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# QUETTA VOICE

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## Nearly 2,000 People Enter Pakistan via Taftan Border Amid Iran Tensions: CM Balochistan

**Staff Reporter:**

**Quetta:** Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has stated that the provincial government has placed all relevant departments on high alert in response to the evolving situation in Iran, ensuring preparedness to deal with any possible developments along the border.

In a statement shared on social media platform X, the chief minister said that the arrival of Pakistani citizens and foreign nationals through the Pakistan-Iran border continues, and authorities at the Taftan crossing are providing all necessary assistance and facilities to those entering the

country. He noted that administrative and security institutions in border districts have been directed to ensure organized and secure movement of incoming individuals. Immigration officials, security agencies, and the local administration at Taftan are actively coordinating efforts to manage the situation and fa-

cilitate travelers. According to the chief minister, a total of 1,979 individuals have so far entered Pakistan through the Taftan border crossing. Among them are families of 37 diplomats, who are also being provided with necessary support and guidance upon arrival. Bugti added that the provincial government is closely monitoring the situation and remains in constant coordination with federal authorities to effectively handle any emergency.

He emphasized that extending humanitarian assistance and ensuring convenience for those arriving at the border remains a key priority of the government.

## Meeting with Imran remains out of reach for PTI; jailed party leaders call on govt to reconsider its approach

**NEWS DESK:**

A meeting with incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan remained out of reach for the party on Thursday, while jailed party leaders called on the government to reconsider its approach toward the former premier.

On Wednesday, PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja had issued a list of six people for a meeting with Imran. The list had included MNAs Shahid Khaatun, Shabbir Ali Qureshi, Javed Waraich, Adil Bazi, Sohail Sultan, and also Major (Retd) Fayyaz Ahmed. The list was sent to the jail authorities as per the direction of the apex court.

However, on Thursday, Qureshi told Dawn that when he, alongside other PTI leaders, reached Adiala jail, they were not allowed to meet Imran.

"We had arrived at 1:30pm and informed the jail administration that, as per the directions of the court, we should be allowed to meet Khan sahib. They told us that names have been forwarded for approval, and suggested we wait," he said.

Qureshi said that they waited till 3pm, which was the cut-off time for jail meetings during Ramadan. He added that they were told that jail authorities had not been informed about the approval for the meeting.

"We had no option but to leave. Unfortunately, the party leaders and family members have not been allowed to meet Imran for many months," he lamented.

Meanwhile, five senior PTI leaders incarcerated at Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail demanded that the government reconsider its approach towards the party and Imran.

The PTI leaders — Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Dr Yasmin Rashid, Ejaz Chaudhry, Mian Mahmoodur Rasheed, and Omar Sarfraz Cheema — made the remarks in a statement issued by the PTI Central Media Department. "National interest demands that the government should revise its approach towards PTI and Imran Khan," they said. They demanded that Qureshi, the party's vice chairman, should be granted access to Imran to "share our political perspective".

## Balochistan Police Hand Over 30 Non-Custom-Paid Vehicles Worth Rs80 Million to Customs

**QASEEM SHAH, NEWS DESK:**

**Quetta:** A joint meeting between Balochistan Police and Pakistan Customs Preventive was held at the Central Police Office to strengthen coordination against the use and smuggling of non-custom-paid vehicles in the province.

The meeting was chaired by Inspector General of Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir and attended by Collector Pakistan Customs Preventive Dr. Karam Elahi, along with senior officials from both departments.

During the meeting, the IG Police said that whenever Balochistan Police seizes non-custom-paid vehicles during operations, the vehicles are handed over to Pakistan Customs Preventive after completing all legal formalities.

He noted that such vehicles are often used in illegal activities, posing serious challenges for law enforcement agencies.



He further stated that the use of non-custom-paid vehicles causes significant financial losses to the national exchequer and emphasized the importance of strict action to curb this practice. Collector Customs Pre-

ventive Balochistan Dr. Karam Elahi appreciated the ongoing campaign launched by Balochistan Police against non-custom-paid vehicles.

He said the crackdown is not only targeting the smuggling of such vehicles but also their use, sale, and purchase in the province.

Officials from both departments agreed to implement a coordinated strategy to intensify joint operations against non-custom-paid vehicles and ensure strict enforcement of the law.

At the end of the meeting, a formal handover ceremony was held in which 30 non-custom-paid vehicles worth approximately Rs80 million were handed over to customs authorities after completion of legal proceedings.

During the ceremony, DIG Quetta Imran Shaukat formally handed over the seized vehicles to Collector Customs Balochistan Dr. Karam Elahi, marking another step in the ongoing efforts to curb illegal vehicle operations in the province.

## 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 de-

serving 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 recruitment collapses, public trust in institutions will collapse with it. Balochistan cannot afford silence where integrity is at stake.

## Balochistan's Education Crisis: Beyond Numbers and Empty Promises

**Syed Ali Shah Analysis:** The Balochistan government's claim that around 45,000 children have returned to schools is being pre-

mismismanagement, and hollow commitments by successive provincial governments. For years, education in Balochistan has been treated more as

open skies or abandoned education altogether. Shelterless schools are not an exception but a norm across vast parts of the province. Equally alarming

important, but without strict monitoring and enforcement, such reviews risk becoming yet another bureaucratic exercise. The return of

government is serious about change, it must move beyond statements and statistics. Massive investment in school infrastructure, transparent teacher



sented as a major breakthrough in addressing the province's deep-rooted education crisis. While any increase in enrollment deserves acknowledgment, this figure pales in comparison to the magnitude of the challenge. More than 3.1 million children in Balochistan remain out of school, a reality that exposes decades of neglect,

a slogan than a serious policy priority. Governments have consistently paid lip service to the issue, announcing plans, committees, and reforms that rarely translate into meaningful change on the ground. The result is a broken system where thousands of schools remain without proper buildings, forcing children to study under

is the issue of so-called "ghost teachers" and ineffective staffing. Despite repeated claims of reforms under the School Based Recruitment (SBK) system, absenteeism, political interference, and lack of accountability continue to cripple public education. Reviewing recruitment processes is

45,000 children to schools should not be used to mask the harsh truth: millions are still deprived of their fundamental right to education. Poverty, insecurity, poor infrastructure, and weak governance continue to push children out of classrooms and into labor, vulnerability, and hopelessness. If the Balochistan management, community-based enrollment drives, and sustained political will are essential. Without tangible action, promises will remain empty, and another generation of Balochistan's children will be left behind. Education cannot survive on rhetoric alone; it demands urgent, honest, and decisive action.

## BUITEMS Gains Dual Global Recognition: THE Rankings 2026 & UNAI SDG 8 Vice-Chair

**Syed Dara Shikoh Amir**

The Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUITEMS) has brought new pride to Pakistan and Balochistan by achieving two major international milestones — its inclusion in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2026 and its appointment as the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) SDG Hub 8 Vice-Chair for Teaching and Education. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings represent one of the most credible measures of global academic excellence, featuring over 2,190 universities from 115 countries. Institutions are evaluated across core areas such as teaching quality, research performance, industry collaboration, and international reputation. In 2026, 99 Pakistani universities participated in the rankings, with 48 officially ranked and the rest designated as "Reporter" institutions. BUITEMS proudly secured the 43rd national position, emerging as the only university from Balochistan to be ranked internationally — a remarkable achievement that underscores its commitment to innovation, research, and quality education. Alongside this ranking success,



BUITEMS has been appointed as the Vice-Chair for the UNAI SDG Hub 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, collaborating with the University of Auckland, which serves as the Global Chair. The University of

Auckland, ranked among the top 1% of universities worldwide and 4th in Oceania in the 2025 Sustainability Rankings, partners

with BUITEMS to drive academic excellence and sustainable development, inclusive education, and youth empowerment in line with the United Na-

tion. With 10,000+ students, 600 faculty members, and 60 academic programs, the university stands as a beacon of growth and opportunity. Its vibrant alumni network of over 11,000 graduates and partnerships with global institutions highlight its pivotal role in advancing human capital and economic growth. Prof. Dr. Khalid Hafeez, Vice-Chancellor BUITEMS, remarked: "BUITEMS' inclusion in the Times Higher Education Rankings and our appointment as UNAI SDG 8 Vice-Chair reflect our dedication to advancing higher education, research, and sustainable development. These recognitions are a testament to the hard work of our faculty, students, and administration who continuously strive for excellence." These dual international recognitions — from Times Higher Education (UK) and the United Nations Academic Impact — reaffirm BUITEMS' position as a leading higher education institution in Pakistan, setting new standards in academic excellence, sustainability, and global collaboration. With its vision of "Quality and Excellence in Education," BUITEMS continues to symbolize Balochistan's progress and Pakistan's commitment to global education and sustainable development.

