



BALUCHISTAN
BMC Final Merit List for MBBS & BDS ...
Page No 5



INTERNATIONAL
Missile debris kills 3rd Pakistani in UAE amid Iran war
Page No 3



NATIONAL
Chairperson says BISP not responsible for cash ...
Page No 8



SPORT
Sinner, Sabalenka secure maiden Indian Wells titles
Page No 7

First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan

Editor: Asim Khan.

QUETTA VOICE

Rs. 10.00 Vol. VII: No: 162

Email address: dquettavoices@gmail.com
Website: www.quettavoices.com

Wednesday 18, March, 2026



Thousands Return from Iran via Gwadar and Chagai: Balochistan CM Assures Full Support at Border Points

Staff Reporter:

Quetta: A significant number of travelers have returned from Iran over the past few weeks, entering through border districts in Balochistan, as provincial authorities continue to manage the influx with coordinated

efforts. According to a statement shared by Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti on X, a total of 5,615 individuals arrived between February 28 and last night through the districts of Gwadar and Chagai.

The Chief Minister noted that among those who crossed

into Pakistan were 2,117 Iranian drivers, along with 431 other foreign nationals, reflecting the continued movement of people across the border.

He praised the district administrations of Gwadar and Chagai for their effective handling of the situation, stating that officials ensured proper

care, assistance, and onward travel arrangements for all incoming passengers.

Bugti emphasized that the Government of Balochistan remains fully alert and committed to facilitating travelers at border crossing points.

"All necessary measures are in place to ensure safety,

comfort, and smooth processing," he said.

The development highlights the strategic importance of Balochistan's border regions, particularly Gwadar and Chagai,

in managing cross-border movement and humanitarian coordination.

Govt calls off Pakistan Day parade, associated events amid austerity measures

NEWS DESK:

The government on Tuesday said it will not hold the Pakistan Day parade and other ceremonial events on March 23 in light of the ongoing Gulf oil crisis and the resulting austerity measures announced by the government.

Pakistan Day — observed on March 23 every year — commemorates the passing of the Lahore Resolution on March 23, 1940, when the All-India Muslim League demanded a separate nation for the Muslims of the British Indian Empire.

A statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) stated that in the backdrop of the ongoing Gulf oil crisis and the consequent austerity measures announced by the government, it was decided that the Pakistan Day parade and associated ceremonial events shall not be held on March 23.

"The day shall, however, be commemorated with dignity and reverence through a simple flag-hoisting ceremony at appropriate levels," the statement said.

"This measure is being taken to ensure that the resilience and unwavering commitment of the nation to the ideals of Pakistan Day remain aligned with the broader austerity framework," it said.

"Ministries, divisions, and departments are advised to mark the occasion in a solemn and respectful manner, ensuring that the essence of the day is preserved despite the scaled-down celebrations," the PMO statement said.

Last week, the government had announced unprecedented austerity measures to cope with the situation that emerged due to the US-Israel war on Iran, which has led to a global oil crisis affecting various countries, including Pakistan.

The measures included a 50 per cent cut in fuel allowance for official vehicles and a four-day work week. It was also decided that 50pc of staff in the public sector would work from home; however, those providing essential services are exempt.

On Saturday, it was also decided that the employees of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and autonomous institutions under government patronage would see their salaries cut by five to 30pc, with the savings to be used for public relief.

Police Impersonators Busted in Quetta Robberies, Officer Among Accused

QASEEM SHAH:

Quetta: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Serious Crime Investigation, Dr. Sami Malik, has revealed a major breakthrough in a series of robberies carried out across the city, involving suspects impersonating law enforcement personnel.

According to Dr. Malik, the investigation uncovered a gang that conducted multiple robberies

targeting shops and residential houses while wearing uniforms resembling those of the Anti-Terrorism Force.

The suspects used these uniforms to deceive victims and avoid suspicion during their operations.

Police have arrested several accused individuals, and fake uniforms used in the crimes have been recovered.

He confirmed that the suspects are currently under investigation by senior officers, and further arrests are ex-



SSP Serious Crime Investigation, Dr. Sami Malik, addressing a press conference

pected as the probe continues.

In a separate but related case, Dr. Malik disclosed that a robbery involving millions of rupees from a shop in Quetta led to shocking revelations.

During the investigation, evidence pointed towards the involvement of a police official. After thorough interrogation, it was confirmed that the officer was complicit in the crime.

The accused official has now been taken into custody, and a case has been formally registered against him along with other suspects.

Dr. Malik further stated that the Serious Crime Investigation wing has arrested dozens of individuals involved in various criminal activities, including murder, attempted murder, and other violent offenses.

Authorities have reiterated their commitment to maintaining law and order and ensuring that no individual, regardless of position, is above the law.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

How Long Will Quetta Pay the Price for SSGC and Federal Negligence?

Editorial: Quetta is once again at the mercy of a winter crisis that has become all too familiar: low gas pressure, unannounced load shedding, and complete administrative silence. Every year, citizens are told to "bear with the situation" as temperatures fall and heaters, stoves, and geysers turn useless. Yet the authorities responsible — Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) and the federal energy managers — continue to operate without accountability.

A City Freezing While Authorities Look Away

The people of Balochistan are right to ask: Why must Quetta suffer the same crisis every winter while no structural reform is introduced? Why are consumers forced to pay heavy bills for a service that barely exists? And why do officials in Karachi and Islamabad continue to treat Balochistan's gas issues as a seasonal inconvenience rather than a governance failure?

D e s p i t e Balochistan being an energy-producing region, its residents struggle every winter for the very resource extracted from their own soil. This contradiction reflects a deep-rooted policy imbalance in the federation,

where Balochistan remains last on the priority list — not because of a shortage of resources, but because of a shortage of political will.

SSGC's Repeated Excuses and Decades of Mismanagement

The SSGC's performance adds another layer of frustration. Each year, the company offers the same explanations — "excessive demand," "pipeline pressure issues," "technical challenges."

Yet no one explains why these problems remain unresolved despite decades of complaints.

Why have there been no significant infrastructure upgrades? Why has the company failed to introduce a clear winter management plan for Quetta? Why is communication with consumers absent?

The unannounced nature of the load shedding exposes a complete disregard for public convenience. When outages are scheduled or announced, families cannot plan meals, heating, or even basic daily routines. Hospitals and clinics struggle to maintain warm environments for patients. Small businesses suffer.

And in a city where temperatures can drop below freezing, such negligence is not

just inconvenient — it is dangerous.

Federal Government's Weak Oversight and Balochistan's Low Priority

The federal government cannot escape responsibility either. Energy management is a national issue, and the pattern of winter mismanagement in Balochistan reflects weak oversight, poor planning, and an unfair allocation of resources. The silence of policymakers during these crises sends a clear message: Quetta's suffering is not a priority.

What Quetta needs is not another round of hollow statements. It needs a transparent winter gas plan, proper infrastructure investment, honest communication with the public, and real accountability for SSGC. Most importantly, it needs the federal government to finally treat Balochistan as an equal stakeholder in national resource management.

The people of Quetta have endured enough. Their patience should not be mistaken for acceptance. Without decisive action, this recurring winter crisis will continue to expose not only the inefficiencies of SSGC but also the federal government's unwillingness to address long-standing injustices.

The Looming threat of Climate Crisis in Pakistan



Sardar Mengal:

Climate change is unleashing its worst effects in the form of heavy rainfalls and disastrous floods. Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change had already warned multiple times in response to the contours of the crisis but we witnessed everything otherwise. Balochistan Vulnerable to Climate Crisis

It is noteworthy that almost 30 districts of Balochistan have been badly hit by the current climate emergency. People who were already drowning in man made disasters of inflation, poverty,

political crisis are currently drowning in a Natural disaster.

Nushki, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Bolan and Jhal Magsi received much of the inflections of flash floods.

People were left stranded to flow with the waves as seen in footages, circulating on social media. Unfortunately, disturbing pictures of dead bodies of children covered with mud, families who were sitting helplessly on debris of their houses and sinking

valuable of the people couldn't awaken the government from its stupor. Even more gloomily, the enraging waves of floods engulfing lives and property, converting everything into dust & debris and wreaking havoc all

around- couldn't merit breaking news on national media.

Prior disregard and later delayed responses have multiplied inflections of the catastrophe.

Loss of land communication has further isolated the stricken areas making true estimation of destruction more exhausting.

Timely decision and act can reduce the effect of Climate Change.

To stop ballooning problems into crisis; rescue, relief and rehabilitation operations should be carried out on full scale as the current pace is insufficient to meet the requirement. NDMA and PDMA need to reach out to the peripheral areas that are out of the

radar.

It's high time for the provincial and federal coalition government to pay special attention to those whose lives are at the stake.

Political parties need to rise above the traditional politics and launch concerted efforts to help out the calamity stricken at the earliest. Social welfare organisations should come forward to heal the lesions of suffering humans. On national level, there should be special discourse and discussion on settlement and rehabilitation of the affected people.

In addition to ensuring: re-building of eroded infrastructure, compensation for losses, clean water, adequate supply of food, there should be numer-

ous measures in pipeline to overcome the post-flood outcomes such as increased risk of infectious diseases. The flood-stricken area can become a breeding ground for many health related problems. Supplying preventive medicines and upholding precautionary measures can halt the onslaught of infectious diseases.

The state machinery in its all forms should come into play to navigate a safe passage out of this hurricane of climate emergency enveloping us now.

The author is a final year MBBS student at King Edward Medical University Lahore, Pakistan. He can be reached on twitter via @SardarMengal11.

IRC reaches to 29,000 out of school girls in Balochistan

By Shakoor Khan: International Rescue Committee (IRC) under its Teach & Educate Adolescent Girls with Community Help (TEACH) project reached out to 29,000 out-of-school girls of 5 districts of Balochistan including Pishin, Killa Abdullah, Nushki, Kharan and Chagai.

