase in the scale of reforms compared with the previous year. It also adds that new agreements with Independent Power Producers in the power sector could result in expected savings of Rs1.4 trillion.

On "Digital Pakistan", it says more than 200 reforms were implemented through digital platforms. The report also highlights progress on the Reko Dita project and says the country's gas policy includes investment targets of \$11 billion.

It says the government is committed



to shifting from short-term stabilisation towards building long-term state capacity, and reports structural changes in the law and justice and IT sectors. The report argues the reform process will further improve Pakistan's global credibility, and says it places special focus on the

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, while maintaining momentum despite difficult geopolitical conditions. Speaking at the launch event, Federal Minister for Climate Change Musadik Malik said there would be no compromise on transparency and evidence-based policymaking.

adding that fact-based reform reporting helps build public trust. Aamir Jahangir, Mishaal Pakistan's Chief Executive Officer, said the 2026 edition documents governance change and reflects the growing maturity of Pakistan's reform process, to record the country's reform journey.

## Beetroot: a less-explored commodity

**NEWS DESK:** In the sprawling fields of Pakistan's agricultural heartland, a quiet but consequential shift is underway — one that carries the promise of diversification, sustainability, and fresh economic opportunity.

As climate pressures mount and global sugar markets evolve, an old European crop is beginning to attract new attention at home sugar beet. For decades, sugarcane has dominated Pakistan's sweeter landscape, consuming vast quantities of water and tying the country's sugar economy to a single crop cycle.

Beetroot sugar, by contrast, offers a compelling alternative. It requires 30-40% less water than sugarcane, matures in five to six months instead of 12-14, and delivers higher sugar recovery rates, often ranging between 14% and 18%, compared to the national average of 9-10%.

What was once viewed as an experiment is now slowly becoming a strategic option. Farmers in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are beginning to recognise that



sugar beet is not merely a substitute crop, but a structural solution to rising water stress, declining soil health, and volatile cane pricing.

Globally, sugar beet is a cornerstone of industrial agriculture. In 2024, world sugar beet production stood at an estimated 294 million tonnes, accounting for nearly 20% of global sugar output.

Russia led production with over 45 million tonnes, followed by Germany and France, where beet-based sugar industries are deeply integrated with advanced mechanisation, research-driven seed development, and efficient

processing systems. Europe collectively dominates beet cultivation, while countries such as the United States and Canada also maintain strong export positions. Trade data underscores the crop's commercial relevance. In 2024, Germany alone exported more than 545,000 tonnes of fresh and dried beet products, while Romania, Sweden, and Belgium emerged as leading exporters of raw beet sugar.

These figures highlight not only production capacity, but the crop's seamless integration into global value chains — a benchmark Pakistan is only beginning to ap-

proach. By comparison, Pakistan's beetroot sugar sector remains modest but increasingly visible. Though beet accounts for just over 1% of total national sugar production, momentum is building.

During the 2022-23 season, beet processing yielded more than 51,000 tonnes of sugar, reflecting growing interest among both farmers and millers. More importantly, yields per hectare in pilot areas have reached 60-70 tonnes, significantly outperforming average cane yields when adjusted for water use and time.

## Kamindu heroics steer Sri Lanka past Ireland in T20 World Cup

**NEWS DESK:** Sri Lanka's 11th-hour call to draft in Kamindu Mendis proved a masterstroke as the all-rounder produced a match-turning cameo to set up a 20-run win over Ireland in their T20 World Cup opener at Colombo's R. Premadasa Stadium on Sunday.

Kamindu's blistering 44 off 19 balls with four fours and two sixes gave Sri Lanka the late thrust they badly needed to post 163.

The spin trio of Maheesh Theekshana, Wanindu Hasaranga and Dunith Wellalage then ran through the Irish middle order, sharing seven wickets to seal a comfortable victory.

"I just wanted to score a few boundaries and put a partnership with Kusal Mendis," said Kamindu. "Kusal was outstanding today. He deserves a lot of credit. We wanted someone to bat through the innings and to take the pressure off the bowlers."

"They played well during the run chase until the 15th over. We had to keep our calm and



we knew they had to take risks and we bowled well towards the end." Hasaranga claimed three wickets to take his World Cup tally to 40, second

only to Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan, who has 50. There were anxious moments when the leg-spinner, who has a history with hamstring

injuries, limped off after his second over. Though he returned to complete his quota, he moved gingerly, raising questions over his fitness for the

rest of the campaign.

