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# QUETTA VOICE

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## Gwadar Fisherman Killed by Debris of Israeli Missile Intercepted in Iran

**News Desk:**

A tragic incident occurred in Iranian waters when a fisherman from Gwadar, Balochistan, was killed after debris from an Israeli missile intercepted by Iranian air defence systems struck his boat. Officials confirmed the incident on Sunday.

Gwadar Deputy Commissioner (DC) Naqibullah Kakar

told The Daily Quetta Voice that the event took place on Saturday. The victim was identified as Muhammad Tayyab, a resident of Gannz, a small coastal town in Gwadar district.

According to DC Kakar, the missile appeared to target fishing boats in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan coastal region.

Although Iranian defence forces successfully intercepted and destroyed the projectile,

fragments fell into the sea, fatally hitting Tayyab's vessel. His body was transported back to Gannz by sea and later buried in his hometown.

The incident comes amid intensifying hostilities in the Middle East. Since February 28, Iran has been locked in direct confrontation with Israel and the United States following coordinated strikes on Iranian territory. In retaliation, Tehran has launched drone and

missile attacks on US military bases and assets across Gulf states, raising fears of a wider regional war. Current Situation and Regional Impact

This tragedy underscores how escalating geopolitical tensions are endangering civilian lives far beyond the battlefield. Fishing communities along the Arabian Sea, particularly in Gwadar and Iran's coastal belt, now face heightened risks as military exchanges spill into

maritime zones. Pakistan, sharing borders with Iran and relying heavily on Gwadar as a strategic port under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is closely monitoring developments. The incident highlights the vulnerability of local livelihoods and the potential disruption of trade and security in the region, making stability in the Gulf crucial for South Asia's economic and humanitarian interests.

## 13 terrorists killed in 5 intelligence-driven operations across KP: ISPR

**NEWSDESK:**

Security forces have killed 13 terrorists in five separate operations across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the military's media affairs wing said on Sunday.

"On March 6-7, security forces conducted a series of high-tempo intelligence-driven operations, part of relentless counter-terrorism campaign, wherein 13 khawarij belonging to Indian proxy Fitna Al Khawarij were killed in five separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

Fitna Al Khawarij is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

According to ISPR, five terrorists were killed in the Bajaur district after an intense fire exchange when troops "effectively engaged the khawarij location" during an intelligence-based operation (IBO).

In two other encounters in Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan districts, three terrorists "belonging to Indian proxy Fitna Al Khawarij were successfully neutralised", the press release said.

"Simultaneously, in two separate engagements in Khyber and South Waziristan districts, own troops effectively neutralised five more khawarij," it added.

ISPR stated that weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the "Indian-sponsored killed khawarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area".

"It is imperative to highlight that these operations are being conducted concurrently as Pakistan continues to counter emerging challenges along its borders with Afghanistan," ISPR noted.

"The security forces of Pakistan remain resolute and unwavering in their commitment to defend the nation's frontiers," the military reaffirmed.

Sanitisation operations were being conducted to "eliminate any other Indian-sponsored kharij found in the area".

ISPR noted that a "relentless counter-terrorism campaign under vision 'Azim-i-Itteham'" (as approved by Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by security forces and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country".

President Asif Ali Zardari commended the security forces for eliminating the terrorists, state-run APP reported.

The president lauded the professional capabilities of the security forces during the operations in Bajaur, Bannu, DI Khan, Khyber and South Waziristan, the media wing of President's Secretariat said in a press release.

President Zardari underlined that operations against "Indian-backed Fitna Al Khawarij terrorists were significant for securing peace in the country".

Terror resurgence and intensified operations

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 71 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".

Due to a resurgence of militancy, especially in KP and Balochistan, where attacks often target security personnel and LEAs, the state has intensified counter-terrorism operations.

On February 24, 26 terrorists belonging to Fitna Al Khawarij were killed in four separate engagements in KP, while eight terrorists belonging to Fitna Al Hindustan were killed in an operation in Balochistan's Samsara

## Balochistan Govt Orders Probe into CTD Inspector Mitha Khan's Killing

**News Desk:**

QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan has expressed deep sorrow and grief over the martyrdom of CTD Inspector Mitha Khan and has ordered an immediate investigation into the incident.

Spokesperson for the Balochistan government and Adviser to the Chief Minister for Political and Media Affairs, Shahid Rind, said that the elements involved in the attack will be arrested soon and brought to justice.

He stated that Inspector Mitha Khan was a brave and dutiful officer who rendered remarkable services for maintaining peace and stability in the province.

Shahid Rind added that such cowardly attacks cannot weaken the resolve of the people of Balochistan or the morale of law enforcement agencies.

He further said that the Government of Balochistan stands with the family of the



martyred officer in this difficult time and prayed for the elevation of the departed soul's ranks.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

### Balochistan High Court Opens the Doors of Justice Wider Than Ever Before



#### Editorial:

The Balochistan High Court's latest initiative — introducing a dedicated WhatsApp number and email address for public complaints — marks a meaningful shift toward openness, accessibility, and public empowerment within the judicial system.

This is not just a procedural reform; it is an invitation for citizens to engage directly with the justice system in ways that were previously difficult, time-consuming, and often intimidating.

For decades, obtaining certified copies of court judgments was a frustrating ordeal for clients and even for experienced lawyers.

Long queues, procedural delays, and administrative hurdles made the process difficult, especially for people from remote districts of the province.

With digital communication now formally integrated, citizens, litigants, and counsel will be able to request and access judgment copies far more easily. This single step reduces barriers that have existed for years and ensures that justice is not only done — but also seen to be done.

Equally important is the ability for citizens to file complaints directly against lower judges or court staff if they face

misconduct, delays, or unfair treatment. Many people lacked the courage, resources, or channels to raise such concerns.

This mechanism now provides them a safe and accessible option, reinforcing the idea that justice is a right, not a privilege.

The Balochistan High Court deserves recognition for taking a forward-looking approach to judicial transparency.

By embracing technology, the court has empowered the public, strengthened accountability, and made justice more approachable for millions. This is a good step — one that brings the judiciary closer to the people it serves.

## Forced Marriage in Islam: A Clear Violation of Women's Rights and Human Dignity

By Musavir Durrani

Forced marriage remains one of the most damaging cultural practices in parts of the Muslim world today. Despite being justified in the name of honor, tradition, or family unity, Islam itself strictly forbids forcing any woman, or man, into a marriage they do not want. Islamic teachings make consent the core of marriage, while coercion makes a marriage *batal* (invalid).

The Qur'an Clearly Forbids Forced Marriages. Allah states in Surah An-Nisa: "O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will." (Qur'an 4:19)

This verse was revealed to abolish the jahiliyyah practice of controlling or forcing women into marriages.

Islam replaced oppression with dignity, choice, and responsibility.

Prophetic Example: Forced Marriages Declared Invalid.

A woman once came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) complaining that her father had married her without her permission. The Prophet (PBUH) gave her the full right to reject or accept the marriage, proving that consent is mandatory.

Hadith References: Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 5138. Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1419.



These narrations all confirm that the Prophet (PBUH) allowed the woman to annul her forced marriage.

One narration even states that she chose to remain married but wanted to teach women that fathers have no right to force their daughters.

Parents Can Advise, But They Cannot Force. Islam highly respects parents, but marriage choice is not their right. They can guide, suggest, and

advise, but they have absolutely no power to force their child into marrying someone. Even if parents think they "know what is best," they cannot override the choice of their daughter or son.

The final decision always belongs to the person getting married.

Statements such as: "If you don't marry this one, who will marry you?" "You have no choice." "Do it for family honor."

"You must obey your parents." These are pure emotional manipulation, and Islam does not allow it. Emotional or Psychological Pressure is Also Haram. Forced marriage is not only when someone is physically pressured. Even emotional, mental, or family pressure counts as force.

Modern Forced Marriages: A New Way of Burying Women Alive. Before Islam, Arabs used to bury baby girls alive. Today, many scholars say: "We no longer bury women in the ground, we bury their

dreams on the day of their Nikkah." When a girl is forced into a marriage, pressured emotionally, or told she has no other choice, we destroy her life while she is still alive.

This is the new form of burying women alive, and Islam came to end this injustice completely. Forced marriage has no place in Islam. It is against the Qur'an, against the Sunnah, and against the dignity that Islam gives to every woman and man.

Parents must love, support, and guide, but never control or force marriage decisions. "Allah gave women this right, and no one can take it away."

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## How AI Is Making Modern Production Smarter and Faster

Syed Muhammad Wisem

AI is changing the way we create and collaborate, with 41% of brands already using AI for video production. Production teams now have to create more content faster than ever.

Staying on track while keeping ideas fresh is a daily challenge. AI is changing how production teams plan, shoot, and edit. It's making the process faster, smarter, and more creative.

As the need for faster content grows, AI is becoming a key tool for handling repetitive tasks such as video editing, adding visual effects, and creating computer graphics. Over time, it has transformed into a powerful creative partner that now supports teams at every stage of production.

In the beginning, AI was mainly used for video automation, and voice synthesis. These tools helped save time but still required significant human input. Today, AI plays an active role across pre-production, production, and post-production, making the entire process more efficient and consistent.

During pre-production, it assists with scriptwriting, budgeting, and storyboard creation. In production, it en-

hances camera tracking, lighting adjustments, and virtual set design. Finally, in post-production, it streamlines editing, color correction, sound design, and even creates advanced visual effects.

Major studios such as Netflix and Warner Bros. are now using AI-driven tools to analyze audience preferences, optimize workflows, and enhance storytelling. As a result, AI has shifted from being a simple technical assistant to becoming an essential force in shaping the future of modern media production.

Why Production Houses Are Turning to AI

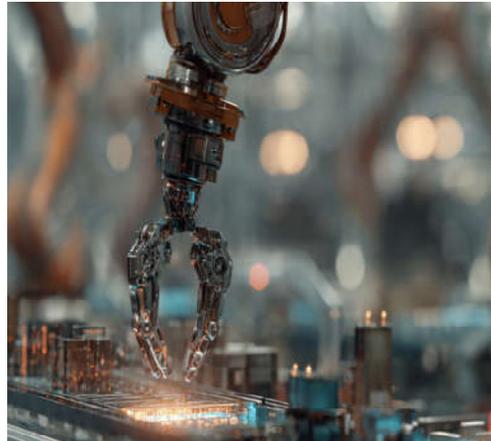
Production houses are facing rising costs and tighter schedules. Keeping up with deadlines while staying creative has become a major challenge. To stay efficient, many studios are now using AI to manage time and 60% of post-production studios utilize AI-powered editing tools to reduce editing time, reduce expenses, and increase efficiency.

