



BALUCHISTAN
260 Traffic Personnel Deployed to Manage Eid...
Page No 5



INTERNATIONAL
Israel army says begun 'limited targeted ground operations'...
Page No 3



NATIONAL
Child abuse cases in Pakistan rise 8% to 3,630 in 2025...
Page No 8

SPORT
Medvedev ousts Alcaraz to set up Indian Wells final against Sinner
Page No 7



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3,000 Federal Constabulary Personnel to Be Deployed in Balochistan After High-Level Security Meeting

QASEM SHAH NEWS DESK:

Quetta: A high-level meeting on the security situation in Balochistan was held in Quetta on Monday, chaired jointly by Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

Senior officials from federal and provincial institutions attended the session and presented detailed briefings on key matters, including the law and order situation, the repatriation of Afghan refugees, and ongoing efforts to curb hawala and hundi networks, extortion, and smuggling.

During the meeting, heads of major federal agencies briefed participants on their respective areas of responsibility and the measures being taken to strengthen enforcement and coordination in the province.

The meeting decided to seek the services of the Federal Constabulary to help maintain peace and stability in Balochistan. In the first phase, two wings of the force, comprising nearly 3,000 personnel, will be deployed in different areas of the province.

Participants also agreed to further strengthen the role of the Federal Investigation Agency in Balochistan.

It was decided that vacant positions in the agency would be filled, with preference given to local candidates.

Both the federal and provincial governments agreed to improve monitoring of anti-state activities on social media.

The meeting decided to intensify action against individuals involved in spreading false propaganda against the state through online platforms.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi assured the provincial government of full cooperation from the federal government, stating that every possible step would be taken to enhance the professional capacity of Balochistan Police and strengthen the province's security framework.

He said the federal government was fully aware of the challenges faced by Balochistan and would continue to support efforts aimed at maintaining peace and stability.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti reaffirmed the provincial government's resolve to eliminate terrorism.

He said the fight against terrorism was not limited to security forces alone but required the collective effort of the entire nation.

Bugti added that his government had made it clear from the first day that the writ of the state would be ensured under all circumstances.

He noted that highways in Balochistan were no longer being blocked in the name of protests, reflecting improved administrative control.

The chief minister also appreciated the federal government's support for restoring peace in the province. Both leaders expressed confidence that terrorism could be defeated through national unity and coordinated efforts between federal and provincial authorities.

Several jailed PTI leaders have written to Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi, seeking the early hearing of appeals against their convictions in a May 9 riots case, it emerged on Monday.

On July 22, 2025, a Lahore Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) sentenced Yasmin Rashid, Omar Sarfraz Cheema, Ejaz Chaudhry, Mian Mahmoodur Rasheed and others to 10 years in prison in a case related to violence on Sherpao Bridge.

In the letter — a copy of which is available with Dawn — Rashid, Cheema, Rasheed and Chaudhry contended that despite being "law-abiding citizens of Pakistan", their constitutional rights had been "trampled" upon as they continued to suffer "political victimisation". "We have been languishing in jail for the last 34 months," the letter stated.

Recalling the July 2025 sentences, the leaders said they had submitted appeals against their convictions before the Lahore High Court (LHC) since their sentencing. "However, for the last eight months, our appeals and suspensions have not been heard." The leaders recalled that their lawyer had "submitted a petition three months back for an early hearing, but to no avail".

"Our families have been running from pillar to post without any response," the letter read.

The incarcerated leaders stressed that "justice delayed was justice denied", appealing to the CJP to issue instructions to the LHC for hearing the appeals "as soon as possible".

"We are appealing to you for our constitutional rights," the leaders said, addressing CJP Afridi. "Sir, as you expedited the court regarding our trial and early disposal, please expedite our appeals and suspension order also," the letter concluded.

The state had launched a crackdown against PTI founder Imran and his party in the wake of the May 9 riots in 2023, filing several other cases against them.

In the case of these jailed politicians, Sarwar Road police had registered a case against PTI leaders and workers on charges of ransacking and burning public property at Sherpao Bridge in the Cantonment area during the protests.

In letter to CJ, jailed PTI leaders seek early hearing of appeals pending before LHC 'for last 8 months'

NEWS DESK:

Remote-controlled blast in Duki martyrs five FC personnel after anti-poppy operation

Remote-Controlled Blast in Duki Martyrs Five FC Personnel After Anti-Poppy Operation

HUSSAIN ZARKOON:

Duki: Five personnel of the Frontier Corps (FC) were martyred and another injured when a remote-controlled explosion struck a security forces vehicle in Balochistan's Duki district on Monday, officials said.

The explosion occurred in the Luni tehsil area at Killi Bakhtiar Khan.

According to police, an improvised explosive device planted along the roadside was detonated as the FC vehicle passed through the area.

Security officials said the FC personnel were returning to Duki after taking part in an operation against illegal poppy cultivation in the region.

Police and Anti-Terrorism Force (ATF) vehicles were also part of the convoy during the operation.

However, authorities said the blast took place after the police and ATF vehicles had already crossed the spot, and the explosion was triggered when the



FC vehicle reached the location.

The powerful blast resulted in the martyrdom of five FC personnel, while one official sustained injuries.

The injured was moved to a nearby hospital for medical treatment.

Following the incident, additional security personnel reached the site and launched a search operation in the surrounding area. Security across the locality has been tightened to prevent any further incidents.

Security forces have faced similar attacks in parts of Balochistan in the past, with outlawed militant groups often claiming responsibility for such assaults targeting law enforcement and security personnel.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Balochistan Higher Education Crisis: Underpaid Faculty, Overlooked Future



Editorial: Balochistan, Pakistan's most underdeveloped yet resource-rich province, is facing a devastating higher education crisis. While billions of rupees are allocated annually for infrastructure—such as roads, dams, and drainage projects—the province's public sector universities remain critically underfunded.

Faculty and staff at three major institutions—University of Balochistan, B U I T E M S (Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences), and Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University—have taken to the streets in protest of salaries, delayed allowances, and budget cuts in the education

sector. These institutions educate over 30,000 students, both male and female, from across Balochistan. Despite their vital role in producing future engineers, researchers, and leaders, their teachers remain unpaid.

Instead of addressing this crisis, the Higher Education Department Balochistan recently announced austerity measures, including drastic cuts to faculty allowances—from junior staff to senior professors.

In a time of soaring inflation, this is unacceptable. Investing in human capital and quality education must be the province's top priority. Without well-paid, motivated educators, academic performance, research output, and global univer-

sity rankings will continue to decline.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has shown a commitment to merit-based reforms and corruption-free recruitment in education. However, this vision must now extend to securing sustainable funding for higher education institutions. The current crisis demands urgent financial relief for university staff and improved budget allocations.

Public universities in Pakistan are central to national development, especially in regions like Balochistan where access to affordable higher education is already limited. Empowering students through quality learning environments, research funding, and skilled faculty will uplift not only the province but the entire nation.

Education & power



Haider Khan: EDUCATION is commonly thought to be a social good, and by some, considered a cure, or solution. Education, we are told, can be the driver of social change, create economic growth, and promises social mobility.

A year, I spent with unemployed university graduates in Lahore paints a different picture of what education means in Pakistan today.

The experience of being highly educated and unemployed should make us question some of the received wisdom, and to recognize the significance of social status. It also begs the question: what is the problem to which education is considered the solution?

International advocates including Gordon Brown and Michael Barber have referred to the transformational capability

of education. For them, Pakistan is in need of development and education is the means to achieving that end.

The World Bank views education as a crucial ingredient for economic growth, capable of reducing poverty. Nobel Peace Prize recipient Malala Yousafzai argues that education is a harbinger of a bright future.

Local politicians echo some of these sentiments, highlighting the potential shift to a "knowledge economy". Other local advocates, who have a more nuanced view, see an education crisis, involving 25 million children between the ages of five and 16 years estimated to be out of school in Pakistan. But what we all have in common is an unquestioning belief in the economic and emancipatory power of education. Or do we?

Some unemployed

graduates see education differently. While there is a strong faith in the cognitive abilities granted by further studies, there is a view that education is part of a strategy of securing a job along with status in a highly competitive environment. Thus, while learning is not unimportant, it gets lost in the quest for high marks, for employment, and for prestige. I began to understand that the other part of the education strategy involves applying for government jobs, which in turn means that test scores and qualifications are the key instruments in the race. In a way, this tightly competitive scramble is driven by the quest for prestige, a stable income, and perks and privileges.