Sri Lanka's innings had been stuck in first gear until Kamindu strode in with the scoreboard reading 86

for four in the 14th over, boundaries having dried up against Ireland's spinners. The left-hander broke a 57-ball boundary drought with a cheeky

reverse sweep and then went into overdrive, plundering 21 runs in the 17th over to wrestle back the momentum. With Kusal Mendis playing

the sheet anchor role in an unbeaten half-century, Sri Lanka found a competitive total from what had looked like a below-par platform.

Ireland were marshalled by left-arm spinner George Dockrell, who returned a miserly spell of 2-17.

A 49-run stand between Lorcan Tucker and Harry Tector for the third wicket kept Ireland in the hunt.

From a promising 105 for two, Ireland lost their way and folded for 143 in 19.5 overs with Matheesha Pathirana cleaning up with two wickets in the final over.

"They got 15 runs too many," said Ireland captain Paul Stirling.

"Bit sloppy in the field and we have plenty of work to do before the next game." "We were confident with plenty of wickets in hand, but Sri Lanka held their nerve."

"Spin is a challenge for us. It wasn't coming onto the bat as much as we expected. Spin, I believe, is going to play a big role in this tournament."

## Malinin keeps USA golden in Olympic figure skating team event

**NEWS DESK:** US star Ilia Malinin saw off a resurgent Japan with a pulsating routine to keep the Olympic team figure skating gold in American hands on Sunday.

Malinin came top in the men's free skating final in Milan with Japan taking silver and host nation Italy claiming an emotional bronze after three days of competition. The 21-year-old, in his first Olympics, will go into the individual event with one gold medal already in his pocket.

"We came here to do one job and we achieved it," said Malinin. "I came in and said

I'm the deciding factor. I just need to go out there and test the ice again to see how it feels and prepare myself for the individual event."

"I knew it was going to be a tie-breaker... and it went exactly the way I wanted. I'm so thankful for that."

"It came down to the energy, the support, the passion from my whole team." The United States finished with 69 points with Japan scoring 68 and Italy medalling for the first time in the team event with 60.

Going into the final round, the Japanese and the Americans had been neck and neck, but Japan were ahead having won

more routines. The title came down to Malinin, a two-time world champion who has been unbeaten in competition in over two years.

"I was so much more nervous watching Ilia than skating myself," said veteran pairs skater Danny O'Shea, who is competing in his first Olympics aged 34 with partner Ellie Kan, and who placed fourth in their section.

Kaori Sakamoto's stunning women's free skate had given Japan the edge after Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara produced the career-best pairs free skating performance.

American champion Amber Glenn

slipped to third in the women's free skate after her errors saw her finish ten points behind Sakamoto -- putting heavy responsibility on Malinin's shoulders.

"I feel guilty, I am sorry that I put this kind of pressure on Ilia," said Glenn, who at 26 is the oldest US women's singles skater to compete in an Olympics in 98 years. Malinin had finished second behind Japan's Yuma Kagiyama in Saturday's men's short programme.

Kagiyama, the Beijing Olympic individual silver medalist, did not compete in the free skate with Olympic newcomer Sato, 22, representing Japan instead.

Djokovic amazed But Malinin hit five quadruple jumps and although the "Quad God" did not deliver the first ever quad axel jump in Olympic competition as he had promised, he had the crowd roaring.

Watched by tennis great Novak Djokovic, Malinin scored 200.03 to push Sato into second place with 194.86.

"It was so unreal," Malinin said. "I've heard from everyone that after I landed my backflip, he was standing there, hands on his head, and I was like, 'Oh, my God. That's incredible.' That's a once in a lifetime moment seeing a famous tennis player watching my performance."



## Man City fight back to end Anfield hoodoo and reel in Arsenal

**NEWS DESK:** Erling Haaland's stoppage-time penalty earned Manchester City a dramatic 2-1 win at Liverpool on Sunday to reduce Arsenal's lead at the top of the Premier League back to six points.

City were heading for defeat at Anfield with six minutes to go before the visitors had another goal ruled out and Szoboszlai was sent off in the same incident after a VAR review.