This trend is growing rapidly as the global AI in media and entertainment market is projected to reach \$34.1 billion by 2027. The demand for quick content is also increasing.

Streamlining production processes to release new shows faster, putting pressure on production teams. At the same time, 65% of advertising agencies are already using AI tools for content creation and optimization.

AI-driven tools speed up brainstorming and script development. These tools help generate dialogue, plot twists, and creative concepts in minutes, saving time while keeping creativity flowing.

Storyboarding and concept visualization have also become easier. Tools like Midjourney, Runway ML, and Pika Labs turn written ideas into visuals, helping directors and producers



see how scenes might look before filming begins. This makes planning smoother and reduces the need for costly revisions later.

AI is also improving casting and budgeting. Some tools analyze data to predict how well an actor will connect with audiences. AI software like Celyx and StudioBinder helps plan budgets and schedules. These tools make it easier for studios to manage costs, track spending, and stay on time.

AI is transforming the way films are shot on set. For example, AI-powered cameras can automatically track actors, adjust framing, and optimize lighting in real time. This helps directors capture perfect shots faster and reduces the need for repeated takes. According to MarketsandMarkets, the use of AI cameras in film production is expected to grow by 22%

annually by 2027. Virtual production is becoming more common. Tools like Unreal Engine and NVIDIA Omniverse allow filmmakers to create realistic digital environments before filming begins. These virtual sets save time, cut costs, and give teams more creative freedom, especially for large-scale or fantasy projects.

AI also improves color grading and sound editing. It can automatically balance colors, refine lighting, remove background noise, and sync soundtracks. Even some free tools can apply complex color grading during filming. Voice recognition systems can follow script lines or adjust camera settings through simple voice commands.

In addition, AI enhances VFX, CGI, and localization. It removes green screens, fills missing frames, and generates realistic effects quickly. Voice tools like Resemble.ai and ElevenLabs speed up dubbing and translations for multiple languages.

The use of AI in video editing has reduced production time by an average of 30%, showing how much it improves efficiency. AI also helps with versioning and distribution. It can create multiple edits for different platforms like social media, TV, or YouTube Shorts. This allows studios to repurpose content easily and deliver it quickly. Overall, AI makes post-production faster, more precise, and more creative.

Case Study: How AI Is Shaping Modern Production

Case Study 1: Netflix Builds a Cloud-Based VFX Studio

Netflix, one of the biggest entertainment companies in the world, began producing its own content in 2012. To manage the largest VFX studio in the world, they needed a more efficient way to handle their growing VFX needs.

Netflix built a cloud-based VFX studio, which allowed them to scale their VFX production up or down as needed. This helped them reduce costs and improve their VFX production process.

Case Study 2: Amazon EC2 G4 Instances, Netflix built fast and secure remote workstations. These cloud tools allowed artists to edit, animate, and render with high-quality visuals while keeping performance smooth. The system helped Netflix move from testing to full production in just one year.

By using AWS, Netflix reduced costs and technical barriers for creators. The company could now attract top VFX and animation talent from anywhere in the world. This innovation showed how cloud and AI tools can transform modern film production.

Case Study 3: Crophy's AI Innovation in Grain Grading

In South Australia, Ana Falkner and Andrew Hannon founded Crophy to make grain testing faster and more accurate. Traditional testing relied on human inspection, which often caused mistakes and disagreements.

The founders wanted a smarter AI-based way to grade crops.

Working with the Australian Institute for Machine Learning (AIML), they built AI software that could analyze grain samples in seconds. Their system reduced testing time from 24 minutes to just 90 seconds and achieved 98% accuracy. This made the grain supply chain faster and more reliable.

In 2024, Crophy raised \$2 million AUD from investors to expand its technology. Their success proved that AI can bring real value to agriculture by making testing faster, more consistent, and more accurate.

Falkner advises businesses to focus on real problems first and then see if AI is the right solution.

Case Study 3: What's Next? Entertainment's Use of AI in Creative Production

What's Next? Entertainment is redefining how film production teams approach creativity and pre-production. To make their workflow smoother and boost creative output, the company uses AI tools like Midjourney and ChatGPT in its daily processes.

During the early stages of filmmaking, the team uses Midjourney for storyboarding and visual exploration. It helps them create detailed visual references, test color palettes, and shape the overall look and feel of each scene before production begins. This saves time and improves collaboration among directors, designers, and cinematographers.

Meanwhile, ChatGPT supports ideation and research. The team uses it to study narrative, conduct competitive analysis, and refine their sentence structures and ideas for better storytelling.

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# Iran unbowed as Trump warns of 'hitting hard'

**NEWS DESK:** Israel and Iran traded attacks as the Middle East war entered a second week on Saturday, while Tehran made an unusual apology to neighbouring states, apparently seeking to calm regional anger at Iranian strikes on Gulf civilian targets, but it dismissed US President Donald Trump's demand for Tehran's unconditional surrender as "a dream".

"I personally apologise to neighbouring countries that were affected by Iran's actions," Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said, urging them not to join US-led attacks on Iran.

He said the country's temporary leadership council had agreed to suspend the attacks on nearby states unless strikes on Iran originated from their territory.

Trump nonetheless cast Iran's apology as a surrender, while saying the country would be "hit very hard" on Saturday and warned the US could widen its attacks to areas where groups of people that were not previously designated targets US bases.

Pezeshkian's comments cast a political



stir in Iran, prompting his office to reiterate Iran's military would respond firmly to attacks from US bases in the region.

Hours after Pezeshkian's announcement, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said their drones struck a US air combat centre at Al Dha-fra Air Base, near Abu Dha-bi, capital of the United Arab Emirates. The Revolutionary Guards also targeted US forces at a base in Bahrain, the Iranian state media said. Blasts were also heard in Doha, a Reuters witness said.

Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejeh, Iran's judicial chief, said evidence from Iran's armed forces indicates that the territory of some regional countries was being used to carry out attacks against Iran.

Heavy strikes on those targets will continue, said Mohseni-Ejeh, who is also a member of the interim leadership council set up after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was assassinated in an airstrike on his compound at the start of the conflict.

Huge explosions were heard in several parts of the Iranian capital, state media reported.

The US-Israeli attacks have killed at least 1,332 Iranian civilians and wounded thousands, according to Iran's UN ambassador, Amir Sa'eed Iravani. Iranian attacks have killed 10 people in Israel and at least six US service members have been killed.

Meanwhile, a classified report by the US National Intelligence Council has found that even a large-scale assault on Iran would be unlikely to oust its entrenched military and clerical establishment, according to The Washington Post's John Hudson.

The report outlined succession scenarios resulting from either a short or extended US military campaign. In both cases, it concluded the clerical and military establishment would respond to Khamenei's killing by following protocols designed to preserve continuity of power," he wrote on X.

The report says the prospect of Iran's fragmented opposition taking control of the country is "unlikely, raising doubts about Trump's declared plan to 'clean out' Iran's leadership structure and install a ruler of his choosing," he added.

Gulf states hit by drones, missiles

The US-Israeli war on Iran has already spilled beyond Iran's borders, as Tehran has responded by hitting Israel and Gulf Arab states hosting US military installations and Israel has launched fresh attacks in Lebanon after the Iran-aligned militia Hezbollah fired across the border.

Gulf states voiced outrage that their civilian infrastructure — hotels, ports and oil facilities — was struck. The UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Iraq have all reported drone or missile attacks over the past week. Iran had defended fences with its Gulf neighbours in recent years, including with former regional arch-rival Saudi Arabia.

The president of the United Arab Emirates said his nation was in a time of war but was well and told his enemies it was no easy prey, in his first public comments since Iran launched missiles at its Gulf neighbour.

"The UAE has thick skin and bitter flesh —

we are no easy prey," Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who is also ruler of Abu Dhabi, said in comments, made on Friday when visiting those injured in strikes, aired on Abu Dhabi TV on Saturday.

"We will carry out our duty towards our country and our people and our residents who are also part of our family," he said.

The UAE also said its air defences intercepted 15 missiles and 119 dro-n-es on Saturday morning and video footage showed one projectile crashing into Dubai airport, the world's busiest for international traffic. Saudi Arabia's defence ministry said it had thwarted repeated drone attacks at a major oil field.

Meanwhile, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan warned Iran on Saturday against firing any more missiles towards Turkey, after Nato air defences destroyed a missile heading into Turkish air space several days ago.

Speaking at a press conference in Istanbul, Fidan also said Turkey opposed all scenarios aiming to create ethnicity-based civil war in Iran, adding that such scenarios could lead to migrant waves.

Turkiye is also considering the possibility of sending F-16 fighter jets to Northern Cyprus as a security measure, a Turkish defence ministry source said days after the island was targeted by a drone attack.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan earlier told British Prime Minister Keir Starmer by phone that there are still things that can be done to build a ground for dialogue on Iran, and that Turkey's "peace-focused efforts are ongoing. Iran rejects Trump call Iran's apparent strategy of maximum chaos has driven up the costs of the conflict by raising energy prices, hurting global business and logistics links and shaking trust in the stability of a critical region for the world's economy.

Early on Saturday, the Iranian army said its drones had carried out drone strikes against targets in Israel and US garrisons points and bases in Abu Dhabi and Kuwait.

related to the ongoing hostilities in Iran, Tisich added. Police arrested six people over unrest at the protest, she said, including two suspects in connection with the devices.