"IRC is striving hard to promote girls' education in Balochistan besides imparting vocational trainings on financial literacy and trades to make them financially independent," said Shareef Mengal, Head of IRC Balochistan during a policy dialogue titled "Improving future of girl's education in Balochistan held in collaboration with UK aid at local hotel here.

Balochistan Education Minister Naseebullah Mari was the chief guest while representatives from the Education ministry, Directorate of Special Education,

Literacy, Non-Formal Education & Human Rights Department, Balochistan Assessment and Examination Commission, Balochistan Textbook Board, Policy Planning Implementation Provincial Institute of Teachers Education, Education Support Programme, Global Partnership of Education, German Agency for International Cooperation, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Society for Community Strengthening and Promotion of Education, Balochistan, Institute for Development Studies and Practices, Japan International Cooperation Agency also attended the event.

The event hosted conversations with mul-

multiple stakeholders including education experts and government functionaries on the barriers faced by girls in the province in pursuing their education and discussing possible solutions to combat those barriers.

Salient feature of the project IRC

While highlighting the salient feature of the project IRC chief in Balochistan Shareef Mengal said under the 'Girls Learn' stream of the project, 22,000 girls received classes on Package A, B and C of non-formal curriculum, of them 4000 enrolled in mainstream formal schooling system.

Under 'Girls Earn' stream of the project, 7000 girls completed Package A of the non-formal curriculum, out of these 7000 girls, 5000 received training on financial literacy and business development planning, 2400 girls received training on 8 vocational trades and toolkits and 250 girls received financial grants to start a business.

Naseebullah Mari, Education Minister Balochistan, on the occasion urged that "We must do our part to remove the barriers faced by girls in the region so that every girl can pursue her education and become a valuable member of society".

"The Government is making all out efforts to combat the low literacy rate which has affected

girls from all ethnic groups, and socioeconomic backgrounds," he said. "We are committed to assist and contribute to building economically prosperous, and educational and vocational Balochistan, so every child has access to education.

He however welcomed the support extended by the International Rescue Committee for providing educational and vocational training opportunities, saying he is very grateful for the on-ground initiative of community-based schools in Balochistan."

Abdul Rauf Baloch - Secretary Secondary Education on the occasion appreciated the contributions of IRC for girls' education in Balochistan.

He shared that education is a complex subject which cannot be discussed without WASH, health and other facilities.

This makes it a responsibility of all relevant departments and stakeholders who should play their role effectively.

Zain Ul Abedin Khan, Deputy Director Programs, IRC, in his remarks said that "We as a society need to commit to prioritize and focus on Girls' Education through adequate resources. Girls' education in Balochistan is one of the biggest challenges faced by the country and to deal with it we must work with innovative methods like Non-Formal Education." He further added

that, "Over the years, we have realized that if girls are unable to reach school, all stakeholders need to fill the gap and provide access to long learning opportunities like productive skills and life-skills within communities.

Girl's education is correlated with lower rates of poverty

The panel discussions established an opportunity for the policy makers and practitioners to understand that girl's education is correlated with lower rates of poverty and improved health outcomes. While stimulating dialogue, the stakeholders pledged to work together to eradicate the barriers to girls'

education by providing gender inclusive facilities and quality of education.

The event was a culmination of three sessions where the first was hosted to discuss the barriers faced by girls in pursuing their education.

The panelists of the first session classified the barriers into 3 categories: Cultural, Economic and Service Delivery. The panelists recommended Accelerated Learning Programs (ALPs) as a viable option while integrated with skill-based trainings and digitalized education.

Initiatives to combat the barriers to education

The second session was focused on sustainable initiatives to combat the barriers with the help of Non-Formal Education in bridging the gap between primary and secondary schooling.

Chairperson of the session, Mr. Abdul Khalique - Chief Planning Officer Policy, Planning, and Implementation Unit welcomed the participants and emphasized the importance of solutions to these barriers.

Mr. Ashraf Gichki - Director Literacy and Non-Formal Education shared contribution of NFE department toward provision of second chance of education to out-of-school children.

Personal struggles in overcoming the barriers to education

The third and final session gave the TEACH clients an opportunity to express their personalized struggles in overcoming barriers to education.

Anam - client of TEACH project from Pishin shared that after joining TEACH ALP center,

she can read books and newspapers. Simra from the same district shared that her parents don't allow travelling long distances to school but after opening of ALP center at doorstep, she was able to join the classroom for first time in her life. Haleema from Nushki district shared that her mother is the only breadwinner of home and works at households of others to earn income. Haleema shared that she is the only child of her family who can read, thanks to joining ALP center.



Gamers recoil as Nvidia touts new graphics boost

NEWS DESK: A new graphics-boosting AI technology touted by chip giant Nvidia on Monday as a "GPT moment" for gaming has been blasted by players denouncing the "slopification" of favourite titles.

Nvidia has surged in recent years from a creator of graphics chips for gaming to the world's most valuable company, as its technology has proved crucial for powering generative artificial intelligence.

That technology is set to be recycled into games in the upcoming generation of Nvidia's Deep Learning Super Sampling (DLSS) technology, which uses AI to improve graphics in real time, the company said at its annual developer conference in California's San Jose.

Originally used to upscale images to higher resolutions, current versions pump up the quality and realism of visual elements like reflections, shadows and highlights.

"DLSS 5 empowers game developers to deliver a new level of photoreal computer graphics previously only achieved in Hollywood visual effects,"



Nvidia said in a statement. It called the update set to arrive in autumn its "most significant breakthrough in computer graphics" since DLSS' creation in 2018.

"DLSS 5 is the GPT moment for graphics — blending hand-crafted rendering with generative AI to deliver a dramatic leap in visual realism," chief executive Jensen Huang said.

The resource-intensive tech will only work with Nvidia's most powerful and expensive graphics cards.

A minute-long video published by Nvidia showed before and after shots of several popular games that could benefit from the technology, including Resident Evil Requiem, Starfield and Harry Potter tie-in Hogwarts Legacy.

The images showed characters modified with more dramatic lighting and intense colour to produce a near-photorealistic look, but also with details changed, such as fuller lips and larger eyes on female faces.

Many online commenters quickly recoiled, lumping the sup-

posed graphics upgrade in with low-effort "AI slop" images that infest social networks.

"Now your game can look like an AI-generated image, wow!" one viewer posted on Nvidia's YouTube channel, which accumulated almost 11,000 mostly negative comments in 14 hours.

"Great, they turned DLSS into a TikTok filter," another wrote.

Posters on X and Bluesky were deeply divided, with many warning that adding more AI to graphics would keep players from experiencing the visual art of games as developers intended.

"Artists are rightly going to be pissed about this," gaming podcaster Will Smith wrote on Bluesky.

"Yassifying (Resident Evil protagonist) Grace changes the tone and themes of this game," he added, referring to modifying women's images to make them stereotypically feminine or sexualised.

In a response on YouTube, Nvidia said that "game developers have full, detailed artistic control over DLSS's effects to ensure they maintain their game's unique aesthetic."

"This is a very early look" at a technology that will be "under our artists' control" and "totally optional" for players, "Starfield" developer Bethesda posted on X.

Nigeria suicide attacks kill 23, wound more than 100

NEWS DESK: Multiple explosions staged by suspected suicide bombers rocked the north-eastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri, killing at least 23 people and wounding more than 100 others, police said on Tuesday.

The three blasts, which struck on Monday evening, came after an attack on a military post overnight Sunday on Monday, which authorities blamed on suspected militants.

Combined with the attack on the military position the evening prior and a mosque bombing in December, the assaults have wrecked a peaceful stretch in the city, which had become a relative oasis of calm as Nigeria's long-running insurgency was pushed to the rural hinterlands.

Fighters from Boko Haram and rival group Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have recently stepped up attacks in northeastern Nigeria.

Their 16-year campaign to establish their rule in the country has killed more than 40,000 people and displaced around two million.

Preliminary investigation reveals that the incidents were carried out by suspected suicide bombers," police spokesman Nahum Kenneth Daso said in a statement.

"Regrettably, a total of twenty-three (23) persons lost their lives, while one hundred and eight (108) others sustained varying degrees of injuries," he added.

A militia member told AFP the death toll from the explosions in the city could be as high as 31.

An AFP reporter at a city hospital on Monday evening saw dozens of wounded people seeking treatment, as well as multiple bodies covered by sheets on the sidewalk outside.

The attackers struck the city's main market, the gate of the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital and an area around the city's Post Office flyover.

Maha Mohammed, 31, who escaped the market blast, said he initially heard two explosions and saw panicked people running.

"At that moment, we were not sure what had happened. But after about two or three minutes, other people who were running along the road started shouting that it was a bomb at the market entrance."

"Many of them ran toward the Post Office area because the market entrance and the Post Office are not far apart. Unfortunately, as they were running towards Post Office, the person who had the explosive device ran into the crowd while people were still trying to escape," said Mohammed.

"Barbaric attacks" Police said in the early Tuesday morning statement that "normalcy has been fully restored in the affected areas" and that security forces have increased their "presence and surveillance across Maiduguri and its environs to prevent any further occurrences."



US does 'not need' help from allies on Iran, Trump says

NEWS DESK: US President Donald Trump, whose call for assistance from allies to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to oil traffic has largely been rebuffed, said on Tuesday that US forces "no longer need" military help in the Iran war.

"Because of the fact that we have had such Military Success, we no longer need, or desire, the NATO Countries' assistance, WE NEVER DID!" Likewise, Japan, Australia, or South Korea," Trump posted on his Truth Social network, adding: "WE DO NOT NEED THE HELP OF ANYONE!"

Earlier in the day, Israel said it had killed Iran's powerful national security chief, Ali Larjani, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calling him the leader of "the gang of gangsters" that runs the Islamic republic.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said Larjani was "eliminated last night", although this has not been confirmed by Iran. "This morning

we eliminated Ali Larjani, the boss of the Revolutionary Guards, which is the gang of gangsters that actually runs Iran," Netanyahu said in a televised statement. He said the overthrow of Iran's authorities by the people "will not happen all at once, it will not happen easily. But if we persist in this — we will give them a chance to take their fate into their own hands." If confirmed, Larjani's death would be a huge blow to Iran's ruling system more than two weeks into the war engulfing the Middle East, which has crushed by authorities, with rights groups reporting thousands killed in the crackdown.

