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# QUETTA VOICE

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Chief Minister Balochistan and IG Police Balochistan Addressing a Press Conference.

## CM Balochistan: Female Suicide Bomber Arrested in Balochistan

**NEWS DESK:**

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti confirmed that security forces arrested a female suicide bomber in an intelligence-based operation, successfully foiling a major terrorist plot in Balochistan.

Addressing a press conference alongside Provincial Interior Minister Mir Zia Langove, he termed the action a major success and praised security agencies for

their swift and effective response, which prevented potential loss of innocent lives.

**Suspect Reveals Recruitment and Training Network**

Officials identified the suspect as Laiba, a 19-year-old from Khuzdar district.

During the briefing, she disclosed that she had been radicalized and trained for a suicide mission by terrorist

operatives. According to initial investigations, she had links with the banned outfit Balochistan Liberation Army and was in contact with facilitators involved in extremist activities.

She further revealed that she had been assigned the task of recruiting and preparing other girls for similar attacks.

Authorities stated that the arrest has exposed key connections between terrorist networks and their support systems.

**Government Vows Strong Action Against Terrorism**

Mir Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that terrorist groups are exploiting women and misleading the public, but noted that the people of Balochistan reject such narratives and are actively cooperating with law enforcement agencies.

He announced that sensitive cases involving women will be

handled by female police officers to ensure their protection and dignity.

He also highlighted the importance of countering online extremism and preventing the misuse of digital platforms for propaganda.

Reaffirming the government's commitment, the chief minister said intelligence-based operations will continue to eliminate terrorism, ensuring peace, stability, and security across Balochistan.

**Unable to meet Imran, Aicema denies blocking PTI leaders' access to him**

**NEWS DESK:**

Rejecting media reports that she is opposing meetings between Imran Khan and party leaders, Aicema Khan on Tuesday questioned how she could stop such meetings when she herself has been unable to meet her brother.

"People across Pakistan are demanding the release of Imran Khan. The whole world is raising the same demand. Just wait and see — people will come out of their homes and secure his release. Moreover, as the global situation changes, I am hopeful he will be released," Ms Khan said while talking to media persons outside Adiala jail.

"We are waiting here to find out whether we will be allowed to meet Imran. I believe we will not be granted permission, as they want to hide his health condition and what has been done to him. We had requested the chief justice to allow his medical treatment at Shifa International Hospital. We do not insist on meetings if he is allowed proper medical treatment," she added.

She said the Chief Justice had forwarded the request for medical treatment to chief commissioner, who comes under Mohsin Naqvi.

Jailed PTI leaders warn economic stability may collapse within weeks if Gulf tensions continue.

Replying to a question about attacks from Afghanistan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ms Khan said she feels pain for every martyr but added that such questions should be directed to the provincial government. She also stressed that there should be no tensions between Muslims.

Open letter  
Meanwhile, in an open letter shared by their counsel, Rana Madassar Umer, PTI leaders Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Yasmin Rashid, Ejaz Chaudhry, Mian Mahmoodur Rasheed, and Omar Sarfraz Cheema warned that the hard-earned macroeconomic stability achieved over the past three years — largely by placing financial strain on ordinary citizens — could dissipate within the next three weeks if the Gulf conflict persists.

Pakistan's fragile economy has been further exacerbated by a lack of economic restructuring measures and internal disagreements over economic strategy.

## 936 Doctor Vacancies Approved in Balochistan, Sent to Balochistan Public Service Commission (BPSC)

**NEWS DESK:**

Quetta: A major development has emerged for the medical community in Balochistan following protests by the Young Doctors Association (YDA) and successful negotiations with the district administration. The Health Department of Balochistan has officially forwarded 697 Medical Officer (MO) and 239 Lady Medical Officer (LMO) vacant positions to the Balochistan Public Service Commission (BPSC) for recruitment.

This progress comes as a result of assurances made by the Quetta district administration — including the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and Additional Deputy Commissioner — during negotiations with YDA Balochistan. During the talks, YDA's Supreme Council representatives, including Chairman Dr. Yasir Achakzai, Dr. Bahar Shah, and Dr. Hafeez Mandokhail, presented the demands of the doctors' community, which were positively acknowledged by the administration. A dedicated committee formed by YDA, led by Dr. Saboor Kakar, played a crucial role by collecting and compiling va-



File Photo of Young Doctors Association Balochistan protesting for protective equipment: Quetta Voice

cancy data from District Health Officers and Medical Superintendents across the province. Based on this data, the Health Department formally submitted the vacancies to BPSC. Senior leaders, including Pakistan Medical Association's Senior Vice President Dr. Kanyar Khan and Dr. Tariq Baloch, closely followed the process, leading to the issuance of an official notification by the Additional Secretary of S&GAD.

Officials further indicated that upcoming promotions from Grade 17 to Grade 18 are expected to create approximately 976 additional vacancies for Medical Officers, Lady Medical Officers, and Dental Surgeons, which will also be sent to BPSC for permanent recruitment. During negotiations, the administration also assured that — Departmental and retaliatory actions against doctors would be stopped. As a summary would be forwarded to align house officers' salaries with other provinces YDA Balochistan termed this development a significant achievement and reaffirmed its commitment to continue efforts until all issues — including permanent appointments and salary adjustments — are fully resolved.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

## Urgent Need for a Modern Examination Hall at BPS



## Editorial:

The recent high-level meeting at Governor House between Balochistan Governor Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail and Balochistan Public Service Commission (BPS) Chairman Justice (R) Mehta Katalish Nath Kohli has once again exposed a long-standing injustice faced by thousands of young aspirants in the province: the absence of a modern, spacious examination hall.

Governor Mandokhail described this infrastructural shortfall as a "major gap" that directly hampers the commission's ability to conduct competitive written examinations and interviews with the dignity, efficiency, and fairness they deserve.

In a province where youth unemployment is already a crisis, forcing candidates into cramped, outdated, or makeshift venues during high-stakes tests is simply unacceptable.

It undermines

exam integrity, creates unnecessary stress, disadvantages those traveling from remote districts, and sends a discouraging message about how seriously the state values merit-based opportunity.

The BPS is not just another department—it is the gateway through which competent, honest, and capable officers enter public service. These officers shape governance, deliver development projects, maintain security, and implement policies that affect every citizen of Balochistan.

When the very institution responsible for selecting them is starved of basic facilities, the entire chain of public administration suffers.

Successive governments have allowed this neglect to persist for years, prioritizing other expenditures while leaving the BPS to struggle with financial constraints and outdated infrastructure.

This is not merely an administrative oversight; it is a betrayal of the province's talented youth who pin their hopes on transparent, merit-driven recruitment.

The Governor's emphasis on urgent financial support, modern infrastructure, and institutional reforms must now move beyond words.

The provincial government should immediately prioritize and fund the construction of a state-of-the-art examination and interview complex at BPS.

Equipped to handle large-scale tests, ensure privacy during interviews, and uphold the highest standards of professionalism.

Until this happens, the promise of equal opportunity will remain hollow for far too many. Empowering the BPS with proper facilities is not a luxury; it is a necessity for building a more transparent, efficient, and trustworthy government in Balochistan.

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



Improving the education sector has always been the hallmark of all successive governments in Balochistan. Every government has allocated substantial funds to improve the education sector and quality of education to enable students to compete on national and international level. Health and education, all successive governments declared their priorities.

Former Chief Minister, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch led nationalist government allocated around 24 percent budget to bring the province at par with other parts of the country. Dr. Baloch's government also declared emergency and announced implementation of article 25-A of the constitution to enroll all of school children in Balochistan. The number of out of school children in Balochistan is currently over 1 million.

However, independent sources put the number high as compared to the official data. There are conflicting figures about the exact number of out of school children in Balochistan.

To be precise, positive strides were made during Dr. Malik Baloch led government to improve the education sector.

For the first time in the history of Balochistan, 5000 teachers were appointed through national testing service (NTS), launching an effective campaign against growing cheating during examinations and introducing the education management and information system to ensure the presence of teachers in schools.

Track record shows, teachers were always recruited on political basis with no merit and transpar-

ency in the recruitment process. This has ruined the entire education sector. Dr. Malik Baloch, the then adviser on education Sardar Raza Muhammad Bareech led rallies against cheating to create awareness among the people regarding the course of cheating in educational institutions.

After the removal of Sardar Raza Bareech as an adviser on education and transfers of senior bureaucrats Ghulam Ali Baloch and Saboor Kakar, no effective step was taken to improve the quality of education in Balochistan.

Now again the portfolio of education has been awarded to Sardar Muhammad Rind who belongs to Pakistan Tehrik e Insaaf (PTI). Mr. Rind has made announcements to bring what he claimed

revolutionary changes. However, improvement in education sector, enrolling out of school children in schools and improving quality of education needs a multi-pronged strategy. Senior bureaucrat Ghulam Ali Baloch who had already served as secretary education has again been posted.

Mr. Baloch is taking a number of initiatives to improve schooling and trace out ghost schools and teaches across the province.

However, political speed breakers appear to be major obstacles in his way.

