



BALUCHISTAN
Provincial Minister Khetran Meets Delegations...
Page No 5



INTERNATIONAL
Jerusalem's Muslims despair on Eidul Fitr as access to Al-Aqsa...
Page No 3



NATIONAL
2 terrorists killed following attack on under-construction...
Page No 8



SPORT
HBL PSL 11 to go ahead as per schedule, confirms PCB
Page No 7

First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan Editor: Asim Khan.

QUETTA VOICE

Rs. 10.00 Vol. VII: No: 165
Email address: quettavoice@gmail.com
Website: www.quettavoice.com
Monday 23, March, 2026

CM Sarfraz Bugti Pledges Transparent Use of Public Funds, Holds Open Court in Dera Bugti

From Our Correspondent:

DERA BUGTI: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, reaffirmed his commitment to transparency and public welfare, stating that "every penny of public resources is a trust" and vowing to personally monitor development projects from planning to completion. On the second day of Eid, the chief minister continued public engagement by holding an open court at Pakistan House in Upper Dera Bugti. He met tribal elders and residents, listened to their concerns, and issued on-the-spot directives to address key issues. People from Kohlu, Barkhan, Dera Bugti, and surrounding areas participated in the gathering. The chief minister spent over five hours interacting directly with citizens, providing immediate relief and strengthening public confidence in governance. Bugti emphasized that resolv-



ing public issues remains the top priority of the provincial government. He acknowledged the challenges of delivering basic facilities across Balochistan's scattered population but assured that a structured strategy is in place to improve infrastructure, including communication networks and essential services. He further stated that the upcoming provincial budget will focus on practical, people-centric development projects. Approved schemes addressing real public needs will be prioritized and included in the budget. Highlighting accountability, Bugti said he would personally oversee development initiatives to ensure they deliver tangible benefits to the people. Tribal elders and local residents appreciated the government's efforts, expressing gratitude for ongoing development projects and the timely resolution of public concerns.

قرارداد سے تعمیر تک

March ۲۳

یہ دن صرف تاریخ نہیں، عزم نو کی پہچان ہے

23 مارچ 1940ء کو گلہان ہے جب برصغیر کے مسلمانوں نے ایک آزاد مکت کے حصول کے لیے جدوجہد کی۔ آج حکومت بلوچستان اس جہاد کو یاد کرتی ہے کہ ہم تو سب نیک اور چھٹی حکم کے ساتھ صوبے کی ترقی اور خوشحالی کے لیے جدوجہد کرتے ہیں۔

پاکستان کی پہچان، بلوچستان کی آن

عزم ہائی ٹیکنالوجی، بلوچستان کی آن

حکومت اطلاعات | حکومت بلوچستان

SS NO 25/27-13-2026

IG Balochistan Visits Police Lines, Pays Tribute to Martyrs on Eid



Staff Reporter:

QUETTA: Inspector General of Police Balochistan, Muhammad Tahir, marked Eid-ul-Fitr by visiting Police Lines, where he paid tribute to fallen police personnel and appreciated the services of officers on duty. Balochistan Travel Guide

He also visited CMH Hospital to inquire about injured police personnel and prayed for their swift recovery. During his visits to Sariah, New Sariah, and Saddar police stations, the IG met officers and, praised their performance, and encouraged them to continue their duties with dedication. He also interacted warmly with citizens, exchanged Eid greetings, and highlighted the strong relationship of trust between the police and the public.

Accompanied by senior officials, the IG laid floral wreaths at the martyrs' memorial and offered prayers for their elevated ranks and for strength and patience for their families. He also met with families of the martyrs, who expressed satisfaction over the department's continued support. The IG later visited the homes of martyred officers, including DSP Mir Faisal, Inspector Zubair Ahmed, and Sub-Inspector Mitha Khan, where he conveyed condolences and acknowledged their sacrifices, calling them the pride of the nation.



Internet Suspension in Quetta, Balochistan Causes Disruption on March 23

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

SBKWU Teacher Recruitment Scandal Raises Alarms for Pakistan's Education System



Editorial: Serious questions have emerged over the secondary teachers recruitment process conducted by Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (SBKWU), triggering widespread concern about merit, transparency, and accountability in Balochistan's education system. It is essential to clarify a point that has caused public confusion: the advertised posts were NOT for SBKWU itself. The university was only assigned the responsibility of conducting tests and interviews for Secondary School Teacher recruitment across Balochistan. According to initial findings, hundreds of candidates who had failed were allegedly declared successful during the teacher recruitment process.