Larjani, 68, has been described as a key pillar in the ruling system, close to the late ayatollah and central to the government's nuclear policy and strategic diplomacy over decades.

At first we defended them and opposed the war," he said. "But once they began

Missile debris kills 3rd Pakistani in UAE amid Iran war

NEWS DESK: Another Pakistani national was killed due to "falling debris" following the interception of a ballistic missile in the United Arab Emirates, the country's media office said on Tuesday.

The development marks the third instance of a Pakistani national losing their life in an attack in the UAE during the ongoing war between Iran, the US, and Israel.

The Abu Dhabi Media Office, in a statement on X, said that the authorities "responded to an incident involving falling debris in the Baniyas area,

following the interception of a ballistic missile by air defence systems."

"The incident resulted in the death of a Pakistani national," it said.

The Pakistan Embassy in the UAE, in a statement on X, expressed sorrow at the death and said it was in "close coordination" with local authorities.

The embassy said that it will extend "all possible support to the bereaved family," and added that the embassy will "facilitate the repatriation process at the earliest possible time."

"In this hour of grief, we share in the family's pain and offer our deepest condolences and prayers," the statement added.

Meanwhile, the UAE's Ministry of Defence said its air defences were "responding to incoming missiles and drone attacks originating from Iran."

The ministry confirmed that the "sounds heard in scattered areas across the country are results of air defence systems intercepting ballistic missiles, as well as fighter jets intercepting drones and loitering munitions."

In light of the prevailing situation, the



Gulf states press US to 'neutralise Iran for good' as Hormuz crisis deepens

NEWS DESK: Gulf Arab states did not ask the US to go to war with Iran, but some are now urging it not to stop short by leaving the Islamic Republic still able to threaten the Gulf's oil lifeline and the economies that depend on it, three Gulf sources told Reuters.

At the same time, these sources and five Western and Arab diplomats said Washington "was pressing Gulf states to join the US-Israeli war."

According to three of them, President Donald Trump wants to show regional backing for the campaign, to bolster its international legitimacy as well as support at home.

"There is a wide feeling across the Gulf that Iran has crossed the red line with the Gulf country," said Abdulaziz Sager, chairman of the Saudi-based Gulf Research Center and familiar with government thinking.

At first we defended them and opposed the war," he said. "But once they began

directing strikes at us, they became an enemy," Iran retaliates against US bases in the Strait of Hormuz — the artery carrying about a fifth of global oil and underpinning Gulf economic growth.

The attacks have reinforced Gulf fears that leaving Iran with any means to defend itself via arms or manufacturing capacity could embolden it to hold the region's energy lifeline hostage whenever tensions rise.

As the war entered its third week with US and Israeli airstrikes intensifying against civilian infrastructure and Iran firing at US bases and economic targets across the Gulf, a Gulf source said the prevailing mood among leaders was "unmistakable: that Trump should comprehensively degrade Iran's military capacity."

The alternative, the source said, was living under "constant threat."

Unless Iran was severely weakened, he said, it would continue to hold the region "to ransom."

Iran has often viewed its Arab Gulf neighbours — "close allies of the US that host American military bases — with deep suspicion, even if relations with Qatar and Oman have generally been less fraught.



AIU organizes intellectual session on Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH), highlights importance of studying Prophet's life

ISLAMABAD (INP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) has organized an important intellectual session on Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH), highlighting the importance and necessity of studying the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman, Department of Seerat Studies, Dr. Shah Moeen-ud-Din Hashmi stated that understanding Islam in its true spirit, gaining knowledge of Allah's attributes and access to the true message of the Holy Qur'an is not possible without studying the Seerat of the Prophet (PBUH).

He emphasized that the blessed life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is in fact a practical interpretation of the Qur'an, without which a complete and correct understanding of Islam cannot be achieved.

In his lecture titled "The Need and Importance of Studying Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH)", he stressed that Seerat not only forms the foundation of Islamic knowledge but also presents a comprehensive code of life for humanity.

Dr. Hashmi further stated that if individuals and societies align their lives with the principles of Seerat, they can build a balanced and exemplary society and achieve success in both this world and the Hereafter.

He urged students to study Seerat deeply and make it a part of their practical lives. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Librarian Syed Ghulam Kazim Ali, in his vote of thanks said that the Holy Prophet of Ramadan is a blessed and sacred period with a special connection to Allah Almighty. He remarked that although a sense of sadness is felt at the end of this sacred month.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting regarding restructuring of PARC.

PMD predicts rainfall, thunderstorms in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has predicted rainfall and thunderstorms in Karachi, in the days leading up to Eid-ul-Fitr 2026.

According to the PMD forecast, a heavy western weather system is expected to enter Karachi by this evening or night.

The Met Office has also forecast strong winds in the city from tonight, with rain accompanied by thunder and gusty winds expected over the next two days. There is also a possibility of hailstorms in some areas. Officials said the western system is likely to bring intermittent rainfall to Karachi over a two-day period, which may lead to a drop in temperatures.

Meanwhile, the National Disaster Management

Punjab issues security plan during Eidul Fitr celebrations

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab Home Department has issued detailed security directives to ensure safety during Eidul Fitr celebrations across the province.

The circular mandated a three-tier security system at all places of worship. Authorities have instructed strict monitoring of prayer sites, deployment of additional security personnel, and the use of a single main entrance at each location.

Special security posts staffed with officers in protective gear will be established at key points, while lady police personnel will assist female worshippers. Walk-through gates, CCTV cameras, and metal detectors will be used to conduct thorough security checks, and parking areas will be allocated at a safe distance from prayer sites.

The directives also emphasize combing operations around mosques and madrasas, with special attention to hotels, restaurants, Eid bazaars, and public areas.

Authorities will liaise with religious leaders to maintain interfaith harmony and take immediate action against objectionable speeches or misuse of loudspeakers.

Monitoring of beggars, strict supervision of banned or fourth-schedule individuals, and effective traffic management near worship sites have also been ordered. Public display of firearms will be banned province-wide.

off and replenishing groundwater. At the policy level, Pakistan has also moved to expand rainwater harvesting. In July 2025, the federal cabinet approved the Green Building Code and the Rainwater Harvesting Code.

The rainwater code applies to residential, commercial and industrial buildings and requires systems to collect, filter and reuse rainwater.

In Punjab, authorities have also announced a plan to build 358 underground water tanks, including 34 in urban areas and 324 roadside tanks, alongside recharge wells.

Experts say that combining large-scale planning with low-cost local initiatives could help Pakistan reduce flooding, recharge rainwater ponds and aquifers and make better use of monsoon rainfall in the years ahead.

Media reports have highlighted the work of teacher-activist Usman Abbasi, widely known as Teacher Usman, who has helped build rainwater ponds and recharge wells through community initiatives aimed at reducing run-

KP set to mark Pakistan Day with historic afforestation drive

PESHAWAR (INP): The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) is set to mark Pakistan Day with a historic afforestation drive, aiming to plant a record one million saplings across the province in a single day.

The plantation campaign will be formally launched at 9 a.m. on March 23, simultaneously across all districts.

The initiative is a "Green Khyber Pakhtunkhwa." Spokesperson for the Department of Climate Change, Forests, Environment and Wildlife, Latifur Rehman, told APP that the initiative is being carried out on the directives of Secretary Junaid Khan, in line with

the Chief Minister's special vision to promote environmental sustainability. He said the initiative would be a first-of-its-kind record in Pakistan's history, symbolizing both environmental stewardship and national unity.

The government has decided to transform this year's Pakistan Day into a "green pledge" to ensure a sustainable future for coming generations.

Highlighting the urgency of the initiative, he noted that climate change has emerged as a major global challenge, with Pakistan among the most affected countries. Tree plantation, he

added, is vital for improving air quality, maintaining ecological balance, and ensuring sustainable development.

For the campaign, saplings are being supplied to all districts from official forest nurseries. The plantation drive will continue uninterrupted until the last sapling is planted.

To ensure transparency and effective monitoring, a dedicated software application and a central control dashboard have been established.

Through this system, real-time data, including photos and live videos of plantation activities, will be transmitted to the central monitoring unit. Offline data upload options have also been introduced for remote areas with limited internet access.

The campaign will witness active participation from government departments, educational institutions, district administrations, motorway police, Pakistan Railways, local communities, and the armed forces, making it a broad-based national effort.

Officials emphasized that if every citizen takes responsibility for nurturing even a single tree, the initiative could lay the foundation for a greener, healthier, and more sustainable Pakistan.

Meeting reviews, finalize security arrangements for Eid-ul-Fitr in DI Khan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (INP): The Divisional Intelligence Coordination Committee (DICC) met here at the Commissioner's Office to review and finalize security arrangements for Eid-ul-Fitr.

The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Dawood Khan and attended by Regional Police Officer Syed Ashfaq Anwar, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Nasir Khan, Assistant Commissioner (Political and Development) Sajjad Baloch, along with senior officials of police and other law enforcement agencies.

On this occasion, special prayers were offered for the martyrs of police and other law enforcement agencies who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty, as well as for the speedy recovery of injured personnel.

The participants paid tribute to their sacrifices and reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining peace. During the meeting, the forum was briefed on the comprehensive security plan for Eid-ul-Fitr.

The special focus was being given to maintaining law and order during the last ten days of Ramadan, particularly for Khatim-ul-Quran gatherings in Masjid and the Youm-e-Quds procession on the last Friday. The officials reviewed security measures in line with provincial government directives, assuring that strict arrangements would be in place to enable citizens to participate in religious activities without fear.

The forum was further informed that detailed security plans had also been prepared for Chand Raat and Eid-ul-Fitr. Additional personnel from police and other law enforcement agencies would be deployed at sensitive locations, including Masjid, Imambarahs, and key highways.