Despite being the poorest province of Pakistan, Balochistan spends over 70 billion rupees on primary, middle, secondary and higher education in the province.

The province spends thousands of rupees per month on a student. Unfortun-

ately, neither the quality nor the education standard meet national standards what to speak about international standards. Poor quality of education is the result of poor capacity of teachers that needs to be improved to compete on national and international level.

The Balochistan government has announced to enroll 70000 kids in government run schools in the province. However, ground realities negate claims of the provincial government. So far, the government has not been able to mobilize the civil society, media, political parties and tribesmen to make sure maximum enrollment of kids in educational institutions of the province. Coordinated efforts and combined strategy by all segments of society can ensure implementation of article 25-A of the Constitution.

## Taftan border and Balochistan Govt's response

## Quetta Voice Analysis

The sudden arrival of thousands of Zaireen at Pak-Iran border Taftan posed a serious challenge for government of Balochistan to make sure their screening and conduct medical tests in the aftermath of outbreak of COVID-19 in neighboring Iran. The federal government closed the border with Iran at Taftan on February 23rd to halt the spread of deadly corona virus.

All of a sudden over 4,000 Zaireen, students, tourists and traders gathered at Taftan, Pakistan's bordering town with Iran. The poorly equipped health officials that too less in number tried to conduct screening and tests of those entered from Iran. However, many managed to flee from the administration and used their own means of communication to reach Quetta on way to their home provinces. The drivers were paid heavy fares by those fleeing the quarantine centers at Taftan.

Perhaps, in the beginning, the Balochistan government and Islamabad did not realize the gravity of situation. A wind-blowing tent quarantine center was established to keep the



Zaireen and others to halt the spread of novel corona virus. However, the laboratory to diagnose the deadly disease and conduct tests of novel corona virus could not be arranged at the border soon after the closure of border.

The National Institute of Health (NIH) dispatched machinery

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

Apart from corona virus, the Balochistan government appeared to be concerned about the security of Zaireen as well.

In the past, Zaireen were fre-

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

The Chief Minister Balochistan, Jam Kamal Khan has been closely monitoring the

unfolding situation and all the time directing the concerned quarters to halt the spread of novel corona virus. However, loopholes in the system caused the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country.

Although, the Chief Minister issued statements, precautionary measures through print, elec-

tronic and shares videos on social media to sensitize the people about the deadly virus.

Nevertheless, the virus penetrated and made its way from Taftan to Sukkur prompting the Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah to say that Zaireen were not properly screened at Pak-Iran border

## Taftan

Opposition political parties in Balochistan in general and the Balochistan National Party ideologue, Sanaulah Baloch have strongly criticized the Jam Kamal led government for what they call its failure and incompetency to contain the corona virus.

Political parties, members of civil society and legal fraternity had also objected over the establishment of quarantine center at Mian Ghundi area of Quetta. They feared spread of deadly virus after establishment of center near the city rather they demanded of the government to shift the Zaireen to their home provinces directly from Taftan.

To be precise, the virus has already penetrated and now it is time for all political parties from left to right and religious to nationalists to join their hands to contain its spread.

The government needs to take all stakeholders including political parties, media, civil society and lawyers to evolve a combined strategy in the province to tackle the situation. It is not alone the job of government rather every individual to play his/her role to contain the virus before it is too late.

# UN says 36,000 Palestinians displaced in occupied West Bank in one year

**NEWS DESK:** The United Nations urged Israel on Tuesday to halt immediately its dramatic settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, raising concerns of "ethnic cleansing" with over 36,000 Palestinians displaced in a single year.

A fresh report from the United Nations rights office, looking at the 12 months up to Oct 31 last year, warned that Israel's accelerating expansion of unlawful settlements and annexation of large parts of the occupied West Bank was driving "unprecedented" displacement.

"The displacement of more than 36,000 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank represented the mass expulsion of Palestinians on a scale previously unseen, amounting to unlawful transfer that is prohibited under international humanitarian law," the report said.

Alongside "the extensive displacement of Palestinians in Gaza", it "appears to indicate a concerted Israeli policy of mass forcible transfer throughout the occupied territory, aimed at permanent displacement, raising concerns of ethnic cleansing". Urges Israel to immediately stop dramatic



expansion of illegal settlements, annexation of large territory. The report pointed to the advancement or approval by Israeli authorities of 36,973 housing units in settlements in occupied East Jerusalem and around 27,200 in

the rest of the occupied West Bank. Also during the 12-month period, "an unprecedented 84 settlement outposts were established across the occupied West Bank, bringing the total number to more than 300", the report said.

In addition to roughly three million Palestinians, more than 500,000 Israelis live in settlements and outposts in the West Bank, which are illegal under international law. Violence in the West Bank, which Israel

has occupied since 1967, has risen sharply since the Oct 7, 2023, Hamas raid in Israel. There has also been a spike in deadly attacks by Israeli settlers since the start of the Iran war, with at least six Palestinians killed since the hos-

ilities began on Feb 28. "War crime" According to a tally based on Palestinian health ministry figures, Israeli troops or settlers have killed 1,045 Palestinians in the occupied territory since Oct 2023. In Tuesday's re-

port, the UN rights office said it had documented 1,732 incidents of settler violence resulting in casualties or property damage over the course of the reporting period. That compares to 1,400 during the previous 12-month period, it

said. "Settler violence continued in a coordinated, strategic and largely unchallenged manner, with Israeli authorities playing the central role," the report said. Volker Turk, the UN rights chief, called on Israel to "immediately and completely cease and reverse the establishment and expansion of settlements".

In a statement, he also urged "the evacuation (of all settlers, and an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territory)".

And he insisted that Israel "must also enable the return of displaced Palestinians, and stop all practices of land confiscation, forced evictions and house demolitions".

The report also described that advancing settlement plans were heightening the risk of displacement faced by thousands of Palestinians from Bedouin communities located northeast of East Jerusalem.

Unlawful transfer of protected persons constitutes a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, constituting a war crime, it stressed. "Under certain circumstances, it may also amount to a crime against humanity."

## US judge orders restoration of Voice of America

**NEWS DESK:** A federal judge has ordered the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM) to recall more than 100 employees of Voice of America (VOA) journalists and staff by March 23 and restore the broadcaster's operations.

In a sweeping decision announced on Tuesday, US District Judge Royce C. Lamberth found that actions taken under the agency's previous leadership to shut down large parts of VOA and its sister networks violated federal law and the agency's statutory mandate. The ruling di-

rects USAGM to return VOA and affiliated networks to the air and re-instate employees who had been dismissed or placed on leave.

The dispute stems from restructuring measures carried out in 2025 under Kari Lake, an American political figure and former television news anchor who later became a prominent supporter of US President Donald Trump. In early 2025, the Trump administration brought Lake into USAGM — the independent federal agency that oversees VOA and other US government-funded

international broadcasters. She was named senior adviser to USAGM in March 2025, later became deputy chief executive, and from July 31 to November 19, 2025, served as acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the agency.

Although she was never confirmed by the US Senate for the CEO position — a legal requirement — she exercised broad authority within the agency. During her tenure, USAGM carried out sweeping staff reductions and curtailed VOA's global broadcasts. She is widely be-

lieved to have supervised the closure of significant portions of VOA's operations. Judge Lamberth ruled that the agency failed to provide a legitimate rationale for dismantling the broadcaster and concluded that the actions taken under Lake's authority were unlawful. The court's decision effectively voids the mass layoffs and programme suspensions.

VOA Director Michael Abramowitz, whom Lake had sought to remove, welcomed the ruling. "We are thrilled with Judge Lamberth's ruling and look forward to getting back to work," Abramowitz said in a statement. "Voice of America has never been more needed."

He praised the workforce's "resilience and dedication" during the prolonged uncertainty.

The cuts had a significant impact on journalists worldwide, including South Asia. About a hundred Pakistani journalists working for VOA's Urdu and Pashto services lost their jobs when those language services were shut down or drastically reduced as part of the restructuring.



## British Muslims warned against fake Haj booking platform

**NEWS DESK:** UK police have warned Muslims to remain vigilant against fraudulent websites impersonating the official Haj booking platform following a rise in pilgrim-related scams, suggesting total losses could reach millions of pounds.

Data obtained through a freedom of information request shows aspiring pilgrims reported losses of £195,752 in 2025, a 30 per cent increase from £150,000 in 2024. The City of London Police recorded 34 Haj-related fraud reports last year, with the highest individual loss amounting to

£64,000. The actual financial damage is believed to be far higher. The Council of British Hajjis has estimated that as few as three per cent of victims report such crimes, suggesting total losses could reach millions of pounds.

Police said fraud patterns have shifted in recent years. Earlier cases largely involved unlicensed travel agents selling bogus pilgrimage packages, but scammers are increasingly moving online. UK police were triggered by rise in pilgrim-related scams. Investigators raised

concern about fake versions of Nusuk, the Saudi government's official portal for booking all-inclusive Haj packages, which pilgrims from eligible countries including the UK must use.