The significance of education in this race may have something to do with the nature of the competition. Over 23, 403 can-

didates had applied for the CSS competitive examination 2019, of the 14, 521 appeared and only 372 cleared the written exam. The pass percentage of the appeared candidates was 2.56 percent. This crushing competition should be seen in the context of an increasingly educated labour force.

Estimates by the State Bank of Pakistan indicate that two million individuals enter the labor force annually. The Higher Education Commission statistics indicate that more than half of those entrants may have a university degree.

In light of these demographic and economic pressures, what does education mean today? What are the different conceptions of education share are the belief that attaining an education enables social mobility. But where the two different perspectives di-

verge reveals the way education falls short of the great expectations it cultivates. This gap illustrates how education is deeply connected to a system of status and power.

For young men with degrees but without jobs, that system positions people in government hierarchies and redirects highly trained professionals including engineers and doctors towards the elite bureaucracy. But without contacts, guidance, mentoring, and above all, power, education becomes a limited springboard for their aspiration of joining another class.

This experience confirms what other studies have shown in other parts of the world, as access to education...

The author is currently serving as an assistant focal person in education department at civil secretariat Quetta.

Quetta City, Proposed Master Plan

Abdul Latif Kakar : QUETTA: The mountain-ringed, Quetta city needs a comprehensive master plan to ensure the solution of problems faced by citizens and address the mega question of climate change.

Through the proposed plan, scarce resources would be transparently and rationally utilized to make it a better living city in the country.

For the first in the history of the province, the Urban Planning Development (UPD) under the leadership of chief minister Balochistan, Jam Kamal Khan has started the preparation of the master plan.

Geographical location, looming threat of natural calamities including earthquakes, drought, and floods, the need for making a comprehensive master plan for Quetta city is growing. Rather, it is now indispensable to make this plan, before it is already late.

Geography and Soil

Four main units may describe the soils of Quetta i.e. (1) piedmont plains (very deep and well-drained soil) (2) piedmont basins (3) salinity and alkalinity (4) gravelly piedmont fans and aprons bordering the mountains and plains.

The central part of the Quetta valley is covered by a soil that ranges from sandy



loam to silt loam. This type of soil is good for crop production.

At the margin of the valley near foothills, the soil consists of sandy loam, mixed with pebbles and rock fragments and is suitable for vegetation.

In the Hanna valley, the greater part of the valley floor is covered by barren rock about crops of low

yield and dry mala bed. The soil is restricted to the narrow banks and low terraces along the main

stream. However, the nature of the soil in Beliti is silty clay which is not suitable for cultivation.

Similarly, the Chiltan surface has soils that are predominantly gravelly loams.

The vegetation on these soils is mainly Haloxylon which provides poor grazing for livestock.

Soil erosion As far as soil erosion is concerned, both stream erosion of soil and wind erosion is occurring in the district.

The stream erosion takes place in the piedmont plain along the banks and beds of streams.

Such streams are Sariab Lora, Hanna river, Habib Nallah near Hudda. Wind erosion occurs in the valley.

This all requires a review of the existing plans and documents and preparation of the digitized base map of Quetta with a protocol for its updating.

A review of existing policies, procedures, plans studies conducted by donor agencies, and other relevant data. Current and future population trends need to be reviewed.

Transportation, mass transit, and city traffic management and monitoring system, housing commercial, and industrial land use evaluation of the existing condition of buildings and housing schemes should be thoroughly reviewed.

To be precise, the city needs a master plan on an emergency basis to address the looming threat of climate change and natural disasters.

Strait of Hormuz cannot be used to strike Iran: Esmail Baghaei

NEWS DESK: Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei on Monday said the Strait of Hormuz will not be open to any country seeking to strike Iran, adding that Iran's armed forces control the passage and no country can use it to launch attacks on Iran.

According to Al Jazeera, he said the passage of ships through the strait would take place under special conditions due to insecurity created by Israel and the US in the region.

Baghaei said that Iran, as a coastal country, has the right to take necessary measures in the Strait of Hormuz to ensure national security and prevent what he described as aggressors from misusing the waterway.

He added that Iran has historically been the guardian of safe passage through the strait but blamed the US and Israel for creating the current conditions.

Japan, Australia reject Trump demand to send warships to secure Hormuz

US President Donald Trump's demands for a coalition to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz appeared to fall on deaf ears on Monday as allies Japan and Aus-



tralia said they were not planning to send navy vessels to the Middle East to escort ships through the vital waterway.

With the US-Israeli war on Iran creating turmoil across the Middle East and sending up global energy markets in its third week, Trump on Sunday insisted that nations relying heavily on oil from the Gulf have a responsibility to protect the strait through which 20% of the world's energy transits.

Markets in Asia reacted cautiously, with Brent crude rising more than 1% above \$104.50 and regional share markets mostly weaker amid concerns about the risk to Middle East oil facilities and after Trump's request for allies to get more involved.

"I'm demanding that these countries come in and protect their own territory because it is their territory," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One on the way from Florida to Washington. "It's the place from which they get their energy."

Trump said his administration has already contacted seven countries, but did not identify the Middle East from where it gets 95% of its

oil from the Straits. Trump said "We may delay," he said in reference to his visit if China did not offer support in the Gulf.

The Chinese foreign ministry did not immediately respond to the Reuters request for comment. Trump also ratcheted up pressure on European allies to help protect the strait, warning that NATO faces a "very bad" future if its members fail to come to Washington's aid.

European Union foreign ministers will discuss on Monday bolstering a small naval mission in the Middle East but are not expected to decide on extending its role to the choked-off Strait of Hormuz, diplomats and officials say.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer discussed the need to reopen the Strait with Trump, and with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, a Downing Street spokeswoman said on Sunday, while the strait before his scheduled meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing at the end of this month and might postpone his trip if it did not provide assistance. "I think China should help too because China gets 90%

Israel army says begun 'limited targeted ground operations' against Hezbollah in south Lebanon

NEWS DESK: The Israeli military said on Monday it had begun what it described as "limited ground operations" against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.

"In recent days, IDF troops from the 91st division have begun limited and targeted ground operations against key Hezbollah strongholds in southern Lebanon, aimed at enhancing the forward defence area," the military said in a statement. "This activity is part of broader defensive efforts to establish and strengthen

a forward defensive posture, which includes the dismantling of terrorist infrastructure and the elimination of terrorists operating in the area, in order to remove threats and create an additional layer of security for residents of northern Israel," it said.

"Prior to the troops' entry into the area, the IDF conducted strikes using both artillery and the Israeli Air Force against numerous terrorist targets in order to mitigate threats in the operational environment."

Lebanon was dragged into the Middle East war on March 2 when Iran-backed Hezbollah attacked Israel in response to the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes, with Israel launching air raids on the neighbouring country and troop incursions into border areas.

Around 800,000 Lebanese civilians have been displaced since the conflict began, and at least 773 people have been killed, many of

them civilians, according to an Axios report on Saturday.

The report also says US officials urged Israel not to strike Beirut's international airport or other Lebanese state infrastructure during the planned operation.

Israeli officials told the outlet that while Israel agreed to avoid targeting the airport, it did not commit to protecting all other state infrastructure.

"We feel we have full US backing on this operation," an Israeli official told Axios.



US, Chinese economic chiefs meet to pave way for Trump-Xi summit

NEWS DESK: Top US and Chinese economic officials launched a new round of talks in Paris on Sunday to iron out kinks in their trade truce and clear a smooth path for US President Donald Trump's trip to Beijing to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the end of March.

The discussions, led by US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, are expected to focus on shifting US tariffs, the flow of Chinese-produced rare earth minerals and magnets to US buyers, American high-tech export controls and Chinese purchases of US agricultural products.

The two sides began talks on Sunday morning at the Paris headquarters of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and were expected to continue on Monday, a Treasury official said.

China is not a member of the club of 38 mostly wealthy democracies and considers itself a

developing country.

Before departing for Paris, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said that US officials want to ensure stability in the relationship. "We want to make sure that we continue to get the rare earths we need for our manufacturing base," he said.

He added that the US and China trade negotiators Li Chenggang follow a string of their meetings in Europe last year to ease trade tensions.

US-China trade analysts said that with little time to prepare and Washington's attention focused on the war on Iran, prospects for a major trade breakthrough are limited, in Paris or at the Beijing summit.