Given the scale of the exercise, involving thousands of applicants for secondary teaching positions across the province, such irregularities cannot reasonably be described as clerical mistakes. The magnitude strongly suggests organised manipulation, carried out with the involvement or protection of influential individuals rather than the actions of a single official. This issue strikes at the heart of education governance in Balochistan. Secondary school teachers shape the academic foundation of students, and any compromise on merit directly damages learning outcomes. In Balochistan, where literacy rates remain among the lowest in the country, flawed teacher recruitment further deepens an already critical education

crisis. Reports that deserving candidates were sidelined only intensify public frustration and mistrust. All anti-corruption and accountability institutions must take immediate notice. A transparent, independent, and time-bound investigation is necessary to identify those responsible for manipulating the recruitment process conducted under SBKWU's authority. Accountability must reach every individual involved, regardless of status or influence. This is not merely an administrative controversy; it is a matter of justice and the future of Balochistan's education system. If credibility in teacher recruitment collapses, public trust in institutions will collapse with it. Balochistan cannot afford silence where integrity is at stake.

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 out of school children in Balochistan. The number of out of school children in Balochistan is currently over 1 mil-

lion. 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 curse 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 Yar 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. Unfortu-

nately, 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. Though, it was imperative to install laboratory soon after

the closure of the border to make sure proper screening and diagnosis of the people. 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 ideological, 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.

Jerusalem's Muslims despair on Eidul Fitr as access to Al-Aqsa Mosque denied amid US-Israeli war on Iran

NEWS DESK: Hundreds of Muslim worshippers held Eidul Fitr prayers at the gates of Jerusalem's Old City on Friday, with Israel closing access to the Al-Aqsa mosque and other holy sites over its war on Iran.

"Today, Al-Aqsa has been taken from us. It's a sad and painful Ramadan," Waqidi Mohammed Shweiki, a silver-haired Palestinian man in his 60s, told AFP.

"It's a catastrophic situation for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for Palestinians in general and for all Muslims across the globe."

Since Israel and the United States started the war on Iran on February 28, Israeli authorities have closed access to Jerusalem's world-renowned holy sites over security concerns. Al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for Christians and the Western Wall for Jews.

As Iranian missile barrages head towards Israel, the authorities have banned gatherings of more than 50 people nationwide to limit potential casualties. In a sign of the risks, police said this week that shrapnel fragments had



fallen on the Old City.

Researchers say this is the first time the Al-Aqsa Mosque — the third holiest site in Islam — has been closed during the last 10 days of Ramadan and for Eidul Fitr since Israel's annexation of east Jerusalem in 1967. As the holiday marked the end of

Ramadan, worshippers denied access to the site arrived with prayer mats under their arms at dawn under the watchful supervision of Israeli police.

The crowd tried to push through the city gates, but the few dozen police officers repelled them, occasionally with

kicks or slaps to the head and at least twice with tear gas.

Eventually, the worshippers managed to take up a position next to Herod's Gate as the police retreated for a few minutes and allowed the street prayers to take place. An imam standing

on a plastic stool delivered a short sermon.

"Pray, invoke Almighty God and hope that your prayers will be answered," he told the worshippers.

"O God, grant victory to the oppressed." The Israeli police then pushed back the worshippers, who dis-

persed without resistance into the narrow streets, buying still-warm bread from street stalls as they went.

"Broken heart" The gathering of just a few hundred worshippers was a far cry from the typical way Eid is usually marked in Jerusalem, when some

100,000 people flock to Al-Aqsa.

The Israeli police said that "despite the high-alert status, police allowed prayers to be conducted on the street outside the Old City of Jerusalem without intervention." "However, officers were required to en-

force... life-saving guidelines when crowds later exceeded authorised capacity and seemingly attempted to breach security perimeters into the Old City," they said.

But while Israeli authorities claim the closure of Al-Aqsa is for safety reasons, there is fear among some Palestinians that it could be part of efforts to rewrite the strict rules governing access to Jerusalem's holy sites.

"The occupier, under the pretext of security and for its own interests, has closed the mosque," cleric Ayman Abu Najm, who had come from Beit Hanina, a Palestinian neighbourhood in east Jerusalem, said.

"In the history of the occupation, this is the longest period during which the Al-Aqsa Mosque has been closed."

For some Muslims, the inability to access Al-Aqsa this year was felt as a deep personal loss.