# Iran claims Israel carried out strikes on Gulf energy sites to drag other states into war

**NEWS DESK:**Iran has accused Israel of carrying out drone strikes on energy and civilian sites in the Gulf, calling the attacks a deliberate effort to provoke regional tension and draw Arab states into a US-Israeli war on Tehran, according to Turkish public broadcaster TRT World.

A Foreign Ministry official told Middle East Eye: "I can categorically say that some of the attacks were not carried out by us [Iran]."

The official said Israel was behind strikes on Saudi Arabia and at least one attack on Oman, but did not specify which incidents.

The statements follow multiple drone and missile strikes on Saudi facilities, including the Ras Tanura oil refinery and the US embassy in Riyadh, and two attacks on Oman's Duqm Port, a major logistics hub that has hosted US naval access since 2019.

On Thursday, a drone crashed near the airport in Nakhichevan. Two Iranian sources told MEE that Israel's Mossad executed the strikes using an established network of agents inside Iran.

"This is an Israeli effort to sabotage regional peace and alliances between neighbours," one source said.

Another Iranian source said Tehran had privately informed Saudi Arabia it was not re-arming for the Ras Tanura strike.

"This is an Israeli effort to sabotage regional peace and alliances between neighbours," the source added.

Additionally, according to UK news outlet Sky News, a "Shahed-like drone" which targeted a Royal Air Force base in Cyprus was not launched from Iran, according to a Ministry of Defence spokesperson.

Explosions in Qatar Multiple rounds of explosions exploded in the Qatari capital Doha on Thursday, just hours after officials said they were evacuating residents living near the US embassy.

A column of black smoke was seen on the Doha horizon.

The targeting of Qatar on Thursday came hours after the country's prime minister lambasted Iran's foreign minister during a call, in the first high-level contact between the two countries since the Islamic Republic launched its missile and drone campaign.

Qatari Premier Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani accused Iran of seeking to "harm its neighbours and drag them into a war that is not theirs", on the call with Iran's Abbas Araghchi, according to a statement by Qatar's foreign ministry.

Explosions were also heard in Bahrain's capital, Manama, on Thursday.

In neighbouring Saudi Arabia, officials said they had inter-



The ground in Doha described Thursday's blasts as some of the most intense since Iran began targeting the Gulf state on Saturday.

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In neighbouring Saudi Arabia, officials said they had inter-

cepted three cruise missiles and several drones.

"Three cruise missiles were intercepted and destroyed outside the city of Al-Kharr," the Saudi defence ministry posted on X.

Elsewhere, a tanker was hit by a "large explosion" in waters off Kuwait, causing an oil spill, the British maritime security agency UKMTI reported.

Azerbaijan drone attack

Azerbaijan on Thursday summoned the Iranian envoy after two people were wounded in drone hits on an airport and near a school.

The attacks around midday involved at least two drones that crossed from Iran into Azerbaijan's exclave of Nakhichevan, which borders Iran and is separated from mainland Azerbaijan by Armenia, said a foreign ministry statement.

"One drone fell on the terminal building of Nakhichevan Airport, while another drone fell near a school building in the village of Shekerabad," the ministry said, damaging the airport and wounding two civilians.

The ministry said it had summoned Iranian envoy in Baku to inter-cept the threat," the ministry said in a statement.

Iran has sent out a second warship towards Sri Lanka's territorial waters, a day after a US submarine destroyed an Iranian frigate, killing at least 87 sailors, a minister told parliament.

Defensive systems are operating to intercept the threat," the ministry said in a statement.

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June, Azerbaijan reassured Iran that it would not allow its territory to be used for attacks against Tehran after Israel launched a large-scale strike on Iranian targets.

Exchanging fire

The Israeli military said it identified a fresh round of missiles launched from Iran on Thursday, the sixth day of a war engulfing the Middle East.

"A short while ago, the IDF (military) identified missiles launched from Iran toward the territory of the State of Israel."

Defensive systems are operating to intercept the threat," the ministry said in a statement.

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## 'Critical in determining our future': Nepal votes in key post-uprising polls

**NEWS DESK:**Nepal votes on Thursday for a new parliament in a bid to end a stalemate between an entrenched old guard and a powerful youth movement in months after deadly anti-corruption protests toppled the government.

Key figures contesting for power include the Marxist former prime minister seeking a return to office, a rapper-turned-mayor bidding for the youth vote, and the newly elected leader of the powerful Nepali Congress party.

"Nepalis have been waiting for change for so long, from one system to another," said Nilanta

Shakya, 60, a retired engineer, who was among the first to vote at a college in the capital, Kathmandu.

"I hope there is a meaningful change this time," she added.

People stand in a queue outside a polling station as they wait for their turn to vote at a village, in Jhapa district, Nepal on March 5, 2026.

Nearly 19 million voters are choosing who replaces the interim government in place since the September 2025 uprising, in which at least 77 people were killed, and parliament and scores of government buildings were torched.

Youth-led protests under a loose Gen Z banner began as a demonstration against a brief social media ban, but were fed by wider grievances at corruption and a woeful economy.

Sushila Karki, the interim prime minister, urged a "peaceful election", saying the vote was critical in "determining our future".

The polls, which close at 5pm (4:15pm PKT), are one of the most hotly contested elections in the Himalayan republic of 30 million people since the end of a civil war in 2006.

Thousands of soldiers and police have been deployed at polling centres. A woman cast her vote as a security officer stands guard at a polling station at a village, in Jhapa district, Nepal on March 5, 2026.

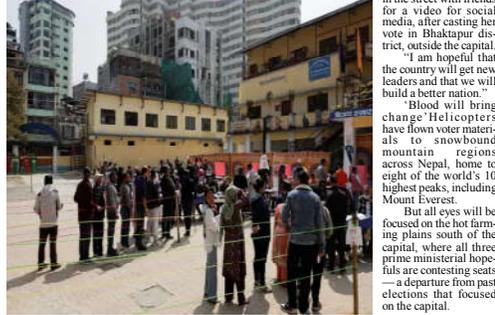
The election has seen a wave of young candidates promising to tackle Nepal's woeful economy, challenging veteran politicians who have dominated for decades and argue that their experience guarantees stability and security.

"Today feels like a day of celebration," said Nirmla Bhandari, 50, a housewife, who danced in the street with friends for a video for social media, after casting her vote in Bhaktapur district, outside the capital.

"I am hopeful that the country will get new leaders and that we will build a better nation."

Blood will bring change Helicopters have flown voter materials to snowbound mountain regions across Nepal, home to eight of the world's 10 highest peaks, including Mount Everest.

But all eyes will be focused on the hot farming plains south of the capital, where all three prime ministerial hopefuls are contesting seats — a departure from past elections that focused on the capital.



## Son 'frontrunner' to succeed Khamenei

**NEWS DESK:**Mojtaba Khamenei has emerged as frontrunner to succeed his late father as Iran's supreme leader.

The 56-year-old survived the US-Israeli aerial blitz of his country, which claimed the life of his father Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and a host of other senior leaders.

Two Iranian sources told Reuters Mojtaba was not in Tehran during the strike that destroyed the supreme leader's compound, and also claimed the lives of his wife, another son and a number of senior military and leadership figures.

As fresh explosions rang out in Tehran, plans for a funeral for the elder Khamenei were in doubt. His body had been scheduled to lie in state in a vast Tehran mosque from Wednesday evening, but state media reported the funeral ceremony was postponed. The Assembly of Experts that will select the new leader is "close to a conclusion" and will announce its

decision soon. Assembly member Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami told state TV on Wednesday, without naming the candidates. Has an Khomeini, grandson of first supreme leader Imam Khomeini and a champion of the reformist faction sidelined in recent decades, is also said to be in the running.