Pakistan targets military installations in Kabul, Nangarhar under Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq: Tarar

ISLAMABAD, March 17 (INP): Federal Minister for Information Ataulah Tarar has said that military installations in Kabul and Nangarhar were targeted during recent airstrikes under Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq.

The minister said that the Pakistan Army carried out successful airstrikes on the night of March 16, specifically targeting locations in Kabul and Nangarhar that were involved in supporting terrorist activities.

Meeting reviews, finalize security arrangements for Eid-ul-Fitr in DI Khan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (INP): The Divisional Intelligence Coordination Committee (DICC) met here at the Commissioner's Office to review and finalize security arrangements for Eid-ul-Fitr.

The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Dawood Khan and attended by Regional Police Officer Syed Ashfaq Anwar, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Nasir Khan, Assistant Commissioner (Political and Development) Sajjad Baloch, along with senior officials of police and other law enforcement agencies.

On this occasion, special prayers were offered for the martyrs of police and other law enforcement agencies who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty, as well as for the speedy recovery of injured personnel.

The participants paid tribute to their sacrifices and reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining peace. During the meeting, the forum was briefed on the comprehensive security plan for Eid-ul-Fitr.

The special focus was being given to maintaining law and order during the last ten days of Ramadan, particularly for Khatim-ul-Quran gatherings in Masjid and the Youm-e-Quds procession on the last Friday. The officials reviewed security measures in line with provincial government directives, assuring that strict arrangements would be in place to enable citizens to participate in religious activities without fear.

The forum was further informed that detailed security plans had also been prepared for Chand Raat and Eid-ul-Fitr. Additional personnel from police and other law enforcement agencies would be deployed at sensitive locations, including Masjid, Imambarahs, and key highways.

Pakistan targets military installations in Kabul, Nangarhar under Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq: Tarar

ISLAMABAD, March 17 (INP): Federal Minister for Information Ataulah Tarar has said that military installations in Kabul and Nangarhar were targeted during recent airstrikes under Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq.

The minister said that the Pakistan Army carried out successful airstrikes on the night of March 16, specifically targeting locations in Kabul and Nangarhar that were involved in supporting terrorist activities.

"Technical support infrastructure and ammunition storage facilities at two locations in Kabul were effectively destroyed.

The visible secondary detonations after the strikes clearly indicate the presence of large ammunition depots," Tarar wrote on X.

"In Nangarhar, four installations used by the Afghan Taliban administration were targeted," Tarar added.

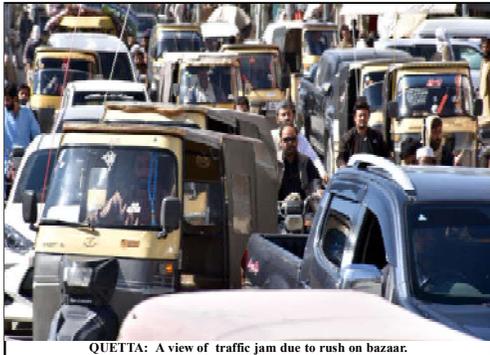
The minister said these sites included logistics hubs, weapons storage, and technical infrastructure, all of which were completely destroyed.

According to the minister, the strikes were "precise" and limited to infrastructure used by the Afghan Taliban regime to support its "multiple terrorist proxies", including the Fitna Al Khawarij and Fitna Al Hindustani - terms Pakistani authorities use for Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), respectively.

Tarar added that Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq to safeguard Pakistani citizens against terrorism waged by Master Terror Proxy will continue until the desired objectives are fully achieved.

"False claims made by the propagandists Taliban regime cannot be fool the Afghans and the world from their heinous actions supporting and sponsoring terrorism in the region," he said.

The Afghan Taliban authorities in Kabul said the strikes hit a drug treatment centre, killing civilians - a claim Pakistani security sources rejected as "ridiculous".



QUETTA: A view of traffic jam due to rush on bazaar.

Governor Mandokhail Calls for Modernization of BPS, Stresses Need for Exam Hall

NEWS DESK: Balochistan Governor Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has expressed serious concern over the absence of a large examination hall at the Balochistan Public Service Commission (BPS), calling it a major gap in the province's top competitive examination body.

During a meeting with BPS Chairman Justice (R) Mehta Kalash Nath Kohli at the Governor House in Quetta, the governor emphasized that the commission plays a crucial role in recruiting competent and capable officers for various government departments across Balochistan.

He described the BPS as a beacon of hope for talented youth, stating that thousands of candidates rely on the institution for fair career opportunities. He stressed that every member of the commission must ensure strict merit, transparency, and impartiality in recruitment so deserving candidates receive their rightful positions.

The meeting reviewed key issues including the performance of BPS, lack of a large examination hall, financial challenges, recruitment procedures, and future reforms. The governor underlined the urgent need for financial strengthening of the commission to enable expansion of its infrastructure and operationally.

Mandokhail said that the construction of a modern and spacious examination hall is essential to facilitate candidates and improve the efficiency of the examination process. He noted that better infrastructure would help BPS conduct exams more effectively and professionally.

Highlighting unemployment-related challenges in Balochistan, the governor stated that transparent and merit-based recruitment through BPS can significantly reduce youth frustration and joblessness in the province.

He also urged the BPS chairman to further improve transparency, efficiency, and institutional performance, adding that reforms in the commission would enhance public trust in government institutions.



The meeting reviewed key issues including the performance of BPS, lack of a large examination hall, financial challenges, recruitment procedures, and future reforms. The governor underlined the urgent need for financial strengthening of the commission to enable expansion of its infrastructure and operationally.

Quetta Commissioner Reviews Cleanliness and Security Arrangements Ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr

QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Shahzab Khan Kakar chaired a high-level meeting to review cleanliness and security arrangements in the city ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehruallah Badini, Administrator Metropolitan Corporation (MTC) Zahid Khan, Operational Manager Saaf Quetta Project Muhammad Kamran, DDS Metropolitan Corporation Muhammad Anwar Khan, Assistant Commissioner (Police) M u h a m m a d Kaleemullah, and other officials.

During the session, the commissioner received a detailed briefing from representatives of the Saaf Quetta Project regarding ongoing sanitation operations in the city. He inquired about the current cleanliness situation, door-to-door waste collection, availability of machinery, and field workforce performance.

Commissioner Shahzab Khan Kakar expressed concern that the expected results from the Saaf Quetta Project have not yet been achieved, directing the management to improve planning and administrative performance to deliver better outcomes and ensure long-term improvements in the city's sanitation system.

Officials informed the meeting that the project currently has 36 to 38 garbage collection vehicles, with 20 additional vehicles expected to be added soon.

They also noted that sanitation coverage is being expanded in Zone One areas, including Multani Mohalla and Kasi Qila, although recovery-related challenges persist in some localities.

The commissioner instructed that a proper survey should be conducted, and households should be provided with waste collection bags along with a reasonable monthly fee structure to strengthen the door-to-door collection system.

He observed that citizens are generally willing to pay Rs. 250 to Rs. 500 per month, emphasizing the need to improve recovery mechanisms.

Special arrangements for Eid-ul-Fitr were also discussed in detail. Saaf Quetta representatives stated that additional sanitation staff will be deployed at all major Eidgahs and Imamabargahs, with around 15 to 20 workers assigned to each location for cleaning, sweeping, and lime application.



The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehruallah Badini, Administrator Metropolitan Corporation (MTC) Zahid Khan, Operational Manager Saaf Quetta Project Muhammad Kamran, DDS Metropolitan Corporation Muhammad Anwar Khan, Assistant Commissioner (Police) M u h a m m a d Kaleemullah, and other officials.

Provincial Minister, IG Police Hold Key Meeting on Law and Order in Barkhan and Across Balochistan

QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Public Health Engineering (PHE) Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetrani held his first formal meeting with the Inspector General (IG) Police, where both leaders discussed the overall law and order situation in Balochistan, with a special focus on Barkhan district.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed key challenges related to maintaining peace in Barkhan, including the rising incidents of crime, public safety concerns, and measures to strengthen the security system.

The importance of improved coordination between law enforcement agencies and district administration was emphasized to ensure sustainable peace in the region.

Speaking on the occasion, Provincial Minister Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetrani stated that maintaining peace in Barkhan is a top priority for the government, and no negligence will be tolerated in this regard. He directed authorities to take indiscriminate action against criminal elements and ensure the protection of life and property of citizens at all costs.

He further assured that the government will provide full support and necessary resources to ensure the protection of life and property of citizens at all costs.

He assured that all available resources are being utilized to maintain peace, and operations against criminal elements are being intensified.

Both sides agreed to adopt a joint strategy for maintaining law and order, strengthen coordination among institutions, and continue effective measures to provide a safe and secure environment for citizens across Barkhan and the province.



Speaking on the occasion, Provincial Minister Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetrani stated that maintaining peace in Barkhan is a top priority for the government, and no negligence will be tolerated in this regard. He directed authorities to take indiscriminate action against criminal elements and ensure the protection of life and property of citizens at all costs.

Quetta Deputy Commissioner Reviews Security and Arrangements for Upcoming Polio Campaign

QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehruallah Badini chaired an important meeting of the District Polio Eradication Committee (DPEC) to review security and administrative arrangements for the upcoming anti-polio campaign starting from April 13.

The meeting was attended by District Health Officer Dr. Aamir Khan, Mandokhail Deputy DHO Dr. Babar Shahid, WHO Divisional Coordinator Dr. Safdar Zarghoun, and officials from other relevant departments.

During the meeting, officials provided a detailed briefing on the performance of teams in previous polio campaigns and achievement of targets. It was informed that during the upcoming campaign, a target has been set to vaccinate over 420,000 children across the district, with 1,400 security personnel deployed to ensure the safety of vaccination teams.



The meeting was attended by District Health Officer Dr. Aamir Khan, Mandokhail Deputy DHO Dr. Babar Shahid, WHO Divisional Coordinator Dr. Safdar Zarghoun, and officials from other relevant departments.