Haj is expected to take place between May 25 and June 30 this year. Online package prices range from £4,500 per person to more than £12,000 for premium options, while the UK receives around 3,600 Haj places annually. Official figures show the highest number of fraud reports in a single month in 2025 was recorded in May, with

further clusters in February and September. Most cases were classified as consumer and retail fraud, including misrepresentation or non-delivery of services, while several involved ticket fraud where purchased tickets were invalid or never supplied.

Police made no arrests related to Haj fraud last year, saying many offences now originate overseas. Authorities instead prioritise shutting down fraudulent websites and have urged the public to report suspicious platforms quickly.

Pilgrims have been advised to book only through the official Nusuk website and to use authorised travel agents listed on the platform.

Detective Chief Inspector Kevin Ives, City of London Police's joint lead for Haj fraud, told HypHEN he did not know what had driven the year-on-year rise in reported financial losses. "We hope that our messaging to report crimes is hitting home, but we are also worried the criminals are finding new tactics after the pivot to Nusuk," he added.



## Iranian projectile hits near Australian base in UAE amid widening Middle East crisis

**NEWS DESK:** An Iranian projectile hit near Australia's military headquarters for the Middle East in the United Arab Emirates on Wednesday but caused no injuries, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said. It landed at 9:15 Sydney time (22:15 GMT Tuesday) near the Al Minhad base.

"I can confirm that no Australian personnel were injured, and everyone is absolutely safe," Albanese told reporters.

The projectile caused "minor damage" to an accommodation block and a medical facility, the Australian leader said. Al Minhad Air Base -- just 24 kilometres (15 miles) south of Dubai -- has hosted Australian forces since 2003 and serves as the primary hub for the country's operations in the Middle East.

Up to 80 Australians are on base at any given time, according to the Australian military. The base was previously hit by an Iranian drone attack following the February 28 US-Israeli strikes that killed Tehran's

leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iran has responded to the Israeli US attacks with wide-ranging strikes on its Gulf neighbours, some of which host US bases. Gulf Arab states have struck more than 2,000 mis-

sile and drone attacks on US diplomatic missions and military bases as well as oil infrastructure, ports, airports, ships and residential and commercial buildings, and most of them aimed at the 71 United Arab Emirates.



## PIA suspends flights to UAE's Fujairah for 2 days in view of 'security situation'

**NEWS DESK:** The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on Wednesday morning suspended its flights to Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the next 48 hours in view of the "security situation" as the Middle East war persists.

In a statement, the carrier's spokesperson said that for the time being, PIA flights to the UAE will only be operated to Al Ain.

The decision comes amid the ongoing Middle East conflict, which began on February 28 with US-Israeli strikes on Iran and the assassination of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei.

As its leadership continues to be targeted by the US and Israel, Iran has kept up retaliatory strikes targeting US assets and bases in Gulf countries, disrupting air travel as airlines periodically cancel flights. Indian airline Air Indigo has also sus-



ended operations to Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah, Doha, Kuwait, Bahrain and Dammam until March 28. A day earlier, the UAE's General Civil Aviation Authority announced the "temporary and full closure" of the country's airspace, according to Al Jazeera.

The temporary precautionary measures were lifted later in the day, the UAE's state news agency WAM reported.

The development also comes in the wake of an attack on a Kuwait-flagged tanker 723 nautical miles east of Fujairah, according to the United Kingdom's Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO).

On March 14, the Fujairah port, a major global hub for refuelling ships as well as crude and fuel exports, came under attack. The port is located approximately 70 nautical

miles from the Strait of Hormuz, which is effectively closed due to the Iran war, increasing the importance of Fujairah's flows to the global market during the current conflict.

Fujairah exported more than 1.7 million barrels per day of crude oil and refined fuels on average last year, according to Kpler data, a volume equal to about 1.7 per cent of daily world demand.

## ANF seizes over 472 kg of drugs, arrests 11 suspects in nationwide operations

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) has arrested 11 suspects in seven operations conducted across the country and recovered more than 472 kilograms of narcotics

worth over Rs 136.6 million, an ANF spokesman said on Wednesday. He said the operations targeted domestic and inter-provincial drug trafficking networks in multiple re-

gions. In Kech District, ANF recovered 300 kg of ice and 40 kg of heroin from a vehicle in the Jusak area and arrested two suspects. In another operation near Yaroo in Pishin, 24 kg

of hashish was seized from a car, and one suspect was apprehended. Similarly, near Pabli Bazaar in Nowshera, 12 kg of hashish was recovered from a vehicle, and the

accused was taken into custody. On Hub River Road near Jamia Faqoona, ANF teams confiscated 84 kg of hashish from two vehicles and arrested three suspects. At a cargo office

in Rawalpindi, authorities recovered 2.4 kg of opium and 790 grams of ice concealed in a parcel, leading to the arrest of the accused. In a separate action near Bund Road in Lahore,

2.4 kg of hashish was seized from an individual. In an inter-provincial operation near the Islamabad Toll Plaza, ANF recovered 4.8 kg of hashish and 2 kg of ice from a vehicle and

arrested two suspects. The spokesman said cases had been registered against the accused under the Control of Narcotic Substances Act 1997, and further investigations were underway.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Steering Committee of Pakistan Railways.

## Rain in Lahore, other parts of country turns weather cold

LAHORE (INP): Light rain in Lahore and its surrounding areas in the wee hours of Wednesday turned the weather cooler and also delayed the departure of winter season.

Rain was also reported from other cities of Punjab including Mianwali, Kalabagh, Chashma and Kandiyia.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa heavy rainfall occurred in Peshawar and Dera Ismail Khan and surrounding areas, causing roads to submerge under rainwater, which disrupted traffic flow.

Meanwhile, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has forecast rainfall with thunderstorms and strong winds across various parts of Pakistan until March 25. According to the NDMA's National Emergency Operations Center, a new western weather system will affect northern and western areas,

including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Murree, Galat, Jhelum, Chakwal, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Lahore, and surrounding regions, bringing rain and winds.

Upper Punjab may see hail and thunderstorms at some locations, while southern Punjab cities like Multan, Khanewal, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Rahim Yar Khan, and Dera Ghazi Khan are also expected to receive rainfall.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, most districts may experience intermittent rain and strong winds. Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir could see rainfall and snow in hilly areas. Balochistan may experience storms and rain from March 17-23, while Sindh remains mostly dry except for scattered rainfall in Sukkur, Larkana, Jacobabad, Dadu, Karachi, and Hyderabad.

## Pakistan receives petrol, crude oil tankers at Port Qasim

KARACHI (INP): The arrival of petrol and crude oil tankers continues at Port Qasim, Karachi as Pakistan government is securing fuel amid Middle East crisis.

According to details, two petrol shipments and one diesel tanker have recently reached the port, while additional vessels carrying petrol and crude oil are currently stationed at the outer anchorage awaiting clearance.

Among the arrivals, MT Khairat delivered 60,000 tonnes of petrol from Fujairah, while MT Sunny Liger brought in a further 20,000 tonnes from the same location. Another vessel, MT NCC Reem, anchored with 38,000 tonnes of petrol.

Meanwhile, several tankers have completed offloading operations and departed. MT Torm Damini discharged 37,000 metric tonnes of petrol before leaving the port, while MT Nave Atropos completed the delivery of 53,000 metric

tonnes. MT Sapporo II also departed after unloading 55,000 metric tonnes of petrol. Additionally, MT Maritime Amity delivered 43,000 metric tonnes of diesel before sailing. However, sources said that MT Sea Clipper, carrying 34,000 tonnes of petrol, remains at the outer anchorage and has yet to receive a berth due to financial constraints.

The continued movement of fuel shipments highlights ongoing efforts to maintain petroleum supplies amid rising demand. Earlier, the government increased the price of kerosene oil by Rs39.20 per litre while keeping petrol prices unchanged for the week ending March 20.

With fresh price notification, Kerosene, commonly described as the poor man's fuel, has become the most expensive consumer product at Rs58 per litre and has seen the highest increase among all fuels since March 7.

## PM orders swift actions to make housing loans accessible for people

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the relevant authorities to take practical steps to ensure effective access to housing finance for the common people.

He said that providing housing to low-income groups, promoting affordable housing projects, including encouragement of the private sector, and improving public facilities are among the government's top priorities.

The prime minister was speaking while chairing a meeting on the matters related to the

Federal Ministry of Housing and Works held at the Prime Minister's House. During the meeting, a briefing was given on the strategic roadmap of the Ministry of Housing and Works.

It was informed that reforms were being made to the tax structure related to the construction sector. "Consultations between the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and the provinces are underway on draft regulations for the construction industry, and discussions are also being held regarding forms concerning housing mortgages," the meeting was told.

The meeting was further informed that a framework was being prepared for the construction of homes for low-income groups under Public-Private Partnership (PPP). The briefing added that a Real Estate Regulatory Authority will be established to regulate the real estate and housing sectors.

"Regarding housing finance, the Ministry of Finance, FBR, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and provincial governments are working together with the Ministry of Housing on Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)."

The meeting was attended by Minister for Law and Justice Azam Naezer Tarar.