Critics say Mojtaba lacks the clerical credentials to be supreme leader; he has never held a formal government position, but was widely seen as the gatekeeper to his father. He has also appeared at loyalist rallies, but has rarely spoken in public.

The US Treasury Department imposed sanctions on Mojtaba in 2019, saying he represented the supreme leader in "an official capacity despite never being elected or appointed to a government position" aside from working in his father's office.

ing lead the opposition to the Shah. As a young man, he served in the Iran-Iraq war.

Mojtaba studied under religious conservatives in the seminaries of Qom, and holds the honorific title of "Hujjat al-Islam" — a notch below the rank of Ayatollah, like his father.

Mojtaba was born in 1969 in the city of Mashhad and grew up as his father was help-



## US-India naval ties in focus amid Iran conflict

**NEWS DESK:**A former senior adviser to the US Secretary of Defence, has claimed that the US Navy is increasingly relying on Indian ports for docking and unloading operations due to escalating tensions with Iran.

Former US Army Colonel Douglas Macgregor's remarks, made in a recent interview on One America News, have sparked discussion on social media, particularly in South Asia, highlighting what

some view as a potential shift in US military logistics away from traditional Persian Gulf bases, according to a media report.

He argued that threats to US installations in the Gulf had prompted this pivot towards Indian facilities, suggesting the move potentially linked to conflicts involving Iran.

However, New Delhi has termed these reports "baseless and fabricated".

X, the MEAF's account of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs said the claim that Indian ports are being used by the US Navy are false.

Official US-India defence cooperation, strengthened through frameworks such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), is focused on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific rather than direct involvement in Middle Eastern conflicts.

Examples of such cooperation include visits by US Navy vessels, including the USSN Charles Drew in 2022 and 2023 to facilities near Chennai, and the USS Frank Cable in August 2025.

These visits were conducted under Master Ship Repair Agreement with Indian firms such as Larsen & Toubro, enabling routine maintenance and overhaul.

India's foreign policy continues to emphasise strategic autonomy, attempting to balance relations with the US, Russia and Iran.

Notably, New Delhi maintains cooperation with Tehran on projects such as the Chabahar port, despite Western sanctions.

Indian officials have not directly responded to Macgregor's claims, and experts distinguish between routine port calls and the establishment of forward operating bases for specific operations.



## Trump administration keeps 'boots on ground' option open as Iran conflict intensifies

**NEWS DESK:**The White House has acknowledged that the Donald Trump administration is deliberately avoiding categorical statements on Iran, as doing so could limit the president's flexibility in a fast-evolving security environment.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said deploying US ground troops into Iran is not part of the current military strategy, but declined to rule out the option entirely.

"It's not part of the current plan, but I'm not going to remove an option for the president that is on the table," she said.

Leavitt suggested that previous administrations had sometimes narrowed their strategic space by prematurely dismissing potential options before fully assessing how unfolding developments might alter the situation.

The present approach, she indicated, is designed to preserve maximum latitude for decision-making.

The calibrated message reflects a broader doctrine in US national security policy to maintain ambiguity to strengthen deterrence while avoiding premature escalation.

Since the operation began, neither Washington nor Israel has deployed ground forces, relying instead on airpower and naval strikes. Leavitt said the campaign has four main objectives: eliminating Iran's ballistic missile threat, destroying its naval capability, disrupting its missile and drone production infrastructure and cutting off Tehran's pathway to a nuclear weapon.

She claimed that

the United States was moving towards "complete and total control" of Iranian airspace and that nearly 2,000 targets had been struck so far.

The possibility of sending ground forces has nonetheless become a central question of the conflict intensifies. When asked about the issue earlier this week, President Donald Trump himself declined to rule it out.

"Like every president says, 'There will be no boots on the ground.' I don't say it," Trump told The New York Post. "I say 'probably don't need them, [or] if they were necessary.'"



# Pakistan Air Force destroys Taliban brigade headquarters in Kandahar

RAWALPINDI (INP) - Pakistan's armed forces have intensified Operation Ghazab-ul-Haq, with the Pakistan Air Force reportedly destroying a brigade headquarters of the Afghan Taliban in Kandahar.

According to security sources, the air operation targeted the Taliban's brigade headquarters of the 205 Corps in Kandahar, while the Pakistan Army simultaneously struck ammunition depots belonging to the group.

The strikes were part of ongoing retaliatory operations being carried out under Operation Ghazab-ul-Haq. Security sources said the continuing operation has inflicted heavy military losses on the Afghan Taliban as Pakistani forces conducted effective and powerful actions against militant positions.

The latest development follows a major airstrike carried out a day earlier on Bagram Airbase, where Pakistan reportedly destroyed an aircraft hangar and two warehouses. The American newspaper reported that Pakistan had successfully targeted the strategically significant airbase, with satellite imagery showing visible damage to an aircraft hangar and warehouse facilities.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Jamaat-e-Islami led by Ameer e Jamaat-e-Islami Hafiz Naem ur Rehman calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## Pakistan to 'begin' Hajj 2026 operation from 18th April

ISLAMABAD, March 05 (INP): Pakistan's Hajj 2026 operation is scheduled to officially commence on 18 April, with the first flight carrying pilgrims to Saudi Arabia the same day.

In the initial phase, flights will depart from Karachi, Lahore, Sialkot, and Multan, with full details of individual flights to be shared with pilgrims next week.

Under the Hajj 2026 scheme, a total of 468 flights will transport 119,000 pilgrims from Pakistan.

On the first day, four flights will depart for Medina, while flights to Jeddah are set to begin from 4 May. The final flight of the operation is scheduled for 21 May.

## Efforts underway for de-escalation between US, Iran: Azam

ISLAMABAD (INP): Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar has stated that government is fully vigilant and making efforts for de-escalation between the US and Iran.

Responding to the points raised by the leader of the opposition in Senate today, he said a briefing was given to the parliamentary leaders yesterday on the regional situation.

Amongst the students under the Prime Minister's laptop scheme.

She told the house that a robust campaign has been launched in the federal capital to bring out-of-school children into the schools.

The Senate passed the National Accountability Amendment Bill, 2026. It was moved by Mohammad Abdul Qadir. Taking the floor, Leader of the House Ishaq Dar said the treasury benches supported the amendment bill, as prima facie it seeks to improve the existing legislation.

## Punjab CM approves 'Rehmat Card' for widows, orphans

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved Rehmat Card for widows and children deprived of parental love.

The Rehmat Card will become an economic shield for more than 50,000 destitute families in the first phase. The 'Rehmat Card' project will be launched immediately after Eid. Under the project, widows will get Rs10,000 and orphans Rs25,000 each through mobile application, web portal, call, and Center of Zakat Office.

## Ahsan Iqbal inaugurates CEEC Pakistan regional headquarters

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal inaugurated the newly established Regional Headquarters of China Energy Engineering Corporation (CEECC) Pakistan during a visit to the company's office.

The minister was received by Managing Director Wang Hui Hua and other senior company representatives. The visit coincided with the Chinese Spring Festival and Lantern Festival, according to a Gwadar Pro's report.

## Pakistan shows concern over India-Canada uranium deal

ISLAMABAD, March 05 (INP): Pakistan on Thursday expressed concern over the long-term uranium supply agreement concluded between India and Canada, as well as their potential cooperation on small modular reactors and advanced reactor technologies, calling it yet another country-specific exception in the field of civil nuclear cooperation.

India and Canada recently announced several agreements, including a 10-year nuclear deal, after their prime ministers met in New Delhi to reset ties that had deteriorated due to diplomatic tensions.

Both sides agreed on a \$1.9 billion uranium supply deal and also discussed cooperation in developing small modular nuclear reactors and advanced reactor technologies.

Responding to media queries regarding the agreement, Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said that it was particularly ironic given that India's 1974 nuclear test - conducted using plutonium produced in a reactor supplied by Canada for peaceful purposes - had led directly to the establishment of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). "A state whose actions necessitated the establishment of global export controls is now being granted preferential access under selective arrangements," the spokesperson said.

