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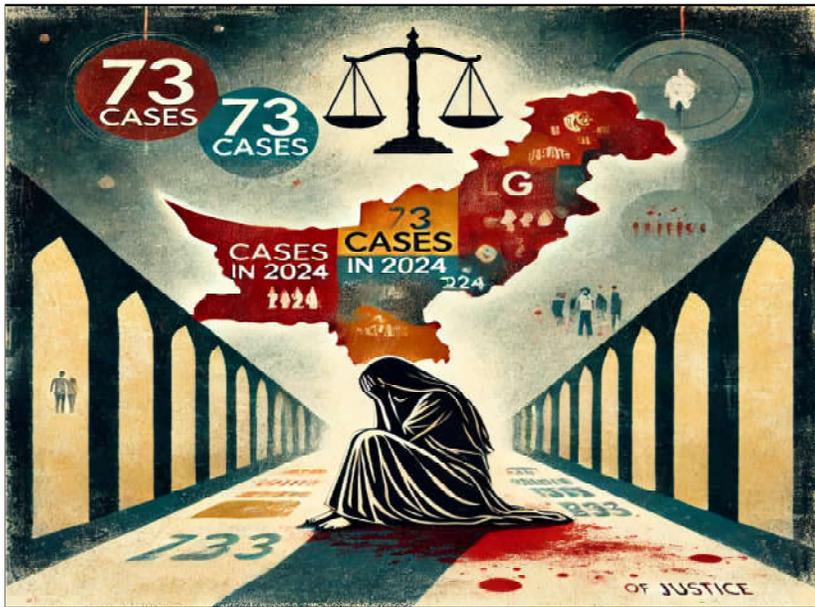
Editor: Asim Khan.

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Email address: dquettavoic@gmail.com
Website: www.quettavoic.com

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Police Trained to Improve Response to Gender-Based Violence in Balochistan

NEWS DESK:

A one-day training workshop aimed at improving police handling of gender-based violence (GBV) cases was organised in Quetta, bringing together front-line police officers from across Balochistan.

The workshop was arranged by the Aurat Foundation in collaboration with UN Women and the Embassy of Germany in Islamabad. Held at Shaheed Hameed Shakeel Hall, the training focused on officers who are often the first point of contact for women and girls seeking protection from violence.

Building Sensitivity and Survivor-Centred Policing. The session aimed to strengthen the understanding, sensitivity and professional capacity of police personnel dealing with GBV survivors.

Speakers highlighted that fear, stigma and complex legal procedures often discourage survivors from approaching law enforcement, making empathetic and confidential police response critical for access to justice.

Fauzia Shaheen opened the workshop with a discussion on key gender concepts, harmful social stereotypes and the emotional and social impact of gender-based violence on survivors

and their families.

Legal expert Fatima Jahanzeb led a detailed session on gender-sensitive investigation techniques, survivor-focused referral pathways and legal protections available to women and girls.

She emphasised trauma-informed policing and stronger coordination between police, legal and support institutions. Institutions Call for Stronger Protection Systems

Yasmeen Mughal introduced the objectives of the Gender Parity Project, highlighting its focus on safety, dignity and institutional capacity-building to improve public service delivery across Balochistan.

Addressing participants, Muhammad Khalil shared insights into UN Women's access-to-justice initiatives in the province.

He underscored the importance of increasing women's participation in the police and judiciary, establishing gender-responsive units, engaging community volunteers and creating safe spaces for survivors.

Allauddin Khilji praised the Balochistan Police for its commitment to improving GBV response services and acknowledged Israr Ahmed Umrani, AIG Gender,

for recognising the need for specialised training for reporting officers and ensuring full in-

stitutional support for the initiative.

The workshop concluded with the distribution of certificates to participating officers by AIG Gender Israr Ahmed Umrani. Officers reaffirmed their commitment to adopting a more compassionate and survivor-centred approach in handling cases of gender-based violence.

Speakers and participants jointly stressed the need for sustained collaboration between state institutions and civil society to build a safer environment where women and girls can live without fear, access justice without barriers and have their dignity protected.

Six Killed, Vehicles Torched in Armed Attack in Panjur's Dastak Area

News Desk:

At least six people lost their lives in a deadly armed assault in the Dastak area of Panjur, where attackers also set two vehicles on fire, police said on Monday.

Officials stated that the incident occurred in the Chaidagi-Dastak locality, approximately 60 kilometres from Panjur city.

Unknown assailants carried out the attack and fled before law enforcement arrived.

Police teams reached the scene shortly after the incident and began collecting evidence.

The cause and motive behind the attack remain unclear.

A search operation has been launched in the surrounding areas to track down those responsible, police added.

Two of the victims have been identified as Dewood, son of Awaziz, and Jan Salim, son of Haji Faiz Muhammad, residents of the border village of



Nagar. The identities of the remaining four deceased had not

been confirmed at the time of reporting.

Authorities said investigations are underway, and more

details are expected as the situation develops.

Punjab Assembly to take up ordinance against land grabbing tomorrow

NEWS DESK:

The Punjab Assembly will take up on Tuesday (February 24) the Punjab Protection of Ownership of Immovable Property (Amendment) Ordinance 2026, which is aimed at curbing land grabbing and fast-tracking property disputes.

The ordinance was on the agenda for Monday's session but could not be tabled due to a lack of quorum. The amended ordinance, promulgated on Feb 17, introduces jail terms of up to 10 years and fines up to Rs10 million for the illegal possession of immovable property, while mandating that cases be decided within 30 days.

It amends the Punjab Protection of Ownership of Immovable Property Act, 2025 — operation of which was suspended by the Lahore High Court last year — to strengthen protection for lawful owners and streamline adjudication through newly empowered district-level tribunals.

Under the ordinance, a key structural reform is the establishment of the Punjab Property Tribunal in each district, to be presided over by a serving additional sessions judge, with exclusive jurisdiction to try offences under the Act and determine questions of title. The tribunal is required to proceed on a day-to-day basis and conclude cases within 30 days of receiving a report from the scrutiny committee, limiting adjournments to no more than seven days at a time. Under the previous law, retired sessions judges were to be appointed to the post.

Further, now the tribunals cannot take up the cases already being heard by the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC), Supreme Court (SC) and the LHC.

The district scrutiny committees, headed by deputy commissioners and comprising senior police and revenue officials, will examine complaints, scrutinise records, summon relevant persons and attempt amicable settlements within 30 days before submitting their reports to the tribunal. Any person who directly or indirectly occupies property through fraud, force, coercion, forgery, misrepresentation or other illegal means will face a minimum of five years' imprisonment, extendable to ten years, along with heavy financial penalties.

Even attempts, abetment or facilitation of such offences will attract prison terms ranging from one to three years and fines up to Rs1m. In a significant deterrent against misuse of the law, the tribunal has been granted powers to punish false, frivolous or vexatious complaints with imprisonment of up to five years and fines up to Rs500,000.

The tribunal may also award monetary compensation to lawful owners, not less than the officially notified value of the property, along with recovery of any profits gained through illegal occupation. To prevent further complications during litigation, the ordinance declares that any sale, lease, gift, mortgage or other form of alienation of a disputed property after the filing of a complaint shall be null and void unless specifically permitted by the tribunal. Appeals against final judgments will be only before the LHC within 30 days, while interim orders will not be appealable. Bail for accused persons arrested under the ordinance may only be granted by the high court, reinforcing the exclusive authority of the tribunal system.

According to the statement of objects and reasons, the amendments are aimed at strengthening the legal framework protecting property rights, ensuring faster dispute resolution, enhancing penalties to deter illegal occupation and removing obsolete provisions to create a more coherent and effective enforcement mechanism across Punjab.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

SBKWU Teacher Recruitment Scandal Raises Alarms for Pakistan's Education System



Editorial: Serious questions have emerged over the secondary teachers recruitment process conducted by Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (SBKWU), triggering widespread concern about merit, transparency, and accountability in Balochistan's education system. It is essential to clarify a point that has caused public confusion: the advertised posts were NOT for SBKWU itself. The university was only assigned the responsibility of conducting tests and interviews for Secondary School Teacher recruitment across Balochistan. According to initial findings, hundreds of candidates who had failed were allegedly declared successful during the teacher recruitment process.