Minister for Economic Affairs Ahsan Khan Cheema, Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister for Housing and Works Kiaz Pirzada,

Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Inter-Provincial Coordination Rana Sanullah, Minister of State for Finance and Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani, and other senior government officials.

## Sindh accelerates digital governance as CM Shah oversees expansion of e-stamping system

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah launched an expanded push for digital governance in the province, describing technology-driven reforms as central to building a transparent, efficient and citizen-centric government, as he presided over the signing ceremony for the e-Stamping system.

The ceremony held at CM House was attended by Provincial Ministers Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho and Syed Sardar Shah, SACM Ali Rashid, Spokespersons Nadir Gabol and Buland Junjo, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Chairman F&D Najam Shah, and Senior Member Board of Revenue Khalid Hyder Shah, Secretary Finance Fazal Jatoi, Secretary to CM Asif Jameel, Secretary U&B Abbas Balcohi, Secretary IT Zulfikar Nizamani, Dr Sarosh Lodhi, President Sindh Bank Anwar Shaikh and Deputy CEO Asad Shah, along with senior officials.

The ceremony marked the signing of a Master Service Level Agreement and Service Order between the Board of Revenue Sindh and the Sindh Information Technology Company (SITC) for the continued rollout and expansion of the e-Stamping platform — an initiative aimed at digitising government documentation, eliminating fake stamp papers and simplifying services for citizens.

Addressing the gathering, the chief minister said the reform was part of a broader strategy to modernise governance in Sindh through digital systems that enhance transparency, efficiency and ease of access for the public. "In just five months since SITC took over the system, more than 730,000 challans have been processed and Rs12.8 billion collected through the e-Stamping platform transparently and efficiently," he said.

Murad Ali Shah said the significance of the reform went beyond revenue generation, noting that the system was designed to eliminate long-standing irregularities in documentation.

Officials further apprised that during the fiscal year 2025-26, sales tax has recorded a growth of 27 percent, while income tax has grown by 9 percent, with an overall tax growth of 16 percent so far. It was expressed confidence that the province would achieve the International Monetary Fund (IMF) target of 19 percent growth by the end of the current fiscal year.

The Governor was also informed that under Section 40-D, sales tax is being applied on locally manufactured products in the erstwhile FATA province. Principal Secretary to Governor, Zubair Arshad, was also present on the occasion.

During the briefing, it was informed that the tax collection system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa comprises seven zones, including Taxpayer Zone, Corporate Zone, Withholding Zone, Mardan, Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan and Refund Zone.

The Governor was told that the province generated approximately Rs2.47 billion in tax revenue during the fiscal year 2024-25. Officials further ap-

## Governor Kundi apprised of tax collection, revenue targets

PESHAWAR (INP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Faisal Karim Kundu on Tuesday briefed officials of the Regional Tax Office (RTO) Peshawar on tax collection, performance of zonal offices and revenue targets during a meeting held at Governor House Peshawar.

Chief Commissioner RTO Peshawar Muhammad Taqi Qureshi gave a detailed presentation to the Governor on overall tax collection, growth trends and performance of various tax zones across the province. Principal Secretary to Governor, Zubair Arshad, was also present on the occasion.

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## Pakistan offers to mediate between Iran, US amid rising tensions

ISLAMABAD, March 18 (INP): Pakistan has offered to mediate between Iran and the United States in a bid to reduce escalating tensions in the region. The offer comes as Islamabad reiterates its commitment to diplomatic stability in the Middle East.

Federal Minister for Information Technology Attaullah Tarar said Pakistan is ready to play a constructive role in easing tensions between Iran and the US.

In an interview, he stressed that Pakistan is willing to participate in all efforts aimed at de-escalation and restoring balance in the region. Tarar condemned the attacks on Iran and reiterated Pakistan's solidarity with Gulf countries. He emphasized that Pakistan remains committed to maintaining peace and stability, given its longstanding relationships with countries across the Middle East.

Highlighting Pakistan's diplomatic track record, Tarar noted that the country has previously played a successful role as a mediator in resolving disputes.

Speaking to Al

Jazeera, he said Pakistan is actively engaging with various partners and is well-positioned to facilitate dialogue. "Pakistan is involved in talking with various partners, and we have always wanted this balance in relations to remain," he said.

He added that Pakistan is capable of playing a mediation role among regional countries due to its strong diplomatic ties. The minister underscored Pakistan's sincere desire to help de-escalate the situation in Iran and prevent further instability.

He reiterated that Pakistan stands ready to step in wherever possible to support peace efforts in the region.

Addressing separate concerns, Tarar rejected allegations by the Afghan Taliban that Pakistan had bombed a hospital. He termed the claims baseless, stating that the Pakistan Army did not target civilians in Afghanistan. According to the minister, military operations were specifically aimed at camps involved in spreading terrorism, and the Afghan Taliban had circulated misleading information.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti is offering condolences and Fatcha on the death of the father of a senior official of the CM Secretariat, Inamullah Mashwani.

## Temperatures plunge as rain, thunderstorms hit many Sindh cities

HYDERABAD (INP): The mercury took a plunge after many cities with thunderstorms lashed a number of cities in Sindh late last night and Wednesday morning.

There were reports of thunderstorms from Jacobabad, Shikarpur, Kashmore, Mirpur Mathelo and other cities which turned the weather cold again. However, the rain came at a cost as the power supply to different localities in many cities was suspended.

Jacobabad and its suburbs received light rain, which resulted in the suspension of power supply. However, it applied brakes to a plunging aftermath accompanied by strong winds. Light to moderate rain, accompanied by cool breeze, in Shikarpur and surrounding areas brought the mercury down. Several feeders were tripped after thunder showers lashed Mirpur Mathelo and towns in its outskirts namely Garhi Chakar and Jarwar. Light rain, accompanied by cold winds, was also reported from Kashmore and its surrounding areas, which turned the weather pleasant.

On the other hand, after several days of extreme heat, Karachi will receive thunder showers today. Rain will also be accompanied by strong winds. The minimum temperature in the Sindh capital on Wednesday morning was recorded at 23 degrees Celsius, while it was expected to touch 32 degrees Celsius in the afternoon.

The level of moisture in the air stood at 87 per cent, while breeze was blowing from the north-east at the speed of eight kilometers per hour. Rain and snow were reported from different areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), which turned the

weather cold again. Another spell of rain lashed Upper Dir after a gap of one day, while upper areas received light snow, which disrupted routine life.

Meanwhile, heavy rain, accompanied by strong winds, continued in different parts of district Khyber such as Barra and Jamrud. Farmers, on the other hand, termed rains beneficial for the wheat and other crops.

Temperatures plummeted following thunder showers in different areas of Balochistan. It rained cats and dogs in Kalat and its adjoining areas.



QUETTA: World Health Organization team lead Dr. Afandiyar Sherani presenting the 10-year transformation plan of Balochistan Health to Health Secretary Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Panizai.

Governor Balochistan Calls for Policy Reforms to Curb Brain Drain in Higher Education Sector

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has emphasized the urgent need for a comprehensive policy to address the growing issue of brain drain in the province's higher education sector, particularly in public universities.

Speaking during a meeting with vice chancellors of various universities, the governor stated that talent requires proper opportunities to flourish, and in the absence of such opportunities, valuable human resources are often lost. He noted that universities and campuses in remote districts of Balochistan are facing a severe shortage of professors, which is negatively impacting the quality of higher education.

Governor Mandokhail highlighted that the lack of job security, incentives, and facilities is forcing talented academics to migrate to other provinces. He stressed the need to shift from "brain drain" to "brain gain" by creating a conducive environment for scholars and researchers.

He announced that the government will provide job security and better incentives to professors, associate professors, and assistant professors, enabling them to remain committed to their institutions and perform effectively. He expressed confidence that such education-friendly policies will also attract scholars and professors from other provinces to Balochistan.

The governor added that timely Senate and Syndicate meetings have improved transparency in university governance, and institutions in Balochistan are now performing at par with those in Punjab and Sindh. He expressed optimism that students from other provinces will soon choose Balochistan for higher education. However, he pointed out that due to lack of job security, more than 30 senior PhD scholars have already moved to other provinces, creating not just a numerical shortage but a serious challenge for the higher education system.

He warned that failure to address brain drain could lead to a "brain hemorrhage," severely affecting institutional capacity over time. In contrast, universities in other provinces and at the federal level offer better salaries, career growth opportunities, and job stability, making them more attractive to faculty. Governor Mandokhail further noted that the absence of qualified professors is affecting MPhil and PhD students, who are being deprived of proper research supervision and academic guidance.



Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail is seen during a meeting with vice chancellors of various universities in Quetta, discussing the brain drain issue in higher education.

Balochistan Revenue Authority Advances Reform Agenda to Strengthen Local Resources and Fiscal Governance

QUETTA: Under the vision of Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti, the Balochistan Revenue Authority (BRA) is moving forward with its reform agenda to enhance the mobilization of local resources and improve fiscal governance.