He noted that India had neither placed all its civilian nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards nor undertaken any binding commitment to do so under this arrangement.

## Pakistan's macroeconomic indicators show stabilization

ISLAMABAD (INP): Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has stated that Pakistan's macroeconomic indicators are showing signs of stabilization and recovery.

Talking to British High Commissioner Jane Marriott in Islamabad on Thursday, he said economic growth in the first quarter of the current fiscal year reached 3.7 per cent, with improvements in large-scale manufacturing and resilience in the agriculture sector.

## Middle East war disrupts aviation routes as Pakistan cancels 145 flights

ISLAMABAD (INP): The ongoing war in the Middle East has severely disrupted aviation operations, with Pakistan cancelling 145 flights to the region for the sixth consecutive day as the conflict continues to rattle regional airspaces.

A large number of flights from Pakistan's major airports were cancelled on Thursday and 12 from Multan bound for Middle Eastern destinations were called off. Meanwhile, 35 flights from Lahore and 12 from Islamabad, 14 from Peshawar, 12 from Sialkot and six from Faisalabad were also cancelled, aviation sources said.



THATTA: A teacher giving laptop to students during First-Ever Laptop Distribution in Thatta Under Prime Minister's National Laptop scheme at Institute of Medical & Health Sciences, Thatta.



QUETTA: District Karezat Committee Head Jamil Kakar along with ex Provincial Minister Abdul Wahid Saddique addressing a press conference.

He emphasized that the government is now focused on transitioning from stabilization to sustainable and inclusive growth while addressing social challenges such as unemployment and poverty.

Regarding Pakistan's ongoing economic reform agenda and engagement with the International Monetary Fund, the Finance Minister noted that the government remains committed to meeting programme benchmarks and advancing structural reforms, particularly in the areas of tax policy, revenue mobilization, governance, and institutional transparency.

Balochistan Stronger Digital Media Strategy Reviewed

NEWS DESK: A high-level meeting was held in Quetta to review the performance and future media strategy of the Directorate General of Public Relations (DGPR) Balochistan. The meeting was chaired by Information Secretary Imran Khan.

Senior officials examined the department's overall performance, key performance indicators (KPIs), digital media policy, and the effectiveness of communication strategies used to highlight government initiatives and development projects across the province.

Director General Public Relations Askar Khan, Director Public Relations (Press) Syed Tanveer Akhtar, and other officials attended the meeting and presented updates on ongoing activities and outreach efforts.

During the session, participants discussed ways to improve the timely delivery of information to the public and to strengthen media coverage of government policies, public welfare programs, and development initiatives taking place throughout Balochistan.

Addressing the meeting, Information



Secretary Imran Khan said the Information Department plays a central role in communicating the policies and development agenda of the provincial government under the leadership of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti. He added that the department acts as an important link between the government and citizens by ensuring that accurate and reliable information reaches the public.

He stressed the importance of expanding the use of modern digital communication tools,

including social media platforms and video documentaries, to provide effective coverage of development projects and public welfare initiatives across the province.

According to the Information Secretary, digital media has become an essential platform for public awareness and for presenting government achievements. He emphasized that the department must continue to strengthen its media strategy in line with evolving communication trends to effectively

project the government's development vision.

He also highlighted the need to enhance institutional capacity within the Information Department, adopt modern technology, and maintain close coordination with media organizations in order to promote transparency and strengthen public confidence. Earlier, DGPR Balochistan Askar Khan briefed the participants on the department's performance, ongoing projects, digital communication initiatives, and

public awareness campaigns. He noted that the department is increasingly utilizing modern media platforms to promote government policies and highlight development activities throughout the province.

The meeting reaffirmed the department's commitment to improving its professional performance and ensuring that government initiatives and public welfare measures are communicated to citizens in a timely, transparent, and effective manner.

Governor Mandokhail Reaffirms Commitment to Promotion and Protection of Balochistan's National Languages

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail stated that the various national languages spoken in the region are not merely a means of expression but vital threads that bind the province's historical and cultural heritage and civilizational journey of thousands of years. He said these languages play a crucial role in

He appreciated the voluntary services of writers and linguists associated with these institutions, acknowledging their selfless efforts in safeguarding and advancing the province's historical and cultural identity.

The Governor expressed these views while speaking to a delegation comprising of

such institutions, regularly participated in their programs, and provided assistance whenever challenges arose.

It is a partnership rooted in mutual respect and a shared passion for knowledge and culture," he added.

Earlier, the delegation apprised the Governor of their reservations and demands regarding



transmitting cherished values and traditions from one generation to the next.

He emphasized that the provincial government remains committed to promoting and preserving the rich linguistic diversity of Balochistan, including Balochi, Pashto, Brahui, and Hazaragi, through dedicated academics.

Pashto, Brahui, and Hazaragi academics at the Governor House Quetta. Governor Mandokhail further remarked that throughout his 40-year political career, his family has maintained close ties with literary academics, literary societies, and academic institutions. He noted that they have extended financial support to

the Balochistan Languages Academies and Societies Act, recently introduced by the provincial cabinet.

Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail attentively listened to their concerns and assured them of his full cooperation in seeking sustainable and practical solutions to the issues raised.

Secretary C&W Reviews Progress on Prefab Police Stations, Nokkundi Master Plan and Agro Markets

QUETTA: A review meeting was held under the chairmanship of Secretary Communications and Works Babar Khan to assess progress on key development projects including Prefab Fortification of Police Stations, the Nokkundi Master Plan, and Agro Markets (Fruit and Vegetable Markets).

The meeting was attended by Chief Engineers from six zones, Superintending Engineers of Kharan and Washuk, Superintending Engineer Makran, the Chief Architect, and other concerned officials.

During the session, officials presented detailed briefings on the progress of



ongoing projects, technical challenges, and future plans of action.

Addressing the participants, Secretary C&W Babar Khan stated that all projects under review are of significant importance and their timely completion is the government's top priority.

He directed the departments to further accelerate the pace of work, warning that any delay would not be tolerated.

Specifically refer-

ring to the Prefab Fortification of Police Stations project, he issued strict instructions that districts where work has not yet commenced must clearly demonstrate performance by Eid.

He cautioned that failure to show satisfactory progress within the stipulated timeframe would result in action against the concerned engineering officers.

He emphasized that the construction of prefab police stations is crucial for maintaining law and order, making it imperative to expedite and improve the pace of implementation.

The meeting also included a detailed discussion on the Agro Market (Fruit and Vegetable Market) project.

so that construction work can begin without delay.

He noted that the initiative is vital for strengthening the agricultural economy and providing improved facilities to farmers.

Secretary Babar Khan reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring timely and high-quality completion of these public welfare projects on an emergency basis to further enhance the development process across the province.

The Secretary instructed that the project be awarded immediately after Eid.

Grand Rally Held in Jaffarabad to Pay Tribute to Pakistan Army and Martyrs

NASIRABAD: In light of the directives of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, a grand rally was organized in District Jaffarabad to pay tribute to the leadership of the Pakistan Army and the supreme sacrifices of martyrs.

The rally was led by Deputy Commissioner Jaffarabad Khalid Khan. It commenced from the DC Office Jaffarabad, passed through various main roads and key points of the city, and concluded at the same venue. Participants car-

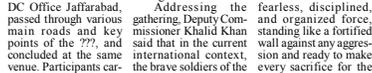
ried national flags, placed garlands, and inscribed with slogans in support of the Pakistan Army and martyrs. A large number of district officials, representatives of various departments, political and social figures, tribal elders, and citizens attended the rally, expressing solidarity and admiration for the armed forces.

Chants of "Long Live Pakistan Army," "Pakistan Zindabad," and "Our Martyrs Are Our Pride" echoed throughout the area.

Addressing the gathering, Deputy Commissioner Khalid Khan said that in the current international context, the brave soldiers of the

and stability. He stated that the entire nation salutes them for their unwavering commitment.