However, the Iran war is expected to come up at the Paris talks, especially in reference to the spike in oil prices and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Oil rises as focus returns to threats on Middle East export facilities

NEWS DESK: Oil prices rose on Monday as investors focus returned to threats facing Middle East oil facilities, despite US President Donald Trump's call for nations to help safeguard the Strait of Hormuz, a vital artery for global energy shipments.

Brent crude futures climbed \$1.27, or 1.2%, to \$104.41 a barrel by 04:00 GMT after settling up \$2.68 on Friday. US West Texas Intermediate crude gained 54 cents, or 0.6%, at \$99.25 a barrel, after settling up nearly \$3 in the previous session.

Both contracts have surged more than 740% this month to their highest since 2022, after the US-Israeli attacks on Iran prompted Tehran to halt shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, changing off a fifth of global oil supply in the biggest disruption ever.

"US strikes over the weekend on Kharg Island raised supply concerns, as most of Iran's oil exports pass through it," ING commodity strategists said on Monday.

While the strikes appear to have "targeted military, rather than energy infrastructure, they still pose sup-

ply risks since Iranian oil is about the only oil moving through the Strait of Hormuz for now, ING added.

Over the weekend, Trump threatened further strikes on Iran's Kharg Island, which handles about 90% of its exports, after hitting military targets there, to spur a defiant response of more retaliation from Tehran.

Iranian drones hit a key oil terminal in Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates shortly after the Kharg attacks, and occupying southern Iran to protect the Strait of Hormuz,"



Pope criticises those who invoke religion to wage war

NEWS DESK: Pope Leo XIV renewed his appeal on Sunday for peace in the Middle East and criticised those who invoke religion to wage war, saying that "God cannot be enlisted by darkness."

"Currently, many of our brothers and sisters in the world are suffering from violent conflicts, caused by the absurd claims of problems and differences can be resolved through war," he said on a pastoral visit to a Rome suburb.

He added: "Some claim to involve the name of God in these deadly decisions, but God cannot be enlisted by darkness. It is peace that those who invoke him must seek."

Earlier on Sunday, the US pontiff held his weekly Angelus prayer at the Vatican to again pray for the victims of the "atrocious violence of war" in the Middle East and urge dialogue and peace.

The pontiff prayed for victims of "atrocious violence of war" in the

Middle East

"I renew my closeness to all those who have lost loved ones in the attacks that have hit schools, hospitals, and residential areas," the 70-year-old said. Leo said the situation in Lebanon was a particular cause for concern.

"On behalf of the Christians of the Middle East, I address those responsible for this conflict," he said.

Declare ceasefire in ME

Pope Leo made an impassioned plea for an immediate ceasefire in the expanding Iran war, lamenting "atrocious violence" that he said had killed thousands of non-combatants and caused suffering across the region in his weekly Angelus prayer in St. Peter's Square.

"In the name of Christians in the Middle East and of all women and men of good will, I appeal to those responsible for this conflict: Cease fire!" Pope Leo said.



ence would not bring the justice, stability and peace that the peoples of the region long for.

"For two weeks, the peoples of the Middle East have been suffering the atrocious violence of war," the pope said at his weekly Angelus prayer in St. Peter's Square.

"As the US-Israeli war on Iran enters its third week, the first US pope warned that vio-

US, Chinese economic officials met in Paris on Sunday to iron out kinks in their trade truce and clear a smooth path for US President Donald Trump's trip to Beijing to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the end of March. Pope Leo XIV renewed his appeal on Sunday for peace in the Middle East and criticised those who invoke religion to wage war.

Lahore court grants physical remand of police officer in fraud case

LAHORE (INP): In an important development in over Rs30 million fraud case against Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Azhar Naveed Khan, a court in Lahore on Monday granted to the police three-day physical remand of the suspect.

The suspect was presented before the duty judicial magistrate.

In its one-page order, the court said that an FIR of fraud had been registered against the DSP at Defence-B police station of Lahore on the complaint of Hassam Khan.

The order read that the police sought 10-day physical remand of the suspect for interrogation and recovery of the embezzled amount.

The court ordered the police to complete the police station. The officer was taken into custody following allegations that he deceived a citizen in a financial transaction related to luxury vehicles.

According to the police, the complainant, Hassam, alleged that the officer obtained a large sum of money under the pretext of arranging two high-end vehicles. The complainant told investigators that a total of Rs33.3 million was transferred to the suspect as payment for the cars.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding enforcement of austerity and relief measures, abs conversation and management petroleum reserves in wake of emerging situation in the region.

Rainfall lashes Punjab, KP and AJK regions, snowfall at mountains

ISLAMABAD (INP): Rain lashes several areas of Punjab including Lahore, Sheikhupura, Hafizabad, Rawalpindi and Islamabad besides parts of Azad Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit Baltistan region.

In Lahore, rain couple with isolated hail-storm, lashed Gulberg, Model Town, Johar Town and other areas of the city.

Heavy rain also continued in various areas of the federal capital. DC Islamabad has directed all assistant commissioners to go out into the field to review the situation in their areas.

Rain was reported in Chakwal district. Due to rain, the managing director of the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) has placed officers and staff on alert to ensure drainage arrangements in view of the expected rainfall.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, more rain is expected today and tomorrow. Officials added that after a one-day break, another weather system is likely to enter Pakistan.

However, rain with thunderstorm is reported in upper Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Upper Punjab, Islamabad, and Gilgit-Baltistan. Wind and hail are also expected at isolated locations during the period.

Rain was reported in Lower and Upper Dir while snowfall was reported at Lowari and other mountain areas. Heavy rain was reported in Rawlakot.

Spring Tree Plantation drive launched in Mirpur

MIRPUR, March 16 (INP): A spring tree plantation campaign on Monday was launched here at View Point Park under a joint initiative of the Municipal Corporation and the Kashmiri NGO Anjuman Falah-o-Bahood.

Insaniyat Mirpur, in collaboration with the "Heal the Earth" Free Plant Nursery.

A brief ceremony was held at the park to mark the launch of the drive, attended by a large number of citizens, social workers and members of the public. Mayor Mirpur, Ali Usman Khalid attended the event as chief guest.

Among those present were environmental activist Labina Majid, Deputy Mayor, Muhammad Ramzan Chughai, XEN Corporation Mirpur, Chaudhry Shahzaib Karamat, SDO Corporation Mirpur, Raja Muhammad Hafeez, President Anjuman Falah-o-Bahood Insaniyat Mirpur, Dr Tahir Mahmood, Jahangir Mughal, Farzana Nawaz Raja, Hafsa Bari and other notables of the city.

Addressing the gathering, Mayor Ali Usman Khalid said the services of welfare and social organizations were commendable and widely recognized.

He said such organizations were playing an important role in the development and beautification of Mirpur by working alongside government institutions to improve the city and protect the environment.

Federal govt will bring more job opportunities for youth across Sindh: Nihal Hashmi

KARACHI (INP): Sindh's new Governor Nihal Hashmi on Sunday said he is not an elected official but a constitutional Governor while addressing his maiden press conference in Karachi.

At the outset of his media talk, he stressed that as his responsibility as the governor, he represented "each and every person and child" of Sindh's villages and districts.

He said this is not a privileged post; it is a post of responsibility, "praying that may God help him fulfil his role with honesty and justice."

Nihal Hashmi vowed that the federal government would bring more job opportunities and improve education for youth across the province.

"It is of immense joy that we will bring the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) to Sindh as well, with cooperation from each and every person and child" of Sindh's villages and districts.

Hashmi further said there would not just be "youth programme and computer training, but an entire comprehensive subject and chapter on education".

NAB challenges LHC order on Maryam Nawaz inquiry in Chaudhry Sugar Mills case

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has challenged the Lahore High Court's (LHC) decision related to Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz in the Chaudhry Sugar Mills case before the Federal Constitutional Court.

The case pertains to alleged money laundering and income beyond means via "dubious" business transactions of the Chaudhry Sugar Mills, of which Maryam was a major shareholder.

The LHC, in November 2019, released Maryam in the sugar mills case on bail, subject to surrendering her passport to the court. Later, in October 2022, returned her passport after the NAB said it did not require the travel document anymore.

In its petition, the NAB argued that the high court interfered in the authority of the NAB chairman by questioning the decision to close the inquiry against CM Maryam.

The bureau requested the constitutional court to declare the high court's February 4, 2026, order null and void, maintaining that the accountability watchdog had the legal authority to withdraw proceedings before filing a reference.