A high-level review meeting, chaired by Abdullah Khan, brought together senior experts from the BRA and the Department of Finance to discuss strategies for strengthening revenue collection. The meeting focused on a comprehensive assessment of the tax gap in Balochistan and mapping the revenue potential of various sectors. It was decided that the department will explore the possibility of obtaining technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to support this initiative.

The study will identify key revenue drivers, including overall economic activity, growth trends, and untapped potential in the services sector. Special attention will be given to identifying new taxable sectors under the Central Product Classification (CPC) framework and reviewing the existing negative list system to expand the tax net. The meeting emphasized that the expansion of the tax base should not impose additional burdens on sectors that are already paying taxes. Instead, reforms will target the informal economy through institutional improvements, better documentation, and systematic mapping.

This initiative reflects the government's commitment to promoting transparency, ensuring fairness in the tax system, and establishing a sustainable revenue framework for the province. The meeting also discussed the possibility of issuing strict directives to state departments to ensure that all illegally issued documents are cancelled and returned to the relevant departments for cancellation. The meeting was attended by SSP Nasir Ahmad Nasir, Chairman of the Chaman Area, and Deputy Commissioner Manzoor Shraiz, and representatives of intelligence individuals involved through family tree linkage.



Members of the Balochistan Revenue Authority are seen during a meeting in Quetta, discussing the reform agenda to strengthen local resources and fiscal governance.

GDA Reviews Administrative Reforms and Staff Performance in High-Level Meeting

GWADAR: Director General Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) Moir ur Rehman Khan chaired an important meeting to review institutional performance, administrative reforms, and operational efficiency of various departments.

The meeting was attended by Director Administration Chanz Khan, Director Finance Zakir Majeed, Director Environment Rasool Bakhs Baloch, Controller Buildings Nazir Ahmed, Director Land Management Shai Mansoor, Deputy Director Human Resources Nazir Muhammad, and Deputy Director Town Planning Abdul Razzaq, along with other officials. During the session, the DG was given a detailed briefing on employees' roles, postings, responsibilities, performance, and ongoing assignments within the organization. Various proposals aimed at institutional improvement and reforms were discussed, and clear directives were issued to relevant departments for their effective implementation. It was emphasized that organizational development depends on transparency, merit, efficiency, and accountability.

The DG instructed that staff in the Water Section should be appointed on a permanent basis rather than temporary attachments, to ensure improved performance and better water supply services for citizens. The meeting also reviewed government policies on austerity measures, with instructions to fully implement these directives across all departments. Key decisions were also considered to ensure discipline within the organization. The proposal for early retirement of employees involved in drug abuse was discussed, while strict disciplinary action was ordered against employees with continuous absenteeism.

Director General Moir ur Rehman Khan stressed that reforms are essential for institutional growth, adding that only through transparency, merit, and accountability can the GDA be transformed into a strong and effective public organization. He directed all officers and staff to perform their duties with integrity, professionalism, and a spirit of public service, aiming to make the Gwadar Development Authority a model public institution.

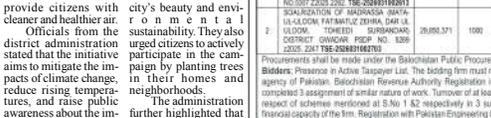


Director General Moir ur Rehman Khan is seen during a meeting in Gwadar, reviewing administrative reforms and staff performance.

Quetta Administration Launches "Clean and Green Initiative 2026" to Promote Tree Plantation

QUETTA: The District Administration Quetta has intensified its tree plantation drive under the campaign titled "Quetta Clean and Green Initiative 2026," aiming to make the city greener and combat environmental pollution.

As part of the campaign, joint teams of the district administration and Rotary Club are actively engaged in plantation activities across various parts of the city. Saplings are being planted along major roads, parks, educational institutions, residential areas, and vacant plots to improve the overall environment and provide citizens with cleaner and healthier air. Officials from the district administration stated that the initiative aims to mitigate the impacts of climate change, reduce rising temperatures, and raise public awareness about the importance of tree plantation. They emphasized that trees not only help reduce pollution but also have positive effects on human health and well-being. Representatives of the Rotary Club reiterated their commitment to continue working alongside the administration to enhance the city's beauty and environmental sustainability. They also stressed the need for citizens to actively participate in the campaign by planting trees in their homes and neighborhoods. The administration further highlighted that proper care and maintenance of planted saplings are crucial. Citizens and relevant authorities have been encouraged to ensure regular watering and protection of plants to achieve long-term benefits from the initiative. People from various walks of life have appreciated the effort, calling it positive to enhance the city's beauty and environmental sustainability.



People are seen participating in a tree plantation activity in Quetta, part of the "Clean and Green Initiative 2026" campaign.

Kech Deputy Commissioner Reviews Hospital Performance, Warns Against Staff Absenteeism

TURBAT: Deputy Commissioner Kech Yaser Iqbal Dashti conducted a follow-up visit to Teaching Hospital Turbat on Wednesday, where he met with Medical Superintendent Dr. Waheed Baloch and other medical officers to review hospital performance and facilities.

During the visit, detailed discussions were held regarding the overall functioning of the hospital, availability of medical services, and existing challenges. The Deputy Commissioner particularly highlighted concerns raised during his previous visit, including cleanliness issues and the absence of some doctors from duty. He emphasized that the hospital's developmental lies not in exporting talent but in nurturing it locally, adding that billions are spent on university infrastructure, but without faculty retention, desired outcomes cannot be achieved. The governor concluded by calling for immediate measures to empower PhD scholars and researchers, stating that a developed and educated Balochistan depends on effectively utilizing the expertise of its academics and researchers.

He stated that Teaching Hospital Turbat is the largest healthcare facility in Makran Division and one of the key hospitals in the province, where specialist doctors and medical staff are responsible for serving a large population. Expressing concern, the Deputy Commissioner noted that some doctors prioritize private practice visits while neglecting their hospital duties, which creates difficulties, especially for underprivileged patients who rely on public healthcare services. Yaser Iqbal Dashti reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring strict attendance and discipline within the hospital, announcing that surveillance visits will continue to monitor staff performance. He warned that strict action will be taken against officials and staff found absent during duty hours without permission, in accordance with rules and regulations. The Deputy Commissioner emphasized that Teaching Hospital Turbat is a vital public institution, and improving its performance while ensuring quality healthcare services is a collective responsibility. He assured that the district administration will continue to take necessary measures to provide timely and better medical facilities to the public.

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Crackdown on Illegal ID Cards: Nasirabad DC Chairs Meeting on Afghan Refugee Documentation

NASIRABAD: Deputy Commissioner Nasir Ahmad Nasir chaired an important meeting regarding Afghan refugees holding Pakistani identity cards, focusing on verification



Deputy Commissioner Nasir Ahmad Nasir is seen during a meeting in Nasirabad, discussing the crackdown on illegal ID cards and Afghan refugee documentation.

issued strict directives to state departments to ensure that all illegally issued documents are cancelled and returned to the relevant departments for cancellation. The meeting was attended by SSP Nasir Ahmad Nasir, Chairman of the Chaman Area, and Deputy Commissioner Manzoor Shraiz, and representatives of intelligence individuals involved through family tree linkage. He further instructed that the scope of investigations be expanded to identify individuals involved through family tree linkage. The meeting also discussed the possibility of issuing strict directives to state departments to ensure that all illegally issued documents are cancelled and returned to the relevant departments for cancellation. The meeting was attended by SSP Nasir Ahmad Nasir, Chairman of the Chaman Area, and Deputy Commissioner Manzoor Shraiz, and representatives of intelligence individuals involved through family tree linkage. He further instructed that the scope of investigations be expanded to identify individuals involved through family tree linkage. The meeting also discussed the possibility of issuing strict directives to state departments to ensure that all illegally issued documents are cancelled and returned to the relevant departments for cancellation. The meeting was attended by SSP Nasir Ahmad Nasir, Chairman of the Chaman Area, and Deputy Commissioner Manzoor Shraiz, and representatives of intelligence individuals involved through family tree linkage. He further instructed that the scope of investigations be expanded to identify individuals involved through family tree linkage.

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Flag Hoisting Ceremony to Be Held in Chaman on Pakistan Day

CHAMAN: A dignified flag hoisting ceremony will be held at the Deputy Commissioner Office, Chaman, on the occasion of Pakistan Day (March 23).

The event will be attended by a large number of participants, including tribal and political elders, religious scholars, officers of line departments, teachers, students, and representatives of various patriotic organizations from across the district.

Deputy Commissioner Chaman Habib Ahmed Bangalzi, in his statement, urged citizens to actively participate in the national ceremony and express their spirit of patriotism. He emphasized that nations that value their freedom understand its true importance, adding that the historic Pakistan Resolution of March 23 paved the way for independence. He noted that after tireless struggle and sacrifices, Pakistan came into existence on August 14, 1947, bringing peace and relief to the subcontinent. The district administration has encouraged the public to join the celebrations and make the occasion memorable by demonstrating unity and national pride.