He further remarked that the armed forces have always defended the country during challenging times and thwarted hostile designs against Pakistan. He added that Pakistan's armed forces remain a fearless, disciplined, and organized force, standing like a fortified wall against any aggression and ready to make every sacrifice for the



protection of national borders. The Deputy Commissioner emphasized that the entire Pakistani nation stands shoulder to shoulder.

Balochistan Textbook Board Achieves Record Milestone in Printing and Distribution for Academic Year 2026

QUETTA: In line with the provincial government's vision of "Education for All," the Balochistan Textbook Board has achieved a historic milestone in the printing and distribution of textbooks for the academic year 2026.

More than 90 percent of textbooks have been successfully printed and transported from Lahore to Quetta ahead of schedule. As in the previous year, the books have been distributed free of cost to all 36 districts of the province in the first phase.

These remarks were made by Provincial Education Minister Rabeela Hameed Khan Durrani while addressing a ceremony organized by the Balochistan Textbook Board to inaugurate the large-scale free distribution of textbooks for the academic year 2026.

The event was attended by Secretary Secondary Education Lal Jan Jafar, Special Secretary Secondary Education Salam Khan Achakzai, Chairman Balochistan Textbook Board Dr. Gulab Khan Khilji, Director Schools Akhtar Khatun, Secretary Balochistan Textbook Board Dr. Niaz Tareen, Director BEMIS Balochistan Education Management Information System Naemattullah Kakar, and other senior officials.

The Education Minister stated that by ensuring full transparency in the printing tender process, the Board saved approximately



Rs1.25 billion for the provincial exchequer.

These measures were taken under the vision of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti and in accordance with directives from the Education Department.

Chairman Dr. Gulab Khan Khilji highlighted that, compared to previous years, the Board not only significantly reduced printing costs but also replaced the decades-old curriculum dating back to the 1970s with a modern syllabus aligned with contemporary educational standards.

According to official data: In 2023-24, 9.25 million textbooks were printed at a cost of Rs2.12 billion.

In 2024-25, 9.3 million books were printed at Rs1.108 billion.

In 2025-26, 12.8 million textbooks were printed at just Rs883.1 million, reflecting extraordinary savings.

This year, printing

was achieved at a cost of Rs0.65 per page—the lowest among provinces

— compared to Rs0.79 per page in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Directorate of Schools reported a demand of 12.8 million books for the current academic year, 3.5 million more than last year.

The increase is attributed to the reopening of over 4,000 previously closed schools and the recruitment of more than 10,000 new teachers by the provincial government.

Under the National Curriculum of Pakistan 2022-23, new textbooks from primary to intermediate levels have been prepared. The updated curriculum includes Nazra and translation of the Quran.

BEFORE THE JUDGE BANKING COURT QUETTA DISTRICT COURT KACHEHRY SHARAE IQBAL QUETTA SUIT NO. 27/2026

Aslari Bank Limited, M A Jinnah Road Quetta.

Plaintiff

VERSUS

Taimoor Naeem S/o Mularammad Naeem. CMC No: 54400-4337832-5. Cell No: 0312-5298991, 0333-5298999.

Defendant

Designation: Operation Manager, Department: A&BL, Aslari Bank Limited, Al-Bait Market, OPP Civic Center Main Road, District Lasbela Area Karachi. Employee Number: 0107062.

Address:

House No. 18 Seven Sky Blue Housing Scheme HITE Hub, District Lasbela, Balochistan, Near Gatroon Industries Pvt. Ltd, Mullah Azzabab, Mustang Balochistan.

SUIT FOR RECOVERY OF RS. 903,516/16.- BEARING ACCOUNT NO. 119AKP00083080 US 9 OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (RECOVERY OF FINANCE) ORDINANCE XLVII, 2001.

NOTICE UNDER FORM IV APPENDIX B OF C.P.C., 1908

Notice to: -

The above noted defendant.

WHEREAS the plaintiff has instituted a suit against you under section 9(5) of the Banking Companies Ordinance XLVII of 2001 for RS. 903,516/16.- balance of principal & interest mark up/rent due to him of which copy can be obtained from this court, on or, hereby summoned to appear and defend the suit, and within such time to cause an appearance to be entered for you.

In the default thereof the plaintiff will be entitled at any time after expiration of such 30 (thirty) days to obtain decree as prayed in the plaint.

Leave to appear may be obtained on an application to the court supported by an affidavit or declaration showing that there is defence to the suit on the merits, i.e. if it reasonable that you should be allowed to appear in the suit. Date of hearing is 06-04-2026.

GIVEN under my hand and seal of the court, this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of March, 2026.

(SAIFULLAH KHAN) Registrar

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL TSE-2300399284 Only electronic bid will be submitted. No physical bid is required. Request for Proposal for selection of Consultancy services invited on Electronic Public Procurement System (EPPS)...

## General Sales Tax (GAT) piles pressure on cotton growers

**NEWS DESK:** As early cotton sowing is expected to kick off within a few weeks across South Punjab and Sindh, farmers are heading into the fields carrying more than seeds. They are bearing a tax burden that many say could determine whether they should plant cotton in the upcoming Kharif season.

This tax pressure, however, is not the only concern in their minds, they have also to bear high input costs, which have now become a new normal, and after completing the crop cycle, they will once again have to sell their crop in the market or to the middleman with the apprehension of not getting a fair price. Many farmer lobbies are consistently demanding that the federal and provincial governments establish a mechanism to save the declining cotton crop and are asking for different waivers, one of which is scrapping the 18% general sales tax (GST) on locally produced cotton and oilseeds.

"The Ministry of Finance and the Federal Board of Revenue

should immediately issue a Statutory Regulatory Order to remove the 18% GST on locally produced cotton seeds and oilseeds," said Pakistan Business Forum Punjab President Malik Talat Suhail. The demand comes at a time of acute urgency, when the Punjab government has set an early cotton cultivation target for 0.7 million acres. It has also made various promises like turning the Bahawalpur Division into a cotton valley by launching a project worth Rs2 billion. The scale of last season's failure was alarming.

The Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) had set overall production target of 10.18 million cotton bales from plantations over 2.2 million hectares for the 2025-26 season, but actual output came in at 6.85 million bales, which was 34% below the target.

Suhail argued that the timing of relief matters as much as the relief itself. "If the government truly intends to revive cotton and meet the national production target, it must immediately issue the SRO to with-



draw GST. This step will directly support farmers and encourage increased cultivation," he said. The GST burden falls at the worst possible time in the production cycle, adding to input costs when farmers are most financially stretched. Farmers warned that cotton was the lifeline of Pakistan's economy and the country could not afford to treat it as a secondary priority any more.

The continued decline in domestic production is already pushing the textile industry,

which depends on cotton as its primary raw material, towards expensive imports. For growers in the cotton belt, this is not an abstract policy debate. Muhammad Aslam, a cotton farmer from South Punjab who cultivates around 20 acres, said

they were being taxed on the seed before it was even planted in the ground. "Last year, we lost money despite working the entire season; yes, flood was also one of the reasons. If the government does not help us now, many of us will

switch to sugarcane production or leave the land idle. Cotton farming is becoming a punishment," he remarked. The farmer community thinks the crisis in cotton is not simply due to changing weather patterns; it is due to deeper structural fail-

ures, weak pest surveillance systems, poor seed quality, inadequate mechanisation and the politically driven expansion of sugarcane cultivation into prime cotton acreage. In Punjab alone, the decline in cotton cultivation has coincided with a 22% increase in the area under alternative crops such as sugarcane, rice, maize and sesame.

The PBF also called on seed regulatory authorities to fast-track the approval of new, high-yielding and climate-resilient cotton varieties.

The National Biosafety Committee has recently approved a triple-trait genetically engineered cotton variety, a development that could improve pest resistance and yields if adoption is scaled up quickly.

Suhail stressed the need for a centralised governance framework backed by reliable data to guide cotton policy, warning that without structural reform and consistent policy direction, restoring economic resilience to the agriculture sector will remain extremely difficult.

## Govt refutes ordering temporary suspension of port entries in Pakistan

**NEWS DESK:** The government on Thursday refuted a "fabricated" notification claiming that the Cabinet Division ordered the "temporary suspension of all port entries in Pakistan" due to the security situation

until March 10. "No such order has been issued by the Cabinet Division or the Ministry of Maritime Affairs," the information minister said in a fact check.