Given the scale of the exercise, involving thousands of applicants for secondary teaching positions across the province, such irregularities cannot reasonably be described as clerical mistakes. The magnitude strongly suggests organised manipulation, carried out with the involvement or protection of influential individuals rather than the actions of a single official. This issue strikes at the heart of education governance in Balochistan. Secondary school teachers shape the academic foundation of students, and any compromise on merit directly damages learning outcomes. In Balochistan, where literacy rates remain among the lowest in the country, flawed teacher recruitment further deepens an already critical education

crisis. Reports that deserving candidates were sidelined only intensify public frustration and mistrust. All anti-corruption and accountability institutions must take immediate notice. A transparent, independent, and time-bound investigation is necessary to identify those responsible for manipulating the recruitment process conducted under SBKWU's authority. Accountability must reach every individual involved, regardless of status or influence. This is not merely an administrative controversy; it is a matter of justice and the future of Balochistan's education system. If credibility in teacher recruitment collapses, public trust in institutions will collapse with it. Balochistan cannot afford silence where integrity is at stake.

Balochistan's education sector, implementation of article 25-A



Improving the education sector has always been the hallmark of all successive governments in Balochistan. Every government has allocated substantial funds to improve the education sector and quality of education to enable students to compete on national and international level. Health and education, all successive governments declared their priorities. Former Chief Minister, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch led nationalist government allocated around 24 percent budget to bring the province at par with other parts of the country. Dr. Baloch's government also declared emergency and announced implementation of article 25-A of the constitution to enroll all out of school children in Balochistan. The number of out of school children in Balochistan is currently over 1 mil-

lion. However, independent sources put the number high as compared to the official data. There are conflicting figures about the exact number of out of school children in Balochistan. To be precise, positive strides were made during Dr. Malik Baloch led government to improve the education sector. For the first time in the history of Balochistan, 5000 teachers were appointed through national testing service (NTS), launching an effective campaign against growing cheating during examinations and introducing the education management and information system to ensure the presence of teachers in schools. Track record shows, teachers were always recruited on political basis with no merit and transpar-

ency in the recruitment process. This has ruined the entire education sector. Dr. Malik Baloch, the then adviser on education Sardar Raza Muhammad Bareech led rallies against cheating to create awareness among the people regarding the curse of cheating in educational institutions. After the removal of Sardar Raza Bareech as an adviser on education and transfers of senior bureaucrats Ghulam Ali Baloch and Saboor Kakar, no effective step was taken to improve the quality of education in Balochistan. Now again the portfolio of education has been awarded to Sardar Yaqub Muhammad Rind who belongs to Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI). Mr. Rind has made announcements to bring what he claimed

revolutionary changes. However, improvement in education sector, enrolling out of school children in schools and improving quality of education needs a multi-pronged strategy. Senior bureaucrat Ghulam Ali Baloch who had already served as secretary education has again been posted. Mr. Baloch is taking a number of initiatives to improve schooling and trace out ghost schools and teaches across the province. However, political speed breakers appear to be major obstacles in his way. Despite being the poorest province of Pakistan, Balochistan spends over 70 billion rupees on primary, middle, secondary and higher education in the province. The province spends thousands of rupees per month on a student. Unfortu-

nately, neither the quality nor the education standard meet national standards what to speak about international standards. Poor quality of education is the result of poor capacity of teachers that needs to be improved to compete on national and international level. The Balochistan government has announced to enroll 70000 kids in government run schools in the province. However, ground realities negate claims of the provincial government. So far, the government has not been able to mobilize the civil society, media, political parties and tribesmen to make sure maximum enrollment of kids in educational institutions of the province. Coordinated efforts and combined strategy by all segments of society can ensure implementation of article 25-A of the Constitution.

Taftan border and Balochistan Govt's response

Quetta Voice Analysis

The sudden arrival of thousands of Zaireen at Pak-Iran border Taftan posed a serious challenge for government of Balochistan to make sure their screening and conduct medical tests in the aftermath of outbreak of COVID-19 in neighboring Iran. The federal government closed the border with Iran at Taftan on February 23rd to halt the spread of deadly corona virus. All of a sudden over 4,000 Zaireen, students, tourists and traders gathered at Taftan, Pakistan's bordering town with Iran. The poorly equipped health officials that too less in number tried to conduct screening and tests of those entered from Iran. However, many managed to flee from the administration and used their own means of communication to reach Quetta on way to their home provinces. The drivers were paid heavy fares by those fleeing the quarantine centers at Taftan. Perhaps, in the beginning, the Balochistan government and Islamabad did not realize the gravity of situation. A wind-blowing tent quarantine center was established to keep the



Zaireen and others to halt the spread of novel corona virus. However, the laboratory to diagnose the deadly disease and conduct tests of novel corona virus could not be arranged at the border soon after the closure of border. The National Institute of Health (NIH) dispatched machinery

and laboratory to conduct the diagnosis 10 days after the closure of the border. Before installation of the laboratory, the health officials used to send tests of suspected patients to Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi for diagnosis. Though, it was imperative to install laboratory soon after

the closure of the border to make sure proper screening and diagnosis of the people. Apart from corona virus, the Balochistan government appeared to be concerned about the security of Zaireen as well. In the past, Zaireen were fre-

quently targeted by terrorists on Quetta-Taftan highway. Since then, the Balochistan government has been providing security and law enforcers escort long convoys of buses from Quetta to Taftan all the time. The Chief Minister Balochistan, Jam Kamal Khan has been closely monitoring the

unfolding situation and all the time directing the concerned quarters to halt the spread of novel corona virus. However, loopholes in the system caused the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country. Although, the Chief Minister issued statements, precautionary measures through print, elec-

tronic and shares videos on social media to sensitize the people about the deadly virus. Nevertheless, the virus penetrated and made its way from Taftan to Sukkur prompting the Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah to say that Zaireen were not properly screened at Pak-Iran border

Taftan. Opposition political parties in Balochistan in general and the Balochistan National Party ideologue, Sanaulah Baloch have strongly criticized the Jam Kamal led government for what they call its failure and incompetence to contain the corona virus. Political parties, members of civil society and legal fraternity had also objected over the establishment of quarantine center at Mian Ghundi area of Quetta. They feared spread of deadly virus after establishment of center near the city rather they demanded of the government to shift the Zaireen to their home provinces directly from Taftan. To be precise, the virus has already penetrated and now it is time for all political parties from left to right and religious to nationalists to join their hands to contain its spread. The government needs to take all stakeholders including political parties, media, civil society and lawyers to evolve a combined strategy in the province to tackle the situation. It is not alone the job of government rather every individual to play his/her role to contain the virus before it is too late.

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

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

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

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

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

A member of Oseguera's Jalisco New

Generation Cartel told Reuters that the blasts and sporadic gunfire were carried out in revenge for the government's killing of Oseguera, and warned of further bloodshed as groups move to take control of his cartel.

"The attacks were carried out in revenge for the leader's death, at first against the government and out of discontent," the person said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"But later, the internal killings are coming, by the groups moving in to take over."

In Mexico's Pacific coast, a five-hour drive from the military operation in the town of Tapalpa that took down the leader of the powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel, a student beached on a pier in Puerto Vallarta took out their cell phones to film thick waves of smoke obscuring blue ocean views, showed a video shared with Reuters.

Daniel Droyet, a Canadian who has wintered in Puerto Vallarta for years, said in a phone interview that he was concerned about a new era of violence taking



root in the typically placid resort zone.

"I have never seen anything like this before," he said.

In the state of Jalisco, authorities reported that gunmen had attacked a base for the National Guard military police, and recommended guests remain inside hotels and suspended public transit.

Other scenes of criminal activity and military response were captured in videos shared by government security sources with Reuters: A green military tank made its way through a residential neighborhood in the state of Aguascalientes.

Roadblocks paralyzed the highly traveled Mexico-Puebla highway. In the state of Colima, cartel members

standing in pick-up trucks blocked a road.

A trucking industry group said in a statement it was "profoundly worried" by the highway violence and recommended that truckers keep to safe areas or return to their operating yards until conditions improved.

The state of Guanajuato, a CJNG stronghold, reported 55 incidents across 23 municipalities, with 18 arrests, but said by evening all incidents were under control.

Carlo Gutierrez, who lives in Guadalajara, Jalisco's capital, said that friends on WhatsApp groups were encouraging people to stay home.

"There is fear and a lot of caution," he said of the city, one of three

main Mexican venues for World Cup soccer matches this summer.

Former cop turned kingpin Oseguera, a former police officer, founded and oversaw the rapid rise of the CJNG, named for the western state of Jalisco that is home to one of Mexico's biggest cities, Guadalajara.

In recent years, CJNG has expanded into one of Mexico's most powerful cartels, known for violent tactics including forced labor and forced recruitment.

Under El Mencho's leadership, CJNG also became a highly diversified criminal enterprise, expanding from drug trafficking to fuel theft, extortion, human smuggling, and complex financial frauds.

The cartel pioneered use of drones in attacks against civilians in remote regions of western Mexico as part of its rapid territorial expansion.