Victory was City's first away to Liverpool in front of a crowd since 2003 and reappeals some pressure to Arsenal's quest for a first title in 22 years.

"I feel the whole team knew before the game, if we lost it then the title race was probably over," said Silva. "We felt like we needed to win."

Defeat delivered another blow to Liverpool's hopes of

Champions League football next season.

The defending champions remain down in sixth and four points adrift of the top five.

These two clubs have combined to win the last eight Premier League titles, but both showed the flaws which have opened the door for Arsenal to potentially end their long wait to be crowned champions of England once again.

Haaland has scored just once from open play in his last 13 games and an uncharacteristic lack of confidence from the Norwegian showed with the best chance of the first half inside the opening two minutes.

Silva's clever pass split the Liverpool defence, but Haaland's shot lacked conviction under pressure from Milos Kerkez, and Alisson Becker was able to save

low to his left.

Guehi booed Second half slumps have been a consistent feature of City's season and the visitors again faded in the second period until a late flurry saved their title challenge.

"In the second half we pressed really high and played good football," said Liverpool boss Arne Slot.

"We have im-



proved so much, but we need to improve the results."

Marc Guehi was relentlessly booed after his proposed move to Liverpool from Crystal Palace broke down on transfer deadline day in September.

City took advantage to swoop in last month when they lost two key centre-backs to injury.

Guehi was fortunate to escape with just a yellow card when he dragged down Mo Salah just outside the box in a decision that infuriated Slot.

But it was City who were left fuming at the award of the free-kick which led to the opener when Ryan Gravenberch went down under minimal contact.

Szoboszlai scored the only goal from an outrageous free-kick when Arsenal defender Anfield in August and produced another stunning strike which clipped the inside of the post before finding the net.

However, the Hungarian went from hero to villain when City levelled six minutes from time.

## Stunning strikes mark end of National Challenge Cup group stage

**NEWS DESK:** A series of spectacular goals provided the highlights as the group stage of the National Challenge Cup concluded on Sunday.

With Mammons, Pakistan Air Force, Wapda, Pakistan Army and SA Gardens securing places in the quarter-finals.

The standout moments came from Wapda's Ali Raza, who struck an acrobatic overhead kick, and Pakistan Army's Mohammad Rafay, whose first-time volley from a corner drew applause.

In Group 'A', Mammons held Paki-

stan Navy to a goalless draw at the KPT Stadium to finish top of the group.

Navy, needing a win to qualify, dominated possession and forced Mammons goalkeeper Usman Ali into two early saves but failed to convert their chances. Mammons defended resolutely in the second half to deny Navy the breakthrough.

Mammons will face Group 'B' runners-up Khan Research Laboratories in the quarter-finals.

Wapda topped Group 'B' with a commanding 5-0 win over

Hazara Coal at the KMC Stadium.

Ali Raza scored a hat-trick, netting twice inside the opening six minutes before producing a stunning overhead kick from a corner. Mohammad Adeel added a third just before the interval, Ahmed Faheem struck after the restart, and Ali completed his treble in the 53rd minute.

Wapda will meet Pakistan Air Force in the last eight.

Pakistan Army finished top of Group 'C' after defeating International Supply Company at the KPT Stadium. Rafay opened the scor-

ing in the 13th minute with a well-taken volley. Army missed a chance to double their lead when Afzaal's penalty was saved by Akhtar Ali, but Subhan Karim sealed the win with a breakaway goal in the 61st minute.

In Group 'D', 10-man SA Gardens edged Nimso 1-0 at the KMC Stadium to claim top spot. Despite Ali Khan Niaz's early dismissal, Shahzab Nawaz headed home the winner in the 53rd minute.

SA Gardens will take on International Supply Company in the quarter-finals.



## Pakistan's Alpine Club seeks to boost mountaineering tourism

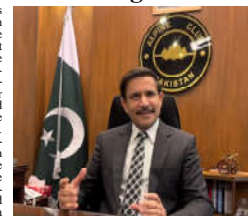
**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan's towering mountain ranges, including some of the world's highest peaks such as K2, are drawing growing interest from foreign climbers, according to Major General (R) Irfan Arshad Khan, President of the Alpine Club of Pakistan.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Express Tribune at the club's Secretariat in the Pakistan Sports Complex, Khan described mountaineering as a "life-threatening sport" in which Pakistani climbers have consistently excelled, earning international honors for the country.