The clarification comes amid the ongoing hostilities in the Middle East, which have disrupted sea traffic coming through the Strait of Hormuz off Iran's coast.

Pakistan has formally requested that Saudi Arabia provide an alternative oil supply route through its port city of Yanbu to maintain its fuel supply chain in the wake of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

However, the

fake notification, dated March 4, did not make any mention of the Iran war.

It claimed that an emergency meeting had been convened by the maritime affairs ministry

"in view of the prevailing security situation," without expanding further on the security concerns.

The fabricated notification had listed the Karachi, Gwadar, Pasni, Ormara and

Jiwani ports as those where "all types of entries" were to be temporarily suspended.

Disinformation and misinformation have spiked in recent days amid the ongoing war between Iran and Israel, which the United States also joined.

The fabricated notification had listed the Karachi, Gwadar, Pasni, Ormara and

## Chinese shipping latest to halt Gulf services

**NEWS DESK:** Chinese shipping giant Cosco, which operates one of the world's biggest oil tanker fleets, announced it was suspending services to and from Gulf countries from Wednesday, including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait.

Other shipping giants including Maersk and MSC have already

announced that they have halted operations in the region.

The state-owned, Shanghai-based firm is among several major shipping groups that have halted vessel operations in the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for global energy transit.

Cosco Shipping Lines said it would "suspend all new bookings" for routes through the

Strait of Hormuz "with immediate effect until further notice".

The company blamed the disruption on "the escalating conflicts in the Middle East region and the resultant restrictions on maritime traffic" in the Strait.

New worldwide bookings bound for Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait and parts of the UAE and Saudi Arabia have been

halted, the company said in a statement.

It has also suspended services from Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait and parts of the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia's Jeddah, along with the UAE's Khor Fakkan and Fujairah,

are excluded from the suspensions and can be reached through the UAE's Khor Strait.



## Consumers to bear Rs23bn extra burden

**NEWS DESK:** The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on Wednesday notified about Rs23 billion in additional burden on electricity consumers by allowing Rs1.62 per unit higher fuel costs in March and about 35 paise per unit other charges for the next three months.

As such, consumers will bear an additional burden of about Rs1.98 per unit in higher tariffs in March.

The impact of the fuel cost adjustment (FCA) alone for March works out at around Rs1.4bn, while Rs8.7bn under the quarterly tariff adjustment (QTA) will be recovered over three months.

In a late-night notification, Nepra said it "has decided that positive fuel cost adjustment for January 2026, i.e. Rs1.6274/kWh... shall be applicable to all the consumer categories of KE (K-Electric) and NWDISCOs (power distribution companies previously part of Wapda) except lifeline consumers, electric vehicle charging stations



(EVCS) and prepaid electricity consumers of all categories who opted for pre-paid tariff."

The regulator, which has lately started issuing its decisions and notifications late at night, said the higher FCA would also apply to incremental consumption package consumers.

The regulator said the supply of additional power from the national grid to K-Electric was having a positive impact for consumers.

It said that if KE had not been provided electricity from the national grid, the cost for electricity consumers would have increased by Rs1.50 per unit on account of FCA and unit on account of quarterly capacity purchase price, resulting in a total increase in tariff of Rs3.88 per unit. Nepra also noted

that the additional drawal of more than 1,100 GWh under the incremental package had necessitated the dispatch of marginal generation plants, which consequently contributed to higher FCA adjustments.

However, the regulator said the increase in overall sales was expected to improve capacity cost recovery, which may translate into favourable quarterly tariff adjustments at the end of the relevant quarter.

## China route considered for potato exports

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan is considering routing potato exports to Central Asia through China as regional tensions disrupt traditional trade corridors and increase transportation costs for exporters.

The proposal was discussed during the fourth meeting of the Committee on Potato Export, chaired by Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain to review the evolving export situation and finalise measures aimed at protecting farmers' interests.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research on Wednesday, the meeting was held against the backdrop of growing logistical constraints affecting Pakistan's access to regional markets.

Participants were informed that the prevailing war-like situation in Iran has rendered traditional trans-



port routes unsafe, while the closure of the Afghanistan border has significantly restricted overland connectivity with Central Asian markets.

At the same time, limited access to certain Gulf routes has further complicated export operations for Pakistani traders.

In view of these developments, the committee reviewed alternative and viable corridors to sustain export momentum. Officials noted that,

under the current circumstances, the most feasible option for accessing Central Asian markets is through China.

The government is engaging relevant authorities to facilitate smoother transit through this corridor to ensure the continuity of export flows.

The meeting also discussed the impact of regional instability on transportation costs. With freight and logistics expenses rising sharply, the minis-

ter highlighted the need for targeted government support to exporters.

Hussain said the government was considering transport subsidies and concessional freight support to offset extraordinary costs arising from external disruptions.

The objective is to maintain the competitiveness of Pakistani potatoes in international markets despite the increase in logistics expenses.

# Allen's fastest century fires NZ into T20 World Cup final with crushing win over South Africa

**NEWS DESK:** Finn Allen plundered the fastest century in Twenty20 World Cup history to lead New Zealand into the final with a nine-wicket demolition of South Africa at the Eden Gardens on Wednesday.

South Africa, previously unbeaten in the tournament, recovered from a precarious 77-5 to post a competitive 169-8 after Marco Jansen led their recovery with a belligerent 55 not out.

Allen smashed an unbeaten 100 off 33 balls, however, and shared a 117-run opening stand with Tim Seifert (58) as New Zealand romped to their target in only 12.5 overs.

Allen, who hit eight sixes, finished the match with his 10th four to bring up the fastest hundred in a T20 international between two full-member nations.

"I say it's pretty up there," player of the match Allen said. "Obviously, we wanted to try and put them on the back foot early."



Allen and Seifert looked in a hurry to finish the job from the start, amassing 84 runs in the six powerplay overs to take control of the match.

Allen plundered 22 runs from a Corbin Bosch over in a scintillating display of power-hitting, and it was not until the 10th over that Kagiso Rabada beat Seifert's swipe across the line and sent the balls flying.

New Zealand were cruising by then, however, and Ravindra joined Allen to complete the chase in dominant style.

Defending champions India took on twice champions England in the second semi-final in Mumbai on Thursday.

Wang was again put to work after the interval as she smothered Tanaka's attempt from short range. But Wang was financially helpless when Tanaka slotted home after being on the receiving end of a superb pass from Hana Takahashi.

Japan's celebrations were made to wait with VAR needed to determine whether the ball deflected Tanaka's hand on the way down.

It appeared to be Japan's only goal until Seike stepped up late. India and Vietnam are also in Group C and play each other later Wednesday.

## Pakistan beat Austria 4-2 to top pool in World Cup qualifiers

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan defeated Austria 4-2 in their third match of the FIH Men's World Cup Qualifier Round, strengthening their position at the top of the pool standings and securing a place in the semi-finals.

Pakistan delivered a disciplined performance at the Suez Canal Hockey Stadium, with forward Abu Bakar Mahmood scoring twice to lead the attack.

Afraz and Muhammad Sufyan Khan added a goal each to complete the scoring for the Asian side.

Austria's resistance came through goals from Kellner and Scholz, but Pakistan maintained control for most of the match to seal a 4-2 victory.

Pakistan captain Ammad Shakeel Butt said after the match that strong team morale and unity had played a key role in the team's unbeaten run in the qualifiers.

"Our confidence is high and the team spirit is excellent. We are focused on delivering our best in the semi-final and, Insha'Allah, securing qualification for the 2026 Hockey World Cup," he said.

Officials of the Pakistan Hockey Federation, including president Mohyuddin Ahmed Wani and committee members Islahuddin Siddiqui, Hassan Sardar and chief selector Samiullah Khan, congratulated the team on their undefeated run in the pool stage and wished them success in the semi-finals.

Butt said qualifying for the World Cup would be a special gift for the nation. "We want to give this achievement to the people of Pakistan who always support us with their prayers," he said.