Far-right influencer Jake Lang was demonstrating against alleged "Islamification" and calling for an end to "public Muslim prayer" in New York in front of Grace Muslim, the residence of Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

His protest drew around 20 people, police said, while counter-protesters numbered about 125. A man wearing a dark hooded sweatshirt and beige cargo pants was handed a device wrapped in tape and blowing smoke by a fellow activist. He dropped

## New York police probe man for throwing 'ignited' devices near anti-Muslim protest in front of Mayor Mamdani's house

**NEWS DESK:** New York counterterror police said they were carrying out an investigation on Saturday after a man threw "ignited devices" near far-right protesters demonstrating outside the mayor's home.

New York Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said the devices contained nuts, bolts and screws as well as a fuse — but it was not clear if they were functional improvised explosive devices, or hoax imitations.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation said in an X post that its Joint Terrorism Task Force was "actively investigating" the matter along with New York City Police.

There was no indication the incident was

it near a line of police before vaulting a crash barrier.

The man also threw a similar device near Lang's group of protesters.

"Witnesses reported seeing flames and smoke as it travelled through the air before it struck a barrier a few feet from police officers," Tisch told a briefing, naming the suspect as Amir Balat, 18.

"Mr Balat then ... gets a second device from a man."

"Mr Balat lights the device and starts running with it. He then drops the device."

Moments later, he and the other man were detained by police, who were heavily deployed to the protest.

"The bomb squad responded and ... based on a preliminary examination and X-ray imaging, the devices which were a bit smaller than a football appeared to be a jar wrapped in black tape — importantly with nuts, bolts and screws along with a hobby fuse that could be lit," Tisch added.

"We don't yet know if they contained explosives (they contained material)."

A demonstrator opposed to Lang, teacher Mia Kurzer, 23, told AFP she "showed up because we have to show that hate has no place in our city."

"We democratically elected a mayor who is Muslim — and that's New York. We have different cultures, and we have to celebrate those cultures."

She added, "I think (Lang) is an idiot. I think he underestimates the power of the people."

There were some scuffles, apparently between protesters and counter-demonstrators.

Police arrested six people, Tisch said, including a protester in Lang's group who used pepper spray against counter-protesters, the two men who handled and threw devices and three others for disorderly conduct and obstructing traffic.



## Second Pakistani killed in UAE due to falling debris from aerial interception amid ongoing Iran-US-Israel war

**NEWS DESK:** A Pakistani driver was killed when "debris from an aerial interception" fell onto a vehicle in Dubai's Al Barsha area late on Saturday night, according to Dubai Media Office. This is the second instance of a Pakistani national losing his life in an attack in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during the ongoing war between Iran and the US and Israel.

The war has expanded in the region, with Iran targeting US assets and bases in Gulf countries and Israel carrying out attacks in Lebanon. The statement by the Dubai Media Office does not specify which projectile was intercepted during Saturday's incident, or from where it was fired.

The Pakistani embassy in the UAE said its consulate in Dubai was in direct contact with local authorities to assist the Pakistani

national's family. The family are profoundly saddened to confirm that a Pakistani national lost his life yesterday in Dubai's Al Barsha area due to falling debris following the interception of an incoming missile," the embassy said on X.

"Our Consulate General in Dubai is in direct contact with local authorities to assist the family and facilitate the repatriation process as quickly as possible."

In this hour of grief, we share in the family's pain and offer our "most sincere prayers," it added.

The war began on February 28, with the US and Israel launching attacks on Iran. The same day, the UAE defence ministry had reported the death of a person due to falling debris after air defences intercepted missiles targeting sites in Abu Dhabi.

Initially, the defence ministry said an Asian national was killed after the debris fell on a residential area of Abu Dhabi.

Later, UAE authorities confirmed that the victim was a Pakistani national, who was identified as Mureed Zaman, a resident of Khatimat, Paktunkhwa's Bannu district.

## Chinese FM urges US to manage differences in face of trade woes

**NEWS DESK:** China's top diplomat urged the United States on Sunday to iron out its differences with Beijing as the world's two largest economies lock horns over trade tariffs and geopolitical issues.

US-China ties have been strained since US President Donald Trump returned to the White House last year, followed by a trade war that saw the two countries impose tariffs on each other's products.

While the US-China trade war has uprooted

the global economy, Beijing has sought to profit off Trump's mercantilist policies by positioning itself as a reliable alternative partner.

"We observe a certain country erecting tariff barriers and pursuing decoupling and supply chain disruption," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told a press conference on Sunday.

"These actions are akin to trying to extinguish a fire with fuel. Ultimately, they will backfire," he was speaking

during China's annual political gathering, which began this week, known as the "Two Sessions".

The parallel meetings of China's parliament and political consultative body are closely watched for clues as to the priorities of China's leaders in the face of a precarious geopolitical landscape.

Wang addressed a range of issues, including the US-China relationship, tensions in the South China Sea, as well as wars in the Middle East and Ukraine.

"This year is indeed a big year for Sino-US relations," Wang told reporters.

While China and the US "cannot change each other", he said, adding "we can change the way we interact with each other."

Wang urged both sides to "manage existing differences and eliminate unnecessary interference".

Middle East war

But a wide range of disagreements remain. Beijing has blasted US and Israeli military strikes on Iran, which sparked the war in the Middle East.

China has diplomatic and trade ties with Tehran and has condemned the assassination of Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Wang said on Sunday that war "should never have happened."

"A strong fist does not mean strong reason. The world cannot return to the law of the jungle," he told reporters.

At the same time, he maintained that China's relations with Moscow,



## Mideast airlines begin cautious flight resumption amid regional tensions

**NEWS DESK:** MAJOR airlines across the Middle East are beginning a cautious and complex resumption of flights after widespread airspace closures linked to regional tensions temporarily grounded the global aviation hub, though operations in Qatar remain severely restricted.

Key carriers, including Emirates, Etihad Airways and flydubai, have started operating limited schedules from the United Arab Emirates.

However, the situation remains fluid, with a significant number of cancellations still in effect and airlines universally advising passengers not to travel to or from airports where a confirmed and valid booking has been taken in coordination with relevant authorities following extensive safety and security assessments," Etihad said in a statement.

Dubai's flagship carrier, Emirates, also confirmed it had resumed operations. "Passengers who have confirmed bookings for this afternoon's flights may proceed to the airport," the airline advised.

The Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways

resumed a limited commercial flight schedule from March 8, operating to a lengthy list of destinations including cities in Europe, Asia and North America.

The decision has been taken in coordination with relevant authorities following extensive safety and security assessments," Etihad said in a statement.

Dubai's flagship carrier, Emirates, also confirmed it had resumed operations. "Passengers who have confirmed bookings for this afternoon's flights may proceed to the airport," the airline advised.

The situation in Qatar, however, remains significantly different. Qatar Airways' scheduled flight operations are still suspended due to the closure of Qatari airspace. An update is expected on March 8 by Doha time.

The Qatar Civil Aviation Authority announced a "partial" resumption of air navigation in Qatar, through designated navigational contingency routes with limited operational capacity," clarifying these initial flights are for passenger evacuation and air cargo and "do not include scheduled flights to and from Doha."

In a highly controlled measure, Qatar Airways operated special inbound flights from London and Frankfurt on March 7, with flights from Paris, Madrid, Rome, and Bangkok planned for March 8.

The airline also organised outbound repatriation flights on March 7 to five European cities, with priority given to families, the elderly and those with urgent needs.

Elsewhere in the region, Oman Air and SalamAir have announced significant cancellations. Oman Air suspended all flights from March 9 to March 11 to and from Amman, Dubai, Bahrain.



## Karachi varsities switch to online classes as fuel becomes costlier

KARACHI (INP) — The University of Karachi (KU) and the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST) have decided to hold virtual classes to conserve fuel amid the escalating



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visits Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Junaid Anwar Chaudhry to offer condolences on the demise of his mother.

### Soaring petrol prices push vegetables, fruits beyond reach in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan government's sharp increase in petrol prices has caused a ripple effect across the country, pushing up the cost of vegetables and fruits. As per details, the rising prices of petroleum products in the open market are now impacting the overall cost of food items, with inflation graphs climbing in the country's two largest cities, Karachi and Lahore.

In Lahore, tomatoes are being sold at Rs70-75 per kilogram, onions at Rs55-60, and ginger at Rs310 per kilogram. Meanwhile, the prices of staple items such as flour, sugar, and rice remain relatively stable for now, with sugar at Rs160, ten kilograms of flour at Rs910, and rice ranging from Rs250 to 400 per kilogram. Market sources have, however, warned that these prices may rise in the coming days.

### Maryam Nawaz becomes shield for widows and orphaned children

LAHORE (INP): In just two years, the Government of Punjab has launched more than 100 development and welfare initiatives, with over 50 already completed. Each project introduced by the Punjab government is distinct from the previous one. One of the most notable features of these initiatives is that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz inaugurates a project only when it is ready to start delivering tangible benefits to the public. The era when government projects remained confined to files is now over.

Maryam Nawaz is a pragmatic leader who strongly dislikes the political sloganeering and unrealistic promises that characterized past governments. For this reason, she personally reviews every aspect of public relief initiatives before ensuring that



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, presenting the Monthly Development Update in Islamabad on Saturday, highlighting Pakistan's economic stabilization and progress during the current fiscal year.

Middle East conflict. The development came a day after the federal government raised petrol and diesel prices by whopping Rs5 per litre each as surging global oil prices, fuelled by the US-Israel war with

Iran, put pressure on domestic energy costs. According to a declaration issued by the University of Karachi (KU), all morning classes will be shifted online from March 9 until the end of the holy month of

Ramadan to facilitate students. The KU administration said there were concerns about transport problems due to the increase in the prices of petroleum product. Similarly, the FUUAST Karachi cam-

### Several detainees injured in brutal Indian police action in Rajouri jail

JAMMU (INP) Several prisoners were injured during a brutal action by Indian police inside District Jail Dhangri in Rajouri district of Indian Jammu and Kashmir, indicating the deteriorating conditions faced by detainees in the territory's prisons.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the police action was unleashed under the garb of what detainees described as a heated argument between two inmates, which later escalated into a larger scuffle involving other prisoners inside the jail.

In reaction to the police action, detainees set blankets on fire and pelted stones at prison guards and police personnel. Several prisoners sustained injuries during the police action. Observers say such incidents reflect the mounting frustration among detainees, particularly Kashmiri prisoners who are often held under stringent laws and face harsh prison conditions in the occupied territory and India.