"Ramadan without the Al-Aqsa Mosque is a very sad feeling, a feeling of having a broken heart," said worshipper Zeyad Mona.

Italy, Germany and France offer help with Hormuz only after ceasefire

NEWS DESK: Six major international powers said on Thursday they were ready "to contribute to ensuring safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz, though three stressed that any initiative would take place post-ceasefire."

Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the Netherlands said they were ready "to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz." They said they "welcome the commitment of nations who are engaging in preparatory planning," as they condemned "in the strongest terms recent attacks by Iran on

unarmed commercial vessels in the Gulf."

But Italy, Germany and France made clear later that they were not talking about any immediate military help, but rather a potential multilateral initiative after a ceasefire. The declaration came as an effective Iranian blockade of the strait has paralysed commercial shipping through the crucial maritime chokepoint, which in peacetime sees a fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas pass through it.

The war, which erupted on February 28 when the United States and Israel began bombing Iran, has led Tehran

to retaliate with strikes across the Gulf region.

Twenty-three commercial vessels, including 10 tankers, have reported incidents or have been attacked. The situation has left around 20,000 seafarers stranded on approximately 3,200 vessels west of the strait, according to the International Maritime Organization.

"We express our deep concern about the escalating conflict," the allies' joint statement said. "We call on Iran to cease immediately its threats, laying of mines, drone and missile attacks and other attempts to block the Strait to commercial shipping."

added.

"Freedom of navigation is a fundamental principle of international law, including under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The effects of Iran's actions will be felt by people in all parts of the world, especially the most vulnerable."

"Not a war mission" US President Donald Trump has urged other world powers, and NATO, to help reopen the Hormuz Strait to commercial shipping. But they have rebuffed his call in the short term while insisting they were open to discussions and planning.

In a statement, Italy's Defence Minister Guido Crosetto said the statement by the six countries should not be seen as a "war mission". "No entry into Hormuz without a truce and a comprehensive multilateral initiative, for which it is right and appropriate for the United Nations to provide the legal framework," he said in a statement. And in Berlin, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said that any German military involvement "would depend on the situation after a ceasefire... and whether we can participate within the framework of an international mandate".

Hezbollah battles Israeli troops in Lebanon

NEWS DESK: Hezbollah said on Thursday its fighters were battling Israeli forces in south Lebanon, as a military source on the ground said Israeli troops were slowly advancing while "systematically destroying" border towns.

Lebanon was drawn into the Middle East war on March 2 when Hezbollah attacked Israel to avenge the killing of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Israel responded with intense strikes on Lebanon that have killed over 1,000 people and displaced over a million more, according to local authorities, and by launching ground operations in the south.

In a statement, Hezbollah said its fight-

ers had ambushed Israeli troops entering the border town of Taybeh and destroyed a tank.

Resistance group repeats denial of having 'cells' in Kuwait

"The enemy then attempted to continue its advance" from a nearby area, but fighters "again targeted them with guided missiles, scoring direct hits and destroying five Merkava tanks".

On Wednesday, Hezbollah added, "Enemy soldiers were seen fleeing the area of engagement."

The Israeli army announced on Monday that it had launched "limited" ground operations in Lebanon. A military source in south Lebanon said that the Israeli army was advancing slowly and "systemati-

cally destroying" the border villages it enters.

"Violent night" Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported a "violent night" in Kham and Taybeh,

saying the towns were "targeted by several airstrikes and subjected to heavy artillery shelling that continued until dawn".

On Wednesday, Hezbollah said it had repelled an attempt by "Israeli enemy soldiers to advance" in Kham.

In recent days, the group has reported getting Israeli forces on the border with Lebanon and inside Lebanese towns such as Kham. The town overlooks part of southern Lebanon and northern

Israel and was the first point into which Israeli forces advanced after the start of the war.

It was also the site of intense clashes between Israeli forces and Hezbollah during their last war in 2024. The military source on the ground said that Israeli soldiers "have almost captured the town".

"They advance one or two kilometres a day and take the time to systematically destroy the towns they enter, such as Kfar Kila or Aitaroun," he added.

"They bulldoze what is not destroyed by airstrikes or artillery" while "they are engaged in ground fighting against" Hezbollah, whose men are fighting in small groups.

Israel has issued warnings to all residents south of the Zaharani River, more than 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the border, to evacuate, and has said it wants to create a buffer zone in Lebanon to protect residents of north Israel.