BMC Final Merit List for MBBS & BDS Admissions Expected Soon

HEALTH DESK: QUETTA: The final merit list for MBBS and BDS admissions at Bolan Medical College (BMC), Quetta is expected to be uploaded soon, bringing relief to many students waiting for confirmation of their admission status.

A few weeks earlier, the college had already uploaded the tentative merit list for the academic session 2025-26, which included district-wise

process, the release of the final merit list has been slightly delayed because a few Deputy Commissioners have not yet submitted the complete student data after conducting interviews in their respective districts.

The officer said that the delay is mainly linked to the ongoing law and order situation in some areas of the province, which has slowed down the submission of verified

allocations in government medical colleges of Balochistan. Officials stated that once the remaining district data is received and reviewed, the BMC final merit list will be uploaded on the official website, confirming the admission of selected candidates.

Advice for Candidates
Students who applied for admission are advised to regularly



records from certain districts. **Final Verification in Progress**
The interviews conducted in home districts and the verification of candidate data are part of the final review process before confirming MBBS and BDS seats.

Delay Due to Pending District Data
According to an administrative officer involved in the admission

check the official website of Bolan Medical College for updates regarding the final merit list announcement.

After the list is published, selected candidates will be required to complete document verification and admission formalities within the given deadline to secure their seats in MBBS or BDS programs.

PMDC MDCAT 2026: Changes, Issues And Way Forward

HEALTH DESK: The MDCAT 2026 Pakistan exam is emerging as a major shift in the country's medical admission system. With new policies introduced by PMDC, students can expect improvements in transparency and structure—but several longstanding concerns still remain.

For aspirants, staying updated with the latest PMDC MDCAT 2026 updates is just as crucial as academic preparation.

– Lack of transparency in result checking
– Confusion in the MDCAT merit formula
– Intense competition due to limited medical seats
– Unified MDCAT syllabus across provinces

– Biometric verification for candidates
– Improved security and anti-cheating measures
– These steps aim to rebuild trust in the MDCAT examination system.

– To address criticism, PMDC has implemented several MDCAT reforms in Pakistan, focusing on fairness and

Development of a standard question bank
– Biometric verification for candidates
– Improved security and anti-cheating measures
– Unified MDCAT syllabus across provinces

– These steps aim to rebuild trust in the MDCAT examination system.

– To address criticism, PMDC has implemented several MDCAT reforms in Pakistan, focusing on fairness and

under discussion and could shape future exams.

– Improve exam management
– Reduce logistical issues
– Ensure fairness across regions

– Despite these updates, the MDCAT exam pattern 2026 remains unchanged:
– 180 MCQs
– No negative marking

– Subjects: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, English, Logical Reasoning
– MDCAT Pakistan Issues: Challenges Still Face Students
While reforms have been introduced, several MDCAT system problems in Pakistan continue to affect students.

A key issue is the lack of clear syllabus guidelines, leaving students confused about their depth and exam expectations. Other major concerns include:

– Paper leaks and weak exam security

Oil climbs over 2% as Iran war halts supply

NEWS DESK: Oil prices rose more than 2% on Tuesday, reversing some of the previous session's losses, on worries about supply with the Strait of Hormuz mostly shut and United States allies re-buffing calls to send warships to help tankers move through the vital waterway.

Brent futures jumped \$2.74, or 2.7%, to \$102.95 a barrel by 03:57 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude gained \$2.45, or 2.6%, to \$95.95.

In the previous session, Brent futures settled 2.8% lower while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude slid 5.3% after some vessels sailed through the critical waterway.

The Strait of Hormuz — a chokepoint for about 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas trade — has been largely disrupted by the US-Israeli war on



Iran, now in its third week, raising concerns about supply shortages, higher energy costs and rising

inflation. The risks remain stark: It only takes one Iranian militia to fire a missile or plant a

mine on a passing tanker to reignite the entire situation," IG market analyst Tony Sycamore said in a

note. Several US allies rebuffed Donald Trump's call on Monday to send warships

to escort shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, drawing criticism from the US president, who ac-

cused Western partners of ingratitude after decades of support. "For now, oil markets are fixated on the duration of the conflict, halted supplies at Hormuz, and eventually the damage this chaos will leave on the Gulf," said Priyanka Sachdeva, senior market analyst at Phillip Nova.

Meanwhile, traders said prices were further supported after a fire broke out in the Fujairah Oil Industry Zone after a drone attack during morning trade in Asia, though no injuries were reported.

Middle East crude benchmarks have soared to all-time highs, becoming the most expensive oil in the world, with traders blaming the price spike on reduced supply available for

Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' third-largest producer, to shut in production, reducing its output by more than half, two sources told Reuters.

Iran has asked India to release three tankers seized in February as part of talks seeking the safe passage of Indian-flagged or India-bound vessels out of the Gulf via the Strait of Hormuz, three sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

To curb rising energy costs, the head of the International Energy Agency suggested member countries could release more oil, in addition to the 400 million barrels they have already agreed to draw from strategic reserves.

Israel said it has detailed plans for at least three more weeks of war as its military struck sites across Iran overnight.

Rice exports plunge despite subsidies

NEWS DESK: Rice exports declined by 35.38 per cent in February despite government subsidies, prompting exporters to question the effectiveness of the support scheme.

Exporters said the subsidy programme had pushed up domestic prices, making Pakistani rice less competitive in international markets and undermining the intended benefit of the government's cash support.

The government has announced a 3 per cent duty drawback on local taxes and levies for coarse rice and a 9pc duty drawback for basmati exports. Under the scheme, the government has allocated approximately Rs15 billion to provide rebates on local taxes and levies for rice exporters.

Official figures compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics show that basmati rice exports declined by 19.21pc in value and recorded negative growth of 27.98pc in quantity in February.

The export of coarse rice also registered a decline of 42.50pc in value and 32.94pc in quantity during the month under review. The figures indicate that the subsidy

scheme introduced by the Ministry of Commerce failed to arrest the decline in exports.

A leading rice exporter, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Dawn that the decline in exports was mainly driven by higher domestic prices and large-scale hoarding, which undermined Pakistan's competitiveness in international markets.

"Our rice exporters have remained largely commodity traders over the past four decades, focusing primarily on meeting export refinance facility performance (ERF) targets rather than developing into efficient exporters like their counterparts in the region," he said.

He added that the sector has also failed to develop value-added products from rice byproducts such as rice stalk, paddy husk, rice bran, broken rice, rice flour, rice straw, rice snacks, vermicelli, noodles and rice glucose.

Another exporter told Dawn that rebates offered under the duty drawback of local taxes and levies at the port cannot compensate for weak production at the farm level.

He said that sustainable export growth depends on higher agricultural output and lower input costs for farmers, rather than financial incentives announced after the crop

has already moved through the supply chain.

He added that improving rice exports requires measures to raise productivity, including better seed quality, efficient irrigation, and reduced costs of fertiliser, energy, and other farm inputs. Without addressing these factors, he said, subsidies at the export stage would have only a limited impact on competitiveness in international markets.

The exporter also called for a policy shift in the ERF, suggesting that it should be withdrawn from commodity exports and redirected towards value-added rice products and byproducts.



Pakis-tan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA) opens applications

NEWS DESK: The Pakis-tan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA) has published sandbox guidelines and opened applications for the first phase of issuance of asset-referenced tokens. An asset-referenced token is a type of stablecoin, defined in the recently passed Virtual Assets Act, 2026 as a virtual asset "that represents, directly or indirectly, ownership rights, claims, or economic

interests, including entitlements to receive or share income, returns, or other economic benefits, in respect of one or more underlying assets, or is designed to maintain a stable value by reference to such underlying assets."

Such tokens are required to be "fully backed by the underlying assets and may reference tangible or intangible assets, including but not limited to commodities, real

estate, real-world assets, securities, financial assets, or a combination of official currencies, but shall not be backed or derive its value from other virtual assets."

A Fiat-referenced Token, on the other hand, is another form of stablecoin that PVARA is set to regulate. This is defined as a "virtual asset that purports to maintain a stable value relative to a single official currency of any country

and is redeemable at par value by its issuer".

The newly-published guidelines, which appear to focus on the issuance of asset-referenced tokens, include details regarding eligibility, the application process, and key evaluation criteria, as it asks applicants to provide an exit plan—focused on "winding down if unsuccessful or transitioning to licensing if successful".



Govt approves crackdown on hawala, money laundering networks

NEWS DESK: The government on Tuesday approved a nationwide crackdown against money laundering and hawala/hundi networks operating across the country, with authorities reiterating that the "business of hawala/hundi would not be tolerated under any circumstances".

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting jointly chaired by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb.

The meeting's mem-

bers resolved that strict action would be taken against major business figures and institutions involved in illegally transferring funds abroad. Officials agreed that no leniency would be extended to individuals or entities engaged in hawala/hundi operations.

It was decided that overseas remittances must be sent strictly through banking channels and other legally approved mechanisms. The process of sending money abroad through

money changers would also be streamlined to eliminate loopholes and ensure complete transparency.

The ministers emphasised that the entire mechanism for foreign remittances would be made "transparent and foolproof", adding that all illegal channels used for transferring funds abroad would be discouraged at every level.

A strong resolve was expressed to take firm action against "big money launderers", with the ministers reiterating that the "business of

hawala/hundi would not be tolerated under any circumstances".

The meeting also approved the formation of a joint working group comprising the State Bank of Pakistan and the Federal Investigation Agency. The group will regularly review progress on matters related to curbing illegal financial flows.

During the session, at least three more State Bank brief participants on the current system of fund transfers through banking channels.



High GST proposal worries hybrid manufacturers

NEWS DESK: A proposal to increase the general sales tax (GST) on locally-made hybrid and electric vehicles (HEVs) has become a source of worry for assemblers.

The proposal envisages increasing GST to 18 per cent from the current 8.5pc with effect from July 1.