According to the petition, the Chaudhry Sugar Mills case was of a private nature and did not involve any loss to the national exchequer. NAB further stated that no evidence of corruption or corrupt practices against Maryam surfaced during the investigation.

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IHC directs PMDC to decide BMC case within 30 days

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court has disposed of a petition related to the alleged corruption in the approval of Bahawalpur Medical College and directed the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) to take action and decide the matter within 30 days.

According to reports, officials and employees of the former Pakistan Medical Commission were accused of receiving millions of rupees in bribes for granting approval to Bahawalpur Medical College. Following the allegations, the registration of the college was later cancelled.

Separate investigations conducted by the Prime Minister Inspection Commission and the Intelligence Bureau found several senior officials and more than 18 employees of the Pakistan Medical Commission involved in corruption and recommended disciplinary action against them.

However, the officials had obtained a stay order from the Islamabad High Court, delaying the proceedings for a considerable period. The court has now disposed of the petition, paving the way for further action against the accused employees. Sources say that a decision has been made to remove some employees from service, while influential former office-bearers are reportedly not being proceeded against.

Those named responsible in the investigation reports include former PMC President Dr. Arshad Faqir, Vice President Muhammad Ali Raza, member Dr. Romna Hassan, member Asif Loya, Anees ur Rehman, Tariq Ahmad Khan, member Koshan Zafar, Executive Member Dr. Shaista Zeeshan, Member (Education) Dr. Moeen Ali, and Council Secretary Dr. Dawood Adnan Shams.

Pakistan playing constructive diplomatic role to de-escalate Iran conflict: Masood Khan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former president of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States Masood Khan has said that Pakistan is playing a constructive diplomatic role amid the escalating conflict involving Iran, maintaining communication with major capitals including Washington, Tehran and Riyadh to promote dialogue and de-escalation.

Masood Khan speaking during a television interview on the evolving Middle East crisis, said although there is speculation that the United States may consider an exit strategy from the conflict with Iran, the war appears far from over.

He noted that while President Donald Trump could politically claim victory at any time, signals from the U.S. defence establishment suggest preparations for a prolonged confrontation.

He pointed out that additional military deployments, including naval assets and marine expeditionary forces, indicate that the conflict may intensify rather than conclude quickly. According to Masood Khan, the objectives initially set by Washington—such as forcing Iran to surrender or achieving regime change—have not been realised so far.

"At the same time, there is mounting international pressure to end the war," he said, noting that global markets have already been affected, with rising oil and gas prices causing economic instability. He also observed that Russia has benefited strategically from the situation, while European countries have expressed concerns because of the broader geopolitical implications, particularly in relation to the war in Ukraine.

Masood Khan said that despite the ongoing military confrontation, several back-channel diplomatic initiatives are underway. Countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman are actively facilitating quiet diplomacy, while additional communication channels involving international actors continue to operate in an effort to reduce tensions.

He cautioned that the deployment of ground troops could significantly prolong the conflict, drawing parallels with previous U.S. military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, he noted that while military objectives in those countries were achieved rapidly at the outset, the resulting wars continued for years due to complex regional dynamics.

Dasu Hydropower Project (DHPP) distributes hygiene kits to school students

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Dasu Hydropower Project (DHPP) has launched a campaign to distribute health and hygiene kits among students in schools located within the project area to promote personal hygiene and healthier daily practices among children.

The initiative began with an inaugural ceremony held on March 12 at Government Centennial Model High School for Boys in Dasu.

The campaign aims to encourage students to adopt proper hygiene habits and maintain better personal health in their daily lives.

The ceremony was attended by Director Social and Welfare Development, Shabbir Rehman Afridi and other relevant officials from local government, representatives from WAPDA, NESPAK and DHG.

School teachers, health department officials and a large number of students also participated in the event.

The initiative reflects the continuing commitment of DHPP to support the education sector and contribute to the well-being of local communities, particularly children living in the project area.

The first stage, currently under construction, will produce 2,160 megawatts through six units of 360 megawatts each, with an estimated annual generation capacity of 12,222 gigawatt-hours.

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing a meeting of the Committee to Monitor Petrol Prices to review petroleum stocks, global supply chain developments, and national energy preparedness at the Finance Division.

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QUETTA: Federal Minister for Interior, Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti in Quetta.

Deputy Commissioner Chairs District Polio Eradication Committee Meeting in Nasirabad

NASIRABAD: Deputy Commissioner Nasirabad, Captain (R) Zulfiqar Ali Karrar, chaired an important meeting of the District Polio Eradication Committee to review preparations for the upcoming anti-polio campaign scheduled from April 13 to April 16 across the district.

The meeting was attended by SSP Nasirabad Asad Nasir, District Health Officer Dr. Ayaz Hussain Jamali, PPHI District Support Manager Tariq Shahbaz Kattohara, Medical Superintendent Dr. Habib Pandrani, Deputy Commissioner's PS Manzoor Shirazi, representatives from UNICEF, N-Staff, COMNet, and officials from other relevant departments.

During the meeting, Dr. Ghulam Yaseen Dajli from N-Staff delivered a detailed briefing about the campaign.

He informed participants that special teams have been



formed across the district to administer polio drops to children under the age of five. He added that extensive preparations are underway, including micro-planning, team training, establishment of transit points, and special focus on high-risk areas to ensure the campaign's success.

He noted that eliminating polio is a collective responsibility that requires strong public support and awareness. The meeting also reviewed security arrangements, monitoring mechanisms, access to remote areas, and public awareness strategies.

The Deputy Commissioner also urged parents to actively participate in the national campaign and cooperate with health teams to protect their children from the debilitating disease. He stressed that no negligence or carelessness will be tolerated during the campaign, and all teams must strictly follow the

schedule while visiting households to ensure that every child under five years of age receives polio drops. The Deputy Commissioner also urged parents to actively participate in the national campaign and cooperate with health teams to protect their children from the debilitating disease.

He noted that eliminating polio is a collective responsibility that requires strong public support and awareness. The meeting also reviewed security arrangements, monitoring mechanisms, access to remote areas, and public awareness strategies.

Yaser Iqbal Dashti Assumes Charge as Deputy Commissioner Kech

TURBAT: Deputy Commissioner Kech, has been transferred under a government notification and appointed as Additional Secretary Home, Balochistan.

Following the transfer, Yaser Iqbal Dashti, who was awaiting posting, has been appointed as the new Deputy Commissioner Kech and has

now officially taken charge of the position. District officials and administrative staff welcomed the new Deputy Commissioner and expressed hope that under his leadership, administrative affairs and development initiatives in Kech district will continue to improve.

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260 Traffic Personnel Deployed to Manage Eid Shopping Rush in Quetta, Says SSP Traffic

QUETTA: SSP Traffic Mirza Bilal Hassan has announced

around major shopping centers and markets where Eid shopping ac-

ments that cause inconvenience to the public. The SSP Traffic



that 260 traffic police personnel have been deployed across the city to ensure smooth traffic flow during the Eid shopping season.

He shared these details during a press conference at various locations in Quetta on Sunday. According to the SSP Traffic,

also stated that legal action will be taken against illegally parked motorcycles and vehicles that obstruct roads and disrupt traffic flow.

He emphasized that no one will be allowed to create obstacles in the traffic system or establish illegal encroachments.

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Deputy Commissioner Chairs Meeting to Review Preparations for Anti-Polio Campaign in Jaffarabad

JAFFARABAD: Deputy Commissioner Jaffarabad Khalid Khan chaired an important meeting to review preparations for the upcoming anti-polio campaign scheduled from April 13 to April 16 across the district.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Huzoor Bakht Bugti, PPHI District Support Manager Faisal Iqbal Khoso, N-Staff Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Solangi, representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO), officials of the Lady Health Workers Program, and heads of other relevant departments.



During the meeting, participants conducted a detailed review of the administrative and operational measures taken so far to ensure the successful implementation of the polio vaccination campaign throughout the district.

He stressed that no child should be left without polio vaccination, highlighting the importance of coordinated efforts to eliminate the disease.

He also urged parents to recognize their national responsibility and fully cooperate with polio teams so that future generations can be permanently protected from this crippling disease.

The Deputy Commissioner further stated that the performance of field teams will be closely monitored during the campaign, and any negligence or carelessness will not be tolerated.

Balochistan, Saudi Business Leaders Discuss IT Investment Opportunities in Online Meeting

QUETTA: Vice Chairman of the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBOT) Bilal Khan Kakar and Vice Chairman of the Saudi Arabia-Pakistan Joint Business Council Abdulaziz Al-Ashrafi jointly chaired an online meeting to discuss potential investment projects in the Information Technology and Innovation sector in Balochistan.