On Wednesday, the UN peacekeeping force said it was deeply concerned by a "violent escalation" in Lebanon, citing "intensified air and ground activity and increased presence of Israeli forces inside Lebanese territory".



Trump-appointed arts panel approves gold coin featuring his image

NEWS DESK: A federal arts panel comprised of members appointed by Donald Trump on Thursday unanimously approved a commemorative gold coin featuring his image, part of a series of coins the US Mint is planning to produce to celebrate America's 250th birthday this year.

The 24-carat gold coin is the latest effort by Trump and his allies to put the president's name on buildings, government programmes and US currency. The second White House term began in January 2025.

During a presentation by a US Mint official to the Commission of Fine Arts, discussion turned to what diamond the 24-carat coin should be, up to three inches (7.6cm).

Chamberlain Harris, a White House aide whom Trump appointed to the commission this year, said the biggest possible coin would be Trump's preference.

"The larger the better," she said, shortly before the coin was approved by the entire

panel. The US Mint will now produce five dimensions for the coin. Trump has already approved the design and it is expected that Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent will order the coin to be minted.

The coin would depict a stern-looking Trump leaning over a desk and staring forward. It is based on a photograph displayed in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington.

The White House referred questions to the Treasury Department. "As we approach

our 250th birthday, we are thrilled to prepare coins that represent the enduring spirit of our country and democracy, and there is no profile more emblematic for the year of such coins than that of our serving President, Donald Trump," US Treasurer Brandon Beach said in a statement to Reuters.

The US Mint did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Trump gold coin drew criticism from some Democrats and members of another federal arts committee.

"Monarchs and dictators put their faces on coins, not leaders of a democracy," Jeff Merkley, a Democratic US senator, told Reuters in a statement.

"Trump's administration moving to put his face on a commemorative coin is his latest effort to distort the meaning of America's 250th birthday."

Donald Scarinci, a member of the bipartisan Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee, a separate federal panel that refused to consider the gold coin proposal last month.

Iran attacks wipe out 17% of Qatar's LNG capacity for up to five years, Qatar Energy CEO says

NEWS DESK: Iranian attacks "have knocked out 17% of Qatar's liquefied natural gas (LNG) export capacity, causing an estimated \$20 billion in lost annual revenue and threatening supplies to Europe and Asia," Qatar Energy's CEO and state minister for energy affairs told Reuters on Thursday.

Saad al-Kaabi said two of Qatar's 14 LNG trains and one of its two gas-to-liquids (GTL) facilities were damaged in "the unprecedented strikes. The repairs will take 12 to 18 months per year of LNG for three to five years, he said in an interview.

"I never in my wildest dreams would have thought that Qatar would be — Qatar and the region — in such an attack, especially from a brotherly Muslim country in the month of Ramadan, attacking us in this way," Kaabi said.

Hours earlier, "Iran had aimed a series of attacks at Gulf oil and gas facilities after Israeli attacks on its own gas in-



structure. State-owned QatarEnergy will have to "declare force majeure on long-term contracts for up to five years for LNG supplies bound for Italy, Belgium, South Korea, and China due to the two damaged trains, Kaabi said.

"I mean, these are long-term contracts that we have to declare force majeure. We already declared, but that was a shorter term. Now it's whatever the period is," he said.

QatarEnergy had declared force majeure on its entire output of

LNG after earlier attacks on its Ras Laffan production "hub, which came under fire again on Wednesday.

"For production to restart, first we need hostilities to cease," he said. US oil major ExxonMobil is a partner in the damaged "1" LNG facilities, while Shell is a partner in the damaged "2" facility, which will take up to a year to repair.

Texas-based ExxonMobil holds a 34% stake in LNG train S4 and a 30% stake in train S6, Kaabi said. Train S4 im-

pacts supplies to Italy's Edison and EDF in Belgium, while Train S6 impacts South Korea's KOGAS, EDF and Shell in China.

The scale of the damage from the attacks has set the region back 10 to 20 years, he said. "And of course, this is a safe haven for a lot of people, to have a safe place to stay and so take up to a year to repair. I think, has been shaken."

The fallout extends well beyond LNG. Qatar's exports of condensate will drop by 200,000 barrels per day, he said.

Pakistan will not tolerate use of Afghan soil for conduct of terrorism: Field Marshal

RAWALPINDI (INP): Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir has emphasized that Pakistan will not tolerate use of Afghan soil for conduct of terrorism against its people. He was interacting with Ulema of Ahle-Tashayyu at Rawalpindi where matters of national security and role of Ulema in societal harmony came under discussion.