"This team is determined to bring medals and pride back to the country." The highest ranked team in the competition at eight, Japan are desperate for a third title to add to their back-to-back triumphs in 2014 and 2018.

But they will need to clean up their finishing touches after attempting 30 shots and enjoying almost 90 per cent of possession. We need to be a little more sharp but this was the first game and we open with three points, so you cannot be unhappy with that," Japan coach Nils Nielsen said.



## England have belief to take down India in semi-final, says Brook

**NEWS DESK:** England are drawing confidence from a run of eight victories ahead of their Twenty20 World Cup semi-final against India, captain Harry Brook said, adding that his team's resilience would be a key factor on Thursday at the Wankhede Stadium.

England's route to the last four has not all been smooth sailing, with the two-time champions advancing after wins over Sri Lanka, Pakistan and New Zealand, against whom they needed 43 runs off the final 18 balls to get over the line.

"We've won tight games, which in World Cups prove to be very important, and we've got a lot of confidence going into the deeper parts of the game," Brook told reporters on Wednesday.

"We've won games, which we probably shouldn't have, and it just feels like we've never really been out of any game so far, which holds you in good stead in these world competitions."

Brook's own form has underpinned the message. The 27-year-old struck a 50-ball hundred to lift England past Pakistan in Pakkelele. "I don't believe that



he's in the team," Brook said. England's top two wicket-takers in the tournament are spinners Adil Rashid and Liam Dawson. "I feel like England always get a bad rap about playing against spin. We've gone to Sri Lanka and we've won six games in a row against subcontinent sides, who are very good in their own backyard," Brook said.

"We've got a lot of confidence playing on turning pitches. [Varun] Chakravarthy is one of the best bowlers in the world, and I'll try my best to face him and score as many runs as I can against him."

The winners on Thursday will advance to Sunday's final against South Africa or New Zealand, who meet in the other semi-final on Thursday at Mumbai.

**INDIA SEEK TO BEAT 'STREET-SMART' ENGLAND**

India's bowling coach Morne Morkel warned the hosts will need a "special performance" to beat a "street-smart" England in the semi-final.

Sanju Samson's sparkling 97 not out enabled India to chase down 196 against the West Indies in a winner-takes-all clash on Sunday in Kolkata.

## Misfiring Japan overcome Taiwan in Women's Asian Cup

**NEWS DESK:** Bayern Munich midfielder Monika Tanikawa finally cracked a dogged Taiwan on Wednesday as powerhouse Japan kicked off their Women's Asian Cup with a 2-0 victory in Perth.

Brimming with a talented squad featuring 16 England-based players, Japan dominated a one-sided match played in fierce heat.

But they were left frustrated by an inability to hit the target other than Tanikawa's strike in the 61st minute and a header from substitute Kiko Seike in the 92nd minute.

The highest ranked team in the competition at eight, Japan are desperate for a third title to add to their back-to-back triumphs in 2014 and 2018.

But they will need to clean up their finishing touches after attempting 30 shots and enjoying almost 90 per cent of possession. We need to be a little more sharp but this was the first game and we open with three points, so you cannot be unhappy with that," Japan coach Nils Nielsen said.

Taiwan, who reached the final eight in the last edition in 2022, did not have a shot on goal but fought gamely with goalkeeper Wang Yu-ting producing a superb performance.

Under Greenland-born Nielsen, Japan's first foreign-born women's coach, the team have vowed to play in a fast and brash manner. Heading Nielsen's words, Japan were aggressive from the outset and peppered the goal but without success.

Taiwan were clinging on against the odds with Wang pulling off a spectacular save to deny a bullet from Mina Tanaka with each one cheered enthusiastically by their vocal supporters, who livened up the sparse terraces.



## Resurgent Wolves stun Liverpool, Everton enjoy home comfort

**NEWS DESK:** Resurgent bottom club Wolverhampton Wanderers stunned Liverpool with a last-gasp 2-1 win at a rocking Molineux on Tuesday to offer a glimpse of a miraculous escape from relegation while putting a big dent in the top-five hopes of Arsenal's side.

A dull game burst into life in the final stages with Rodrigo Gomes hitting the hosts ahead only for Mohamed Salah to level with his first Premier League goal since November.

But a deflected effort by Andre wrong-footed keeper Alisson in the 94th minute to seal a second successive win for Wolves who also beat Aston Villa at home on Friday with a 2-0 victory over Burnley boosting their chances of European qualification.

Elsewhere, Leeds United's Premier League relegation fears deepened with a 1-0 home defeat by Sunderland on Tuesday.

Bournemouth and Brentford drew 0-0 — a result that moved Bournemouth into the top half and left Brentford seventh.

Wolves have looked doomed since picking up two points from their opening 18 matches — the worst start in Premier League history — but suddenly they are re-energised.

They are still bottom with 16 points from 30 games, 11 points from the safety zone, but where there was only despair and gloom, pride has been restored and a glimmer of hope, even if relegation still looks a certainty.

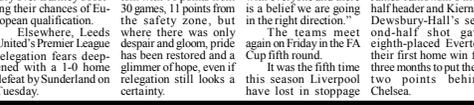
"Never mind the position you're in, any time you beat Liverpool you have to enjoy it," Edwards, whose side also drew with leaders Arsenal last month, told Sky Sports.

It was a big, big night for us. We are trying to build momentum and turn things around. We are showing fight and spirit and also quality. We are competing with everyone and there is a belief we are going in the right direction."

The teams meet again on Friday in the FA Cup fifth round. It was the fifth time this season Liverpool have lost in stoppage time and it left Slot's side in fifth place with 48 points.

"Bad result," Slot said. "We are losing far too many football games and dropping points. Was it again an extra (added) time that we conceded? The three ones we lost in the last 22 games were all in extra time."

At the Hill Dickinson Stadium, James Tarkowski's first-half header and Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall's second-half shot gave eighth-placed Everton their first home win for three months to put them two points behind Chelsea.





## First polio case of 2026 reported from Sujawal District in Sindh

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan's National Emergency Operations Centre for Polio Eradication (NEOC) confirmed the first wild polio case of 2026 in a four-year-old child from Bello Union Council in Sindh's Sujawal District on Thursday.

Polio is a highly infectious and incurable disease that can cause lifelong paralysis.

The only effective protection is through repeated doses of the oral polio vaccine for every child under five during each campaign, along with the timely completion of all essential immunisations.

In a press release, NEOC said the case was reported through the polio surveillance network and confirmed by the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad.

"The Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) is already analysing the best response to tackle and prevent further transmission," it said.

Despite challenges, eradicating the global threat of polio in Pakistan and worldwide is within reach, and the PEI continued to "intensify its efforts to leave no child behind," it said.

While Pakistan's dedicated frontline workers ensure that vaccines reach every child, parents and caregivers play a crucial role by making sure their children receive all recommended doses, including routine immunisations.

The PEI urged all parents and caregivers to ensure that their children are vaccinated during every campaign to protect them from lifelong disability or death.

It also highlighted the role of communities, religious leaders, and the media in promoting vaccination, countering misinformation, and ensuring that every child in Pakistan was protected.

Pakistan is one of the last two countries in the world, alongside Afghanistan, where polio remains endemic.

31 cases of the virus were reported over 2025.

The target for the last nationwide polio campaign was to vaccinate 45.4 million children under the age of five.

However, a total of 44.6 million children were vaccinated as refusals were reported from across the country.

## Sindh apex committee orders enhanced security for foreigners

**NEWS DESK:** The Sindh Apex Committee reviewed the tense security situation following the United States and Israel's strikes on Iran and the resulting chaos in Karachi on Wednesday and decided to ensure the protection of foreigners and conduct targeted operations against terrorism.

The 33rd meeting of the provincial apex committee, a high-level forum of civil and military leadership, was held at the Sindh Chief Minister House to conduct a comprehensive review of the progress under the National Action Plan, ongoing operations in the riverine areas, security arrangements for foreign nationals, and measures against street crime and other illegal activities.

The meeting was chaired by Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah and attended by the Karachi corps commander, senior police, Rangers and intelligence officials, Sindh Home Minister Zia Lanjar and others.