Meanwhile, authorities in District Jail Baderwah in Doda district claimed to have intercepted a parcel containing two keypad mobile phones allegedly intended for an inmate, a resident of Hajira area of Bandipora district.

In another related development, police conducted searches in District Jail Kathua. Authorities said all barracks in the prison were searched in the presence of senior police officials, although no significant recoveries were reported.

Political analysts and rights observers say frequent incidents inside prisons in the occupied territory point to growing unrest among inmates, particularly Kashmiri detainees who have been incarcerated under draconian laws.

Rehmat Card program, orphaned children will be able to continue their schooling. The program will be formally launched after Eid. Registration will be facilitated through a dedicated mobile application, a web portal, and direct submissions at the offices of the Zakat and Ushr Department.

The Chief Minister has also stated that every citizen has an equal right to the facilities of Punjab, and all available means will be used to ensure that assistance reaches those who truly deserve it. Punjab is envisioned as a province where the government itself takes responsibility for the welfare of every individual.

Through this program, widows and orphaned children will be able to live with financial independence and dignity.

During an intelligence-based operation in Bajaur District, the ISRP said, security forces effectively engaged the terrorists' location and after an intense fire exchange, five terrorists were gunned down.

In two other encounters in Bannu and

Sources privy to the matter on Thursday had said that federal government was considering online classes as a measure to conserve energy and streamline operations. Along with digital learning measures such as reduced office attendance, remote work for corporate and IT sec-

education routines across the country in a bid to conserve energy and streamline operations. Along with digital learning measures such as reduced office attendance, remote work for corporate and IT sec-

President Asif Ali Zardari said that women have played a crucial role in Pakistan's development and progress. He recalled that the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, had emphasized the importance of women's participation in national life.

The president also highlighted the leadership of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto as a shining example of the determination and strength of Pakistani women in all spheres of life.

This year Women's Day is being marked under the theme "Rights, Equality and Action: For All Women and Girls," reflecting the global commitment to protecting women's rights and ensuring equal opportunities.

In his message, President Zardari noted that women are serving the nation in every field, from aviation cockpits to parliamentary halls, and their services are highly commendable. He stressed the need to eliminate discrimination against women and harmful social practices that hinder women's progress.

He further said that ensuring equal rights would help improve women's access to education, employment, and protection. He also highlighted the important role of rural women, particularly in agriculture and the national economy.

He added that Pakistan is committed to international agreements aimed at eliminating discrimination against women and emphasizing the need to provide women with equal access to credit, property, and employment opportunities. He said that women's contribution to the nation is essential for creating an environment where women can realize their full potential without discrimination or fear.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also paid tribute to women across Pakistan and the world who continue to contribute to society with dedication and resilience. The prime minister stated that protecting women's rights is key to ensuring sustainable national development and prosperity. He said women's hard work, determination, and valuable services in every sector of life are a source of pride for the nation.

He added that Pakistan women are playing a transformative role in building a strong and prosperous country, from education and healthcare to sports, governance, and the armed forces. The prime minister also reaffirmed the government's commitment to creating an environment where women can realize their full potential without discrimination or fear.

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## PM, President praise women's role in national development on International Day of Women

ISLAMABAD (INP): International Women's Day observed across Pakistan and around the world on Sunday, with leaders and citizens highlighting the vital role women play in society.

On International Day of Women, President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to Pakistani women, emphasizing that no nation can achieve meaningful progress without the active participation of women in all spheres of life.

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## Crash course for Sindh agriculture graduates began ahead of China training

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has launched a 14-day preparatory course for 200 agriculture graduates from Sindh who are set to travel to China for specialized training under the prime minister's capacity-building initiative.

The crash course, held at Sindh Agriculture University in Tandojam from March 4 to March 17, is designed to prepare the selected candidates before their departure to China.

Officials said the training aims to expose participants to global best practices and innovative agricultural technologies so they can help address key local challenges, including climate change impacts and food security.

HEC Director General Anaysha Ikram deputed a senior official to the selected candidate, highlighting the role of youth leadership

mission (HEC) as part of the government's initiative titled "Short-Term Trainings of 1,000 Agricultural Professionals in China."

This program, facilitated by the HEC, is currently preparing 200 talented trainees from Sindh for their upcoming departure to China, the statement said.

Officials said the training aims to expose participants to global best practices and innovative agricultural technologies so they can help address key local challenges, including climate change impacts and food security.

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## Punjab gov orders strict crackdown on hoarding of petroleum products

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab government has ordered a strict crackdown on the hoarding of petroleum products across the province.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz held a meeting with Finance Minister Muhammad Arunzeb and Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik to review the situation arising from the ongoing war. The meeting also assessed the supply demand and reserves of petroleum products in Punjab.

Participants agreed on adopting a fuel conservation policy to maintain balance between supply and demand amid the crisis.

Maryam Nawaz emphasized the need to ensure the availability of diesel for agricultural use. The meeting also agreed to closely monitor petroleum reserves.

The chief minister directed authorities to launch strict action against those involved in hoarding petroleum products.

District administrations have been ordered to continuously monitor fuel supply, while the Price Control and Transport departments have been tasked with overseeing the situation and taking action where necessary.

She also instructed that people should not face long queues at petrol pumps and warned that no one would be allowed to sell petroleum products above the official price anywhere in Punjab.

During the meeting, the chief minister was briefed on the reserves of petrol, diesel, LNG and other fuels.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari addressing orphaned children at an Iftar dinner hosted at Alwan-e-Sadr in connection with the observance of Orphans Day.

## Security forces neutralise 13 India-backed terrorists in five KP operations

RAWALPINDI (INP): Security forces neutralised 13 India-backed terrorists in five different intelligence-based operations (IBOs) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Sunday.

According to the military's media wing, a series of high-tempo intelligence-driven operations was conducted at midnight on March 6 and 7 as part of a relentless counter terrorism campaign.

During an intelligence-based operation in Bajaur District, the ISRP said, security forces effectively engaged the terrorists' location and after an intense fire exchange, five terrorists were gunned down.

In two other encounters in Bannu and

Dera Ismail Khan Districts, three terrorists were successfully neutralised. Likewise, five more terrorists were killed in two separate engagements in Khyber and South Waziristan Districts.

The ISPR said that weapons and ammunition were also recovered from Indian sponsored militant terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area.

The statement added that sanitisation operations were being conducted to eliminate any other India-sponsored terrorists, and further stressed that a relentless Counter Terrorism campaign under the vision "Azme Istehkam" by security forces and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) will continue

at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored terrorism from the country.

The security forces of Pakistan remain resolute and unwavering in their commitment to defend the nation's frontiers. These IBOs come as Pakistan continues to counter emerging security challenges along its borders with Afghanistan and proceeds with Operation Ghazab lil-Haq.

Pakistan has witnessed a rise in cross-border terrorist activity, particularly in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, which share a border with Afghanistan, since the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan in 2021.

In response to the escalating terrorist incidents, Pakistan

launched "Operation Ghazab lil-Haq" during which at least 527 Afghan Taliban fighters have been killed in strikes conducted along the border and inside the neighboring country.

According to Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Friday, over 755 Afghan Taliban fighters have been injured, 237 checkpoints destroyed, 38 captured, and 205 tanks, armored vehicles, and artillery guns eliminated.

Prior to this operation, Pakistan had also targeted seven terrorist camps and hideouts along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border belonging to Fina al-Khawarij (FAK), its affiliates, and Daesh-Khorasan, in retaliation for recent suicide attacks.

### Balochistan Bar Council Condemns Killing of Advocate in Panjgur, Announces Court Boycott

**News Desk**  
**QUETTA:** The Balochistan Bar Council has strongly condemned the brutal killing of advocate Hamal Hasni in Panjgur, describing the incident as a grave attack on the legal profession and the rule of law.

In a press release issued on March 7, 2026, the Bar Council expressed deep sorrow and concern over the tragic incident and extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family of the deceased lawyer.

According to the statement, the killing of a lawyer is not merely the murder of an individual but an attack on the justice system and the supremacy of law. The council stated that lawyers have always played a vital role in upholding the Constitution, protecting public rights, and ensuring the rule of law in society.



The Balochistan Bar Council criticized the failure of relevant institutions to ensure the protection of lawyers and citizens. The council urged the Government of Balochistan and law enforcement agencies to immediately take

notice of the incident, conduct a transparent investigation, and arrest those responsible as soon as possible. The council further demanded that effective security measures be introduced to ensure the safety of lawyers so that such tragic incidents can be

prevented in the future. The Bar Council warned that if the perpetrators are not arrested immediately and practical steps are not taken to protect lawyers, the legal fraternity reserves the right to stage strong protests.

To protest the killing, the Balochistan Bar Council has announced a boycott of courts across the province on Monday, March 9, 2026. The council also prayed for the elevation of the ranks and patience for the grieving family.

### Awareness Rally Held in Barkhan to Promote School Enrollment Campaign

**BARKHAN:** An awareness rally was organized by the Education Department in Barkhan District as part of the ongoing school enrollment campaign aimed at encouraging parents to send their children to school.

The rally was led by Abdullah Khosa, Deputy Commissioner of Barkhan. The initiative sought to highlight the importance of education and raise public awareness about enrolling more children in educational institutions.

The rally started from the district headquarters and was attended by officials from the district administration, officers of the education department, teachers, and a large number of students.

The rally passed through various roads of the city with the aim of educating the public about the significance of schooling and motivating parents to ensure their children receive an education. Among those present were Naveed Latif, District Education Officer, Khadim Hussain Bhangar, Assistant Commissioner, Tariq Mahmood DDO, and Muhammad Naseem Khetran, District Monitoring Officer.

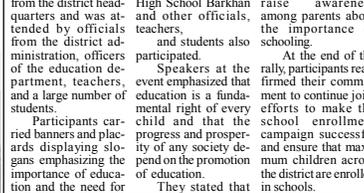
Representatives of the Balochistan Education Foundation, along with the principal of Model High School Barkhan and other officials, teachers, and students also participated.