The Field Marshal reiterated the resolve to eliminate terrorists and their infrastructure operating against Pakistan wherever they may be, through precise, intelligence-based operations. He emphasized that Afghan Taliban must prevent use of Afghan soil for terrorism against Pakistan. The Field Marshal also underscored vital role of Ulema in promoting unity, tolerance

and national cohesion, particularly in countering misinformation, sectarian narratives and externally sponsored destabilization efforts. He highlighted Pakistan's efforts and pro-active diplomacy in seeking regional de-escalation. He emphasized the critical role of Ulema to strengthen unity and counter extremism, reiterating that religious sentiments must not be exploited to incite violence in the country.

Violence in Pakistan, on the basis of incidents occurring in another country, will not be tolerated. The participating Ulema expressed their desire for peace, stability, and con-

demmed violence in the name of religion in the strongest terms. They expressed whole-hearted support to law enforcement agencies in bringing about peace and stability in the country.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high level meeting to assess the economic situation and availability of petroleum products in country risen due to Gulf situation.

Punjab Ramadan package distributed to beneficiaries without compromising their dignity: Azma Bokhari

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari stated that the Ramadan package has been successfully distributed to beneficiaries without compromising their dignity. In her statement, the minister said the Punjab government effectively implemented the Ramadan Guardian Package, achieving its three main objectives: distribution of aid cards, meals, and facility bazaars. Millions of eligible individuals received aid cards at their doorsteps, ensuring that no underprivileged or deserving citizen's dignity was violated. The multi-billion rupee Ramadan pack-

Global oil prices spike above \$110 amid Iran, US-Israel escalation

ISLAMABAD (INP): Oil prices rose on Thursday, with benchmark Brent rising as much as \$5 a barrel, after US and Israel have launched fresh illegitimate strikes on Iran's energy hub and in aggressive and massive retaliation Iran attacked energy facilities across the Middle East from there US and Israel launched attack on Iran. Brent futures were up \$4.66, or 4.3%, at \$112.04 a barrel by 0400 GMT, after an earlier rise of more than \$5 to \$112.86 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude rose 96 cents, or 1%, to \$97.28 a barrel, after having risen over \$3. Brent closed up 3.8% on Wednesday, while WTI settled nearly flat. WTI has been trading at its widest discount to Brent in 11 years due to releases from US strategic reserves and higher freight costs, while renewed attacks on Middle Eastern energy facilities boosted support for Brent. Escalation in the Middle East, precise attacks on oil infrastructure, and the death of Iranian leadership all point to a prolonged disruption in oil supplies. Phillip Nova analyst Pivryanka Sachdeva said in a note. "Adding fuel to the fire, the Federal Reserve served 'steady rates' with a hawkish narrative, pointing to the economic concerns that follow a war." The US central bank held interest rates steady on Wednesday, projecting higher inflation as policymakers take stock of the impact of the US-Israel war with Iran. On Wednesday, QatarEnergy said Iranian missile attacks on Ras Laffan, the site of Qatar's core LNG processing operations, caused "extensive damage" to "its energy hub". Saudi Arabia said it intercepted and destroyed four ballistic missiles launched on Wednesday toward Riyadh and an attempted drone attack on a gas facility.

Punjab Civil Defence equipped with advanced anti-drone guns

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab Home Department has equipped the Civil Defence with advanced anti-drone guns, a spokesperson of the department said on Thursday. The spokesperson described this as a significant milestone in the field of civil defence and a major step by the Home Department to protect the country's airspace from hostile drones. The newly provided EMG-150 anti-drone gun can neutralise enemy drones in mid-air. It has the capability to jam and bring down drones at a range of 2 to 3 km. Under the initiative, the Punjab Home Department will equip Civil Defence units across the province with anti-drone guns. The Civil Defence's Bomb Disposal and Drone Squad is being trained by the National Radio and Telecommunication Corporation (NRTC). As a pilot project, the first anti-drone gun has been deployed in the Rawalpindi Division. The EMG-150 weighs just 6 kg and

can accurately target drones at long distances. It operates on eight frequencies, sufficient to neutralise any drone in the world, and uses a high-gain directional antenna for precise targeting. The system can interfere with a drone's control signals, forcing it to land or become inoperable, and can even alter its flight path or bring it down safely. The gun is capable of jamming GPS, Galileo, GLONASS, and BeiDou signals and features a powerful jamming system delivering up to 200 watts output. It operates effectively in temperatures ranging from -22°C to over 65°C. The spokesperson added that, in line with the vision of the Punjab Chief Minister, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, steps are being taken to enhance Civil Defence capabilities. The NRTC will continue to produce additional anti-drone guns to strengthen security. The advanced system is expected to play a key role in protecting sensitive installations across Punjab.