The meeting was attended by BBOT CEO Qamran Aslam and other officials. Participants reviewed opportunities for mutual investment and explored ways to strengthen economic



cooperation between the two sides. During the meeting, discussions focused on the possibility of establishing joint ventures in FinTech, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), and IT services. The proposed collaboration

aims to promote cross-border innovation, investment, and technological cooperation in Balochistan's emerging IT sector. On the occasion, Abdulaziz Al-Ashrafi also expressed special interest in investing in Balochistan's mineral sector, particularly in setting up refinery and value-addition facilities for copper and gold.

Participants also agreed to hold separate IT sector meetings to further discuss additional investment opportunities previously explored with Saudi Prince Mansour bin

Mohammed bin Saud. These potential projects include fish and shrimp farming, livestock development, agricultural value chains, as well as human resource development and skills training. Speaking during the meeting, Bilal Khan Kakar said that Balochistan is rich in investment opportunities, and international partnerships in sectors such as IT can play a vital role in the province's economic growth. He noted that the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade will provide full facilitation and support to foreign investors.

Clean Drinking Water Projects Reviewed in Harnai Villages

HARNAI: On the directives of Haji Noor Muhammad Durrani, Provincial Minister for Food in Balochistan, and in consultation with local person Haji Bazz Muhammad Durrani, XEN Public Health Engineering Haazee Ur Rehman Hashmi conducted a visit to several villages in Harnai to review ongoing development projects related to the supply of clean drinking water. During the visit, the XEN inspected ongoing work in

Charkeen, and Killi Chishti Abad, where projects aimed at improving access to safe drinking water are currently underway. Haazee Ur Rehman Hashmi reviewed the progress of development activities at various sites and received briefings from relevant officials and staff regarding the quality of work and pace of construction. He directed the concerned authorities to utilize all available resources to ensure the project is completed on time and

according to approved standards, so that residents can benefit from the facility as soon as possible. He noted that due to the special attention of Provincial Minister Haji Noor Muhammad Durrani and the guidance of local person Haji Bazz Muhammad Durrani, several welfare and development initiatives are progressing rapidly in the area. The XEN emphasized that providing clean drinking water is one of the government's top priorities.

Turbat Mayor Balkh Sher Qazi Visits Koh Murad Ziarat Sharif, Reviews Facilities for Pilgrims

TURBAT: Mayor Municipal Corporation Turbat Balkh Sher Qazi visited Koh Murad Ziarat Sharif to review facilities being provided to pilgrims and assess arrangements at the religious site. During the visit, the mayor inspected the Basic Health Unit (BHU) center, the Ziarat Committee office, and the medical camp established by the All Pakistan Zikri Muslim Anjuman to provide healthcare services to visitors.

Members of the Ziarat Committee and central leaders of the All Pakistan Zikri Muslim Anjuman expressed their gratitude to Mayor Balkh Sher Qazi for extending full cooperation and Councilor Khuda

to facilitate pilgrims visiting the shrine. They particularly appreciated the provision of water supply, emergency services including fire brigade facilities, and arrangements for pilgrims arriving at the site.

At the end of the visit, Mayor Balkh Sher Qazi assured that the shortage of medicines at the medical camp would be addressed soon to ensure uninterrupted healthcare services for pilgrims.

During the visit, the mayor was accompanied by Masood Baloch, Dr. Muhammad Hayat Balkh Sher Qazi for extending full cooperation and Councilor Khuda

NOTICE INVITING TENDER. The Executive Engineer Public Health Engineering Division Quetta invites sealed Percentage rate tenders based on composite schedule of rates 2023 Government of Balochistan and market sale from interested contractors, Drilling Agencies, Civil Work and Salar Work for the works mentioned below under BSD for the year 2025-26. Bid Security 2% Estimated cost of each work - Tender Fee 3000/- and Timed and Sealed.

NOTICE INVITING SEALED QUOTATIONS. For Expanded Hospital under the Balochistan Health Care Program (BHCP). Sealed quotations are invited from well-reputed and registered firms, medical stores, and suppliers engaged in the business of medicines and medical consumables, and capable of establishing and operating a 24x7 pharmacy outlet titled 'BHCP Pharmacy' within the Balochistan health care program policy guidelines 2024.

Flood relief and Samaritan's dilemma

NEWS DESK: Pakistan suffered a devastating flood season last year, prompting massive state compensation. While the compassion behind this response is unquestionable, the way relief is structured may unintentionally deepen long-term vulnerabilities.

This reflects what Nobel laureate James Buchanan termed the Samaritan's dilemma—a situation in which unconditional aid reduces the recipient's incentive to prevent harm, thereby reinforcing the very problem it seeks to solve.

The Punjab government's recent flood relief programme is a striking example. It offered immediate, unconditional cash compensation to fully cover damages to homes, property, and livestock. The intention was both humane and political—to help households recover quickly from the shock and to secure public support. Nearly Rs500 billion was spent—one of the largest provincial relief efforts.

However, such blanket compensation—if repeated flood after



creates expectations that the state will always act as the ultimate insurer of private risk. This is when incentives have less incentive to invest in resilient housing—such as elevated

foundations or sturdier structures—because they expect the government to pay for rebuilding.

Second, communities underinvest in collective mitigation measures, including strengthening

relocation—though costly and disruptive—feels necessary when losses are reimbursed. Third, communities underinvest in collective mitigation measures, including strengthening

leaves or enforcing basic building standards. Fourth, the government's fiscal burden grows. Each flood triggers another round of massive payouts.

The state cannot abandon citizens during crises. The challenge, therefore, is to protect people without encouraging dependency. Conditional aid, therefore, is the most responsible way for the government to intervene and create the conditions for better long-term flood management.

This cycle is the essence of the Samaritan's dilemma: generous state intervention weakens the very behaviours—self-protection, risk mitigation, and community preparedness—that reduce long-term losses.

Risk is a choice and choices must have consequences. The riverine belt attracts settlers for its fertile land and economic benefits, and many families have lived there for generations. But staying in a flood-prone area is still a conscious decision, and it carries responsibilities.

Households that invest in safer construction, elevated housing, or community-based mitigation efforts should be rewarded.

Those who repeatedly ignore well-known risks should not expect bailouts every time a flood strikes. Yet Pakistan is a democracy.

The state cannot abandon citizens during crises. The challenge, therefore, is to protect people without encouraging dependency. Conditional aid, therefore, is the most responsible way for the government to intervene and create the conditions for better long-term flood management.

Before the next monsoon season, the government should announce that future compensation will be conditional on following basic safety guidelines—simple, actionable measures that materially reduce vulnerability.

The government should issue these guidelines as soon as possible. Not only would this reduce material losses, but it would also significantly reduce casualties and injuries during floods.

It would further reduce the scale and frequency of emergency rescue operations, which are costly, dangerous, and often involve displacement and loss of life.

Conditional aid, therefore, is the most responsible way for the government to intervene and create the conditions for better long-term flood management.

Based on our field visits in flood-affected areas, we identified three practical measures that significantly reduce flood losses and should be included in these guidelines.

Oil shock and the import trap

NEWS DESK: The conflict in the Middle East has once again created a wave of uncertainty amid increasing volatility in oil prices. Although the conflict is external, the implications for the domestic economy are significant.

At the time of writing, Brent and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil prices showed significant oscillation, suggesting uncertainty in the oil market. The length of the conflict and the extent of damage to oil infrastructure are likely to dictate the trend in global oil prices. A shorter conflict will likely have a limited impact, while a prolonged conflict with significant damage to oil infrastructure in the region may result in pushing Pakistan into another debt trap.

The "petrol bomb" has hit Pakistan's economy with significant force as escalating oil prices are not only likely to impact fiscal balances but also Pakistan's external account. The petroleum levy on petrol surpassed Rs100 per litre in the revision on March 7, 2026. Rising oil prices will exacerbate the trade deficit, while sustained pressure from the trade deficit can consequently result in a balance-of-payments crisis.

It is expected that the monthly import bill will increase by \$600 million, deteriorating the current account deficit. The SBP, which had pre-

viously forecast keeping the current account deficit below 1% of GDP, is expected to revise its forecast to absorb not only rising inflation risks but also risks to the external account.