Sunday's raid was one of Mexico's highest-profile blows against drug gangs responsible for smuggling billions of dollars of drugs, including fentanyl - into the US.

"Violence in wake of cartel arrests, killings Authorities have not reported any casualties beyond several cartel members and officials killed during the military operation."

'No thanks': Greenland and Denmark reject Trump's hospital ship offer

NEWS DESK: Greenland and its territory, Denmark, on Sunday rejected Donald Trump's offer to send a naval hospital ship to the island covered by the US leader.

A day earlier, Trump said he was sending "a great hospital boat to Greenland to take care of the many people who are sick and not being taken care of there."

However, Greenlandic Prime Minister Jens Frederik Nielsen, who heads the autonomous territory's government, wrote on his Facebook page, "That will be no thanks from us."

"President Trump's idea to send a US hospital ship here to Greenland has been duly noted. But we have a public health system where care is free for citizens," he said.

"This is not the case in the United States, where going to the doctor costs money."

Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen likewise told Danish broadcaster DR: "The Greenlandic population receives the healthcare it needs. They receive it either in Greenland, or if they require specialised treatment, they receive it in Denmark."

He added: "It's not as if there's a need for a

special healthcare initiative in Greenland."

On the day that Trump made his proposal, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said she was "happy to live in a country where access to healthcare is free and equal for all."

Where insurance or wealth does not determine whether one receives dignified treatment.

Trump, in his Truth Social message on Saturday about the hospital ship, posted an AI-generated image of a US Navy medical vessel, USNS Mercy.

"It's on the way!!!!" he added.

It was not immediately clear if that meant he was deploying that



Nepal bus crash kills 19 people

NEWS DESK: A bus in Nepal skidded off a mountain road and plunged into an icy river on Monday, killing at least 19 people, according to police sources.

The bus, en route from the tourist city of Pokhara to the capital city Kathmandu, fell more than 200 metres (655 feet) into the Trishuli River in Dhading district in the early hours of Monday morning.

"Out of 44, in total 19 people died, and 25 are undergoing treatment," senior local police officer Prakash Dahal told AFP, confirming one British citizen was among the dead.

One Chinese person and a New Zealander were injured, he said, without giving further details.

Mohan Prasad Neupane, information officer at the district administration office, said the rescue operation had been completed by dawn.

"The injured are undergoing treatment," Neupane said.

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"The injured are undergoing treatment," Neupane said.



Another Tejas jet lost as Indian Air Force grounds fleet for inspections, reports local media

NEWS DESK: The Indian Air Force (IAF) has lost another Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Tejas light combat aircraft after it over-shot the runway at a frontline airbase, sustaining major damage to its airframe, Indian media, including The Hindu reported.

The incident, believed to have been caused by a brake failure, took place on February 7, and the pilot ejected safely, according to The Times of India.

Following the accident, the entire fleet of about 30 single-seat Tejas jets was grounded to undergo comprehensive technical inspections. The Hindu added.

The latest mishap comes amid delays in the delivery of the Tejas Mk-1A variant, according to Indian media outlets. HAL has faced repeated

delays in supplying the jets, mainly due to GE Aerospace missing deliveries for engine deliveries.

The IAF has not released an official statement regarding the incident.

This is reported to be the third Tejas aircraft lost since induction.

The first crash occurred near Jaisalmer in March 2024 after a fire-power demonstration, with the pilot ejecting safely.

The second incident was reported in November 2025, when a Tejas jet crashed during an aerial display on the last day of the Dubai Airshow, the Middle East's biggest airshow.

In February 2021, India's Defence Ministry signed an INR480 billion contract with HAL for 83 Tejas Mk-1A jets, followed by a separate INR623.7bn deal in September 2025 for 97 additional aircraft, Indian media outlets reported.



More than 200 political prisoners in Venezuela launch hunger strike

NEWS DESK: More than 200 Venezuelan political prisoners were on hunger strike Sunday to demand their release under a new amnesty law that excludes many of them.

The inmates at the Rodeo prison, about 40 kilometres east of the capital Caracas, shouted to their loved ones as part of the protest, an AFP journalist witnessed.

"Freedom!" "release us all!" and "Rodeo 1 on strike" were among the cries from the prisoners that were audible from outside the facility.

The amnesty law was approved by Venezuela's congress on Thursday as part of a wave of reforms encouraged by the United States after it ousted and captured former president Nicolas Maduro on January 3.

The hunger strike, which began Friday night, came about after inmates complained they would not benefit from the law because it excludes cases involving the military, which are the most common ones at that facility.

"Approximately 214 people in total, including Venezuelans and foreigners, are on hunger strike," said Yalitzia Garcia, mother-in-law of a prisoner named Nahuel Agustin Gallo.

Gallo, an Argentine police officer, is accused of terrorism, another category that is excluded.

"It's a first step, and I think we're on the right track."

Not all the inmates at the prison were joining the hunger strike, the relatives said.

Amnesty law criticised

The amnesty law was engineered by interim leader Delcy Rodriguez under pressure from Washington after US ammandos attacked Venezuela on January 3, kidnapped Maduro and his wife and took them to the United States for trial on alleged drug trafficking charges.

Opposition figures have criticised the new legislation, which appears to include carve-

outs for some offences previously used by authorities to target Maduro's political opponents.

The law also excludes members of the security forces convicted of activities related to what the government considers terrorism.

But the amnesty extends to 11,000 political prisoners who, over nearly three decades, were paroled or placed under house arrest.

More than 1,500 political prisoners in Venezuela have already applied for amnesty under the bill, the head of the country's legislature said Saturday.



US-Iran tension drags Pakistan Stock Exchange in red

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Monday started the week on a downturn, driven by geopolitical tensions between Iran and the US, alongside persistent

selling pressure. At the close of trading, the PSX's benchmark KSE-100 Index plummeted by 5,478.63 points, settling at 167,691.08 points, a decline of -3.27 percent.

Out of 567 active companies in the ready market, 42 advanced, 389 declined, and 136 remained unchanged. The engagement was being closely monitored by market participants, given its importance for fiscal discipline, reform continuity, and external financing access. Despite equity market turbulence, macroeconomic indicators provided mixed but

structurally supportive signals. An International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission is scheduled to arrive on February 26 to review Pakistan's performance under the US\$7 billion

Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and initiate discussions on the FY27 federal budget. The engagement is being closely monitored by market participants, given its importance for

fiscal discipline, reform continuity, and external financing access. Earlier on Friday, the benchmark index recorded a bullish trend, gaining 999.42 points, a positive change of 0.58 percent

to close at 173,169.71 points. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 537,645 million shares with a traded value of Rs 23,790 billion.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Lebanon to Pakistan Abdulaziz Issa called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naved Ashraf at Naval Headquarters.

PTI lawmakers protest outside SC over Imran Khan's cases, health issues

ISLAMABAD (INP): Lawmakers backed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) staged a protest outside the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SC) on Monday, demanding that cases involving the party's founder be fixed for hearing and that he be allowed to meet his family.

The protesters also called for the PTI founder to be examined by his personal physicians, arguing that access to independent medical evaluation was essential and mounting concerns about his health. The demonstration drew several senior figures from the party, including Opposition Leader in the Senate Alama Raja Nasir Abbas

and PTI Secretary Salman Akram Raja, as well as MNA Aamir Dogar, Shafi Jan, Muhammad Hussain, Shahid Khatkhat and other members backed by the party. The protest coincided with fresh claims by Aleema Khan regard-

ing the health of her brother, the jailed former prime minister Imran Khan. Speaking at a press conference on February 17, 2026, she said she and her sisters had been stopped at Chakri earlier in the day while attempting to travel to Adiala Jail to hold a media briefing.

Aleema said the purpose of the press conference was to raise concerns about Khan's health, claiming that he had reportedly lost vision in one eye. She added that his wife, Bushra Bibi, had conveyed a message stating that he was in poor health.

According to Aleema, former Prime Minister Imran Khan had complained of worsening eyesight and requested that Dr Faisal Khan and Dr Asim be allowed to examine him.

She said he had also asked for his blood test reports to be shared with his family and personal doctors to ensure transparency about his medical condition.

Two POs injured, re-arrested after police encounter

FAISALABAD (INP): The police re-arrested two record-holding criminals in injured condition after an encounter in the area of Saddar police station.

Police said on Monday that ASI Liaqat Ali of Batala Colony police station was taking accused Haidar and Sher Muhammad for recovery in a registered case late night when four armed outlaws riding two motorcycles intercepted the police party near Sitara Gold City and opened fire.

The assailants forcibly fired the detainees and fled towards Chak No.209-RB.