Ayaz Shaukat appointed as first SMPRA Chairman

ISLAMABAD, March 19 (INP): The federal government on Thursday appointed lawyer and Islamabad Advocate General Ayaz Shaukat as the first chairman of the newly formed Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority (SMPRA). SMPRA has been granted extensive powers to regulate unlawful and offensive online content, oversee the registration and licensing of digital platforms, and enforce compliance. It may suspend or revoke licenses and block platforms partially or completely in case of violations. Additionally, the authority will issue guidelines, impose fines, and direct relevant entities to remove or restrict unlawful content. It will also handle complaints, initiate actions independently, promote online safety, support research and awareness, and coordinate with international organizations. The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), introduced in 2016, has faced criticism from various quarters, with some labeling it a restrictive law aimed at curbing dissent. The authority will operate as a corporate body with the power to sue and be sued, with its headquarters in Islamabad and the op-

India continues to deny Kashmiris' right to self-determination: FO

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has rejected India's recent statement as baseless and misleading, asserting that New Delhi continues to suppress and deny the right to self-determination of Kashmiris in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir in violation of relevant UN resolutions. According to Kashmir Media Service, the statement was made by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tahir Andrabi, in response to media queries regarding remarks issued by India's Ministry of External Affairs on March 17, 2026. The spokesperson said the Indian statement on Pakistan's actions against terrorist infrastructure in Afghanistan reflects blatant hypocrisy and duplicity, particularly against the backdrop of India's alleged involvement in sponsoring terrorism against Pakistan from Afghan soil. He further stated that India's leadership remains unaccountable despite exploiting Islamophobia for domestic political gains and being linked to actions against its Muslim population, while also extending support to another occupying power accused of killing innocent Palestinians. The spokesperson emphasized that it is preposterous for a country with a record of undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbours to comment on international principles, adding that such statements cannot divert attention from India's continued denial of Kashmiris' fundamental rights. He urged India to refrain from supporting and sponsoring terrorist groups operating from Afghan soil, including those listed under the UN Security Council sanctions list, and to stop criticizing Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts.

Met Office forecast likely rainfall in Karachi on Eid ul Fitr day

KARACHI (INP): The Met Office has forecast likely rainfall in Karachi on Eid ul Fitr predicting rainfall with thunderstorm in the city and outskirts on Saturday. The weather department has forecast mostly a sunny day in the city on Friday (tomorrow). Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) also predicted moderate to heavy rain with thunderstorms in Karachi again on Thursday (today), with mercury expected to drop noticeably during the day. The Met Office said that a system of westerly winds is expected to persist over the city, contributing to unstable weather conditions and a drop in daytime temperatures. Thunderclouds may develop near Karachi from morning through the afternoon, bringing moderate to heavy rain with thunderstorms and strong winds in different parts of the city. Strong gusty winds and lightning are likely during rainfall, the PMD said. The maximum temperature in city is expected to remain between 27°C and 29°C, while the minimum temperature re-

corded earlier in the day was 18.5°C. Light to moderate rain fell across Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital, but was heavier in some areas, meteorologists said. Rain in March is common in Punjab province in east-central Pakistan but unusual in Sindh, which is in the southeast. South Asia's seasonal monsoon brings rainfall that farmers depend on, climate change is making the phenomenon more erratic. Last year, monsoon rains in Pakistan killed more than 1,000 people.



NAWABSHAH: President Asif Ali Zardari meeting elected representatives and notables at Zardari House on occasion of Eid Ul Fitr.