"The mountains of Pakistan are a gift from Allah to our nation," he said, emphasizing that the future of mountaineering in Pakistan is "extremely bright" with vast potential.

"Together with the government, we aim to promote mountaineering and adventure sports."

Khan outlined plans to improve modern infrastructure, train personnel, and strengthen rescue systems for domestic and international climbers.



Agreements are in progress with countries including France and Italy to enhance collaboration in mountaineering.

Foreign tourism is expected to rise further with online visa facilities and improved security measures.

A comprehensive plan, developed in consultation with government institutions, aims to attract more international climbers while boosting Pakistan's economy.

He noted that Pakistani porters are renowned for their bravery, though Nepali porters have tactical advantages.

Specialized training and coaching programs for porters and guides are being implemented to ensure safe and organized trekking and climbing experiences.

Khan also highlighted plans to modernize the rescue system, including helicopter-assisted rescues, through partnerships with foreign companies.

Efforts are being made to increase the participation of female climbers, alongside grassroots initiatives to raise awareness about mountaineering.

"Pakistan is a safe country, and the northern areas offer world-class facilities for climbers and tourists alike," he said.



## Around a million children missed during year's first nationwide polio campaign; 53,000 refusals reported

**NEWS DESK:** Around a million children were missed and 53,000 refusals were reported during the year's first nationwide polio campaign.

The largest share of refusals, i.e. 58 per cent, was reported from Pakistan's largest city, Karachi. The campaign concluded on February 5 in most cities, while the campaign ran till February 8 in Sindh.

During the campaign, polio drops were administered to more than 44.3 million children, marking a significant milestone in Pakistan's continued efforts to eradicate polio.

While the data shows that the polio programme achieved overall household coverage of 98pc, with 2pc children missed, a number of missed children is still huge and worrisome given Pakistan's population.

Overall, 0.95m children were reported as missed during the campaign. A large proportion of these (0.67m) were missed because children were not available at home at the time of vaccination.

During the campaign, 2.5 million guest children were vaccinated, likely covering a substantial share of children recorded as not being available at home.

"233,000 children were reported as left-overs due to security constraints, community boycotts, and snow-bound areas," an official

of the programme said, wishing not to be quoted.

"Of the total left-overs, 184,000 were from KP, including 113,000 from south KP. In AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, around 50,000 children remained unreachable due to snow-bound areas and non-conduct of campaigns."

In Balochistan, the polio eradication campaign was postponed in Mastung, Gwadar, Chagai, and Awaran due to security reasons. 0.14pc of the total targeted children were reported as refusals, with 31,000 refusals from Karachi, forming the largest share," the official added.

"The National Emergency Operation Center (EOC) extends its sincere appreciation to all relevant stakeholders for their cooperation, commitment, and active participation in ensuring the successful implementation of the campaign," said a statement issued by the EOC.

The statement said that in Punjab, more than 22.9m children were vaccinated. In Sindh, over 10.5m children, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, more than 7.13 million and in Balochistan, over 2.36m children were vaccinated.

In Islamabad, more than 455,000, in Gilgit-Baltistan, approximately 261,000, and in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, over 673,000 children

were administered the drops.

The EOC further noted that the first nationwide polio campaign of 2026 was conducted simultaneously in Pakistan and Afghanistan, reflecting strengthened cross-border coordination to interrupt poliovirus transmission and protect children in both countries.

"The Government of Pakistan reaffirmed its strong commitment to achieve a polio-free Pakistan through sustained immunisation efforts, community engagement, and regional collaboration," the statement added.

Pakistan Polio Programme Head Anwarul Haq, while speaking to Dawn, said the positive development was that Pakistan reported fewer cases — 31 in 2025 compared with 74 in 2024.

"Moreover, in terms of poliovirus, Punjab is negative, Peshawar is negative, and Balochistan is also negative. We just need to focus more on some critical areas, namely Sindh and south KP," he said.

Prime Minister's Focal Person on Polio, Ayesha Raza Farooq, told Dawn that the post-campaign independent assessment was underway.

"It will take a week before results are compiled and the programme will share them with all the stakeholders," she said.

## Western weather system to bring drizzle to Karachi

**NEWS DESK:** A western weather system is affecting the western parts of the country and is moving towards the northern regions from today, according to the Meteorological Department's Early Warning Centre on Sunday.