Speakers at the event emphasized that education is a fundamental right of every child and that the progress and prosperity of any society depend on the promotion of education. They stated that

the purpose of the enrollment campaign is to bring out-of-school children into educational institutions. Addressing the participants, Abdullah Khosa said that the district administration, in collaboration with the education department, is taking all possible measures to promote education.

He stressed that all segments of society must play their role to make the campaign successful so that no child remains deprived of education. He also urged teachers to actively encourage children to receive education and raise awareness among parents about the importance of schooling.

At the end of the rally, participants reaffirmed their commitment to continue joint efforts to make the school enrollment campaign successful and ensure that maximum children across the district are enrolled in schools.



### CM Balochistan Condoles Death of Meena Majeed Baloch's Father in Turbat

**TURBAT:** Mir Sarfraz Bugti, Chief Minister of Balochistan, visited the Ginnah area of Turbat to offer condolences to Meena Majeed Baloch, Advisor on Sports and Youth Affairs, on the demise of her father Abdul Majeed.

During the visit, the Chief Minister offered Fateha for the departed soul and prayed that Almighty Allah grants forgiveness to the deceased.

He elevated his ranks and grants him a high place in Jannat-ul-Firdous.

He said that the presence of a father is a great blessing in a



person's life, and his loss is undoubtedly a profound sorrow.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti expressed heartfelt sympathy with Meena Majeed Baloch and the bereaved family, praying that Allah grants them patience

and strength to bear the loss. Several provincial leaders accompanied the Chief Minister during the condolence visit, including Zahoor Ahmed Baloch, Provincial Minister for Planning and De-

velopment, Mir Shoab Noshervani, Provincial Minister for Finance, and Mir Asghar Rind, Parliamentary Secretary for Energy. Mir Asim Kurd Gello and other officials were also present.

On the occasion, relatives and close associates of the deceased, including Zahur Rind, Bashir Ahmed Baloch, and Dr. Noor Baloch, were also present along with members of the bereaved family.

### Senior Officials Review Ongoing Development Projects in Quetta

**QUETTA:** Zahid Saleem, Additional Chief Secretary (Development) of Balochistan, along with Babar Khan, Secretary of the Communications and Works Department Balochistan, visited various ongoing development projects in Quetta on Saturday to review the progress and quality of work.

During the visit, officials provided a detailed briefing on the projects currently underway in the city, including construction and rehabilitation of roads and improvement of urban infrastructure.

Speaking on the occasion, Zahid Saleem directed the concerned authorities to ensure that all de-



velopment projects are completed within the stipulated timeframe and according to high-quality standards so that citizens can benefit from improved transportation facilities

and modern infrastructure. He further emphasized that timely completion and transparency in development projects must be ensured at all costs.

Babar Khan also instructed officials to accelerate the pace of work on ongoing projects, stating that the timely completion of public welfare projects remains a top priority

of the government. Project directors, engineers, and other relevant officials were also present during the visit and provided a comprehensive briefing on the progress of the projects.

### Balochistan Investment Board Discusses PPP Project to Promote FinTech and IT Services

**QUETTA:** An important meeting was held under the chairmanship of Bilal Khan Kakar, Vice Chairman of the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade, to discuss a proposed Public-Private Partnership (PPP) project aimed at promoting FinTech, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), and IT services in Balochistan.

The meeting reviewed potential collaboration opportunities with investors from Saudi Arabia as part of efforts to attract international investment and strengthen the province's digital economy.

Relevant officials, industry experts, and representatives from the private sector participated in the discussion. According to officials, the proposed project will help estab-



lish modern digital infrastructure in Balochistan, facilitate technology transfer, and enhance the skills and capacity of the local workforce.

The plan also includes setting up FinTech, BPO, and IT service centers, which can be effectively utilized through proper planning and international invest-

ment. He added that the Government of Balochistan is committed to promoting investment and supporting the development of modern technology sectors in the province.

This partnership could help position the province as an emerging regional hub for IT and digital services in the future. Participants also agreed that collaboration with Saudi invest-

### Sindh-Balochistan Bus Transport Union Ends Two-Week Protest After Successful Talks in Gwadar

**GWADAR:** The Sindh Balochistan Bus Transport Union has announced the end of its two-week protest following successful negotiations facilitated by Nakeebullah Kakar, Deputy Commissioner of Gwadar, and the district administration.

Following these developments, the union decided to call off the strike that had continued for nearly two weeks. The Sindh Balochistan Bus Transport Union expressed gratitude to the Gwadar District Administration, particularly Nakeebullah Kakar, for listening to the transporters' con-

cerns and taking steps toward their resolution. The union also apologized to passengers for the inconvenience caused by the strike and assured full cooperation with the administration during the upcoming influx of pilgrims for the religious festival at Koh-e-Murad Shrine.

Union representatives expressed hope that the issues of transporters will continue to be addressed on a priority basis in the future so that transport services for the public can operate smoothly without interruption.

### Excise Department Destroys Poppy Crop on 200 Acres in Major Anti-Narcotics Operation in Chagai

**CHAGAI:** In a major crackdown against illegal narcotics cultivation, the Excise and Taxation Department Balochistan destroyed poppy (opium) crops spread over approximately 200 acres in the Kardo area of Chagai District.

According to officials, the operation was conducted with the support of several law enforcement agencies, including the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and Pakistan

Customs. During the operation, security personnel cordoned off the area and used heavy machinery to destroy the large-scale illegal poppy cultivation. Authorities also dismantled resources being used for the unlawful farming activity.

Officials stated that solar tube well systems installed for irrigating the land were also destroyed, with solar panels bro-

ken to prevent the land from being used again for illegal narcotics cultivation in the future.

Authorities added that the operation is part of the ongoing government campaign against illegal drug cultivation and smuggling in the region. Further operations are expected to continue as part of the anti-narcotics drive, while additional investigations related to the case are also underway.

### Ramadan Sasta Bazaar Established in Naseerabad to Provide Relief to Citizens

**NASEERABAD:** On the directives of Mir Sarfraz Bugti, Chief Minister of Balochistan, measures are being taken across the district to provide relief to the public during the holy month of Ramadan. In this regard, a Sasta Bazaar (subsidized market) has been set up in Dera Murad Jamali through the efforts of Zulfiqar Ali Karar, Deputy Commissioner of Naseerabad District.

Bahadur Khan Khosa, Assistant Commissioner of Dera Murad Jamali, visited the Sasta Bazaar and reviewed the availability and prices of essential commodities

including vegetables, meat, fruits, sugar, ghee, pulses, desi ghee, honey, and other daily-use items. He also received a detailed briefing on the subsidies being provided to the public.

The necessary arrangements for the market were made by Sateem Khan Domki, Chief Officer of the Municipal Committee Dera Murad Jamali. A large number of citizens were present at the market to purchase sugar and other essential items and appreciated the government's initiative.

Market Committee, supervised the sale of vegetables and fruits at subsidized stalls established on the instructions of Mir Bilal Sadiq Umran.

Chairman of the Market Committee, to ensure that quality items are provided to the public at affordable prices. On the occasion, representatives of traders' organizations were also present, including Taj Baloch, President of the Traders Association, and Khan Jan Bangalzar, President of the Shopkeepers Association, along with other members of trade unions.

# PM tells ministers to prepare strategy for conserving petroleum products, ensuring uninterrupted supply

**NEWS DESK:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday directed the finance and petroleum ministers to visit the provinces and prepare a strategy in coordination with the provincial governments for the conservation of petroleum products and their uninterrupted supply to the people.

The directives came a day after the government announced a Rs55 per litre increase in petrol and high-speed diesel prices, more hours after PM Shehbaz and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb assured the nation that petroleum reserves were sufficient and the situation remained under control.

The fresh instructions by the premier came during a meeting chaired by him to review the country's economic situation, according to a statement by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

During the meeting, a briefing was given on the current global situation and the economic impacts on the region.

According to the PMO, the premier di-

rected that a strategy emphasising austerity and savings be formulated in view of the current global economic pressure caused by the tensions in the region. He directed that actionable proposals on this matter be given within the next 48 hours.

He emphasised that the strategy should not only minimise the burden on the public but also protect the interests of the country.

Meanwhile, PM Shehbaz was also given a briefing by a committee headed by the Finance Minister on the global economic impact of the recent tensions in the region.

The statement said that the premier was informed that the increase in the price of petroleum products is based on the suggestions of the committee, adding that the minimum possible burden of the global hike in prices was transferred to the consumers.

He further said that the prime minister directed the committee members to work actively and present practical suggestions for easing the burden on the people as soon as possible.

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He also directed that any petrol pump or company found involved in creating artificial shortages or hoarding should be closed immediately, its license should be revoked and legal action should be taken against it.

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## Fuel price hike deepens household anxiety

**NEWS DESK:** The latest increase in petroleum prices has once again placed Pakistani household budgets under pressure, highlighting the fragile nature of economic stability in a country that relies heavily on imported fuel and gas.

Petrol is now priced at Rs321.17/litre and high-speed diesel at Rs355.86/litre. The adjustment follows a sharp rise in international oil prices triggered by the United States and Israel's illegitimate attack on Iran. For many Pakistanis, the development has revived a familiar sense of uncertainty. Just when inflation had

begun showing signs of easing after months of tight monetary policies and government efforts to stabilise prices, the external shock has again raised fears about rising transportation costs, higher food prices and increasing electricity bills.

"We now largely feel that we might not be able to come out of this vicious circle," said Muhammad Irfan, owner of a small grocery shop. He said fuel prices had remained relatively stable even though they were near historic highs, but the stability helped shopkeepers manage prices for their Christian commodities. "The latest

increase in fuel prices will ripple through the entire supply chain as whenever petrol goes up, everything else follows. The wholesalers increase their rates, transporters charge more, and then customers argue with us for higher prices. It becomes difficult for everyone," he added.

Many middle-income Pakistanis believe the timing of the hike is particularly difficult as the country is currently observing the holy month of Ramadan. The festive season will soon follow with Eid for Muslims and Easter for the Christian community. "People were hop-

ing this Eid would be a little easier after a tough year. Now I fear prices of flour, vegetables and meat will rise again," said Bilal Ahmed, a ride-hailing driver. "Even buying clothes for children becomes a calculation."