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TENDER NOTICE: The Deputy Director Agriculture OFWMI Harnai invites sealed tender bids from eligible bidders for execution of following works for the year 2025 based on Composite Schedule of Rates, 2023 (in Percentage Basis). Bid Security: 2% for each work.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER: THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, SOUTH WINDMILLS invites bids for execution of following works for the year 2025 based on Composite Schedule of Rates, 2023 (in Percentage Basis). Bid Security: 2% for each work.

Deputy Director Agriculture On Farm Water Management Harnai: The Deputy Director Agriculture OFWMI Harnai invites sealed tender bids from eligible bidders for execution of following works for the year 2025 based on Composite Schedule of Rates, 2023 (in Percentage Basis). Bid Security: 2% for each work.

# Oil prices fall over \$2 as Iraqi and Kurdish authorities agree to export deal

**NEWS DESK:** Oil prices fell more than \$2 per barrel on Wednesday to spare some of Tuesday's sharp gains after the Iraqi government and Kurdish authorities reached a deal to resume oil exports via Turkey's Ceyhan port, providing modest relief to concerns about supplies from the Middle East.

But with no signs of a de-escalation of the Iran conflict, which has left oil exports from the Middle East largely halted, Brent futures prices were settled above \$100 per barrel for the prior four consecutive sessions.

After rising more than 3% on Tuesday, Brent futures retreated \$2.26, or 2.19%, to \$101.16 a barrel by 0429 GMT on Wednesday. US West Texas Intermediate crude dropped \$2.99, or 3.11%, to \$93.22.



Iraq's oil minister Hayan Abdel-Ghani said oil flows from Ceyhan were expected to start at 0700

GMT on Wednesday, according to state media. Two oil officials said last week that Iraq was seeking to pump at least 100,000 barrels per day of crude through the port. "The news provided some relief to

the market. Any additional volume finding its way back to the market is valuable under the current situation, so prices moved down to reflect that," said LSEG senior analyst Anb Pham. "But we are still in

a \$100 per barrel oil environment, and the crisis around the Strait of Hormuz shows no sign of stopping yet."

Oil production from Iraq's main southern oilfields, where most of its crude is produced and exported, has plunged 70% to just 1.3 million bpd, sources said on March 8, as the Iran conflict effectively shut the vital Strait of Hormuz through which some 20% of global oil passes.

Iran confirmed on Tuesday that its security chief Ali Larjani had been killed in an Israeli attack. He is the most senior figure targeted since Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed on the first day of the US-Israeli war at the end of February.

A senior Iranian official said Iran's new supreme leader had rejected de-escalation

offers conveyed by intermediary countries. The US military said on Tuesday it had targeted "sites along Iran's coastline near the Strait of Hormuz because Iranian anti-ship missiles posed a risk to international shipping there."

Larjani's death was expected to have raised some hopes that the conflict could end sooner, said Mingyu Gao, chief researcher for energy and chemicals at China Futures.

US crude stocks rose by 76.56 million barrels in the week ended March 13, market sources said, citing API figures on Tuesday.

A Reuters poll showed that U.S. crude oil stockpiles were expected to have risen by about 380,000 barrels in the week to March 13.

## ADB unveils five-year strategy to drive sustainable, inclusive growth in Pakistan

**NEWS DESK:** The Asian Development Bank on Wednesday launched a new country partnership strategy (CPS) for Pakistan for 2026-2030, outlining a roadmap to support the country's transition towards sustainable and inclusive growth through private sector development.

The five-year strategy is built around three core pathways: enabling private sector development, advancing inclusion and empowerment, and enhancing resilience and sustainability. These priorities will be supported by cross-cutting themes including good governance and institutional strengthening, gender equality and social inclusion, digital transformation, and regional cooperation and integration, according to an ADB press release.

"The new CPS is tailored to address Pakistan's structural challenges and promote robust and lasting growth, which benefits the whole country, especially the poor and vulnerable," said ADB Country Director for Pakistan Emma Fan. She added that the strategy promotes investments and reforms across key

sectors to stimulate economic growth and job creation, while reaffirming ADB's commitment to supporting both the public and private sectors.

The strategy comes at a time when Pakistan has stabilised its macro-economic conditions following a series of external shocks and initiated structural reforms. It places strong emphasis on export- and investment-led growth, backed by improved public financial management, a more enabling business environment, and investments in high-impact sectors.

Private sector development forms a central pillar of the CPS.

Under the framework, ADB will support reforms and investments aimed at reducing regulatory and compliance burdens, improving infrastructure, expanding access to finance, promoting public-private partnerships, and strengthening private sector operations.

The CPS also identifies transformative opportunities in key sectors including critical minerals, railways and multimodal connectivity, energy security and clean energy, agricultural productivity and value chains, integrated water resource management, and skills development and employment. To address emerging challenges, ADB plans to deploy integrated solutions combining policy reforms, sovereign and non-sovereign financing, technical assistance, and knowledge support across Pakistan.

Advancing inclusion and empowerment remains another key focus, with the bank prioritising investments to strengthen human capital, expand access to quality social services, and enhance women's economic participation.

Given Pakistan's vulnerability to extreme weather events and disasters, resilience and sustainability form a core pillar of the strategy.



## Discos seek higher fuel cost adjustment for February

**NEWS DESK:** After charging Rs1.63 per unit as positive fuel cost adjustment (FCA) this month, power companies have sought another Rs1.64 per unit for April bills as demand increased.

The Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) demanded the higher fuel cost on account of power consumed in February, although more than 75 per cent of power generation came from domestic and cheaper sources.

Electricity consumption was reported

to be around 11.42pc higher than the same month of last year but about 15pc lower than January 2026.

Once approved, the power companies would charge an additional amount of about Rs12.2bn to consumers of all the power companies, including ex-Wapda Distribution Companies (Discos) and K-Electric, in the billing month of April.

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has called a public hearing on March 31 to examine

the request for additional FCA charges for consumers.

The CPPA also filed the petition for a higher FCA for February consumption. The power companies have claimed an average fuel cost of Rs8.37 per unit for February compared to Rs8.23 per unit in the same month last year.

The CPPA reported that 7,427 billion units (gigawatt hours) were delivered to Discos in February, compared to 8,762 GWh delivered to Discos in January.

The power companies claimed that the average fuel cost amounted to Rs8.37 per unit in February against a pre-approved reference fuel cost of Rs6.74 per unit, therefore, the need for about Rs1.64 per unit additional FCA.

The CPPA said about 7,696 GWh of electricity was generated in February at an estimated fuel expenditure of Rs62,750n (Rs8.15 per unit), of which 7,427 GWh of energy was delivered to Discos at a cost of Rs62,2bn (Rs8.37 per unit), leading to a higher fuel cost than already charged to consumers in February bills.

Hydropower regained its top position among fuel sources contributing to the national grid, with a share of over 23pc after annual canal closures in December and January, but remained below its full potential. Hydropower had contributed only 8pc of electricity to the grid in January. This was followed by nuclear power, which accounted for an 18.83pc share in February, compared to 17.5pc in January when a few plants were under forced outage or undergoing annual refueling.



## Auto loans jump for 15th month

**NEWS DESK:** Consumers remained upbeat towards new and old models, thus further propelling outstanding auto loans for the 15th consecutive month to Rs336 billion by the end of February from Rs328bn in January, data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) showed.

Auto loans grew despite fewer working days in February, while consumer spending continued to rise after December due to the model-year change.

As per data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), car assemblers imported semi-

and completely knocked-down kits worth \$1.3 billion in July-February FY26, up 120pc from \$75 million in the same period last fiscal, suggesting a positive sales outlook in the coming months.

However, an uncertain situation has surfaced since February 28 over geopolitical conditions after the war in the Middle East between Iran, the USA, and Israel.

Assemblers fear supply chain issues with imported parts and accessories, as well as price increases due to freight and war risk

charges imposed by shipping lines.

Geopolitical tensions raise supply chain concerns. They also appear divided, with some saying that March auto sales may plunge due to the slowdown in consumer visits to showrooms ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr for fresh bookings and on-the-spot buying.

Other analysts say that auto buying has been going on as usual. A Suzuki car dealer said new bookings generally slowed down in urban markets, but rural markets still have the pre-Eid rush.

People are waiting and seeing the impact of the war. There may be some supply chain delays, as container ships usually arrive via Middle East shipping lines.

He said the used car market has seen an increase in footfall under Rs2.5 million, mainly due to reduced purchasing power.

New models are being launched, with some models attracting the majority of interest; however, this interest is short-lived, and once booked vehicles come to market for resale, the buyer may not be available at that time, the dealer said.

The management of Indus Motor Company (IMC), in a corporate briefing held in the first week of this month, expects disruptions and delays in the import of parts due to the ongoing Middle East crisis. Logistical congestion, higher freight costs, and shipping delays are likely to put pressure on supply timelines.

However, a broader ripple effect may become visible over the next month, making effective crisis management critical, although some disruptions may remain unavoidable.



## India's privatisation drive derails because of weak investor interest in state-run firms: report

**NEWS DESK:** India is considering shelving three planned privatisation sales amid weak investor appetite, two government sources said, a slump that has already derailed its attempt to sell a stake in IDBI Bank and is a fresh blow to the government's flagship divestment programme.