Under its influence, light rain or drizzle is expected in the coastal areas of the province. In Karachi, partly cloudy conditions with chances of drizzle are forecast for today.

On Tuesday, the city is likely to experience cloudy weather, with mist expected in the morning hours.

Over the next two days, Karachi's minimum temperature is expected to range around 17°C, while the maximum may reach up to 30°C. Northeasterly and south-westerly (sea) winds are likely to blow in the city.

In most parts of the province, dry weather is expected to prevail, accompanied by cold nights.

Separately, in Balochistan, according to the Meteorological Department, weather across most districts is expected to remain cold, with skies partly to completely cloudy. Rain and snowfall over the mountains are forecast in Quetta, Ziarat, Pishin, Chaman, Qilla Abdullah and Qilla Saifullah. Rain is also expected in Zhob, Musa Khel, Mastung, Kalat, Turbat, Chaghi, Gwadar and Karan.

Regarding temperatures, the Met Office said the minimum temperature in Quetta was recorded at 0°C, while Kalat recorded -1°C. In Ziarat, the minimum temperature was also recorded at -1°C, while Zhob recorded 4°C.

Sibi recorded a minimum temperature of 12°C and Turbat 16°C, while Nokkundi recorded 9°C and Chaman 6°C.

In coastal areas of Balochistan, Gwadar recorded a minimum temperature of 13°C and Jiwani 15°C.

## CM Murad says fire services to be placed under one institution

**NEWS DESK:** Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that improving the fire brigade system was among the government's top priorities. Addressing the 21st My Karachi Exhibition, he said that the system was previously divided among multiple authorities and would now be brought under one unified institution.

At present, various agencies including the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, Rescue-1122, Karachi Port Trust have their own fire-fighting systems.

The CM said China had offered cooperation to help improve the fire brigade system, including training to ensure rapid response to fire incidents.

He said the Sindh government, in collaboration with the Karachi Chamber of Commerce

and Industry (KCCI), was working to support the people affected by the Gul Plaza fire and was trying to help rehabilitate the damaged shops to compensate for the losses as much as possible. About My Karachi Expo, he said the event had become an important and permanent feature of the city's calendar, reflecting its resilience, diversity and economic vitality despite multiple challenges.

He congratulated the KCCI on the successful organisation of the event and termed its continuity a major achievement.

He said that Sunday marked the final day of the expo, which witnessed participation from millions of citizens over the past few days.

Meanwhile, Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori, on Sunday stressed the urgent need to improve safety measures in the city's narrow streets, markets and shopping centres, highlighting public safety concerns following the recent Gul Plaza tragedy.

Citing statements by Finance Minister Ijaz-ul-Haq and Defence Minister Ijaz-ul-Haq, Tessori said the government would be scrapping decades-old regulations that prevent Jewish private citizens from buying land in the West Bank. The statement issued on Monday by the

## BBI Vice Chairman Meets UAE Consul General to Boost Investment Cooperation

**Mir Salam Jozgazi:** Vice Chairman of the Balochistan Board of Investment (BBI), Bilal Khan Kakar, held a detailed meeting with the Consul General of the United Arab Emirates in Karachi, Dr. Bakheet Atiq Al Remeithi, to discuss strengthening bilateral cooperation and investment opportunities.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on several key areas of mutual interest, including the organization of proposed investment conferences in Karachi and Abu Dhabi to attract investors and promote economic collaboration.

Progress was also reviewed on a major project aimed at cultivating Rhodes grass over more than 100 kilometers in arid areas of Balochistan to support the livestock sector. The two sides discussed enhancing cooperation in halal meat exports and expanding collaboration in the investment industry.

The meeting further covered the de-



velopment of a used oil recycling plant in Hub, Balochistan, facilitation of company registration in the UAE for Pakistani businesses, joint ventures in shrimp farming projects, and other potential investment initiatives.

Both sides agreed to move forward with practical steps to

implement the discussed projects and deepen economic and investment ties between Balochistan and the United Arab Emirates.

## FM Dar underscores importance of expanding trade, economic ties with the EU

**NEWS DESK:** Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday chaired a high-level inter-ministerial meeting to review measures aimed at strengthening Pakistan's economic and trade cooperation with the European Union (EU).