He said the fuel price adjustment directly affects his daily earnings. "I work nearly twelve hours a day, but every time petrol becomes expensive my income shrinks," he said. "Customers are reluctant to pay higher fares while ride-hailing companies hesitate to increase fares for fear of losing customers. But we cannot run our cars without fuel," he said.

Blue-collar workers are feeling the pressure even more intensely. Sajid Mehmood, a construction labourer who commutes daily from the outskirts of the city, said higher diesel prices will quickly raise transport fares. "My wage has not increased in months, but the bus fare keeps rising," he said. "By the end of the month there is almost nothing left."

"The worst part is that we do not know if the fares will come down even if the fuel price hikes reverse," he said.



## Stocks nosedive 6.3pc in jittery week on geopolitical concerns

**NEWS DESK:** The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) experienced an unprecedented decline during the outgoing week amid geopolitical tensions following the outbreak of conflict in the Middle East and border disputes along the western front.

On the first day of trading on Monday, the benchmark KSE-100 index suffered a historic decline, wiping out over 16,089 points or 9.57 per cent in a single session, causing equity investors to lose Rs1.7 trillion as overwhelmed and panicked investors hurried to exit the market amid fears of a prolonged war in the Gulf.

Although bargaining on Tuesday and Wednesday, Thursday triggered a partial rebound, sentiment remained fragile. Investors were also unsettled by heightened security concerns following Pakistan's retaliatory airstrikes targeting terrorist camps inside Afghanistan.

The US-Israel nexus's illegal war against Iran has caused significant instability in the Middle East, impacting the global economy. This unrest led to disruptions in oil supplies as major shipping companies halted operations to and from the Gulf, caus-

ing energy prices to rise and prompting the government to adopt contingency measures, including weekly reviews of petroleum prices to pass on the increased costs to consumers and Covid-like measures such as working from home, switching to online classes to conserve oil stocks.

Index slips to 157,496 on panic-selling. As a result, extending the losses for the sixth straight week, the benchmark KSE-100 index recorded a steep decline of 6.3 per cent, or 10,566 points, closing at 157,496 points.

According to Topline Securities Ltd, the week's decline reflected investors' efforts to reduce exposure amid mounting risks to global energy supply chains and regional stability.

Foreign investors remained net sellers during the week. Foreign corporates off-loaded equities worth \$25.5 million, while mutual funds added \$15.7m and \$14.3m, respectively.

On the macroeconomic front, inflation rose to 6.98pc year-on-year in February up from 5.8pc in January, marking the highest level since October 2024. (AIF) Habib Ltd imports were recorded at \$2.3bn, down 8pc year-on-year, while imports were recorded at \$5.3bn, down 1.6pc. The resulting trade gap stood at around \$3bn. Meanwhile, Pakistan's trade deficit widened to \$2.98 billion in February, increasing 8pc month-on-month and 25pc year-on-year.

However, it may create operational and business challenges for the marine insurance sector, they said.

Industry sources indicate that at a time when reinsurers and retakafal operators are facing more intense pressure, insurers are required to comply with these conditions under reinsurance treaties signed by them.

The Insurance Association of Pak-ist-ān (IAP) noted that a coordinating role in tackling the situation. The association generally could provide temporary support for essential maritime trade and energy shipments, Muhammad Raza suggested.

Saqib Zeeshan, the CEO of Pak-Otatar General Takaful, said the bank of war risk cancellation for vessels may remain limited. If the situation, however, continues to escalate over a

## Industry questions fuel price surge despite 'old stocks'

**NEWS DESK:** Though Pakistan is not part of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, it is the first victim in the region as the government raised oil prices while the high-cost oil is still at sea; the 28-day stocks are being sold at prices yet to reach consumers.

India kept petrol and diesel prices stable despite global price spikes, but LPG prices were increased. The Indian government has so far managed high import costs for crude.

Trade and business people were disappointed with the sudden jump in oil and diesel prices by Rs55 per litre,

while ordinary citizens were highly concerned about the ripple effects of this oil price hike.

"The easiest way to extract money is to bomb the common citizens and destroy the already ailing economy," said Syed Shakil, a textile industry worker.

He said the textile industry was facing tough times and could face the most difficult times in the wake of the Middle East war.

Industry people were looking at several major impacts as a result of this war: unexpected high inflation, increases in interest rates, a larger fiscal gap, a wider cur-

rent account deficit, imbalances in the exchange rate, and higher federal government debts to deal with rising spending in the wake of inflation spikes.

"We are already working at the lowest profits for our products. If the inflation hits as it looks imminent, we will not be able to produce cheaper products and compete in the international market," said Amir Aziz, an exporter of textile products to EU countries.

He said there was no hindrance for exports to Europe, but shipping companies had already increased costs, which meant our next consignments would be more expensive.

He added that buyers had to pay shipping charges, which meant that they would demand even lower prices for our products.

Inflation risks. Similarly, financial sector experts fear that high inflation could escalate government spending, requiring more money and seriously distorting fiscal gap targets for FY26.

The government has been borrowing heavily from banks this year compared to last year, according to the latest State Bank data.

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## End to war risk cover unlikely to hurt local insurers

**NEWS DESK:** The cancellation of war-risk coverage for ships by foreign insurance companies in the Gulf region is expected to have only a "limited direct financial impact" on insurance companies in the country, according to experts in business and industry.

However, it may create operational and business challenges for the marine insurance sector, they said.

Industry sources indicate that at a time when reinsurers and retakafal operators are facing more intense pressure, insurers are required to comply with these conditions under reinsurance treaties signed by them.

The Insurance Association of Pak-ist-ān (IAP) noted that a coordinating role in tackling the situation. The association generally could provide temporary support for essential maritime trade and energy shipments, Muhammad Raza suggested.

longer period, it is likely to have an adverse effect.

Premium volumes could decline as dras-tically due to reduced shipping activity and restricted coverage while the possibility of claims would still persist.

This imbalance between declining premium inflows and the continued risk of claims could place significant pressure on reinsurers operating in the marine ins-ur-ance segment, Saqib Zeeshan added.

Transferring risk. Most marine risks, including war risks, are largely transferred to international reinsurers and retakafal operators. Pakistani insurers typically retain only a small portion of the risk while ceding the majority to global markets.

As a result, the withdrawal of war-risk coverage results in reduced availability of coverage rather than large claim payouts, he said.

The duration of cancellation remains uncertain. War-risk coverage may be reinstated within days or weeks if tensions ease, but if the conflict persists, the suspension could continue on an extended period. Pakistan insurance companies largely rely on international re-insurance and retakafal providers based in major global insurance like London, Europe and parts of Asia. Following the escalation of geopolitical tensions in the region, most reinsurers have issued notices invoking the Ins-titute War Cancellation Clause for cargo.

According to industry sources, both conventional and takaful insurers in Pakistan have received formal cancellation notices.

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# 'Whole country will stop' as India dreams of home World Cup glory

**NEWS DESK:** Tens of thousands of Indian cricket fans crowded the T20 World Cup final stadium on Sunday, and millions more were glued to their televisions, desperate to witness a historic home triumph.

India face New Zealand in Ahmedabad as they attempt to become the first team to retain the trophy, the first to win it on home soil and the first to claim a third world T20 crown.

Cricket's T20 showpiece, a month-long tournament of 55 matches featuring 20 teams, concludes on Sunday evening at the 130,000-seat Narendra Modi Stadium, the world's largest cricket venue.

Diehard supporters arrived from across the country, many clad in Indian colours and waving the tricolour flag as the match began.

Anil, a wedding photographer, travelled 1,200 kilometres (745 miles) by train from the southern city of Hyderabad with his brother, dreaming they would see their team triumph.

"I hope India wins," said the 18-year-old who goes by only his first name.

Hundreds of vendors, all dressed in Indian colours, lined the pavement from the nearest metro rail station to the stadium — painting the entire kilometre-long stretch blue.

"We want to just win this World Cup for the third time," said Sachin Verma, 32, a banker from Lucknow.

Yogesh Vohra, 45, a top-ranked T20 team, knocked out England in a nerve-shredding semifinal in Mumbai.

The match drew 619 million views on streaming platform JioHotstar, according to the company, including a 65 million peak at the same time.

International Cricket Council chairman Jay Shah said it "shattered the world record for digital viewership."

India, the world's most populous country with 1.4 billion people, is the epicentre of the T20 game through the lucrative Indian Premier League.

In the capital, New Delhi, government civil servant Dilip Vaishnav was hoping Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah would weave his magic again with the ball, as he did against England.

"The team looks in great shape and great spirits. Bumrah, as ever, is the silent guardian of the team," the 37-year-old said. Dozens of Bollywood dancers and

"In Beijing we were there," the Paralympic debutant said. "I had third training in downhill and after we (had) to go back home. For me it was really, really sad and I hope in these Games I will be better and it will be."

Later on Saturday, three-time gold medalist Bugeev picked up the eighth medal of his Paralympic career as he finished third in the men's downhill standing.

"It was a difficult medal, I would say, even one of the most difficult of my career," he said. "But I am very happy that I can represent my country again."

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## Ticket prices, hotel tariffs in Ahmedabad skyrocket

**NEWS DESK:** Ticket prices for Sunday's T20 World Cup final between India and New Zealand have soared on the black market, with fans shelling out more than 15 times the original rate as demand overwhelmed supply ahead of the title clash at Ahmedabad.

Official tickets, starting at 2,000 Indian rupees, sold out within minutes on BookMyShow, prompting thousands of fans turning to unofficial routes. Some tickets with a face value of 3,500 rupees were selling at 54,000 when Reuters checked on the eve of

the match. Scalpers have seized control of the resale market, pushing prices far beyond face value as supporters scramble for a seat to witness India's bid for back-to-back titles at the world's largest cricket stadium.

"I've paid 35,000 rupees for a 3,000-rupee ticket because I couldn't get through the waiting list," said a businessman from Mumbai requesting anonymity.

"There are specific WhatsApp groups for reselling tickets. You only get added if you're serious, and it works strictly on advance pay-

ment so buyers don't back out." Ahmedabad police arrested a youth for reselling tickets at an inflated rate, local media reported.