On receiving information, SHO Batala Colony Inspector Zaheer Gull and SHO Saddar Inspector Muhammad Ali along with heavy police contingent launched a chase operation.

The police near Jora Pull encircled the criminals and directed them for surrender but they again opened blunt firing on the police team by taking shelter in nearby sugarcane fields.

The police also returned fire in self-defense and during this encounter, the accused Haidar and Sher Muhammad received serious injuries due to the bullets fired by their own accomplices, whereas remaining outlaws managed to escape from the scene under the cover of darkness.

The police re-arrested both accused involved in 42 criminal cases and shifted them to hospital for medical treatment. A special team was constituted to trace whereabouts of the escapes and arrest thereof, spokesman added.

CM Maryam launches free ambulance service for body transport across Punjab

LAHORE (INP): In a first for the province, the Government of Punjab has approved the launch of a free service to transport deceased persons from hospitals to their homes, following the approval by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

The decision was taken during a special meeting chaired by the chief minister, where officials agreed to operationalise a government-run vehicle

service at major public hospitals and in every tehsil across the province. There are a total of 216 tehsils in Punjab province.

Punjab authorities have been directed to present a comprehensive plan for the rollout of the van service.

Under the approved framework, at least one van will be made available in each tehsil to offer free transportation of bodies from hospitals to residences. As per

the decision in the meeting, bereaved families will be able to access the free ambulance service by calling 1122 or through a designated hospital counter.

The Punjab government has also decided that intercity transportation of deceased persons from one hospital to another will be provided free of cost. OGH said the service will be monitored through a smart management

system to ensure transparency, efficiency and timely response.

During the meeting, Secretary of Emergency Services Dr Rizwan Naseer briefed participants on the operational modalities. The meeting also reviewed a proposal to regulate private ambulance services and fix their rates in order to prevent overcharging and ensure standardised services across the province.

Unannounced Jhelum water surge inundates dozens of Athara Hazari villages

JHELUM (INP): A sudden and unannounced surge in the water level of the River Jhelum has inundated dozens of villages in Tehsil Athara Hazari, submerging farmlands and raising alarm among residents and farmers.

Floodwater has entered several areas, including Balo, Mari Shah, Munday Syed and Dhabhi Balochan, causing extensive damage to agricultural land and standing crops. Large tracts of farmland were seen underwater as the river overflowed into adjoining settlements, the TV channel reported on Monday.

Hundreds of acres of ready-to-harvest wheat, sugarcane and fodder crops have been severely affected, compounding the financial strain on farmers who were already grappling with the aftermath of last year's floods.

Many farmers expressed deep concern over the scale of losses and warned that the situation could worsen if immediate remedial steps were not taken.

The affected farmers have urged the authorities to open the gates of Head Trimu without delay to ensure proper discharge of water and prevent further devastation to crops and residential areas.

They said that compensation for damages suffered during last year's floods has yet to be disbursed, leaving many families in a precarious position.

The development comes despite a recent advisory from the Flood Forecasting Division Lahore, which had issued a flash flood warning concerning the River Kabul but did not signal any unusual rise in the River Jhelum.

In its warning issued on January 20, the division had cautioned that a strong westerly wave was expected to affect the upper parts of the country from the evening of January 21 to January 24, 2026. It had forecast a rise in flows in the Kabul River and its tributaries during January 22 and 23, 2025, amid expectations of moderate to isolated heavy rainfall and snowfall in upper parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmir.

Authorities, including PDMA, DDM, local administrations and emergency services, were advised to remain vigilant and ensure preparedness for any untoward situation, while residents of vulnerable and low-lying areas near streams and nullahs were urged to exercise caution during the forecast period.

Speeding car badly hit food delivery rider

KARACHI (INP): A late-night street race turned tragic at Khayaban-e-Hittani when a speeding car lost control and crushed a food delivery rider, leaving him in critical condition.

The suspects involved managed to flee the scene after a brief, deceptive display of "help," prompting a police manhunt.

According to police reports, the accident occurred at approximately 2:00 AM near the Saba Signal in the DHA neighborhood.

Witnesses and police officials state that two cars were engaged in an illegal street race when one of the vehicles lost control.

The car reportedly somersaulted several times before crashing into 32-year-old Farhan, a food delivery rider who was on his motorcycle on the opposite side of the road. Farhan sustained severe head injuries and multiple fractures due to the impact of the high-speed collision. Rescue teams arrived promptly at the scene and shifted the victim to a nearby hospital in an ambulance.

Punjab Healthcare Commission (PHC) Anti-quackery operations intensified in Punjab

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab Healthcare Commission (PHC) has significantly intensified its anti-quackery operations, conducting raids on 2,130 treatment centres across Punjab over a four-week period and sealing 500 illegal outlets.

According to a PHC spokesperson on Sunday, enforcement teams visited a wide range of treatment facilities, including clinics, laboratories and aesthetic centres. As a result of violations, 500 quackery outlets were sealed. Meanwhile, 232 centres were found to have undergone business changes, with operators either shifting lo-

cations, shutting down operations or converting to other businesses in response to the Commission's strict enforcement.

Additionally, 1,285 healthcare establishments (HCEs) have been placed under surveillance to prevent any resurgence of quackery, as qualified professionals were operating these centres at the time of the inspections.

Chief Executive Officer PHC Dr Muhammad Saqib Aziz stated that the ongoing campaign reflects the Commission's firm commitment to protecting public health and ensuring that only

licensed and qualified practitioners provide medical services in the province.

Lahore recorded the highest number of closures, with 133 illegal treatment centres shut down. The crackdown also extended to other districts, resulting in 14 maternity homes, 13 traditional bone-setter outlets operating without recognised qualifications. A PHC spokesperson further revealed that, to date, the Commission has conducted raids on around 242,000 treatment centres across Punjab, resulting in the closure of more than 67,600 quackery outlets, while 30,663 quacks have abandoned their illegal practices.

more than 50 dental clinics, over 40 hakems and Tibb practices, a dozen homeopathic clinics, over 30 unregistered laboratories and collection centres, about 14 maternity homes, and 13 traditional bone-setter outlets operating without recognised qualifications. A PHC spokesperson further revealed that, to date, the Commission has conducted raids on around 242,000 treatment centres across Punjab, resulting in the closure of more than 67,600 quackery outlets, while 30,663 quacks have abandoned their illegal practices.

The expenditure under the Ruet-e-Hilal Committee's expenses during the meeting. The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee reportedly spent Rs 2 million on observing the Ramadan moon this year. The expenditure will be approved by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in the 48th cabinet meeting scheduled for February 25.

The agenda for the 48th cabinet meeting, chaired by Sohail Afridi, includes approval of the Ruet-e-Hilal Committee's expenditures. According to media reports, the agenda consists of 18 points, with the Rs 2 million expenditure on moon sighting specifically mentioned.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Syed Imran Ahmed Shah chaired a review meeting of PMRRP 2026. Representative of Partner Financial Institutions and State Bank of Pakistan briefed him about the progress of the disbursements.

Massive Rs 2m spent on Ramadan moon sighting

LAHORE (INP): Provincial govt will finalise approval of the committee's expenses during the meeting.

The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee reportedly spent Rs 2 million on observing the Ramadan moon this year. The expenditure will be approved by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in the 48th cabinet meeting scheduled for February 25.

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IBCC introduces e-marking software in all educational boards across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Inter-Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC) finalized software for online e-marking in all the educational boards of the country, including Punjab.

In a statement, the IBCC said that under the current project, e-marking will be conducted for the computer subject paper.

The Inter-Boards Coordination Commission directed all the educational boards of the country to implement the e-marking system in letter and spirit. IBCC provided the software to all the educational boards of the country free of

cost. After the successful completion of the pilot project, all the marks on the papers will be marked by e-marking. Earlier, on February 20, 2026, the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Lahore unveiled its examination procedures. The reforms aim to improve transparency, accountability, and fairness in the assessment system.

The decision comes after numerous complaints about the mismanagement of practical examinations. Concerns were raised over irregular marking practices and

a lack of oversight during lab assessments.

To address the issue, the board has introduced centralized marking for 9th-class practical exams. Practical assessments will now be a mandatory component of student evaluation. Authorities believe this step will ensure uniform standards across all examination centers. CCTV cameras will be installed in the laboratories. The move is intended to monitor practical exams and prevent unfair practices. Officials say surveillance will promote discipline and transparency during assessments.



LAHORE: DG PIB Lahore Shaqat Abbas Khan laid a floral wreath on behalf of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Information Minister Atta Ullah Tarar at the Grave of Salman Gillani, paying tribute and honoring his service.

Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail Terms Pakistan-Iran Trade Route via Balochistan a 'Game Changer'

QUETTA: Governor of Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has stated that trade forms the strongest foundation of Pakistan-Iran bilateral relations, emphasizing that Balochistan serves as Pakistan's vital land link to Iran.

He expressed these views during a meeting with the Iranian Consul General in Pakistan, Mohammad Karimi Toudeshki, who presented his diplomatic credentials.

The Governor welcomed the Consul General and expressed hope that his appointment would further strengthen bilateral ties between the two neighboring countries. Governor Mandokhail highlighted that in light of evolving regional economic and trade dynamics, the land route connecting Pakistan and Iran through



Balochistan holds the status of a potential 'game changer.' He noted that this route offers a unique opportunity to enhance bilateral trade from the current \$3 billion to \$10 billion. He further stated that geography plays a decisive role in shaping relations between

nations, and while countries cannot change their neighbors, they can certainly transform shared borders into avenues of economic growth and mutual benefit. By promoting large-scale economic activities, Balochistan can effectively tackle key challenges such as

poverty and unemployment and improve the living standards of its people. The Governor emphasized the need to further expand and modernize infrastructure in connection with border trade and the establishment of border markets. He added that en-

hancing workforce capacity and skills would accelerate trade activities. Continuous engagement and regular meetings, he said, would also help resolve smaller bilateral issues and strengthen long-term cooperation between Pakistan and Iran.

Musakhel Deputy Commissioner Chairs District Enrollment Committee Meeting to Boost School Enrollment

MUSAKHEL: Under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razaq Khajak, the District Enrollment Committee held a meeting to discuss

and all available resources will be utilized to ensure no child is deprived of their right to education. During the meeting, the attendance of

mittee members. Key decisions were made to identify out-of-school children and enroll them in educational institutions. The committee



strategies for improving school enrollment and overall education quality in the district. The meeting was attended by the District Education Officer (DEO), officials from the Education Department, and other com-

also emphasized launching local awareness campaigns to educate parents about the importance of schooling. Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razaq Khajak stated that education is a top priority,

teachers and the provision of basic facilities in schools were reviewed, with clear instructions issued to relevant authorities to eliminate any negligence and achieve the district's educational targets.

Joint Inspection Launched to Check Fitness Certificates of Long-Route Coaches in Balochistan

QUETTA: On the directives of Provincial Secretary Transport Muhammad Hayat Kakar and Secretary Provincial Transport Authority Balochistan Waheed Sharif, a joint inspection team has been formed to examine the fitness certificates of long-route coaches op-

erating in the province. The joint inspection team comprises the Provincial Transport Authority and representatives of the PTA. As part of the campaign, the team conducted inspections of coaches operating on the Quetta-Zhob route, including vehicles of Al-

Aziz, Al-Yousaf, and Al-Shoab coach companies. During the inspection, both documentation and physical checks of vehicles were carried out. Most of the buses were found fit for operation. However, a bus of Al-Azz Transport Com-



pany bearing registration number LS-7799 was declared unfit for road operation. The bus was immediately stopped from operating on the road and granted one week to obtain a valid fitness certificate. Failure to comply within the stipulated period will result in suspension of its route per-

mit. Additionally, the Provincial Transport Authority further indicated that strict warnings to companies operating on the Quetta-Zhob route over poor cleanliness and hygiene conditions in some buses. The Secretary of

the Provincial Transport Authority further indicated that strict warnings to companies operating on the Quetta-Zhob route over poor cleanliness and hygiene conditions in some buses. The Secretary of

Quetta Commissioner Shahzaib Kakr Reviews Traffic Plan to Facilitate Citizens During Ramadan

QUETTA: Under the leadership of Shahzaib Khan Kakr, a key meeting was held to address traffic issues in Quetta city and ensure smooth public convenience during the holy month of Ramadan.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehruallah Badini, SSP Traffic Mirza Bilal Hasan, Assistant Commissioner Political Quetta Division Syed Kaleemullah, President of Traders Association Rahim Kakr, General Secretary Yasin Mengal, and officials from the Metropolitan Corporation.



Key measures discussed included improving traffic flow during peak hours and ensuring citizens can shop conveniently. It was decided that on nine designated roads, parking will be permitted after

6 PM during Ramadan to facilitate both traders and the public. Additional proposals were reviewed regarding Abdul Sattar Road, and operations will be conducted in Liaquat Bazaar to address congestion

caused by street vendors. Commissioner Shahzaib Khan Kakr emphasized that traffic has become a major challenge in Quetta and called for effective measures to ensure smooth mobility,

facilitate citizens, and support commercial activities. He instructed all relevant authorities to strictly implement the special Ramadan traffic plan to provide maximum relief to the public.

Assistant Commissioner Loralai Conducts Market Inspection to Enforce Ramadan Price Control

LORALAI: On the special directives of Deputy Commissioner Miran Baloch, Assistant Commissioner Loralai Nadeem Akram conducted a detailed visit to various markets in the city during the holy month of Ramadan.

He was accompanied by President of Ayman-e-Tao Sahir Kadizai and General Secretary Usman Jalalzi.

During the inspection, they reviewed the prices, quality, and hygiene standards of essential food items. The Assistant Commissioner examined bakeries, meat shops, ghee, pulses, sugar, flour, vegetables, and other essential commodities to ensure their sale ac-



ording to the officially notified price list. He also checked whether rate lists were prominently displayed at shops and directly interacted with citizens to gather feedback. Shopkeepers were strictly directed to ensure full compliance with official price lists, SOPs, and safety measures.

The inspection team also visited tailorings and other businesses. Fines were imposed on those found violating the official price list. Butchers were specifically warned to strictly adhere to government-notified meat prices across the city. Commissioner made it clear that strict legal action would be taken against anyone charg-

ing above the prescribed rates. He stated that during Ramadan, the district administration remains fully active and vigilant to facilitate the public. He urged the trader community, Anjuman-e-Tajir, and trade unions to fully cooperate with the administration to ensure price stability and reduction so that the common citizen can benefit.

In line with the directives of the Government of Balochistan, these inspections will continue on a daily basis. Keeping in view the sanctity of Ramadan, strict action will be taken without discrimination against profiteering and hoarding.

He also appealed to the public to report cases of overcharging to the district administration so that prompt and effective action can be ensured.

Ramadan Relief Package Distribution Continues in Loralai on CM Sarfraz Bugti's Directives

LORALAI: On the directives of Mir Sarfraz Bugti, the distribution of the Ramadan Relief Package is continuing with dignity and transparency across the province. In view of the blessings of the holy month of Ramadan, the Government of Balochistan has ar-

ranged a special relief package for deserving and underprivileged families. On the fourth day of fasting, a dignified ceremony was held at the Deputy Commissioner's Office in

Loralai. Under the special instructions of Deputy Commissioner Loralai Miran Baloch, ration packages were distributed among hundreds of deserving individuals under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner Nadeem Akram and the son of MPA Afzal Khan



Onmanhel. During the ceremony, priority was given to poor, needy and vulnerable families to ensure they could fulfill their basic needs with dignity during Ramadan. The district administra-

This welfare initiative reflects the Chief Minister's commitment to public service and support for vulnerable segments of society, marking a commendable step toward alleviating

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Makran Division Launches Tree Plantation Drive; Target of 54,000 Saplings Set

TURBAT: The Commissioner of Makran Division, Qadir Baksh Perkan, formally inaugurated the tree plantation campaign across the division by planting a sapling at his office in Turbat.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Conservator Forest Makran Abdul Wahid, Divisional Forest Officer Fida Hussain, and PS Nasir Hassan.

Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Qadir Baksh Perkan emphasized that plantation is the need of the hour to combat climate change and environmental pollution challenges. He stated that trees not only help maintain a clean and green environment but also ensure



a healthy atmosphere for future generations. He directed the concerned departments to implement the plantation campaign in an effective and organized manner to achieve the assigned targets within the stipulated timeframe. Meanwhile, Conservator Forest Abdul Wahid told the media that, like the rest of Balochistan, the plantation campaign has been formally launched in

Makran Division. He announced that a total target of 54,000 saplings has been set for the division. Under this initiative, trees will be planted at various government offices, educational institutions, and public places. Divisional Forest Officer Fida Hussain highlighted that public cooperation is essential for the success of the campaign.

Grid of public notices and advertisements from various districts including Turbat, Quetta, and Loralai.



Ogra seeks input on dollarised return for oil project

NEWS DESK: Amid alerts already raised by two key federal ministries, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) has invited expert and public opinion on a rather quick and upfront four-year payback period for a \$452 million government-to-government investment between state-owned entities of Pakistan and Azerbaijan in the oil sector.