Inflation rates are likely to increase due to the second-round effect of rising food and transport costs. Further inflows of remittances, which has increased to unprecedented levels, may also face uncertainty as expatriates in the Middle East encounter challenges in their host countries. A majority of these inflows originate from the Gulf countries, which cumulatively host more than five million Pakistanis.

More than \$560 billion worth of mineral

products, out of a total of \$3 trillion traded globally, was exported from the Gulf countries in 2024, according to the International Trade Center's Trademap.org. Approximately \$210 billion was exported from the UAE and Qatar.

Qatar is the largest exporter of LNG in the world, and Pakistan imported more than \$3.5 billion worth of LNG from Qatar in 2024, accounting for approximately 50% of its total LNG imports. Interestingly, Pakistan is also a key export destination

for Qatar's LNG, following major Asian economies such as China, the Republic of Korea and India. The rise in the price of natural gas itself will adversely impact the fertiliser industry and consequently the agricultural sector, further threatening the price stability of food products.

Pakistan has one of the highest percentages of fuel imports in total merchandise imports in the world. According to the World Bank's World Development Indicators, 32% of merchandise imports into Pakistan in 2024 were fuel imports, primarily for consumption in the domestic market as re-export of fuel products is minimal.

External financing is quite significant in the era of financial globalisation. Most of the developing economies are relying on external financing to meet their capital requirements. In Pakistan, the external debt-to-GDP ratio was around 24% in FY 2025, whereas the external debt-to-total pub-

lic debt ratio was around 32%. The breakdown of external debt shows that Pakistan owes to multilateral and bilateral creditors. It owes around 57% to the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), which are termed multilateral sources.

In addition, it owes around 26% to bilateral lenders. The bilateral debt also contains deposits from friendly countries while the rest is commercial debt comprising Eurobonds/Islamic Sukuk and short-term loans from international banks.

Although foreign loans from the multilateral sources command low interest rates, there are strings attached to them. When the country faces balance of payments (BOP) crisis, it has to meet the conditionality clause of the IMF to secure the facility. Other multilateral banks wait for approval of the IMF and suspend their assistance till the loan facility is approved by the Fund. On the other hand, bilateral loans have in-

Seeking cheap external development finance

NEWS DESK: The capitalist system is based on debt. Business firms and governments are net borrowers in this system while households are net lenders.

There are two types of debt: domestic and external. A government can never default on the domestic debt but it may default on the external debt. On this basis, the external debt may create problems for the people.

Every year, the fiscal deficit contributes to the debt stock. As far as the case of Pakistan is concerned, the fiscal deficit is mainly financed through domestic sources while the share of external one was around 4% in FY 2024 and increased to 9% in FY 2025.

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flexible interest commitments. Lenders usually stick to their conditions. Through commercial loans have flexible interest commitments, they command higher interest rates. That is the reason Pakistan has to pay high interest rates on Eurobonds, the Sukuk and short-term loans.

Such imports are necessary to keep the wheel of economy moving. Any reduction in such imports slows down the economy. For instance, the reduction of industrial imports will slow down the industrial output which, in turn, reduces the level of GDP.

Considering the current productive structure of the economy, the government should seek cheap development finance from the external sources. It should try to secure subsidised loans either from the multilateral institutions or bilateral sources. In the absence of subsidised external loans, it should seek loans which could be repaid in local currency. In a nutshell, cheap external development finance is quite significant from the perspective of economic development.

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ADB gives 'final chance' to \$360m Central Asia Regional Economic Corridor project

NEWS DESK: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has granted a final one-month extension for the disbursement of a \$360 million loan for the embattled Central Asia Regional Economic Corridor (CAREC) Tranche-III project, which has already been delayed by around a year due to issues with the National Highway Authority (NHA).

"The ADB approves an extension of bid validity from March 6, 2026, to April 5, 2026 (for a period of 30 days). This shall be the last and final extension of bid validity."

The NHA is requested to ensure that the contract award is completed within this extended period, as no further extension is envisaged by the ADB," the bank said in a recent letter.

"Within the same period, the NHA is also requested to provide any new and material information justifying the delay for ADB's review."



In the absence of such information, or if the contract is not awarded within the extended bid validity period, the matter may need to be assessed as a potential non-compliance case, which could affect the financing of the contract and any subsequent procurement actions related to this package," the ADB said.

SC rejects challenge to bidding process

missed a petition by the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) challenging the bidding process under which a joint venture of three firms — NXCC, Dynamic Constructor and Rustam Associates — was declared successful bidder.

The SC, while disposing of the petition, endorsed the Islamabad High Court's findings regarding the procurement process conducted by the NHA

for the N-55 project. Loan disbursement deadline extended till April 5.

It held that the verification of bids submitted by the three-firm joint venture and its credentials had been properly undertaken by the NHA and that no further verification was required.

Earlier, the IHC had rejected PPRA's petition against the Rs172 billion CAREC Tranche-III award to the joint venture.

The yearly price fixing failure

NEWS DESK: With Ramadan close to ending this week, the relief of affordable commodities has remained a far cry for lower-income groups. This was primarily due to structural issues in market dynamics that the government perhaps never factored in.

While market players argue their case with their usual, weak rationale, consumers go unrepresented; an average buyer from the middle- or lower-income groups ends up in losses, unable to even buy fruits during Ramadan that was never fixed. Prices were jacked up, artificially or otherwise, in the mandi. Its trickle-down effects were then seen in retail

or roadside markets, burdening the average buyer.

Despite the presence of a market committee to oversee commodity price ceilings, market monopolies continue to negatively impact prices that could help consumers to seek recourse against profiteers.

Furthermore, price lists are issued separately. Grocery rates were fixed by a district-level committee headed by the deputy commissioner, whereas prices of vegetables and fruits were fixed by the market committee.

Representatives from the Sindh agriculture department's bureau of supplies and prices were part of these mechanisms. Nominees of associations dealing in grocery, grains, meat, milk and pulses remained on board.

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The Market Committee, set up under the Agricultural Produce Markets Act 1939, issues daily price lists for fruits and vegetables after the auction at the mandi. Arthi or commission agents and men who control the entire auction of fruits and veggies before they reach roadside markets or established bazaars, and finally, consumers across the city. These masha khors are considered to be middlemen.

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Agha's century in vain as Bangladesh edge Pakistan to win ODI series 2-1

NEWS DESK: Salman Ali Agha's fighting century went in vain as Bangladesh defeated Pakistan by 11 runs in a nail-biting third ODI at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on Sunday, securing the three-match series 2-1.

Pakistan won the toss and opted to field, a decision that backfired as Bangladesh openers Saif Hassan and Tanzid Hasan added 105 runs for the first wicket. Shaheen Shah Afridi eventually broke the stand by dismissing Hassan for 38.

Tanzid, who went on to score a century, forged further partnerships with Najmul Hossain Shanto and Litton Das, each adding more than 50 runs. Shanto scored 107 off as many deliveries, including seven sixes and six boundaries, while Das and Tanzid added 105 runs for the first wicket. Afridi contributed 41 and 48 respectively, helping Bangladesh



post 290/5 in their 50 overs.

Haris Rauf was Pakistan's most successful bowler with three wickets, while Abrar Ahmed and

Afridi claimed one each. Debutant Ghazi Ghori and Abdul Samad added 50 runs for the fourth wicket before both fell quickly, leaving Paki-

stan at 82/5. Salman Ali Agha and another debutant, Saad Masood, then added 79 runs for the sixth wicket. Masood scored 38 before fall-

ing, while Faheem Ashraf contributed just nine. Agha, who was the only force keeping Pakistan in the hunt, held his nerve and

forged another crucial partnership with Afridi, scoring a brilliant century to take the score to 261.

At that stage, Pakistan needed 30 runs off 15 balls, but as victory seemed within reach, Bangladesh staged another fightback, breaking the partnership by taking the key wicket of Agha, who finished with 107 runs, including four towering sixes and nine boundaries.

Afridi kept Pakistan in contention with two sixes in the penultimate over, leaving 14 runs required in the final over. However, Rishad Hossain held his composure, conceding just two runs, and Pakistan were bowled out for 279 on the last ball of the match.

Afridi made a valiant 37 off 38 balls, but it was not enough as Bangladesh secured an 11-run win and the series 2-1.

Centurion Tanzid Hasan was named Player of the Match, while Nahid Rana was awarded Player of the Series for his eight wickets across the three-match contest.

South Africa tear through NZ to win first T20

NEWS DESK: A new-look South Africa scythed through New Zealand's batting lineup to comfortably win Sunday's first Twenty20 International by seven wickets, with 20 balls to spare.