KP gov distributes Ramadan package to 1.05mn, announces fuel subsidy for bikes

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has scaled up its Ramadan relief efforts, announcing that over 1.05 million people have received assistance under the provincial relief package, with 82 percent coverage achieved so far. Addressing a press conference here, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Information, Shafiq Jan, said the remaining beneficiaries would be covered soon, adding that criticism by the opposition was unsubstantiated as the government was delivering tangible relief amid challenging economic conditions. He said the government has introduced a special two-month relief package for motorcycle owners, one of the most affected segments due to rising fuel prices. Under the initiative, he said registered motorcycle owners will receive Rs1,100 per month in fuel support, totaling Rs2,200, with over Rs3 billion allocated for the programme benefiting more than 1.6 million people. He added that the government has not missed a deadline as the Bus Rapid Transit system and has imposed

a ban on the purchase of new vehicles to reduce expenditures. Meanwhile, Provincial Finance Minister Muzammil Aslam said that rising fuel prices have placed a heavy burden on the public, noting that significant increases in petrol rates have led to substantial additional financial outflows from consumers. He said the province's financial position has improved, adding that while previously resources were barely sufficient for the government's needs, the government is now in a position to cover several months of expenditures. Commenting on Afghan refugees, the minister said there are currently 43 refugee camps in the province. He added that while the repatriation decision was taken by the Federal government, the provincial government aims to transition towards a cashless and paperless economy within the next two years, while maintaining control over provincial debt and avoiding new borrowing.



MULTAN: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani Speaks to the Media on the Occasion of Eid Ul Fitr.

Provincial Minister Khetran Meets Delegations in Barkhan, Vows Swift Resolution of Public Issues

BARKHAN: Provincial Minister Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran held meetings with various delegations in Barkhan, where key issues related to public welfare, development projects, and provision of basic facilities were discussed in detail.

During the meetings, members of the delegations highlighted problems faced by their respective areas and requested immediate solutions.

In response, the Provincial Minister issued clear directives to relevant departments to ensure the timely resolution of public grievances, emphasizing that providing relief to citizens remains the government's top priority and that no negligence will be tolerated.

Sardar Abdul



Rehman Khetran affirmed his commitment to utilizing all available resources for the development and welfare of Barkhan and surrounding areas.

He assured that public issues would be addressed on a priority basis and that the

performance of government institutions would be further improved to ensure effective service delivery.

Later, a grand Iftar dinner was hosted by Mir Ayub Khetran in honor of the Provincial Minister.

The event was attended by tribal elders, local notables, political and social figures, and public issues.

Informal discussions were also held regarding regional matters, mutual cooperation, and solutions

to public issues. The event was attended by tribal elders, local notables, political and social figures, and public issues.

Informal discussions were also held regarding regional matters, mutual cooperation, and solutions

Women-Only Meena Bazaar Inaugurated in Gwadar to Boost Eid Shopping and Female Entrepreneurship

GWADAR: Following the directives of Deputy Commissioner Nageebullah Kakar, Assistant Commissioner Gwadar Saad Kaleem Zafar officially inaugurated a special women-only Meena Bazaar organized by the district administration.

This unique and dedicated bazaar has been set up at GDA Beach Model Park, launching after Iftar today and will continue until Chand Raat, offering a vibrant shopping experience ahead of Eid. The bazaar features a wide range of well-organized shopping stalls, with proper numbering, attractive displays, cleanliness, and effective lighting arrangements. These measures ensure a safe, pleasant, and welcom-

ing environment for visitors—especially women. District administration teams and volunteers are actively managing operations to maintain high standards throughout the event.

What makes this Meena Bazaar distinctive is its exclusive focus on women. All stalls are operated by female entrepreneurs, and services for customers are also being provided entirely by female staff. Nageebullah Kakar has urged the public to actively participate in this positive and unique initiative and contribute to making it a success.

Keywords: Gwadar Meena Bazaar, women-only bazaar Pakistan, Eid shopping Gwadar, female entrepreneurship Balochistan, Chand Raat market Gwadar

Delegations Meet Deputy Commissioner Kech, Highlight Traders' Issues and Departmental Performance



TURBAT: Deputy Commissioner Kech Yasir Iqbal Dashti met with a delegation of the Anjuman-e-Jajiran Turbat, along with various government officials and public representatives, who congratulated him on assuming his new role.

The traders' delegation included Nisar Ahmed Joski, Ijaz Ali

Muhammad Joski, Haji Karim Bakhsh, Haji Abdul Rehman Sanghur, Ishq Roshan Dashti, and Jamal Marri, among others. They apprised the Deputy Commissioner of the challenges faced by the business community in the city and requested the district administration's support in resolving these issues.

Meanwhile, several officials also called on the Deputy Commissioner and briefed him on the performance of their respective departments.