Ogra has scheduled a public hearing for March 2 and sought comments from stakeholders, including the general public, on whether the proposed payback period of four years is justified and whether the project would affect regional transportation costs compared to existing road movement.

The project has to mostly use local resources and dollar-based returns to cover full investment in four years, which has already been objected to by the Ministry of Finance.

The proposal involves a 20-inch, 256-kilometre pipeline from Faisalabad to Thallian (Section I) from Islamabad to carry about

seven million tonnes per annum (MTA), extendable to 10 MTA.

It would then convert to a 12-inch line for 172km to Tarujabba near Peshawar (Section II) with a capacity of five MTA, and an eight-inch, 96km line from Thallian to Fajirabad (Section III).

The cost of Section I has been put at \$320m, followed by \$94m for Section II and \$17.5m for Section III. According to Ogra, the project life is 30 years.

The regulator has also sought public input on whether the claimed throughput volumes are fair and justified, whether the proposed capacities for the three pipeline sections can handle the intended volumes over the project life, and whether the proposed storage capacity of 60,000 tonnes each at Faisalabad and Thallian and 50,000 tonnes at full investment in four years, which has already been objected to by the Ministry of Finance.

The proposal involves a 20-inch, 256-kilometre pipeline from Faisalabad to Thallian (Section I) from Islamabad to carry about



guaranteed returns in dollar terms on the transportation of petroleum products.

The Machike-Thallian-Tarujabba white oil pipeline is to be developed on a government-to-government basis with Azerbaijan's SOCAR, the Frontier Works Organisation (ECC) of the cabinet five months ago was \$300m. The ministries had raised reservations over the project, being

pursued as a "strategic investment" from Azerbaijan, has long been pushed by the FWO through local resources.

The ECC had "approved the terms and conditions" proposed by the Petroleum Division to enable the launch of this strategic project, which was expected to strengthen bilateral friendship, trade and investment ties between

Pakistan and Azerbaijan by the end of August 2025.

Power Minister Awais Leghari had cautioned against guaranteed return in dollar terms, saying the government should have learnt lesson from the experience of independent power producers (IPPs).

He advocated that "all aspects of the investment proposal should be checked thor-

oughly for cost and internal rate of return (IRR), keeping in mind the instance of independent power producers", according to official minutes of the meeting.

SOCAR had set a "ship or pay" condition for investment in the project on the pattern of "take or pay" in power purchase agreements with independent power producers that required full payment for the pipe-

line capacity (about 7.8 MTA) even if petroleum products are unable to be moved for some reason.

Moreover, the Ministry of Finance raised questions over the upfront payback period and noted that "dollarised return was being considered only in the context of foreign investment and should not be applicable in the event that foreign investment does not materialise". There was a view that returns being secured for foreign investment could not be allowed on local investment, and payback should be of a longer term. The Ministry of Finance also demanded rationalising the interest rate assumptions, a more rational weighted average cost of capital (WACC), and an increase in payback period to seven years instead of four to avoid a higher tariff impact at the early stages of the project.

It also wanted the Petroleum Division to finalise the technical details relating to inland freight equalisation margin and declaration of default mode of transport instead of Ogra.

The ECC has, nevertheless, agreed to the cautions to the extent that "dollarised return would be applicable only in the event of foreign investment coming into the project".

At present, approximately 70pc of petrol and diesel is transported by road, whereas 28pc is being moved through an existing pipeline from Karachi to Machike and 2pc is carried by railway.

considering the peculiar needs of the sector.

However, the Petroleum Division argues that such amendments would make the key project unattractive.

Therefore, the ECC has overruled the finance ministry's views and "observed that the project would open new vistas for future investment and hence, must be seen in a larger strategic perspective and be understood as an investment opportunity", according to the official record.

The FWO had originally sought 14.6 per cent IRR and 25pc equity IRR.

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Finance ministry terms claims of 8% interest on external loans 'misleading'

NEWS DESK: The Ministry of Finance on Sunday categorically rejected claims regarding the country's external debt and associated interest payments, calling the reports misleading and stating that the nation's external debt profile remains predominantly concessional and long-term.

"Pakistan's total external debt and liabilities currently stand at \$138 billion, while public and external debt interest outflows increased from \$1.99 billion in FY2022 to \$3.32 billion annually in FY2025, representing an increase of 80.4 per cent, not 84 per cent as reported," the ministry said in an official statement.

The ministry stated that the overall average cost of external public debt is approximately 4 per cent, reflecting the predominance of concessional nature of the borrowing portfolio. "In absolute terms, interest payments rose by \$1.60 billion over this period, not \$1.67 billion," it added.

The clarification came after assertions in a recent press commu-

nication, claiming that interest payments on external debt increased by 84% in three years. Compared to 2022, interest payments last year rose by \$1.67 billion. This interest was paid to the IMF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and commercial banks.

Pakistan is paying interest on external loans at rates of up to 8%. Officials said that Saudi Arabia and China also received interest on safe deposits. Including interest, Pakistan spent \$13.32 billion annually on debt servicing. Net external debt increased by \$1.71 billion last year, while another 7 per cent of this debt consists of commercial loans, while another 7 per cent

relates to long-term Eurobonds. In light of this composition, therefore the claim that Pakistan is paying interest on external loans "up to 8 per cent" is misleading," the ministry said.

The statement also provided a breakdown of debt servicing to specific creditors. According to the State Bank of Pakistan, IMF received \$1.50 billion, including \$580 million in interest; Naya Pakistan Certificates payments totalled \$1.56 billion, including \$94 million in interest; Asian Development Bank received \$1.54 billion, including \$615 million in interest;

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5G mobile devices to hit Pakistani market soon

NEWS DESK: With the 5G spectrum auction scheduled for March 10, the Ministry of Industries has also initiated the move to roll out advanced compatible devices that will help the industry to meet demand for next month, demand for new and more advanced phones, in the process of shifting their production lines to smartphones.

The key feature of the policy is 8 per cent incentives on mobile phone exports, as well as a reduction in customs duties on the import of parts, while the import of CBUS of mobile phones and accessories such as chargers, handsets, etc., will have higher duties.

The policy will be forwarded to the prime minister for approval. The meeting noted that

there were 37 licensed mobile set manufacturers, producing 40 million mobile units annually.

Pakistan assembled 30.2m phone sets in 2025, and around 40pc were feature phones.

The policy also recommends establishing a dedicated Mobile & Electronics Devices Cell within the EDB to ensure effective implementation and coordination.

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Debt and taxes haunt economy

NEWS DESK: Debt and taxes are throttling Pakistan's economy. Pakistan's never ending fiscal profligacy is the underlying reason why we keep going in the intensive care unit asking the same medical team (read: IMF) who keep giving us the same set of treatments, albeit with more powerful medications only to cure our symptoms and failing to cure our disease.

Once the medical team is satisfied that the patient has "stabilised" and out of the intensive care unit into the recovery room, they will continue to monitor the recovery over a period of time until their next pre-planned visit.

While the patient is in recovery then there are expensive over-the-counter "specialists" that are hired for further medical diagnosis thinking that they might give some "new" advanced treatments for this recurring illness.

So, the question to ask is: how sick is the patient? Pakistan's debt is unsustainable on its current path. Gross public debt has hit 70% of GDP in 2025 and the nominal deficit is a whopping 6% of GDP. The fundamental rule of borrowing is that

debt and taxes haunt economy

China opens its market as US tariffs squeeze Africa

NEWS DESK: China has waived all duties on imports from 53 African countries, positioning itself as an anchor of stability amid chaos in the international "rules-based" trading system triggered by US President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs. Many African economies are grappling with the fallout from Washington's trade measures.

Against this backdrop, China's blanket tariff relief has strengthened its position as a reliable economic partner for Africa. The zero-tariff initiative, announced during a high-level meeting linked to the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Changsha, China - marks one of the most expansive trade concessions offered to the impoverished continent to date. From May 1, zero levies will apply to all imports from 53 African nations. Not only that, he also pledged more measures for least-developed African countries to help them boost their exports to the Chinese market.

This is not the first time China has offered trade facilitation to Af-



rica. The tariff elimination builds on commitments made at the 2024 FOCAC summit in Beijing, where China granted zero-tariff treatment to 33 least-developed African countries and waived duties on 98% of goods from 21 others.

Under the new arrangement, the earlier patchwork of preferential access will be replaced with blanket tariff elimination for virtually the entire continent. The development is seen by analysts as a major opportunity for African governments exploring alternative markets amid rising US protectionism. Countries including South Africa, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius,



Botswana, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Chad and Equatorial Guinea have been among those hit hard, with duties in some cases reaching 30% to 80%.