The visitors' seam attack proved unplayable early on as World Cup finalists New Zealand were reduced to 36-5 before being dismissed for 91 in the 15th over, their 10th lowest total in T20s.

South Africa eased to 93-3 in response, with opener Connor Esterhuizen's unbeaten 45 off 48 balls ensuring they would claim early honours in the five-match series.

The 24-year-old was one of four South African players making their international debut in any format, alongside Rubin Hermann, Dian Forrester and Ngqobani Mokoena.

Teenage pace bowler Mokoena im-

pressed with the ball, exploiting unpr-edictable bounce at Mount Maun-gani's Bay Oval to take 3-26 off 3.3 overs.

The 19-year-old ripped through New Zealand's tail to ensure they didn't push their total past 100.

"It was quite cool making my debut. I just went out there and enjoyed it," Mokoena, 19, said. "The whole team was backing me and I was quite excited for it. I just stuck to my plans

and thank God it came off."

Fellow pacemen Gerald Coetzee and Othnel Baartman took two wickets each for South Africa.

The match came a week after New Zealand were beaten by India in the T20 World Cup final in Ahmedabad.

Only captain Mitchell Santner and all-rounder Jimmy Neesham were retained, with most of New Zealand's leading play-

ers rested.

Santner was the pick of their bowlers, taking 1-8 off four overs while Neesham top-scored with 26 before he was Mokoena's first victim.

South Africa's last match was their World Cup semi-final defeat to New Zealand.

The only Proteas survivor from that match was spinner Keshav Mahara, who's captain for this series and played his 50th T20 international.



F1 races in Bahrain, Saudi cancelled due to Iran war

NEWS DESK: Formula One races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have been cancelled as the Middle East war engulfs the region, motorsport's governing body the FIA announced on Saturday.

"It has been confirmed today that, after careful evaluations, due to the ongoing situation in the Middle East region, the Bahrain and Saudi Arabian Grands Prix will not take place in April," the International Automobile Federation (FIA) said in a statement.

"While several alternatives were considered, it was ultimately decided that no substitutions will be made in April.

"The decision has been taken in full consultation with Formula One Group, local promoters and our member clubs in the region."

Bahrain had been scheduled as the fourth Grand Prix this season to take place on April 10-12, with the Saudi race a week later.

The Gulf has been battered by two weeks of Iranian drone and missile attacks after the United States and Israel started their war on Iran.



as well as its large US recent events.

"Bahrain and Saudi Arabia are incredibly important to the ecosystem of our racing season, and I look forward to returning to both as soon as circumstances allow."

My sincere thanks to the promoters, our partners, and our colleagues across the championship for the collaborative and constructive approach that has led to this decision."

Kim Antonelli took pole position for Sunday's Chinese Grand Prix ahead of George Russell and Lewis Hamilton and was asked by AFP in Shanghai about the possible cancellation of the Middle East races.

"My thoughts, and I think it's the same for Lewis and George, are with the ones that are suffering from this situation," said the 19-year-old Mercedes driver.

Formula One and the FIA, they will handle the situation the best way possible in order to guarantee everyone's safety."

The Japanese Grand Prix will take place on March 27-29 with the following Formula One race now slated for May 1-3.

Formula 2, Formula 3 and F1 Academy rounds will also not take place during their scheduled slots in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Medvedev ousts Alcaraz to set up Indian Wells final against Sinner

NEWS DESK: Daniil Medvedev ended Carlos Alcaraz's perfect start to 2026, stunning the world number one 6-3, 7-6(7/5) on Saturday to book an Indian Wells title clash with Jannik Sinner.

Medvedev avenged losses to Alcaraz in back-to-back Indian Wells finals in 2023 and 2024, using an impressive serve display and aggressive play from the baseline to keep the Spanish star on the back foot throughout.

Super happy to beat someone as strong as he (is), Medvedev said. "It's a great feeling."

He'll have his work cut out for him again in Sunday's clash with four-time Grand Slam champion Sinner, who beat fourth-ranked Alexander Zverev 6-2, 6-4.

Alcaraz, 22, became the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam with his Australian Open triumph this year. He followed with a title in Qatar and took a 16-0 2026 record into Saturday's contest.

up to the challenge, last month's Dubai champion running Alcaraz ragged in the intense desert heat as he pushed his own ATP win streak to nine matches.

"I just felt like the long rallies, especially when you play against Daniil, that the rallies are long, that you have to increase all the power in almost every shot," Alcaraz said.

"So it feels like you're wasting extra energy after every shot. And with the heat, sometimes it's really tricky to

deal with all of that."

After Medvedev needed just one break of serve to pocket an opening set in which he didn't face a break point himself, Alcaraz made some adjustments broke first in the second for a 3-1 lead.

But Medvedev broke back immediately, and his control in the rallies had Alcaraz gasping after one long point in the ninth game.

"The first set... he just made it that bit of struggle a little bit," Alcaraz said. "In the second set, I started to feel much better. I realized what I have to do. I realized that I have to suffer, and accept it."

Alcaraz hung on to hold serve for a 5-4 lead in the second set, but he was unable to convert a pair of set points in the next game and they went to a tiebreaker that was all Medvedev.

"He's an amazing player with amazing shots, defense, attack, serve, return, everything," Medvedev said. "So you need to be at your best — and I was."

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Dowman makes history as Arsenal strike late

NEWS DESK: Max Dowman, 16, propelled Arsenal closer to the title by becoming the Premier League's youngest ever goalscorer in a dramatic 2-0 win against Everton on Saturday as Manchester City stumbled in a 1-1 draw at West Ham.

Mikel Arteta's men are edging towards a first league title in 22 years as their advantage over City, who have a game in hand, now stands at nine points.

Arsenal struggled to break down obstinate Everton until the teenage substitute turned the game in the final moments. Viktor Gyokeres finally found a way through in the 89th minute, with a helping hand from Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford who flapped at Dowman's cross.

The ensuing scenes of delirium on the pitch and in the stands underlined the significance of a fourth successive league win.

There was still time for Dowman to run the length of the pitch and slot into an empty net with Pickford nowhere to be seen after coming up for an Everton corner in stoppage time.



that they will be one of the least stylistically impressive champions in recent memory if they do take the crown.

But Arteta and company won't care about that ahead of a huge week.

The Gunners have a Champions League last-16 second leg against Bayer Leverkusen next week, with the tie level at 1-1, before heading to Wembley to face City in the League Cup final.

City's season is in danger of coming off the rails as West Ham hung on for a point that lifted them out of the relegation zone for the first time in three months.

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But the advantage lasted less than four minutes before Kostas Mavropanos headed in from a corner.

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ATC grants bail to 42 held over violent protests after Khameeni killing

NEWS DESK: An Anti-Terrorism Court in Islamabad on Monday granted bail to 42 individuals arrested in connection with vandalism and damage to property during protests following the killing of former Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Judge Abul Hasanat Muhammad Zulqarnain heard the case and approved the bail of all accused against surety bonds of Rs10,000 each.

Police had registered two separate cases against the accused — one at the Secretariat police station and the other at the Aabpara police station — under terrorism and other charges.

The protests in question erupted after Ali Khamenei was killed during strikes by the United States and Israel against the Islamic Republic. Crowds of people took to the streets across Pakistan, with the situation turning violent in many

Pakistan declines China's push for talks with Kabul

NEWS DESK: Pakistan has politely told China that it will continue with its existing policy of non-engagement with the Taliban regime, citing Kabul's failure to change its stance on the presence of the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other terrorist groups operating from Afghan soil.

The response effectively means Islamabad has declined the latest diplomatic effort by Beijing, a close ally, aimed at easing tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

China recently intensified its diplomatic engagement by dispatching its special envoy on Afghanistan to both Kabul and Islamabad as part of a broader effort to calm the simmering tensions between the two neighbours.

According to a statement issued by China's Foreign Ministry, Foreign Minister Wang Yi also held a telephone conversation with Afghanistan's acting Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi to discuss the situation.

China's Foreign Ministry said its special envoy on Afghanistan was currently shuttling between Afghanistan and Pakistan in an effort to mediate.

"China hopes both

At least 23 protesters were killed in clashes across the country, including 10 in Karachi, 11 in the northern city of Skardu — where the crowd torched a UN office and the army was deployed to control the situation — and two in the capital, Islamabad.

In Karachi, protesters chanted "Death to America! Death to Israel!" outside the consulate, where gunfire was heard and tear gas was fired in surrounding streets.