They said they had been hearing this signal from the relevant government departments that the 8.5pc GST would exist till June 30, 2026 as the current auto policy, loaded with incentives, is also expiring on the same date.

An assembler said the proposal to increase sales tax on HEVs and PHEVs could significantly alter vehicle-pricing dynamics as in Pakistan's auto market, relative price positioning determines demand.

"If hybrids lose their monetary advantage, the demand balance could shift," he feared.

Any major change in tax incentives could influence both consumer demand and future investment decisions. "If the price gap between conventional vehicles and hybrids narrows, consumers may return to fossil fuel vehicles," the assembler

said. At the same time, he added, EV adoption could slow if the broader environment becomes uncertain.

Stakeholders say tax policy has historically acted as the central driver behind investment flows, model launches and consumer demand across the sector.

"Pakistan's auto industry has effectively grown through policy design," said a senior executive at an automobile assembler. "When tax structures change, the market direction changes with them."

When stakeholders heavily invest in a sec-

tor due to incentives, the government pulls them back, leaving the investment as well as jobs uncertain, he said.

Policy attracts investment

The Automotive Development Policy (ADP) for 2016-2021 had lured new investment, broken the long-standing dominance of three established auto-makers, offered duties of 0pc on imported spare parts and cut duties on locally-made parts to roughly 25pc, down from 50pc.

New investors were granted a five-year tariff protection window as well.

As a result, 15 new players, most of them Chinese or South Korean, committed investments of over \$1.1 billion, with realised investment exceeding \$1bn as assembly plants, dealerships and vendor networks expanded.

The number of passenger cars sold rose from 181,000 units in FY16 to over 216,000 units in FY18 and eventually peaked near 234,000 units in FY22.

Several new brands entered, SUVs became more prominent and the supplier ecosystem grew significantly.



Iranian women's football team begins journey home after players decline asylum

NEWS DESK: The Iranian women's football team began making their way home from Malaysia on Monday, after five of its players withdrew their claims for asylum in Australia.

Australia had granted humanitarian visas to six players and one support staff member from the Iranian squad after they sought asylum, fearing possible persecution if they returned home.

Concerns over their safety emerged after the players failed to sing the national anthem at a women's Asian Cup match earlier this month.

Five of the group, however, have since changed their minds and decided to return home to Iran, with Australian media reporting the latest withdrawal on Monday.

They joined the rest of the squad in Kuala Lumpur where the team had been staying since departing from Sydney last week, with just two remaining in Australia.

Australian Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Matt Thistlethwaite told News the government



respected the decision of those who chose to return to Iran while continuing to provide support to the remaining two. "This is a very complex situation," Thistlethwaite said. The team was seen at Kuala Lumpur International Airport on Monday evening checking in on an Oman Air flight, though their destination was unclear. Team waiting for flight connections. The Asian Football Confederation said earlier on Monday the squad would seek to travel to another country from Malaysia as it cannot immediately return to Tehran due to the war in the Middle East. "They are just waiting for the flight connections. When they are going... where to, they have to tell us," AFC General Secretary Windsor John told reporters in Kuala Lumpur. He said he was unable to verify reports that the players' families had come under pressure from authorities in Iran, adding that the

players had not expressed any concerns over their safety.

"We have spoken to the team officials. We have spoken to the coaches, the head of delegation. They are actually in high spirits," he said.

"I personally met them. They are not demotivated, or they didn't look afraid." The Iranian Football Association said the team was expected to leave Malaysia for Tehran soon "to once again be emb-raced by their families and homeland."

The Iranian team's campaign in the Asian Cup started just as the United States and Israel launched air strikes on Iran, killing the Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. They were eliminated from the tournament a week ago.

US President Donald Trump had praised Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese for allowing the women to stay, saying on social media the United States was ready to take the players if Australia did not.

Gavaskar condemns Sunrisers for signing Abrar

NEWS DESK: India cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar has alleged that the signing of Pakistani spinner Abrar Ahmed by an Indian-owned Hundred franchise in England "indirectly contributes to the deaths of Indian soldiers and civilians."

Players from Pakistan have not featured in the Indian Premier League (IPL) since 2009 because of deep-seated diplomatic tensions between the two nations.

There was speculation that Pakistan players involved at the inaugural Hundred auction in London would be subject to a "shadow ban", with IPL-affiliated teams refusing to bid for them.

That did not come to pass, but Sunrisers Hyderabad -- from the same group that controls IPL team Sunrisers Hyderabad -- faced a fierce social media backlash after last week clinching a deal for Abrar, paying £190,000 (\$252,000) for his

services. Former India captain Gavaskar, 76, launched a blistering attack in a weekend column for the Indian newspaper Mid-Day.

"The fees that they pay to a Pakistani player, who then pays income tax to his government, which buys arms and weapons, indirectly contributes to the deaths of Indian soldiers and civilians," he wrote.

"Whether it is an Indian entity or an overseas subsidiary of the

entity that is making the payment, if the owner is Indian then he or she is contributing to the Indian casualties."

Three other Hundred franchises -- MI London, Manchester Super Giants and Southern Brave -- are at least part-owned by companies that control IPL teams.

Usman Tariq, the only other Pakistani player bought in auction, was picked up by American-backed Birmingham Phoenix.

The England and Wales Cricket Board last month issued a statement saying all eight franchises in the 100-ball-a-side competition were committed to selection based solely on performances.

India and Pakistan, who were engaged in a deadly conflict in May last year, have not played a bilateral series in more than a decade and meet only in global or regional tournaments.



Sinner, Sabalenka secure maiden Indian Wells titles

NEWS DESK: Jannik Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka claimed their maiden Indian Wells titles, after gripping matches under the California desert sun on Sunday.

Sinner downed Daniil Medvedev 7-6(8/6), 7-6(7/4) while Sabalenka saved a match point on the way to a 3-6, 6-3, 7-6(8/6) victory over Elena Rybakina.

The Italian was imperious throughout, finishing with 28 winners, 10 aces and a perfect eight out of eight net points.

He is now only the third player in history to win all six ATP Masters 1000 hard-court titles, joining Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer.

Furthermore, with his first title of the year, he became the first player since 1990 to win consecutive Masters 1000 titles without dropping a set and extended his winning streak in this category to 11 matches, dating back to his Paris title last November. "I kept believing and kept pushing," Sinner said after the match. "I went for my shots a little more.

A third set, we would have started even, so I tried my best to close it out and I am very happy. It was an incredible ending. ITALY'S



Jannik Sinner celebrates with the Indian Wells title after defeating Daniil Medvedev of Russia in the men's final at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden.

"It was a very very tough match," Sinner said. "It is great to see Daniil back playing this level. I am very happy. I came here from day one, training really hard and this result makes me very happy," he added.

Medvedev reached the final in superb form, having stunned the world number one, Carlos Alcaraz, in the semi-finals ending the Australian Open champion's perfect 16-match winning streak at the start of the season.

However, he has now lost three Indian Wells titles.

Earlier in the women's decider, Sabalenka claimed a long-awaited first Indian Wells title.

Sabalenka ended a frustrating run of finals futility against Rybakina, who had won their last four title clashes starting with a triumph at Indian Wells in 2023 and including a nail-biting final at the Australian Open in January.

Sabalenka held at love 2-1 in the third set, but Rybakina piled on the return pressure to break back for 5-2 and Russian teen Mira Andreeva in last year's final. She had appeared on her way with a break for 2-1 in the third set.

But Rybakina piled on the return pressure to break back for 5-2 and Russian teen Mira Andreeva in last year's final. She had appeared on her way with a break for 2-1 in the third set.

Deflated but determined, Sabalenka held at love 2-1 in the third set, but Rybakina piled on the return pressure to break back for 5-2 and Russian teen Mira Andreeva in last year's final. She had appeared on her way with a break for 2-1 in the third set.

Ramsey out of World Cup play-off squad

NEWS DESK: Wales captain Aaron Ramsey has been left out of the squad for this month's World Cup play-offs, casting fresh doubts over his future in international football.

The 35-year-old has been without a club since leaving Pumas in December, having not played for the Mexican side since September.

That lack of first-team football, combined with injuries, mean Ramsey has not played for Wales since September 2024.

The former Arsenal and Juventus midfielder has said he wants to play for Wales at this year's World Cup should they qualify, but his hopes of representing his country at a fourth major tournament are now uncertain.

"He hasn't played competitive football in seven months. He's not at a club," said Wales manager Craig Bellamy after announcing his squad on Tuesday. "It (Ramsey's future) is not really for me to talk about. It's a situation I'm sure which will resolve itself."

Ben Davies has led Wales in Ramsey's ab-

sence but, as the Tottenham defender is injured, Fulham attacking midfielder Harry Wilson is likely to skipper the team in the play-off semi-final against Bosnia and Herzegovina in Cardiff on March 26.

The winners of the Wales-Bosnia tie will face either Italy or Northern Ireland at home on March 31 for a place at a World Cup in Canada, Mexico and the United States that runs from June 11 to July 19.

Meanwhile, Wales' attempts to persuade Tottenham defender

Ashley Phillips to switch international allegiance appear to have failed for now, with the 20-year-old is on loan at Stoke and has made over 70 appearances across two spells for the English second-tier club.

"We always look at dual nationalities," said Bellamy. "They've been so good for us over a number of years."

"It (Phillips' situation) is not for now but we're always active on it. We have to be. That's for another time."

Injuries to senior players have disrupted Wales' play-off plans.



Idea England weren't fussed about Ashes was tough: Pope

NEWS DESK: Ollie Pope believes the idea England "weren't fussed" during their woeful Ashes tour of Australia has been more successful than he realizes.

Ben Stokes' tourists went down to a 4-1 series loss to Australia over five Tests in 2025/26, with the troubled campaign still the subject of an England and Wales Cricket Board review.

In addition to their poor on-field performance, concerns about the culture of the England squad emerged during a break in Noosa, an Australian resort, where there were reports of excessive drinking by players.

This was followed by revelations that vice-captain Harry Brook had had an altercation with a nightclub owner in the pre-Ashes visit to New Zealand.