In South Africa's case, a 30% tariff has severely impacted automotive and agricultural exports. The United States is the second-largest trading partner of South Africa after China, and the American market accounts for billions of dollars in exports annually. Industry data show that auto exports to the US have plunged since Trump's tariffs took effect, raising fears that up to 100,000 jobs could be at risk in a country already struggling with high unemployment.

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

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

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

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

Pakistan desperately need a win after their first match against New Zealand was washed out.

A defeat would put England, who skittled Sri Lanka for 95 to win by 51 runs, through to the semi-finals with a game to spare. Pakistan would then need to beat Sri Lanka in their final Super Eight match and hope other results go



their way to reach the last four. "What we saw in the Sri Lanka-England opener, Farhan on Monday, Sri Lanka have one or two spinners but

gland struggled against spin," said the in-form opener. "Sri Lanka have one or two spinners but

we have five in all so we will give England a tough time on a pitch that looks good and will grip," said

Farhan. Pakistan's spinners have taken 26 wickets in the four matches so far. Their seamers have dismissed only

seven batsmen. History will be against Pakistan as they have never beaten England in the three previous

Twenty20 World Cup clashes. "We are confident and our morale is high," said Farhan, who scored an unbeaten 100

against Namibia in Pakistan's final group match.

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

Farhan, who tops the T20 World Cup run-scoring chart with 220, said he was ready for the threat of England's express pace bowler Jofra Archer. "Facing Archer will not be difficult because I have faced similar bowlers in Pakistan," said Farhan. "So if he has plans against me, I also have plans against him." Pakistan are likely to bring in spinner Abrar Ahmed in place of seaming all-rounder Faheem Ashraf.

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

Sri Lanka and New Zealand are the two other teams in Pakistan and England's Super Eight group.

South Africa thrash India to end 12-match T20 World Cup win streak

NEWS DESK: South Africa ended India's 12-match winning streak at the T20 World Cup with a crushing 76-run win in Ahmedabad on Sunday in the opening Group 1 Super Eight match.

After a counter-attacking 63 by David Miller and some late hitting from Tristan Stubbs took South Africa to 187-7, the defending champions were all out for 111 in 18.5 overs, failing badly in their first chase of the tournament.

Left-arm quick Marco Jansen finished with 4-22, while left-arm spinner Keshav Mahara took 3-24 as the South African bowlers exposed India's fragile batting line-up.

"Great performance. Very different type of wicket to what we've had here, so great to see the boys assess that pretty early and adapt their skills to execute their plans," said South Africa captain Aiden Markram.

"We're really pumped for the bowling group. They've been working hard, started the comp a bit tough, but the way they rocked up tonight was a great effort."

Hot favourites to defend their crown on home soil, India will need



to win their two remaining Super Eight games against Zimbabwe and the West Indies to have a chance of qualifying.

But the magnitude of the defeat means they will take a poor net run rate forward and that could prove pivotal if their Super Eights group is tight.

"We bowled really well, but we could have batted a little better," said India captain Suryakumar Yadav.

Fans silenced "Sometimes you've got to think, if you're chasing 180-185, you can't win the game in the power play, but you might lose it.

"We lost too many wickets in the power play."

Both teams were unbeaten in group phase and the game was a rematch of the 2024 T20 World Cup final in Barbados, which India won.

India's unbeaten run in the tournament had stretched back to their defeat in the semi-final against eventual winners England in 2022.

South Africa struck immediately in India's chase when Markram opened the bowling and dismissed Ishan Kishan with his off-spin.

Abhishek Sharma got his first runs of the tournament, after three

ducks, with a four off Markram to get the 82,000 crowd on their feet in the cavernous stadium, which has a reported capacity of 130,000.

The joy of Indian fans was short-lived, and they were silenced as left-arm quick Marco Jansen had Itak Yarna caught behind for one in the next over and removed the left-handed Abhishek for 15.

India needed a partnership, but Corbin Bosch dismissed Washington Sundar and Suryakumar, who toe-ended to midwick, as the hosts slumped to 51-

3.

PHF replaces Olympians with technocrats in structural overhaul

NEWS DESK: The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has removed former Olympians from administrative management, appointing technocrats to its key positions in a bid to professionalise the sport.

Mohiyuddin Wani is handling PHF matters in an ad hoc capacity as president. He has delegated the responsibilities of secretary general to Brigadier (ret'd) Akmal Aziz. The post of treasurer has been filled by Captain (ret'd) Farukh Aniq Khan, who has also been appointed head of

the Pakistan hockey team travelling to Egypt for the World Cup qualifier. According to sources, there is a strong possibility that Pakistan hockey may be run in the future through a governing board model similar to that of the Pakistan Cricket Board.

Officials noted that former Olympians struggled with managing administrative affairs. Conflicts among former heroes, personal interests, alleged corruption, politicisation of the sport, and decisions made outside merit have all contributed to the decline of Pakistan hockey.

Following these challenges, the PHF has introduced a professional governance model for the first time. An

Adhoc Governance and Management Committee (PHF) has been formed to oversee the federation's administration, while a Professional Development Committee, co-chaired by Olympians Hassan Sardar and Islahuddin, will manage technical matters such as national team selection, specialised training, and setting benchmarks for coaches and players.

"The reforms reflect our commitment to transparency and professional merit," a PHF spokesperson said. "By involving technical experts and experienced professionals, we aim to restore Pakistan hockey to its former prominence."

Only players with direct experience of the sport will be employed for managing other key areas will be handled by professionals.

As part of the restructuring, the PHF has separated corporate governance, marketing, and resource mobilisation from technical hockey operations to ensure specialised oversight. The newly appointed committee members are as follows, Captain Farrukh Atique will handle Human Resources and Finance, Shakeel Shah (Member Customs) will oversee Departmental Coordination and Outreach, Amir Ibrahim, Chief Executive Officer of Jazz will lead Corporate and Marketing Support, Ghulam Ali Mallah, Executive Direc-

tor of Inter Board Coordination Commission (IBCC), will manage School and College Sports Promotion; and Brigadier (ret'd) Akmal Aziz will be responsible for Services and Institutional Coordination.

The restructuring comes in the wake of Pakistan's hockey chief, Tariq Bugti resigning from his post on February 19, a day after the prime minister ordered an inquiry into a shambolic tour of Australia that saw the national team scrubbing dishes in a guest house, a standoff between the national squad and team management cast a shadow over Pakistan's preparations for the upcoming World Cup Qualifiers.

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Strasbourg snap Lyon winning run



NEWS DESK: Strasbourg struck first when Martial Godo fired in his seventh goal of the season late in the first half.

They doubled that lead on 52 minutes with Diego Moreira that took a long-range strike from the Argentine forward's penalty spot.

Corentin Tolisso pulled one back for Lyon on the hour, but Strasbourg put the match to bed with Joaquin Panichelli's penalty seven minutes from time - the Argentine forward's 13th league goal of the season.

"It's a shame. We knew we had a huge opportunity tonight if we

won. But we can't afford to play like this if we want to win games, especially here," Tolisso told broadcaster Ligue 1.

Veteran striker Olivier Giroud's penalty gave Lille a 1-0 win at Angers which put them fifth and snapped a six-match winless streak in Ligue 1.

The 39-year-old former Arsenal and Chelsea forward fired a spot-kick into the bottom corner before the break to score his fifth league goal of the season.

A first win of 2026 sent Lille to within three

points of Marseille and eight behind Lyon in the third and final direct Champions League qualifying spot.

Above all it's three points but that will do us all a lot of good mentally," Lille captain Benjamin Andre said.

Fellow European hopefuls Rennes followed their 3-1 defeat of leaders Paris Saint-Germain last week with a 3-0 victory at Auxerre to stay level on points with Lille.

Nantes eased their relegation fears with a 2-0 home win over Le Havre, and Nice drew 3-3 with Lorient.

Australia face tough questions after flop campaign

NEWS DESK: Australia coach Andrew McDonald is adamant the players he took to the Twenty20 World Cup were good enough, but the evidence suggests otherwise with a rebuild looming before they co-host the next tournament with New Zealand in 2028.

The 2021 champions were seen as title contenders again at the showpiece in India and Sri Lanka, but the former white ball heavyweights instead suffered a calamitous exit in the group stage for the first time since 2009.

"They've come home to a significant pile-on from former Australian greats and an acerbic media which expected more."

They have been quick to lob sharp criticism at the under-performing players and perceived selection blunders.

"We said at the start of this World Cup that we were concerned about Australia's pace bowlers Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc as expos-



ing a soft underbelly. "All of a sudden, the aura of that Australian team is no longer there when other teams play it... unfortunately, not surprising."

The warning lights were flashing before the event even started when they capitulated heavily to Pakistan in a three-game warm-up, outplayed with bat and ball. In those matches they lost by 22, 90 and 111 runs - the final two Australia's largest in terms of runs in T20s.