The demonstrators also set a vehicle ablaze outside the main gate and clashed with police, with stone-pelting intensifying as reinforcements were summoned from across the city.

Police responded with tear gas and firing. Police Surgeon Dr Sameeya Tariq confirmed in a statement that 96 others were injured in the violence.

Protesters also reiterated that it stands ready to continue making active efforts to facilitate reconciliation and ease tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Sources privy to the development told The Express Tribune that while Pakistan acknowledged China's sincere efforts to defuse the crisis, it made clear that a return to normal diplomatic engagement with Kabul was not possible without tangible changes on the ground.

According to the sources, Pakistani authorities conveyed to the Chinese side that Islamabad had already exhausted all diplomatic avenues before adopting its current policy toward the Taliban government. Pakistan, the sources said, had raised its concerns through bilateral channels as well as through friendly countries in an attempt to address what it described as the longstanding problem of the Taliban regime harbouring TTP and other militant groups.

However, sources here said meetings be-

Protesters also took to the streets in other parts of Pakistan, including Islamabad, Lahore, and Peshawar. In Lahore, police said hundreds gathered outside the US consulate, where small-scale clashes occurred when police fired tear gas to control the crowd.

In the federal capital, thousands of protesters, carrying black flags and chanting "Down with America!" and anti-Israel slogans, gathered in Aabpara Chowk and attempted to march towards the US Embassy despite heavy police deployment and containers placed to seal the Red Zone.

Protesters pelted stones at police, entered the restricted area and reached the gate of the Diplomatic Enclave. Police responded with tear gas and aerial firing, using armoured vehicles to push the protesters back to Aabpara Chowk.

between the Chinese envoy and Pakistan officials led Islamabad to conclude that the Taliban leadership had not altered its position.

According to officials familiar with the discussions, Taliban authorities reiterated that the Chinese envoy their longstanding position that Afghan territory was not being used against neighbouring countries.

Pakistani officials rejected that claim, citing what they described as ample evidence, including reports by the United Nations Security Council, which they say corroborate Islamabad's position regarding the presence and activities of TTP terrorists in Afghanistan.

Under these circumstances, Pakistan conveyed to Beijing that there was little room for meaningful diplomatic progress unless Kabul took concrete steps to address Islamabad's concerns.

At his weekly press briefing, Foreign Office spokesperson Fahir Andrabi confirmed that Pakistan would maintain its current policy toward Afghanistan despite calls from some friendly countries for engagement with the Taliban authorities.

Iran thanks Pakistan for 'strong solidarity' amid US-Israel aggression

NEWS DESK: Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Monday expressed gratitude to the government and people of Pakistan for their unwavering support amid aggression from the United States and Israel.

On social media platform X, in a post in Urdu, Araghchi wrote: "On this blessed and spiritual day, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the government and people of Pakistan for their full-throated expression of solidarity with the people and government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the face of aggression by America and the Zionist regime."

The attacks quickly escalated into a broader confrontation, with Iran retaliating through drone and missile strikes targeting US assets and allied interests across the Gulf.

The war has disrupted major shipping routes, most notably the Strait of Hormuz, a critical passage for global oil supplies, raising fears of a protracted regional conflict with



coordinated strikes on Iranian military sites, citing threats to regional security.

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far-reaching economic consequences.

Global markets and transportation networks have been severely impacted by the war. Oil prices have surged, with Brent crude crossing \$104 per barrel, while air travel in the Middle East has been disrupted due to restrictions on key hubs like Dubai, Doha, and Abu Dhabi.

Governments and international organisations have warned of cascading effects on energy se-

curity, aviation, and regional stability, while Iran has maintained that it is ready to defend itself for as long as necessary.

The conflict continues to pose a direct challenge to US influence in the region, testing alliances and underscoring the strategic importance of the Gulf.

Pakistan has maintained a cautious but supportive stance amid the US-Israel-Iran conflict, calling for restraint and dialogue while avoiding direct

military involvement.

Islamabad has expressed solidarity with Iran, with officials and public figures highlighting the historical, cultural, and economic ties between the two countries.

Pakistan's role has primarily been diplomatic, offering moral and political backing to Tehran while urging regional powers to de-escalate tensions and prevent further disruption to energy supplies and trade through the Gulf.

Child abuse cases in Pakistan rise 8% to 3,630 in 2025: Sahil

NEWS DESK: A total of 3,630 child abuse cases were reported across Pakistan in 2025, according to new figures released by Sahil, which monitors violence against children and women.

In a statement issued on Monday, the organisation said the cases had been reported in 81 different newspapers from across the four provinces, as well as Islamabad Capital Territory, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Sahil said the total represented an 8% increase, or 266 more cases, compared with 2024.

His data showed that girls accounted for 1,924 cases, or 53% of victims, while boys made up 1,625 cases, or 47%. Another 116 cases involved newborn babies.

The organisation said the figures meant that more than nine children were abused every day on average during 2025.

NEWS DESK: After already struggling with higher war risk and freight charges due to deteriorating geopolitical conditions stemming from the Middle East war, exporters are now facing Rs25-50 per kg in "ad hoc charges" on export cargo shipments by air.

Gerry's data Pakistan has introduced ad hoc charges of Rs50 per kg — excluding all applicable taxes — due to rising costs. The charges will be collected from the party presenting the cargo before acceptance at the warehouse. Shippers or their authorised representatives are required to furnish NTN or CNIC details at the time of acceptance.

Abduction was the most commonly reported category, with 1,107 cases, followed by sodomy with 596 cases and rape with 522. Other reported categories included 365 cases of missing children, 195 cases of attempted rape, 141 cases of attempted sodomy, 130 cases of gang sodomy, 108 cases of gang rape, 58 cases of murder after sexual abuse, and 53 cases of child marriage.

According to the report, children aged between 11 and 15 were the most vulnerable to abuse, with more boys than girls affected in that age group.

Sahil said acquaintances remained the most commonly involved in child sexual abuse cases.

Punjab accounted for 73% of the total reported child abuse cases, followed by Sindh with 21%.

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa with 4%, and 2% from Balochistan, federal areas, AJK and GB combined.

The organisation also said 82% of the reported child abuse cases were registered with police, calling it a positive sign of active policing.

Sahil also released figures on violence against women, saying it had monitored such cases for the past two years. It said 7,071

cases of gender-based violence (GBV) were reported across the country in 2025, covering categories including murder, suicide, abduction, rape, honour killing and torture.

The total also included a small number of cases involving transgender people.

According to Sahil, the 2025 figures showed a 34% rise in GBV cases.

The largest category was murder, with 1,546 cases, followed by 1,345 abductions and 1,169 cases of torture.

There were also 877 reported rape cases, 680 suicides, 449 cases of injury, 316 cases of harassment, 284 honour killings and 41 acid attacks.

The data showed that 32% of abusers in GBV cases were acquaintances, 18% were strangers, and 12% were husbands, while in 20% of cases, the abuser was not mentioned.

Exporters up in arms as air cargo charges raised



significant rise in the cost of transportation, ground support services and overall supply chain operations.

The charges have been introduced as temporary operational support to address the extraordinary rise in fuel-related costs and will remain subject to periodic review, with adjustments made as market conditions stabilise, the company said.

The Air Cargo Agents Association of Pakistan said Gerry's data imposed Rs50 per kg ad hoc charges on cargo shipments without prior consultation with industry stakeholders.

It advised its members on March 12 not to deposit export cargo at Gerry's warehouse until further notice. Members were also advised to refrain from booking

cargo with airlines handled through Gerry's data, including DHL, Saudia, Emirates and Turkish Airlines, till the matter was resolved.

Shipping charges Meanwhile, the Collector of Customs (HQ) Exports has been receiving representations from traders regarding the imposition of multiple ancillary charges by shipping lines or carriers and their agents.

In response, the Collector on Saturday directed shipping lines, carriers and their agents to refrain from non-transparent or opportunistic pricing practices, including imposition of excessive charges amid prevailing geopolitical situation.

In another circular, it said it had been reported by the trading community that war risk or emergency conflict surcharge was being imposed by shipping lines on consignments that had already departed or were already in transit prior to the escalation of hostilities on Feb 28.

It noted that retroactive billing of surcharges on cargo already in transit prior to Feb 28 was unjustified and required immediate corrective action.

War risk surcharge and emergency conflict surcharge range between \$3,500 and \$4,000 per twenty-foot equivalent unit, depending on the shipping line.