Pope, however, insists England's were fully focused on regaining the Ashes and might have been more successful had they represented an encouraging start to the first Test in Perth. "Going into that series, there was a lot spoken about the preparation of it," Pope told reporters on Tuesday. "As a team, the misconception might be that we weren't as fussed as it came across."



The 28-year-old, speaking at county side Gloucestershire on Tuesday, added: "The tough thing for everyone in that first game (Test) was the nature of it. Had we won that, and we'd done slightly better on day two, the idea is different."

"Of course we want to be a well-liked team, on and off the pitch, and unfortunately our performance didn't allow that to happen in Australia.

"Take the pressure off!" I can understand why people felt that way, but at the same time the perception that we weren't fussed was probably the hard thing. All we wanted to do was win and win the Ashes... All anyone wanted to do was to win.

"And for us at times it was just trying to, in our minds, take the pressure off the actual Test match."

Even before the trip started, questions were raised about a lack of preparation in Australian conditions, which consisted of a three-day match against the second-string England Li-

ons at Lilac Hill in Perth. "As we've done over the previous years, we tried to treat it like a normal series to get the best out of ourselves," said Pope. "Unfortunately, it didn't quite go to plan."

He added: "I know what it must be as ready as I can be. From a personal point, I felt as ready as I could have been for that first Test."

Pope was dropped after the third Test after averaging only 20.83 runs across the first three games, with replacement Jacob Bethell going on to score a century in the fifth Test at Sydney.



Chairperson says BISP not responsible for cash disbursement after deaths at payment point in Rahim Yar Khan

NEWS DESK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday congratulated Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on the success of a "historic constitutional referendum", according to a statement by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

On Monday, Kazakhstan voted 87.15 per cent in favour of adopting a new constitution, the Central Election Commission said. The new constitution streamlines the country's Parliament and recreates the office of vice president, which was abolished in 1996. It gives the president the right to appoint the vice president, as well as a list of other key officials.

In a statement on Tuesday, the PMO said that during a "warm and cordial call" with the Kazakhstan president, PM Shehbaz congratulated him on the success of the "historic constitutional referendum".

Furthermore, the prime minister stated the "overwhelming turnout and support for the new constitution reflected the trust and confidence of the people of Kazakhstan in President Tokayev's visionary leadership and reform agenda".

The statement said PM Shehbaz expressed confidence that the reforms would further strengthen governance, institutional stability, and national development in Kazakhstan.

"While fondly recalling President Tokayev's visit to Pakistan last month, the prime minister assured him that Pakistan was actively following up on the decisions taken during that visit," it said.

In this regard, PM Shehbaz said that the two sides would meet soon to firm up proposed agreements, it stated. It further said that President Tokayev reiterated his invitation to the prime minister to undertake an official visit to Kazakhstan not later this year, which was accepted. "The two leaders also exchanged views on regional development, particularly the situation in Afghanistan, and underscored the importance of promoting dialogue, cooperation, and connectivity for shared prosperity," the statement said.

PM Shehbaz also "extended warm greetings" to President Tokayev and the brotherly people of Kazakhstan on the auspicious occasion of Eid, and conveyed his best wishes for their continued peace, progress, and prosperity.

In a post on X, PM Shehbaz said that he congratulated the Kazakh president on the "successful constitutional referendum, reflecting the trust of the Kazakh people in his leadership and reform agenda". "We reaffirm our shared commitment to deepening Pakistan-Kazakhstan ties, especially in trade, connectivity and regional cooperation," he said.

NEWS DESK: Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson Rubina Khalid on Tuesday said that the programme was not responsible for the process of disbursement of cash, saying that it had been "outsourced" to banks.

The statement comes a day after at least seven women were killed and more than 75 were injured during a roof collapse when hundreds of women gathered at a retail shop in Rahim Yar Khan's Tibba area to collect BISP handouts.

Speaking to the media during a visit to Sheikh Zayed Hospital in Rahim Yar Khan on Tuesday, Khalid maintained that BISP was not responsible for disbursing cash handouts.

"We don't have any mechanism for disbursement, so when you outsource something, the responsibility falls on the banks," she said.

Khalid termed it unfortunate that the programme — an initiative aimed at uplifting people — was pushed to the "background" while "actual

criminals... are not asked why their retailers and franchises are doing this".

She said that BISP had no "direct relation" to retailers or franchisees, adding that the banks were the ones in contact with them.

"We are going to be imposing fines on them, and a first information report will be filed naming people present at the site of the incident," she added. She asserted that those responsible would be held accountable.

At the outset of her talk, Khalid said, "We share the grief of the bereaved families. People who are responsible for the incident will be given strict punishment".

The BISP chairperson said the women who suffered minor injuries had been discharged from the hospital, while 17 women had suffered major injuries. One of the injured was in a serious condition, she said. She said cheques of Rs1 million and Rs300,000 were being distributed to the heirs of the victims and the injured women, respectively. She said that the financial assistance could not replace the loss of lives, but it would serve as "some relief".

Khalid mentioned that yesterday's payment was the last instalment paid under the old system, saying that from the next quarter, payments would be made under the new digital wallet system.

"We will make the distribution of devices, funds, and procedures more transparent," the BISP chairperson said, adding the payments would be delivered to women on time with "dignity and respect in line with the vision of President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif".

On Monday, reports said more than 200 women had gathered outside Sajjad Karyana Store, a designated BISP retailer, at Chak 123-P Tibba, about 13km from the city. Many of them moved to the first floor of the shop, waiting for their turn to receive the cash handouts. According to eyewitnesses, the roof, reportedly built with weak T-iron and girders, could not withstand the weight of the large crowd and suddenly collapsed.

Suffocation main cause of death in tragic Gul Plaza fire, says police surgeon

NEWS DESK: Inhalational asphyxia/suffocation was the predominant cause of death in the tragic Gul Plaza fire that claimed at least 78 lives, according to Police Surgeon Dr Summayya Syed.

The deadly inferno, which erupted on the night of January 17 at the mall, took nearly two days to be fully extinguished and left over 1,100 shops in ruins. Despite 10 days of hectic search efforts amid the rubble, at least eight people remained missing.

Dr Syed submitted a reply to a questionnaire from the judicial commission probing the blaze, it emerged on Tuesday. Asked what the dominant cause of loss of life was, in her professional opinion, the police surgeon stated: "The predominant cause of loss of life was inhalational asphyxia/suffocation".

However, she added, polytrauma could not be ruled out in 66 others "due to fragmented remains". Polytrauma is a medical condition involving multiple severe injuries.

Detailing the findings, Dr Syed said, "In-

halational asphyxia was established as the primary medical cause of death in the six complete bodies".

"In the fatal fire (suffocation) was established as [the] primary cause of death in the 66 remains," she added, noting that the 66 remains were "fragmentary and 100 per cent burnt".

As per the police surgeon's reply, eight were injured, seven bodies were recovered, and the remains of 66 others were found. Responding to a question of whether the findings "suggest delayed evacuation or prolonged entrapment", Dr Syed provided the chronological details of the bodies and remains recovered.

6 bodies received on January 18

15 fragmentary remains received on January 19

8 fragmentary burnt remains received on January 20

23 fragmentary remains received on January 21

16 fragmentary remains received on January 22

2 fragmentary remains received on January 23

The document does not specify when three of the "total 73" bodies were recovered.

Asked if the condition of the victims indicated a lack of timely rescue, the police surgeon said, "Rescue implies safe evacuation of alive persons. We received eight injured."

"The undersigned cannot comment in this regard," she added, noting that chronological details of the remains' recovery have been provided.

On the question of whether any toxic gases or unusual substances were detected, Dr Syed noted that the results for toxicology samples collected from seven deceased were still awaited.

Post-mortems were not conducted for the six bodies recovered. However, most of the remains were "completely processed".

All medicolegal reports were duly prepared and forwarded, the police surgeon stated. So far, various stakeholders have testified before the judicial commission, including two key witnesses, four prosecution witnesses, the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA), and the chief fire officer.



PM Shehbaz congratulates Kazakhstan president on successful constitutional referendum

NEWS DESK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday congratulated Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on the success of a "historic constitutional referendum", according to a statement by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

On Monday, Kazakhstan voted 87.15 per cent in favour of adopting a new constitution, the Central Election Commission said. The new constitution streamlines the country's Parliament and recreates the office of vice president, which was abolished in 1996. It gives the president the right to appoint the vice president, as well as a list of other key officials.

In a statement on Tuesday, the PMO said that during a "warm and cordial call" with the Kazakhstan president, PM Shehbaz congratulated him on the success of the "historic constitutional referendum".

Furthermore, the prime minister stated the "overwhelming turnout and support for the new constitution reflected the trust and confidence of the people of Kazakhstan in President Tokayev's visionary leadership and reform agenda".

The statement said PM Shehbaz expressed confidence that the reforms would further strengthen governance, institutional stability, and national development in Kazakhstan.

"While fondly recalling President Tokayev's visit to Pakistan last month, the prime minister assured him that Pakistan was actively following up on the decisions taken during that visit," it said.

In this regard, PM Shehbaz said that the two sides would meet soon to firm up proposed agreements, it stated. It further said that President Tokayev reiterated his invitation to the prime minister to undertake an official visit to Kazakhstan not later this year, which was accepted. "The two leaders also exchanged views on regional development, particularly the situation in Afghanistan, and underscored the importance of promoting dialogue, cooperation, and connectivity for shared prosperity," the statement said.

PM Shehbaz also "extended warm greetings" to President Tokayev and the brotherly people of Kazakhstan on the auspicious occasion of Eid, and conveyed his best wishes for their continued peace, progress, and prosperity.

In a post on X, PM Shehbaz said that he congratulated the Kazakh president on the "successful constitutional referendum, reflecting the trust of the Kazakh people in his leadership and reform agenda". "We reaffirm our shared commitment to deepening Pakistan-Kazakhstan ties, especially in trade, connectivity and regional cooperation," he said.