According to a press statement by the CM House, the government directed law enforcement agencies to enhance security mea-

asures for foreign nationals in Karachi, particularly Chinese workers.

Amid regional tensions, key civil-military forum directs intelligence-led operations, crackdown on illegal weapons; CM Murad announces zero tolerance for street crime

The meeting reviewed the prevailing tense security situation in light of the US and Israel's attacks on Iran and the consequent loss of valuable lives in Karachi. The chief minister instructed officials to maintain the writ of the state, bolster the protection of foreign nationals, and carry out specific operations as required.

The committee reviewed efforts under the "Azam-i-Istehkam" framework to combat terrorism and organised crime. CM Shah said that security operations should remain intelligence-led and focused, and reiterated that the government would not permit any anti-state elements to challenge national authority.

He directed the law enforcement agencies to initiate a crackdown on those illegally armed, saying that no one in the province would be al-

lowed to possess illegal weapons.

Over 278,000 aliens repatriated during the meeting, it was informed that 278,816 illegal immigrants had been repatriated. The chief minister directed law enforcement agencies to continue the repatriation of all illegal immigrants and to keep him updated on progress.

He announced zero tolerance towards street crime and all illegal activities, including smuggling, narcotics trade and power theft, urging law enforcement agencies to intensify coordinated efforts.

He further directed law enforcement agencies to continue coordinated actions against terrorism, organised crime, land mafias and illegal weapons without discrimination.

He also instructed that the Sindh Forensic Science Laboratory be completed by December 2026, emphasising that the facility would significantly boost investigative capacity across the province, alongside the operationalisation of the Counter Terrorism School to improve professional training and investigative skills.



## Centre orders monitoring of petrol stations amid hoarding concerns

**NEWS DESK:** The Centre on Thursday asked all the provincial governments to ensure physical inspection and monitoring of retail petrol stations through respective deputy commissioners to avoid hoarding of petroleum products for undue profiteering.

The government also appointed Hamed Yaqoob Sheikh, a grade-22 officer of the Pakistan Administrative Service, as the Petroleum Division secretary — a post lying vacant for the past couple of months. Shaikh, a former secretary of finance and planning, was working as the national food security secretary.

In an announcement, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) said the government had assured the public that the country currently held sufficient stocks of petroleum products to meet national demand and there was no need for panic buying or hoarding.

It also highlighted that the government is currently mulling shifting the petrol pricing mechanism from a fortnightly basis to a weekly basis.

Meanwhile, Ogra also said that in light of



the prevailing geopolitical situation, authorities were closely monitoring the supply chain to ensure the uninterrupted availability of petroleum products across the country. The existing stock position remains comfortable and well within the prescribed requirements," it said.

The regulator warned strict action would be taken against any individual or entity found involved in illegal hoarding or storage of petroleum products at unauthorised locations,

particularly at places other than duly licensed oil depots and retail outlets of OMCs.

According to Ogra, any premises found involved in illegal storage of petroleum products would be sealed.

It said reports had indicated that certain elements may attempt to hoard petroleum products for profiteering during the war drags on.

According to Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, there was "no fuel shortage in the country, but things could become serious if the war drags on."

Pakistan has already formally requested Saudi Arabia to provide an alternative oil supply route through the Red Sea route to maintain its fuel supply chain.

## ECP summons interior minister over delay in LG polls in Islamabad

**NEWS DESK:** The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday summoned Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi over the delay in local government elections in the federal capital.

The term of the last local government in Islamabad expired in February 2021, and since then, elections have been delayed under various pretexts. As a result, around 2.5 million residents of Islamabad continue to face issues ranging from water shortages to unimpeded streets.

A five-member ECP bench — headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja — took up the issue of delay in holding local government elections in Punjab and Islamabad, a press release issued by the ECP said. During the hearing, Raja was informed that the secretary of the interior ministry had been sent three letters by the ECP in which he was asked for "the demarcation of the town corporation, the number of union councils in each

town corporation, the provision of the maps of the town corporations, as well as necessary amendments in the ordinance."

However, ECP received no response from the ministry. In response, the Islamabad chief commissioner said that no such letter had been received, and added that the secretary of the interior ministry was in a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz

Sharif. "In his place, the additional secretary appeared before the ECP," the press release read; however, the ECP took strict notice of the secretary's failure to respond, directing that he should be served a contempt notice.

The ECP further directed the Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi to appear at the next hearing. The Islamabad chief commissioner said that maps of the town corpo-

ration would be provided to the ECP within a week. The ECP then set a deadline of March 12 in the matter.

Local govt polls in Punjab The five-member bench also took up the matter of the delay in local government elections in Punjab, as per the press release.

In this regard, Punjab chief secretary and secretary local government, appeared before the ECP. During the

hearing, the Punjab chief secretary informed the ECP that the provincial government has provided "local government delimitation rules, demarcation order, which contains the number of union councils in town corporations, municipal corporations, municipal committees and tehsil councils to the ECP."

The secretary also informed ECP that "maps and other relevant data will be provided to the ECP by March 12, after which the provincial government will issue a notification on more election rules."

The election commission issued directions to "immediately issue the delimitation schedule as soon as the provincial government provides the maps."

As per the statement, the provincial government was told that upon failure to provide maps, the ECP will call the division-wise deputy commissioner on a daily-basis, starting March 13, "so they may be able to provide ECP the maps."



## FCC bars parallel appeals against SC verdicts

**NEWS DESK:** The Federal Constitutional Court on Thursday ruled that a parallel appeal cannot be filed against a Supreme Court of Pakistan's decision, reinforcing that the apex court's final rulings are beyond review.

FCC clarified that it cannot entertain appeals against final decisions of the SC, marking a significant ruling after months of legal uncertainty.

The court said even after the 27th Amendment to the Constitution, which established the FCC, the new tribunal does not have the authority to supervise or reopen judgments already delivered by the Supreme Court.

"The Constitution does not allow endless litigation; every legal battle must have an eventual conclusion," the court noted in its written verdict.

The ruling comes after a series of petitions were filed in the FCC challenging Supreme Court verdicts, raising concerns about



parallel litigation and the finality of apex court decisions. The FCC emphasised that while it was created to protect constitutional rights and provide a forum for certain specialised cases, it cannot act as a forum to revisit final Supreme Court orders.

Chief Justice Aminuddin Khan dismissed a review petition filed against the Supreme Court's September 12, 2024, or-

der. The petitioner had argued that a three-member Supreme Court bench in 2015 had ruled in their favour, only for the verdict to be overturned by a two-member bench in 2022.

The case concerned a land compensation dispute with the Multan Development Authority.

The FCC held that the land dispute was not of public im-

portance but a private matter and therefore did not warrant reopening of the Supreme Court decision. The court also made it clear that no review could be sought under the guise of "reconsideration" or "corrective measures."

The ruling reinforces the principle of judicial finality and limits its attempts to use the FCC to bypass the Supreme Court's authority.

Following the 27th Amendment, several petitions challenging apex court decisions had been filed in the FCC, creating confusion over the scope of its jurisdiction.

This verdict now establishes that the FCC cannot act as an appellate body over the Supreme Court.

The petitioner's review petition in the Supreme Court had also been dismissed before the FCC case.

their respective jurisdictions. Meanwhile, Ogra said its teams were actively monitoring the situation in the field.

"Inspections are being conducted at oil depots and retail outlets to ensure smooth supply of petroleum products and to prevent any malpractices," Ogra said.

It advised the public not to pay attention to rumours and continue normal consumption patterns as the petroleum supply situation in the country was stable.

The Ogra announcement comes as the United States and Israel's war with Iran continues for a sixth day, disrupting supply chains as ships' passage through the Strait of Hormuz remains paralysed.

According to Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, there was "no fuel shortage in the country, but things could become serious if the war drags on."

Pakistan has already formally requested Saudi Arabia to provide an alternative oil supply route through the Red Sea route to maintain its fuel supply chain.

To curb such practices, all provincial chief secretaries were told to direct the DCs to carry out inspections within

the matter of the delay in local government elections in Punjab, as per the press release.

In this regard, Punjab chief secretary and secretary local government, appeared before the ECP. During the

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