At the time, skipper Mitchell Marsh said:

"Absolutely no stress from our end."

That soon became "It's a devastated group."

"Look at the selections, look at (Glenn) Maxwell, Conolly, Green and (Josh) Inglis, these guys are all out of form," lamented Mark Waugh, himself a former selector.

"The selectors have their plans in place, but you've got to be smart enough to see which players are in form and which players are out of form."

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

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

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

The PML-N MNA affirmed that the people of Pakistan "stand firmly" with their armed forces in the fight against terrorism. He urged the Afghan government to take "decisive action to prevent its land from being used for cross-border militancy," warning that lasting peace in the region depended on the "complete dismantling of terrorist sanctuaries".

Noting that the recent operation "successfully neutralised militants involved in attacks on Pakistani soil", Chaudhry stressed:

Opposition leaders stage protest outside Supreme Court, demand immediate scheduling of Imran's cases

NEWS DESK: Members of the opposition protested outside the Supreme Court (SC) on Monday to demand that the cases of incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan be immediately scheduled for hearing and that he be allowed to meet his family.

Senate Opposition Leader Allama Raja Nasir Abbas and PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja participated in the protest, which ended at around 2pm.

Other leaders present included chief whip Amir Dogar, MNAs Ali Muhammad Khan and Shahid Khattak, MPA Shahfullah Jan, and Muhammad Hussain.

The protest participants also demanded that "a complete medical examination be conducted through his personal doctors", according to a post by the opposition alliance Tehreek-i-Tahaful-i-Ayn-i-Pakistan (TTAP) on X.

Imran, imprisoned since August 2023, is serving a 14-year sentence at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail in a \$190 million corruption case and was convicted in another case regarding state gifts recently.

His health has been



NEWS DESK: Three Federal Constabulary men were martyred in a terrorist attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Karak district on Monday, according to officials.

In a statement, Karak police spokesperson Shaukat Khan said terrorists initially carried out a quadcopter attack on the Federal Constabulary fort in the Dargah Shaheedan area.

The spokesperson said that during the initial attack, the terrorists detonated four rounds of explosives, causing injuries to four Federal Constabulary personnel. However, the Federal Constabulary personnel retaliated.

The exchange of fire went on for a long time, he added.

He said that Rescue 1122 teams arrived at the site of the incident to rush the injured to a nearby hospital; however, the ambulances were ambushed by the terrorists near Gholo Banda Dam, leading to the martyrdom of three Federal Constabulary personnel.

Three Rescue 1122 officials were left

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



injured, he said. He added that following the attack, the ambulances caught fire and were destroyed.

Karak District Police Officer Saood Khan also confirmed that three Federal Constabulary men were martyred as the ambulance carrying the injured came under attack.

Separately, Rescue 1122 spokesperson Asif Khan, in a statement, said that two of the injured rescue personnel were in critical condition.

Meanwhile, PPP Chairman Bilawal

Bhutto-Zardari con-

demned the attack, terming it "cowardly and inhumane," as per a statement issued by the PPP's media cell.

"Those who opened fire on an ambulance have proven that they reject the teachings of Islam," Bilawal was quoted as saying.

Bilawal, as per the statement, paid tribute to the martyred personnel and offered condolences to their families.

He stressed that "a Muslim cannot even think of harming an animal, let alone a human being, in the holy month of

Ramazan".

Last week, a terrorist attack, involving an explosive-laden vehicle, on a checkpoint in KP's Bajaur district martyred 11 security personnel.

On February 18, two Federal Constabulary personnel were injured when unidentified assailants attacked a checkpoint in the Salgazi area of Wazir subdivision.

In November last

year, in a major attack on the force, three Federal Constabulary personnel were martyred in a suicide attack on the force's headquarters in

Peshawar's Saddar area.

KP has seen a rise in terrorist attacks in the past year. According to the Annual Security Report 2025 from the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), KP recorded a significant surge in violence last year as "fatalities rose from 1,620 in 2024 to 2,331 in 2025".

This marked an "absolute increase of 711 deaths, accounting for over 82 per cent of the net national rise and marking almost a 44pc year-on-year surge in violence in the province".

'Abandon this dangerous fantasy': Senate echoes with PPP's displeasure over talks of creating Karachi province

NEWS DESK: The upper house of Parliament on Monday echoed with the PPP's displeasure over the creation of a separate Karachi province, asserting that it was an inseparable part of Sindh.

The development comes two days after the Sindh Assembly passed a resolution

termining Karachi an "inseparable" part of Sindh and opposed any move that suggested otherwise. Opposing the resolution in the Sindh Assembly, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) had also declared it unconstitutional.

On Monday, PPP's parliamentary leader in the Senate, Sherry Rehman, denounced recent statements by certain federal ministers, ostensibly a reference to MQM-P's Mustafa Kamal and Khaliq Mahmood Siddique.

Rehman said that such reckless talk was not only unconstitutional but also a direct provocation to the unity of the federation.

"Let me be clear: the PPP is the custodian of Sindh's unity and no one will be allowed to undermine it," she said.

She said Sindh had always opened its arms to everyone, adding that the province's resources had always been shared with the country since 1947.

"To hear suggestions about dividing Karachi or Sindh is deeply alarming. This is not just an attack on a province, it is an attack on Pakistan itself," she remarked.

Rehman reminded the House that altering a province's boundaries was a constitutional matter that required a two-thirds majority.

"Those floating these ideas should first read the Constitution. Constitutional divisions require democratic majorities, not press conferences," she remarked.

Speaking about coalition partners, she said, "Our friends in MQM-P have always been part of the federal government. They have governed with every administration. May God grant them even more respect, but let no one confuse local political debates with a licence to redraw provincial maps."

She also stated that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had said that no one would be allowed to divide Pakistan based on language or identity.

"This party has shed blood, borne lashes, and endured imprisonment to uphold that principle," she said. She further warned that Sindh had historically faced backdoor conspiracies.



IHC declares chief justice sole 'master of the roster', recalls July 2025 order in Aafia Siddiqui case

NEWS DESK: A larger bench of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) reaffirmed in a detailed judgement on Monday that the chief justice was the sole "master of the roster", ruling that a July 2025 order by Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan in the Aafia Siddiqui case was recalled for being issued by a forum that was not "lawfully constituted".

Last year in July, Justice Khan had issued contempt notices to the prime minister and the entire federal cabinet over non-compliance with the court's directions in a petition filed by Dr Fozvia Siddiqui seeking the release of her sister, Dr Aafia, from a US prison.

However, the registrar's office did not execute the notices because the judge was not included in the duty roster approved by the chief justice. Later, the court registrar's report had recommended that a larger bench should address questions concerning the validity of the July 21 hearing.

The central issue identified was that Justice Khan's bench was not authorised to hear cases on July 21. The weekly roster approved by the chief justice had not assigned him any bench duties that day,



and the official summer vacation roster also listed him as being on leave. On Monday, the matter was fixed before the larger bench, comprising Justices Arbab Muhammad Latif, Raja Inaam Ameen Minhas, Khadim Hussain Soomro and Muhammad Azam Khan. The judgement, authored by Justice Minhas, stated that no bench could legally exercise jurisdiction unless constituted through a roster duly approved by the chief justice.

The bench observed that Justice Khan's leave schedule had been publicly notified in advance, and in line with that schedule,

his name was excluded from the weekly roster prepared by the deputy registrar (judicial) and approved by the IHC chief justice.

Despite this, the judge held court on July 21, 2025, heard cases, and issued directions, including those for the initiation of contempt proceedings against members of the federal government, the bench noted.

It observed that under the high court rules, the constitution of benches fell within the exclusive domain of the chief justice. Moreover, the judgement recalled that in view of institutional and constitutional implications, the matter

was referred to the IHC chief justice for the constitution of a larger bench to settle questions arising from the July 21 order.

The larger bench framed three key questions for determination: whether a bench existed in law merely because judges were present or only upon approval of the roster by the chief justice; whether a judge could self-assign or assume jurisdiction in a case; and whether the chief justice is legally obliged to obtain consent of a bench before consolidating identical petitions and reallocating them for hearing.

The bench exam-

ined Articles 175(2) and 202 of the Constitution in this regard, and noted that the former stated that no court shall exercise jurisdiction except as conferred by the Constitution or by or under law. It held that jurisdiction was "not an abstract concept" attached to a "judge person" but "flows from the lawful constitution of a bench in accordance with prescribed rules".

The bench explained that while judicial power was vested in the high court, but exercising this power in a particular case required its "activation" through a lawfully constituted bench under the approved roster.

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