"Bookings happen only through the BookMyShow app. The cricket association does not sell any physical tickets," GCA secretary Anil Patel told Reuters by telephone.

The International Cricket Council did not respond to Reuters' request for comment.

Ahmedabad's hotel prices have also skyrocketed at least 10 times to cash in on the cricket hysteria.

Properties near the venue were fully booked despite the price hike.

Budget hotels along the Mumbai-Ahmedabad highway and in nearby Gandhinagar, which usually charge 4,000 rupees per night, were demanding rates of 40,000.

"This is our peak time to earn profits as a large number of people come to watch the match," a local hotel owner said.

Another hotel owner said the rush would have been a lot less had India not qualified for the final.

Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou said the club's 2-0 victory over Crystal Palace on Sunday was "a relief" but "not a celebration" because of the club's relegation fears.

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## Russia win first Paralympic medals in 12 years

**NEWS DESK:** Russia won its first Winter Paralympic medals since 2014 on Saturday as Varvara Voronchikhina and Aleksei Bugeev claimed bronze in the women's and men's downhill standing events in Cortina.

Despite Russia's ongoing war with Ukraine, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) has allowed six Russian athletes and four from their allies Belarus to represent their countries, accompanied by their national flags, rather than competing as neutrals.

The move sparked a backlash with Friday's opening ceremony being boycotted by seven countries, including Ukraine, and the Russian delegation was booed by some spectators in the Verona Arena during the athletes parade.

Speaking after winning her nation's first medal since the 2014 Games in Sochi, 23-year-old Voronchikhina said: "For us it's been a really long time when we were without a flag. I'm really glad and all my country and all my teammates also. I'm very

happy because it's the first medal for me." Russia was banned from the 2018 Games due to a doping scandal, although some athletes were permitted to compete under neutral colours.

Russia and Belarus were then banned from the 2022 Paralympics following the invasion of Ukraine, although they were permitted to compete as neutral athletes in the Paris Summer Paralympics two years later.

Voronchikhina said that four years ago in Beijing, she was ready to compete before Russia was suspended by the IPC.

"I was just happy that we could compete again," she said.

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## Russell takes pop at rival Norris over 'worst F1 cars' claim

**NEWS DESK:** George Russell said Sunday that fellow Briton Lando Norris would not be complaining after the world champion lashed out at new rules that have shaken up Formula One.

McLaren's Norris launched a scathing attack on changes to engine and chassis regulations after qualifying at the Australian Grand Prix, declaring they "suck" and the 2026 cars are the "worst" in history.

The shake-up has seen the engine power units switch to 50 percent battery, which drains and needs recharging by braking or by lifting off the throttle.

"We've come from the best cars ever made in Formula One, and the nicest to drive, to probably the worst. It sucks," Norris told reporters at the season-opener in Melbourne.

"Everyone knows what the issues are. It's just the fact the engine is a 50-50 split and it just doesn't

work." While Norris has been critical, Mercedes' Russell has been a cheerleader.

After winning the Australian Grand Prix on Sunday, Russell was asked if he saw his rival's comments as "sour grapes" because McLaren were not as competitive so far this year.

"I was winning. I don't think he'd be saying the same," said Russell.

"We weren't happy with how stiff the cars were last year and the porpoising. Everyone had a

bad back and the drivers were complaining about that and the McLaren drivers said they had no porpoising, even though we watched their car and they were porpoising."

"So everyone is always looking to themselves and we are all selfish in this regard. The truth is last year we had the same engine as them and McLaren did a better job than us. Now McLaren have got the same engine as us, the same as Williams and so far we've done

a better job than them. "That's just how the game goes."

Russell added that drivers need to give the new regulations more time before casting judgement.

"Everyone's very quick to criticise things, you need to give it a shot," he said.

Norris came fifth to start his campaign, more than 51 seconds behind winner Russell.

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Grammy-winning singer Ricky Martin also performed. "Sport and music have a unique way of bringing people together," Martin said, in a statement ahead of the match, saying it was a "celebration of that shared passion".

Also on stage were Indian musicians, including Gujarati singer Falguni Pathak and Bhangra star Sukhbir.

Rashid Khan, from Uttar Pradesh state, said he believed "the whole country will stop to watch" Sunday's blockbuster. "India has been playing fearless cricket in this tournament," the 52-year-old said.

"If our top order fires, I don't see anyone stopping us. New Zealand are always dangerous in knockouts, but with the home crowd behind us, I'm confident India will lift the trophy," Indian student Mitesh Guggula, 21, said he was backing his home team — but offered praise to their rivals.

"New Zealand... they are always fierce on the field, but still maintain their sportsmanship in them," he said. "I think they play with great spirit."

"In Beijing we were there," the Paralympic debutant said. "I had third training in downhill and after we (had) to go back home. For me it was really, really sad and I hope in these Games I will be better and it will be."

Later on Saturday, three-time gold medalist Bugeev picked up the eighth medal of his Paralympic career as he finished third in the men's downhill standing.

"It was a difficult medal, I would say, even one of the most difficult of my career," he said. "But I am very happy that I can represent my country again."

Both Voronchikhina and Bugeev received a polite smattering of applause from the crowd at the bottom of the Olympia delle Tofane piste as their medals were placed around their necks during the ceremonies.

The 28-year-old added: "It's nice when you're not deprived of anything, not restricted, not forced to not reveal yourself, like it was in Korea (2018) for example, when they combined the two colours of our flag."

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## Tottenham relegation fears deepen with home loss to Crystal Palace

**NEWS DESK:** The spectre of Premier League relegation loomed ever larger for Tottenham Hotspur on Thursday after a 3-1 home defeat by Crystal Palace left them teetering just above the drop zone.

When striker Dominic Solanke gave 16th-placed Tottenham the lead against the run of play in the 34th minute, a first league win in 2026 looked on the cards for the hosts.

But they collapsed in shambolic fashion before the interval with Palace replying three times to stun the hosts after Tottenham defender Micky van de Ven was sent off.

Van de Ven hauled back Ismaila Sarr in the area to receive a red card before Sarr coolly slotted home the resulting penalty, sending Guglielmo Vicario the wrong way.

Adam Wharton then played in Jorgen Strand Larsen to slot a low shot past Vicario in the first minute of stoppage time and provided another classy assist for Sarr to make it 3-1.

Sarr also had a goal ruled out for a marginal offside shortly before Solanke's opener.

Ten-man Tottenham battled after the break in a subdued atmosphere and emptying stadium



but could not prevent a fifth successive league defeat which extended their winless league run to 11, their worst for 50 years.

They have 29 points from 29 games, one more than Nottingham Forest and West Ham United, Palace's victory lifted them into 13th place with 38 points.

Tottenham have been ever-present in the Premier League and were last relegated from the top flight in 1977, but interim manager Igor Tudor must turn things around quickly if they are to stay above the trapdoor.

Despite another blow, he remained relatively upbeat.

"It was two games, after the red card it was

a different game. The second half we tried and I saw interesting things," Tudor told TNT Sports. "After this game I believe more than before, maybe that sounds strange but I saw something in the team, I saw some good energy and passion and fight."

Tottenham qualified for the last-16 of the Champions League in impressive fashion but have not won in the Premier League since beating Crystal Palace on Dec. 28 and their home record is the joint-worst in the division along with Burnley.

Croatian Tudor was making his way back to Van de Ven dismissed, Tudor said bluntly. "We need to stop with speaking about pressure."

Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou said the club's 2-0 victory over Crystal Palace on Sunday was "a relief" but "not a celebration" because of the club's relegation fears.

The club's 2-0 victory over Crystal Palace on Sunday was "a relief" but "not a celebration" because of the club's relegation fears.

## Russell takes pop at rival Norris over 'worst F1 cars' claim

**NEWS DESK:** George Russell said Sunday that fellow Briton Lando Norris would not be complaining after the world champion lashed out at new rules that have shaken up Formula One.

McLaren's Norris launched a scathing attack on changes to engine and chassis regulations after qualifying at the Australian Grand Prix, declaring they "suck" and the 2026 cars are the "worst" in history.

The shake-up has seen the engine power units switch to 50 percent battery, which drains and needs recharging by braking or by lifting off the throttle.

"We've come from the best cars ever made in Formula One, and the nicest to drive, to probably the worst. It sucks," Norris told reporters at the season-opener in Melbourne.

"Everyone knows what the issues are. It's just the fact the engine is a 50-50 split and it just doesn't

work." While Norris has been critical, Mercedes' Russell has been a cheerleader.

After winning the Australian Grand Prix on Sunday, Russell was asked if he saw his rival's comments as "sour grapes" because McLaren were not as competitive so far this year.

"I was winning. I don't think he'd be saying the same," said Russell.

"We weren't happy with how stiff the cars were last year and the porpoising. Everyone had a

bad back and the drivers were complaining about that and the McLaren drivers said they had no porpoising, even though we watched their car and they were porpoising."

"So everyone is always looking to themselves and we are all selfish in this regard. The truth is last year we had the same engine as them and McLaren did a better job than us. Now McLaren have got the same engine as us, the same as Williams and so far we've done

a better job than them. "That's just how the game goes."

Russell added that drivers need to give the new regulations more time before casting judgement.

"Everyone's very quick to criticise things, you need to give it a shot," he said.

Norris came fifth to start his campaign, more than 51 seconds behind winner Russell.

McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri crashed out on a reconnaissance lap before the grand prix even started and took no further part.



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## Aurat March activists detained by police in Islamabad ahead of International Women's Day rally

**NEWS DESK:** Several women's rights activists, including Aurat March members, were detained by police in Islamabad ahead of a rally they planned to hold on the occasion of International Women's Day on Sunday. Police sources told Dawn that they were detained near Super Market in Sector F-6. They had planned to reach the National Press Club, but a huge contingent of police was already present there, which arrested the marchers and took them to Women Police Station.

Those detained include prominent and Dr Farzana Bari, along with other Aurat March organisers and participants, police sources confirmed.

They added that the activists were picked up as Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) remained imposed in the federal capital.

Section 144 of the CrPC is a legal provision that empowers district administrations to prohibit an assembly of four or more people in an area for a limited period.

Civil society activist Tariq Mehmood Ghouri told Dawn that, as per the information gathered so far, more than 25 men and women were arrested.