According to a post shared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on X, the deputy prime minister underscored the importance of expanding trade and economic ties with the EU, noting that the bloc remains a key economic partner for Pakistan, particularly under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP-Plus) framework.

Dar highlighted that Pakistan has completed four biennial GSP-Plus reviews and reaffirmed the country's commitment



to fully meeting its obligations under the scheme in order to expand mutually beneficial trade opportunities with the EU.

GSP-Plus is a trade initiative by the EU that allows developing countries to export goods to the region with reduced or zero tariffs, making their products more competitive in European markets.

Under the enhanced GSP-Plus scheme, countries that implement international conventions on human rights, labour rights, environmental protection, and good governance receive additional benefits, including duty-free access for most exports.

The GSP-Plus status has especially benefited Pakistan's key export sectors in textiles, leather goods, and surgical instruments,

which contribute significantly to the country's foreign exchange earnings.

The meeting was attended by federal minister for law and justice, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Bajwa, Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Anna Baloch, and the secretaries of commerce, interior, overseas Pakistanis and human rights. Pakistan's am-

bassador to the EU and senior officials from relevant federal and provincial departments were also present.

At the meeting with the EU's Ambassador to Pakistan, Raimundas Karoblis, in Jan. 2026, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif affirmed Pakistan's commitment to working closely with the EU on initiatives to enhance trade, particularly under the GSP-Plus framework.

The country was granted the GSP-Plus status by the EU in 2014, resulting in a 108 per cent increase in Pakistani textile exports to the EU due to concessional tariffs.

In October 2023, the European Parliament unanimously voted to extend the GSP-Plus status for another four years until 2027 for developing countries, including Pakistan.

## 8 Muslim nations, including Pakistan, warn against 'expansionist Israeli policies' in occupied West Bank

**NEWS DESK:** Eight Muslim countries, including Pakistan, in a joint statement on Monday, warned against the "continued expansionist Israeli policies" in the occupied West Bank.

In the statement, the foreign ministers of Pakistan — along with those of Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Indonesia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar — "condemned in the strongest terms the illegal Israeli decisions and measures aimed at imposing unlawful Israeli sovereignty, entrenching settlement activity, and enforcing a new legal and administrative reality in the occupied West Bank, thereby accelerating attempts at its illegal annexation and the displacement of the Palestinian people."

The statement comes a day after Israel's security cabinet approved a series of steps that would make it easier for settlers in the occupied West Bank to buy land while granting Israeli authorities more enforcement powers over Palestinians, according to Israeli media.

Citing statements by Finance Minister Ijaz-ul-Haq and Defence Minister Ijaz-ul-Haq, Tessori said the government would be scrapping decades-old regulations that prevent Jewish private citizens from buying land in the West Bank. The statement issued on Monday by the



eight Muslim countries reaffirmed that "Israel has no sovereignty over the occupied Palestinian territory."

"The ministers warned against the continued expansionist Israeli policies and illegal measures pursued by the Israeli government in the occupied West Bank, which fuel violence and conflict in the region," the statement said. The ministers expressed "absolute rejection" of Israel's actions, which they maintained "constitute a blatant violation of international law, undermine the two-state solution, and represent an assault on the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to realise their independent and sovereign state."

"Such actions also undermine the ongoing efforts for peace and stability in the region," the statement added.

The ministers also held that "these illegal measures in the occupied West Bank are null and void and constitute a clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions, particularly Resolution 2334, which condemns all Israeli measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character, and status of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967."

In that regard, the ministers recalled the "2024 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which found that Israel's policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory and its continued presence is illegal, affirmed the necessity of

ending the Israeli occupation, and the nullity of the annexation of occupied Palestinian lands."

The ministers, in their statement, called on the international community to "fulfil its legal and moral responsibilities and to compel Israel to halt its dangerous escalation in the occupied West Bank and the inciting statements of its officials."

"They stressed that the fulfilment of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood," the ministers said. They further underscored the need for the statehood to be "based on the two-state solution in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative," which the minister said

"remains the only path to achieving just and comprehensive peace that ensures security and stability in the region."

It should be mentioned that a statement issued earlier this month, the eight nations had condemned the repeated violations of the ceasefire in Gaza by Israel, asserting that these actions risked undermining efforts for restoring stability at a time when regional and international partners were working collectively to advance the second phase of Trump's plan.

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