The privatisation plan, delayed for years, is now facing fresh setbacks that include dwindling interest in state-run firms such as Shipping Corporation of India and HLL Lifecare, besides the collapse of the IDBI Bank stake sale last week after bids fell short of the government's minimum

price. India's finance, shipping and health ministries and the companies did not respond to Reuters' queries.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious privatisation plan was aimed at having the state exit most sectors while remaining only in sensitive ones such as telecom and banking.

But the government could only sell Air India to Tata Sons, and indirect holdings in steel-maker Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd to Tata Steel, and Ferro Scrap Nigam to Konark Transport Co.

The initial delays to the plan came from bu-

reaucratic red tape and political pushback from Modi failed to secure a full majority in 2024 elections and had to rely on regional allies to form the government.

Dwindling buyer interest. India had invited bids to privatise Shipping Corporation in 2020 and received interest from multiple bidders, but a later review found the shortlisted bidders were ineligible to acquire the firm, the two government sources said.

The divestment department has since proposed scrapping the sale and either restarting the process, or exploring a merger with Container Corporation of India to integrate the logistics chain, the sources said.

Higher valuation. The government had also targeted IDBI Bank's privatisation sale derailed what was seen as a model for future bank privatisations, after a high reserve price and Middle East-related geopolitical uncertainty curbed investor interest, an industry source said.

Also, the lack of protection for liabilities such as pension and gratuity dues further deterred investors.



# 'Iran negotiating with FIFA to move World Cup games to Mexico': president Mehdi Taj

**NEWS DESK:**Iran's football federation is in discussions with FIFA about moving their World Cup matches to Mexico from the United States due to concerns about the safety of their players. Iranian football president Mehdi Taj has said.

Iran's participation in the global showpiece event was thrown into doubt after co-hosts the US launched joint airstrikes on the country along with Israel on Feb 28.

US President Donald Trump said last week that Iran were welcome to participate but suggested it might not be appropriate for them to play in the US "for their own life and safety".

"When Trump has explicitly stated that he cannot ensure the security of the Iranian national team, we will certainly not travel to America," said Taj in a post on the Iranian embassy in Mexico's X account.

"We are negotiating with FIFA to hold Iran's World Cup matches in Mexico," the FIFA website said.



FIFA is in regular contact with all participating member associations, including Iran, to discuss planning for the World Cup 2026.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum confirmed on Tuesday that her country was prepared to host Iran's first-round matches at the World Cup if needed.

due to the conflict in the Middle East. Asked at a press conference about reports that Iran's football federation was negotiating with FIFA to relocate

its matches from the US, Sheinbaum said that her country could respond favourably. Huge logistical switch Iran secured a trip to a fourth successive World Cup by top-

ping their group in the second round of Asian qualifying last year. The tournament is due to kick off on June 11 in the US, Canada and Mexico, with Iran sched-

uled to play two group matches in Los Angeles and one in Seattle. Belgium, Egypt and New Zealand are Iran's opponents in Group G.

The organising committees for matches in Los Angeles and Seattle did not immediately respond to a request for comment outside normal US business hours.

The prospect of shifting Iran's fixtures to Mexico would mark a significant logistical switch for the tournament, though relocating matches for security or geopolitical reasons is not unprecedented.

In September last year, Scotland secured a 2-0 World Cup qualifying win over Belarus at Zalaegerszeg near the Austrian and Slovenian borders, after a ruling by UEFA over the role of Belarus as a staging ground for Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In other sports, soured political relations between India and Pakistan means the nuclear-armed neighbours in South Asia only face each other at neutral venues in multi-team events of the ICC.

## Conway helps NZ level Twenty20 series against South Africa

**NEWS DESK:**Devon Conway blasted a century before New Zealand skittled South Africa cheaply to win the second Twenty20 International by 68 runs in Hamilton on Tuesday and level the five-match series 1-1.

Conway's 60 off 49 balls set the home side up for a competitive 175-6 after being sent in first at the Seddon Park.

The Proteas lost wickets regularly to be dismissed for 107 in 15.3 overs, with pace bowlers Ben Sears and Lockie Ferguson snaring three wickets each.

South Africa won game one in Mount Maunganui on Sunday by seven wickets.

Both the sides are fielding largely second-tier line-ups, choosing to rest their first-choice players in the wake of the T20 World Cup.

New Zealand lost the final of the global tournament to hosts India earlier this month, having beaten South Af-

rica in the semi-finals. Conway produced easily the most important innings of the game, the 34-year-old posting five fours and two sixes, national by 68 runs in Hamilton on Tuesday and level the five-match series 1-1.

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New Zealand lost the final of the global tournament to hosts India earlier this month, having beaten South Af-

ter the World Cup. "It has been a very quiet couple of months for me, going over to India and not featuring at the World Cup," he said. "It's been nice to come back and play and add to contribute for the boys and the group."

Josh Clarkson raced to 26 not out at the death while all-rounder Wiaan Mulder took 2-14. Mulder's addition was the only change to South Africa's team from

game one, replacing Jordan Hermann, who was ruled out of the remainder of the series with a hamstring injury.

The tourists never recovered from 31-3 and four wickets fell for three runs late in the chase, before George Linde added some respectability by top-scoring with 33.

The final T20 of the series is scheduled to be held in Auckland on Friday.



Conway's 60 off 49 balls set the home side up for a competitive 175-6 after being sent in first at the Seddon Park.

## Senegal stripped of AFCON title

**NEWS DESK:**Senegal say they will appeal after they were sensationally stripped of the Africa Cup of Nations title on Tuesday and the Confederation of African Football (CAF) instead declared Morocco champions, two months after their chaotic final.

Several Senegalese players controversially walked off the pitch in Rabat during the final on January 18 in protest when the hosts were awarded a penalty late in second-half stoppage time.

After Senegal's players eventually returned having been coaxed back onto the pitch by captain Sadio Mane, Morocco missed the penalty and Pape Gueye went on to score the goal in extra time that gave his team a 1-0 victory.

CAF said that having studied Morocco's appeal, "the Senegal national team is declared to have forfeited the match" and the result was "officially recorded as 3-0" in favour of Morocco.

The CAF Appeals Committee justified its decision by applying Articles 82 and 84 of the AFCON Regulations, which state that if a team "refuses to play or leaves the ground before the regular end of the match without the authorisation of the referee, it shall be considered (loser) and shall be



eliminated for good from the current competition." The articles add that the team contravening the regulations "will lose its match by 3-0".

The Royal Moroccan Football Federation (FRMF) said in a statement its appeal "was never intended to contest the sporting performance of the teams participating in this competition, but solely to request the application of the competition regulations".

"The Federation reaffirms its commitment to respecting the rules, to the clarity of the competitive framework, and to the stability of African competitions," the statement added.

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## Reason behind Babar's exclusion from Bangladesh ODIs revealed

**NEWS DESK:**Was Babar Azam unfit or dropped? The mystery has been solved. The senior batter was not included in the national squad for the Bangladesh tour due to being out of form.

Later, when he refused to play in the National T20 Cup citing pain in his leg, PCB doctor Javed Mughal examined his injury, which turned out to be serious, and treatment was started. According to details, the selection committee had not included Babar Azam in the squad for the Bangladesh tour due to his poor performance in the World Cup.

Later, coach Mike Hesson said that Babar was not dropped, but rested to give opportunities to young players.

Recently, in a press conference, selector Azeem Javed said: "Babar was out due to fitness issues, and similarly Fakhar is also not fit. We will sit down to investigate how this happened, especially since neither of them played an cricket after the World Cup."

These contradictory statements created confusion. Sources claimed that both Babar Azam and Fakhar Zaman participated in the T20 World Cup despite incomplete fitness, which also affected Babar's performance. The selectors were unaware of this and had picked them based on the clearance report of team physio Cliff Deacon.

Recently, when the National T20 Cup was about to begin, Babar declined participation citing minor leg pain.

However, when UK-based PCB Director of Sports and Exercise Medicine Dr. Javed Mughal examined him, he had to be fielded and bowled only one over. Earlier, Shami Hussain had also suffered a neck injury. The team management is not impressed with the fitness of new players and has also expressed concern over their inability to handle pressure.

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Slot vows to win back support of frustrated Liverpool fans

**NEWS DESK:**Arne Slot insists he can win back the support of Liverpool's frustrated fans after admitting he "must have done a lot of things wrong".

Slot has come under fire throughout Liverpool's dismal Premier League title defence and the Reds boss will face increased scrutiny if his side crash out of the Champions League against Galatasaray on Wednesday.

Liverpool were booed off after conceding a 90th-minute equaliser to struggling Tottenham on Tuesday, leaving Slot to answer questions about his Anfield future when he faced reporters on Wednesday.

While the mood on social media has been usually Slot is not frustrated after replacing the beloved Jurgen Klopp.

"It's never nice when someone here that they will support the manager for such a long time, but if you are supporting something then I must have done a lot



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### With 1,176 passengers, Eid train from Karachi sets off

**NEWS DESK:** Over 1,100 passengers, including children, boarded a special Eid train in Karachi on Tuesday, heading to their hometowns to celebrate the festival with loved ones amid excitement.