NEWS DESK: Pakistan on Tuesday dismissed claims made by the Afghan Taliban that its armed forces allegedly struck a hospital in Kabul, stating that the target was "Camp Phoenix", which is several kilometres away from the hospital.

The development comes as the ongoing Operation Ghazab Lillah, which was launched on the night of February 26, following unprovoked firing by the Afghan Taliban from across the border. Earlier on Monday, the government said that Pakistani forces targeted the Afghan Taliban's military installations in Kabul and Nangarhar overnight.

A fact check posted by the information ministry on X said that Omid Hospital, which the Afghan Taliban claimed had been hit, was actually multiple kilometres away from Camp Phoenix, the military terrorist ammunition and ammunition storage site precisely targeted last night.

Sharing satellite imagery, the ministry said that the "actual hospital

is a multi-story structure as compared to the military/terrorist infrastructure actually targeted, whose image is also attached; the difference and lie is clear to see".

Dismissing the claim, it also questioned why an alleged drug rehabilitation facility would be "co-located with [a] lethal ammunition storage site in a military camp".

"This also remains unanswered," it added.

In a separate post, the ministry presented further information, asking why the "official handle" of the Afghan Taliban had deleted a post in which it was claimed that a "drug rehab" had been hit.

Was this [a] generative AI clip that could not stand the multiple fact checks being made? Afghan Taliban walking away from their manipulated post," it said.

In another post, the ministry debunked an image used by the Afghan Taliban spokesperson Zabullah Mujahid, which he had used as "evidence" of the incident. "The image being presented as evidence of a recent incident is, in fact, from May 2023 and was originally shared by the Afghan Taliban interior ministry at that time, exposing the falsehood of the current claim," the information ministry said.

Information Minister Attaullah Tarar also rejected the claim, alleging that the Afghan Taliban regime was "bedeviling yet another falsehood" by making such claims.

"This claim is entirely baseless," he asserted, maintaining that Pakistan was only engaging "military and terrorist targets, along with the infrastructure of the Afghan Taliban regime that are being directly or indirectly used to plan, facilitate, shelter, train, or

Information ministry rubbishes Afghan Taliban's claims of hospital being hit in Kabul

abet terrorist attacks inside Pakistan".

The minister said that strikes carried out on Monday night in Kabul and Nangarhar were "precise, deliberate, and professional".

"No hospital, no drug rehabilitation centre, and no civilian facility was targeted," he emphasised.

"The targets were military and terrorist infrastructure, including ammunition and technical equipment storage sites and other installations linked to hostile activity against Pakistan," he said. Tarar also stated that video footage of "all six strikes" carried out was put out by the information ministry, "making the nature of the targets plain for all to see".

"The visuals leave no room for doubt. The flames and secondary detonations witnessed in Kabul further confirm that the intended ammunition storage site was hit with precision," the information minister said. He said that the "latest allegation" was part of the Afghan Taliban's "same worn-out pattern of deceit".

NEWS DESK: Senate Chairman Younis Raza Gilani directed on Tuesday the implementation of "wide-ranging austerity measures", projecting a reduction of more than 50 per cent in the Senate Secretariat's remaining budgetary utilisation for the current fiscal year, which is believed to translate into savings of around Rs700-750 million.

A statement issued by the Senate Secretariat said that Gilani presided over a high-level meeting at the secretariat today to review the austerity measures and discuss their implementation in light of the country's economic situation.

The austerity measures, a strict ban on non-essential procurements, and the implementation of salary deductions or contributions in line with government policy," the statement detailed.

Additionally, it continued, administrative arrangements had been introduced for human resource management, including "rotation-based pick-and-drop facilities aimed at minimising operational costs and reducing fuel consumption".

Moreover, any fu-

ture procurement would be subject to review and approval by a dedicated Senate Austerity Committee, the statement said.

"As a result of these measures, the Senate Secretariat expects to reduce more than 50pc of its remaining budgetary utilisation for the current fiscal year, resulting in estimated savings of Rs 700 to 750 million," the statement read.

It quoted Gilani as saying: "Public office is a sacred trust requiring the highest standards of financial prudence. Transparency, accountability, and fiscal discipline must remain the guiding principles in all administrative and financial matters of the secretariat".

He added that austerity was not merely a policy directive but a collective national responsibility, directing all wings of the secretariat to ensure strict compliance with his instructions to promote efficiency, responsible governance, and public confidence in state institutions.

NEWS DESK: Senate Chairman Younis Raza Gilani directed on Tuesday the implementation of "wide-ranging austerity measures", projecting a reduction of more than 50 per cent in the Senate Secretariat's remaining budgetary utilisation for the current fiscal year, which is believed to translate into savings of around Rs700-750 million.

A statement issued by the Senate Secretariat said that Gilani presided over a high-level meeting at the secretariat today to review the austerity measures and discuss their implementation in light of the country's economic situation.

The austerity measures, a strict ban on non-essential procurements, and the implementation of salary deductions or contributions in line with government policy," the statement detailed.

Additionally, it continued, administrative arrangements had been introduced for human resource management, including "rotation-based pick-and-drop facilities aimed at minimising operational costs and reducing fuel consumption".

Moreover, any fu-

Gilani directs austerity measures for Senate aimed at saving Rs700m

NEWS DESK: Senate Chairman Younis Raza Gilani directed on Tuesday the implementation of "wide-ranging austerity measures", projecting a reduction of more than 50 per cent in the Senate Secretariat's remaining budgetary utilisation for the current fiscal year, which is believed to translate into savings of around Rs700-750 million.

A statement issued by the Senate Secretariat said that Gilani presided over a high-level meeting at the secretariat today to review the austerity measures and discuss their implementation in light of the country's economic situation.

The austerity measures, a strict ban on non-essential procurements, and the implementation of salary deductions or contributions in line with government policy," the statement detailed.

Additionally, it continued, administrative arrangements had been introduced for human resource management, including "rotation-based pick-and-drop facilities aimed at minimising operational costs and reducing fuel consumption".

Moreover, any fu-

ture procurement would be subject to review and approval by a dedicated Senate Austerity Committee, the statement said.

"As a result of these measures, the Senate Secretariat expects to reduce more than 50pc of its remaining budgetary utilisation for the current fiscal year, resulting in estimated savings of Rs 700 to 750 million," the statement read.

It quoted Gilani as saying: "Public office is a sacred trust requiring the highest standards of financial prudence. Transparency, accountability, and fiscal discipline must remain the guiding principles in all administrative and financial matters of the secretariat".

He added that austerity was not merely a policy directive but a collective national responsibility, directing all wings of the secretariat to ensure strict compliance with his instructions to promote efficiency, responsible governance, and public confidence in state institutions.



NEWS DESK: Pakistan on Tuesday dismissed claims made by the Afghan Taliban that its armed forces allegedly struck a hospital in Kabul, stating that the target was "Camp Phoenix", which is several kilometres away from the hospital.

The development comes as the ongoing Operation Ghazab Lillah, which was launched on the night of February 26, following unprovoked firing by the Afghan Taliban from across the border. Earlier on Monday, the government said that Pakistani forces targeted the Afghan Taliban's military installations in Kabul and Nangarhar overnight.

A fact check posted by the information ministry on X said that Omid Hospital, which the Afghan Taliban claimed had been hit, was actually multiple kilometres away from Camp Phoenix, the military terrorist ammunition and ammunition storage site precisely targeted last night.

Sharing satellite imagery, the ministry said that the "actual hospital

Gilani directs austerity measures for Senate aimed at saving Rs700m

NEWS DESK: Senate Chairman Younis Raza Gilani directed on Tuesday the implementation of "wide-ranging austerity measures", projecting a reduction of more than 50 per cent in the Senate Secretariat's remaining budgetary utilisation for the current fiscal year, which is believed to translate into savings of around Rs700-750 million.

A statement issued by the Senate Secretariat said that Gilani presided over a high-level meeting at the secretariat today to review the austerity measures and discuss their implementation in light of the country's economic situation.

The austerity measures, a strict ban on non-essential procurements, and the implementation of salary deductions or contributions in line with government policy," the statement detailed.

Additionally, it continued, administrative arrangements had been introduced for human resource management, including "rotation-based pick-and-drop facilities aimed at minimising operational costs and reducing fuel consumption".

Moreover, any fu-



Gilani directs austerity measures for Senate aimed at saving Rs700m

NEWS DESK: Senate Chairman Younis Raza Gilani directed on Tuesday the implementation of "wide-ranging austerity measures", projecting a reduction of more than 50 per cent in the Senate Secretariat's remaining budgetary utilisation for the current fiscal year, which is believed to translate into savings of around Rs700-750 million.

A statement issued by the Senate Secretariat said that Gilani presided over a high-level meeting at the secretariat today to review the austerity measures and discuss their implementation in light of the country's economic situation.

The austerity measures, a strict ban on non-essential procurements, and the implementation of salary deductions or contributions in line with government policy," the statement detailed.

Additionally, it continued, administrative arrangements had been introduced for human resource management, including "rotation-based pick-and-drop facilities aimed at minimising operational costs and reducing fuel consumption".

Moreover, any fu-

Gilani directs austerity measures for Senate aimed at saving Rs700m

NEWS DESK: Senate Chairman Younis Raza Gilani directed on Tuesday the implementation of "wide-ranging austerity measures", projecting a reduction of more than 50 per cent in the Senate Secretariat's remaining budgetary utilisation for the current fiscal year, which is believed to translate into savings of around Rs700-750 million.

A statement issued by the Senate Secretariat said that Gilani presided over a high-level meeting at the secretariat today to review the austerity measures and discuss their implementation in light of the country's economic situation.

The austerity measures, a strict ban on non-essential procurements, and the implementation of salary deductions or contributions in line with government policy," the statement detailed.

Additionally, it continued, administrative arrangements had been introduced for human resource management, including "rotation-based pick-and-drop facilities aimed at minimising operational costs and reducing fuel consumption".

Moreover, any fu-