He said that the wife of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) Secretary General Haris Khalique

some other women went to the Women Police Station to meet the arrested marchers, but they had also been detained.

"They have been told to sit in another lockup and are not being allowed to come outside," Ghouri said.

Replying to a question, he said that the marchers had gathered near Super Market and had no intention to head towards D-Chowk. He also alleged that marchers were manhandled by police.

He added that the Lal Masjid management had also shared a video on their official Instagram account, which showed women sitting inside what appeared to be a police vehicle.

According to police sources, the district administration had denied a no-objection certificate (NOC) to Aurat March, so the gathering was an "illegal activity".

Police sources added that the Lal Masjid management had also vowed to stop the march, creating a risk of a possible clash, so it was more appropriate to arrest the activists to avoid a law and order situation.

"Worrying sign for country's democratic fabric" Participants of the march condemned the arrests, stating that the state's high-handedness is a direct assault on the constitutional right to peaceful assembly. Ghouri, also the PPP cell also strongly condemned the registration of police cases against the Aurat March leadership, terming the state's high-handedness a direct assault on the constitutional right to peaceful assembly.

Ghouri, also the PPP cell's information secretary, expressed deep concern over the "draconian tactics" employed by the Islamabad administration to stifle the voices of women and marginalised communities.

## Police register FIR after 15-year-old allegedly sexually assaulted in Mandi Bahauddin hospital

**NEWS DESK:** Punjab Police on Sunday registered a first information report (FIR) after a 15-year-old girl was allegedly sexually assaulted in a hospital near the district's King Chowk, officials said.

Per officials, the incident allegedly occurred in a private hospital when the victim went there to collect medicines. She was reportedly taken to a room in the facility.

The Civil Lines Police Station registered an FIR on the complaint of the victim's mother against three individuals under Sections 376(3) (punishment for rape of a minor) and 114 (abatement) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

One of the suspects was named in the FIR, while the other two had been listed as unidentified individuals, officials said.

The FIR stated

that the victim went to the hospital with her aunt and uncle. "She expressed herself to go to the toilet, but when she didn't return for a long time, her aunt grew concerned," the mother stated in the FIR.

"The aunt and uncle went to look for the girl and heard someone crying in a room. Upon opening the door, they witnessed the suspect assaulting the girl.

The suspect fled upon seeing them," it added.

The FIR further said that the unidentified armed suspects, who stood guard at the entrance of the hospital with weapons, also fled with the named suspect in a vehicle.

Inspector Sohail Aslam, in charge of the Special Sexual Offences Investigation Unit (SSOIU), also confirmed the assault, based on the preliminary medical report of the victim.

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## 583 Afghan Taliban killed as Pakistan continues strikes under Operation Ghazab lil-Haq

**NEWS DESK:** Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said on Sunday that 583 Afghan Taliban operatives have been killed and more than 795 injured during the ongoing Operation Ghazab lil-Haq, launched in response to what Islamabad described as "unprovoked action" from across the Afghan border.

Operation Ghazab lil-Haq was launched last week following renewed clashes along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, after Afghan Taliban forces fired on multiple locations, prompting swift military retaliation by Pakistan.

The neighbouring countries have been engaged in escalating hostilities along the frontier since then. The clashes intensified after Afghanistan launched a border offensive in response to earlier Pakistani air strikes targeting terrorist positions.

Providing a summary of the losses of the Afghan Taliban regime, Tarar said security forces had destroyed 242 checkpoints and captured 38 others during the operation.

"213 tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery on Sunday were destroyed during the operation," he said.

The minister added that 64 locations across



Afghanistan had been effectively targeted in air strikes as part of the campaign.

Separately, the Pakistan Army foiled an infiltration attempt along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border near the Chaman sector, security sources said, as forces continue operations to protect the border fence and prevent terrorist crossings, state broadcaster Radio Pakistan reported.

According to security officials, a group of three to four terrorists attempted to breach the

fence in the border area adjacent to Chaman. Troops responded swiftly and targeted the group as they tried to cut through the barrier.

During the operation, an exchange of fire took place in which one terrorist was killed, while the remaining attackers fled the area in a wounded condition, the sources said.

"The Army effectively targeted the Khwarij attempting to cut the fence," the security sources said.

Officials added that four to five improvised

explosive devices (IEDs) and fence-cutting equipment were recovered from the militants at the site. The latest escalation in tensions between the two countries follows a series of tit-for-tat actions over the past year.

Pakistan earlier carried out air strikes targeting camps of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State Khorasan Province inside Afghanistan after a wave of attacks in Pakistan, including a suicide bombing in Islamabad.

Pakistani security

sources said more than 80 terrorists were killed in those strikes. The strikes prompted attacks by Afghanistan along the border, leading to the breakout of the latest round of open conflict. Islamabad has long maintained that TTP leaders operate from Afghan territory, an allegation that Kabul has repeatedly denied.

Tensions also surged after a series of explosions in Kabul on October 9 last year. Taliban forces subsequently targeted areas along Pakistan's border.

## Punjab government wakes up after POL hoarders make hay

**NEWS DESK:** A day after the petroleum hoarding mafia made millions, the Punjab government woke up to control this menace.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Sunday ordered a grand crackdown on hoarders and profiteers involved in stockpiling petroleum products.

Several petrol pump owners in Punjab had closed their outlets for hours ahead of the PML-N government's announcement of a massive increase of Rs55 per litre in petrol and diesel prices on Friday.

The Punjab government seemed to be sleeping in deep slumber by the time these filling stations made millions selling the hoarded stock once the new price was applicable after midnight.

Panic buying of petrol and other petroleum products has already started in Punjab.

On the directives of the chief minister, the

Punjab Enforcement and Regulatory Authority (Pera) has been mobilised across the province. Authorities have been instructed to take strict action against the elements, creating artificial shortages in order to earn illegal profits," a handout said.

Pera mobilised to check artificial shortage

According to the directives, filling stations found involved in hoarding or profiteering will be sealed immediately and their licences will be cancelled.

The CM directed Pera to adopt a zero-tolerance policy against hoarders and instructed field officers to ensure strict monitoring of petrol pumps throughout the province.

Meanwhile, the surprise increase of Rs55 in the petrol and diesel prices has attracted severe criticism from the public at large across Lahore metropolis and other major and small cities and towns in Punjab.

On the other hand, the massive increase in petroleum products be-

cause of the US, Israeli war and subsequent closure of the Strait of Hormuz has given a huge financial benefit worth billions of rupees to the owners of all petrol pumps and oil marketing companies (OMCs) across the country.

"The 20pc increase in oil prices means a 20-25pc rise in the prices of commodities, essential items, fares, material, transportation etc. It means everything will now be procured with 20 to 25pc additional and sudden burden," com-

mented a motorist while waiting for his turn at a fuel station in Johar Town.

"I think the oil prices will increase further if the war prolongs," he warned, criticising the government for burdening the people through such abrupt actions.

Talking to Dawn, a motorcyclist at a pump in Gulberg also criticised the government for the "big gift" to the people of Pakistan in the form of increasing oil prices.

"Since a common person is already being hit by sky-rocketing prices, such a big surge in oil prices is a huge burden to the public at large. We were expecting some relief in the ongoing holy month of Ramadan. But the government, instead of doing so, crushed all of us," the annoyed man deplored. He urged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to review the decision and order to reverse its prices as they were on March 6.

## US marine 'opened fire in retaliation' when people stormed consulate in Karachi, JIT told

**NEWS DESK:** A Joint Interrogation Team (JIT) probing the facts and circumstances leading to the March 11 violence was informed that "one US marine" stationed at the American mission in Karachi resorted to firing in "retaliation" when protesters stormed the consulate building after breaching security, it emerged on Saturday.

The JIT was also told that Sindh police personnel deployed at US consulate fired 30 shots into the air to stop the mob from storming the complex.

As many as 12 people were killed and 49 others, including seven policemen, sustained bullet wounds during the violent protest near the US consulate against the assassination of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in coordinated US-Israel strikes on Tehran.

Only a couple of days ago, two unnamed US officials told Reuters that American Marines opened fire on demonstrators during the storming of the Karachi consulate but it was unclear whether rounds fired by Marines struck or killed anyone."

After the violent episode, the Sindh government constituted a six-member JIT to ascertain the facts and circumstances surrounding the



incident and identify any lapses in security protocols, procedural compliance or command responsibility.

However, its terms of reference are silent about fixing responsibility of the killings. The police, on their part, registered three terrorism, murder and attempted murder cases against 150-200 unidentified protesters and formed a committee for investigation.

The JIT, which started its proceedings a day before, recorded statements of various police officers, including DIGs of East and South zones, SSPs of Keamari, South City and East districts, who provided details of the incident.

Sources privy to the proceedings told Dawn that the JIT was informed that on March 11 around 3,000 people gathered at Numaish to lodge their protest over Khamenei's assassination.

They said around 300 of them, without the approval of their high-ups, proceeded towards the US consulate on their motorbikes.

The sources said that the group of protesters, some of them armed, managed to breach the inner security layer and reached the consulate complex where they vandalised the property including smashing some windows.

Some armed protesters started firing and an American marine retaliated, the sources noted a police officer told

the JIT. The JIT was also provided with video footage of the incident, showing some unidentified armed men firing inside the consulate.

The sources said that the police officers informed the JIT that the protesters who vandalised US consulate belonged to a religious student party and they were "armed with weapons, lathis, stones and inflammable material".

The JIT was told that raising anti-US slogans the protesters turned violent and the police used tear gas to disperse them.

The officials conceded the failure of law enforcers in taking an effective action against those who breached security at Gate No 4 and

Gate No 5. When the protesters entered the premises, personnel of the Sindh police's Foreign Security Cell deployed there "fired 30 rounds, all aerial, strictly for deterrence."

The JIT was also informed that some miscreants snatched two official weapons from as many policemen and fled.

It was informed that a total of 37 policemen were deployed for the security of the US consulate.

The police officers said that some 450 private security guards were also deployed at the foreign mission and they worked in three shifts.

However, the police deployment has been beset by confusion at the incident and now 1,088 policemen have been performing security duties at the consulate.

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