It was the third of the four special trains arranged by Pakistan Railways on the occasion of Eidul Fitr and the first one departing from Karachi with Peshawar as its last stop.

The special Eid train is said to make some 31 stops, including Hyderabad, Tando Adam, Nawabshah, Rohri, Khanpur, Bahawalpur, Lodhran, Multan, Khanewal, Shortok, Toba Tek Singh, Gojra, Faisalabad, Chak Jhumra, Chiniot, Shahjahanabad, Sardodia, Malakwal, Mandi Bahauddin, Lalamusa, Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Hasan Abdal, Attock, Jehangira, Nowshera and Peshawar.

Most of the 1,176 passengers boarded the train, consisting 16 rail-cars, from the Cantonment Station. Minutes before the train chugged into the stations, Platter No 1 was cluttered with luggage comprising suitcases, hand bags, stuffed in bed sheets or plastic gummy bags.

fruit crates along with water coolers and compartment tiffins along with shoppers full of biscuits, potato crisps and juice boxes.

Peshawar-bound train will make 31 stops including Faisalabad and Rawalpindi.

And as soon as the train arrived the platform floor and benches were cleared. Everyone went into complete frenzy as they found their rail-cars and compartments to settle in while keeping track of all their children, the older ones of whom were also made responsible for carrying this luggage item or the other.

Aleesa Nadeem Singh was headed to Faisalabad for Eid with her husband and their four kids, the younger of whom had already opened the tiffin and was busy consuming pusa because the Eid train was a few minutes late in arriving at Cantonment Station.

Imran Husain was travelling with his wife, daughter and toddler son to Multan to be with his parents and siblings. "I work here in building construction and Eid is the only occasion I get to see my family. I saved up the entire year for it," he said.

Brothers Altaf

### Info minister says Imran's sons 'welcome to visit Pakistan' using Nicop following Jemima's appeal to PM

**NEWS DESK:** Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said on Wednesday that the children of incarcerated former premier Imran Khan were "welcome" to visit Pakistan on their National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (Nicop).

He made the remarks on X in response to a post by Imran's former spouse, Jemima Goldsmith, who had appealed to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif regarding the delay in issuing visas to his sons, Kasim and Sulaiman.

"Imran Khan's phone call will be arranged on Eid day with his children as done in the past as well," the information minister said.

"His children are welcome to visit Pakistan on their Nicop cards as Pakistani citizens for which no visa is required. However, they will fully comply with the laws of Pakistan during their stay," he said.

Kasim and his older brother Sulaiman live in London with their mother and will have to travel to Pakistan to meet Imran, who is imprisoned at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail.

In her appeal to PM Shehbaz on Monday, Jemima had stated, "My sons Sulaiman and Kasim Khan applied for visas in January (again...) to allow them to visit their father, Imran Khan, in Pakistan. The Pakistan consulate states that online visa processing normally takes 7-10 working days. It has now been 60 days."

She said the delay in the issuance of visas was despite Defence Minister Khawaja Asif publicly promising that they (Kasim and Sulaiman) could safely travel there to see their father after four years.

She added that PM's spokesperson for foreign media, Mosharraf Zaidi, had made a similar commitment.

"Meanwhile, they (Kasim and Sulaiman) are not allowed to speak to him (Imran) on the phone, nor send him a letter. They haven't seen him since 2022, after he was shot in an assassination attempt."

"This is an appeal travel directly to Pakistan's PM Shehbaz to please allow Imran Khan's two sons to see their father

### Pakistan announces 'temporary pause' in Operation Ghazab lil-Haq against Afghan Taliban

**NEWS DESK:** Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday announced that Pakistan has decided on a "temporary pause" in the ongoing Operation Ghazab lil-Haq against the Afghan Taliban in view of Eidul Fitr and at the "request of brotherly Islamic countries".

The information minister made the announcement in a post on the social media platform X.

Operation Ghazab lil-Haq was launched on the night of February 26, following unprovoked firing by the Afghan Taliban from across the border.

In his post, the information minister said, "In view of the upcoming Islamic festival of Eidul Fitr, upon its own initiative as well as on the request of our brotherly Islamic countries of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar and the Republic of Turkey, the government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has decided to announce a temporary pause amidst ongoing Operation Ghazab lil-Haq against the terrorists and support infrastructure in Afghanistan."

Tarar said the pause would be applicable from "midnight March 18/19 to midnight March 23/24".

"Pakistan offers this gesture in good faith and in keeping with the Islamic norms," he said.

"However, in case of any cross-border attack, drone attack or any terrorist incident inside Pakistan, Operation Ghazab lil-Haq shall immediately resume with renewed intensity," he warned.

Shortly after the minister's announcement, the Afghan Taliban also announced a temporary suspension of its military operation against Pakistan.

An Afghan Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid reiterated that the decision was made in response to requests from brotherly Islamic countries, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar.

Meanwhile, in a separate post, the information minister provided an update on the operation and Afghan Taliban and Fina al Khawarij losses.

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

According to the minister, 707 had been killed and more than 938 had been injured. He said that 255 posts had been destroyed and 44



### 'Our intelligence was correct': DG ISPR says Pakistan hit ammunition storage site in Kabul strike

**NEWS DESK:** Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt. General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Wednesday stated that the strike carried out in Kabul on Tuesday last week had targeted an ammunition storage site.

He made the remarks while speaking on a radio program "Geo News programme 'Capital Talk'".

The military's spokesperson stated that the public needed to understand the context behind Operation Ghazab lil-Haq (today). Travellers can book their tickets online or from their nearest Pakistan Railways registration office till the eleventh hour.

"This war has been imposed upon Pakistan by terrorists and their sponsors," he said. He said that it was common knowledge that India was behind terrorism in Pakistan and was using Afghanistan as "a base of operations".

He said that Afghanistan had acted as a base of operations for every act of terrorism in

Pakistan, pointing to the suicide bombing in an imambarah in Islamabad's Tariq area.

Noor Wali Mehsud, Bashir Zeb and Gul Bahadur were "being hidden" in Afghan territory.

"Innocent children, people and worshippers were killed during Friday prayers. Where did the terrorist come from? Afghanistan," DG ISPR said.

In the Wana Cadet College attack, five terrorists were killed, and all of them were Afghans. "Our police and people are under attack, and where are these terrorists coming from?"

They are coming from Afghanistan," he said.

DG ISPR added that terrorist leaders, such as

He added that the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was struck, not Afghans.

"They (Afghan Taliban) then struck 53 locations in Pakistan and our posts along the border," he stated. "Everyone [must know] that they initiated it and we responded, and we are going to take them to task."

He added that 81 locations in Afghanistan were targeted in airstrikes to eliminate "terrorist support infrastructure" such as corps and brigade headquarters, ammunition dumps, storage sites and

other facilities enabling terrorist attacks on Pakistani soil.

"When these strikes take place, the information ministry immediately provides regular updates and video clips," he explained.

"If you examine the clips, they pinpoint targeting hangars, tunnels and headquarters, which are being provided by the Afghan Taliban regime, which is the master terror proxy," he said.

Speaking about the strike in Kabul, DG ISPR said that there was an ammunition and drone storage site, which was targeted. He added that there was video footage of the strike, which was publicly available.

"We hit that... if you strike ammunition, there are secondary detonations. Our intelligence was correct; we hit an ammunition storage site, so the ammunition exploded," he said.

"When it did, people in Kabul saw the explosion and fireballs, which lasted for some time. Old missiles like Russian Scud missiles, ammunition, drones and equipment exploded. That is what we struck."



### PMD predicts cloudy, rainy weather in Karachi and showers in other parts of Sindh until Thursday

**NEWS DESK:** The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has said that a westerly wave is likely to bring rainy weather to Karachi and other parts of Sindh on Wednesday and Thursday.

"A westerly wave is affecting most parts of the country today," the PMD said in its weather forecast issued today.

For Karachi division, the Met Office forecast "partly cloudy and chances of wind thunderstorm/rain with few moderate to isolated heavy falls" for both Wednesday and Thursday (March 18-19).

On Wednesday, the maximum temperature will be 30-32 degrees Celsius and the minimum 23-25°C, with a northeasterly wind turning southwesterly.

Humidity forecast at 87 per cent in the daytime, falling to 50-60pc in the evening.

Temperatures are predicted to see a slight dip on Thursday, with highs of 27-29°C and lows of 20-22°C.

westerly, it added.

Meanwhile, the Met Office has also predicted showers in other parts of Sindh for the next two days.

"Rain/thunderstorm with strong winds" were also likely in Larkana, Qambar Shahdadkot, Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Kashmore, Ghotki and Sukkur districts today and tomorrow with occasional gaps, PMD said.

"Lightning strikes may occur at isolated places during the forecast period," the PMD warned, advising farmers to manage their crops "according to the prevailing weather conditions".

In a previous advisory issued on Monday, the department had said a westerly wave was likely to enter the western parts of the country from Tuesday. It also forecast rain and wind in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and the twin cities from March 17 to March 20.