These included Deputy DHO Kech Dr. Aziz Dashti, XEN Irrigation Mirani Dam Raza Samad, Sher Jan

Baloch, Deputy Director Benazir Income Support Programme Jorak Baloch, and DEO Kech Amjad Shehzad.

Deputy Commissioner Yasir Iqbal Dashti thanked all the delegations for their visit and assured them of full cooperation in addressing public and business-related issues, emphasizing the administration's commitment to improving governance and service delivery in the district.

Keywords: Turbat news, Yasir Iqbal Dashti, Kech traders issues, Anjuman Tajiran Turbat, BISP Kech, Mirani Dam irrigation, local governance Balochistan

Governor Balochistan Extends Eid-ul-Fitr Greetings, Calls for Unity and Compassion

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jafar Khan Mandokhail has extended heartfelt Eid-ul-Fitr greetings to the nation, describing the occasion as a reward from Allah Almighty for the observed during the holy month of Ramadan.

In his message, the Governor said that Eid-ul-Fitr symbolizes unity, compassion, and

collective joy. He emphasized that this blessed day is an opportunity to strengthen bonds, share happiness with others, and spread kindness wherever possible.

He highlighted that Islam teaches empathy, solidarity, and social harmony, urging citizens to work together toward build-

ing a just and balanced society. At this time, we need national unity and collective progress more than ever," he stated. Governor Mandokhail stressed that it is a national responsibility to strive for a brighter future where every citizen has equal opportunities and access to basic rights. He also under-

scored the importance of ensuring a better future for coming generations. He further said that Eid serves as a reminder of the power of forgiveness, compassion, and kindness, encouraging people to incorporate these values into their daily lives and promote a society based on justice and equality.

Concluding his message, the Governor prayed that Allah grants everyone the strength to uplift one another and that collective efforts bring happiness and prosperity to the country.

Keywords: Governor Balochistan Eid message, Jafar Khan Mandokhail, Eid-ul-Fitr Pakistan, unity and compassion, national harmony Pakistan

Crackdown Ordered on Illegal Logging in Ziarat Ahead of Eid Tourism Rush

ZIARAT: Deputy Commissioner Abdul Qudoos Achakzai chaired an important meeting on forest conservation, emphasizing strict action against illegal logging and the protection of Ziarat's valuable juniper forests.

The meeting was attended by Range Forest Officer Raheemullah, Forester Inamullah, and other forest department officials, who briefed the Deputy Commissioner on the current situation. Officials informed the meeting that arrest warrants have been issued by the court against individuals involved in illegal tree cutting, while challans issued by the Forest Department were also presented.

Deputy Commissioner Abdul Qudoos Achakzai directed authorities to ensure the immediate arrest of those involved in illegal logging. He also instructed the Forest Department to prepare a special Eid contingency plan, as a large number of tourists visit Ziarat during the Eid holidays. The aim is to pre-

vent any damage to the region's rare and precious juniper forests. Highlighting the importance of trees, the Deputy Commissioner stated that trees are the "ornament of the earth," helping prevent soil erosion, enhancing natural beauty, and contributing positively to the environment.

He stressed that protecting forests can help transform the country into a paradise-like landscape. He made it clear that strict legal action will be taken against anyone involved in deforestation.

Reiterating his stance, he said there will be no compromise on the protection of Ziarat's juniper forests and emphasized the need to expand forest areas, as the region's beauty largely depends on these unique natural resources.

Keywords: Ziarat forest protection, illegal logging Pakistan, juniper forests Ziarat, Abdul Qudoos Achakzai, Eid tourism Balochistan, environmental conservation Pakistan

Advertisement for the Registrar Banking Court in Quetta, featuring text in Urdu and English, including contact information and dates.

Advertisement for Pakistan Resolution Day 1940, featuring a large image of the Pakistan flag and portraits of political figures, with text in Urdu and English.

Trump-appointed arts panel approves gold coin featuring his image

NEWS DESK: A federal arts panel composed of members appointed by Donald Trump on Thursday unanimously approved a commemorative gold coin featuring his image, part of a series of coins the US Mint is planning to produce to celebrate America's 250th birthday this year.

The 24-carat gold coin is the latest effort by Trump and his allies to put the president's name on buildings, government programmes and US currency since his second White House term began in January 2025.

During a presentation by a US Mint official to the Commission of Fine Arts, discussion turned to what diameter the 24-carat gold coin should be, up to three inches (7.6cm).

Chamberlain Harris, a White House aide whom Trump appointed to the commission this year, said the biggest possible coin would be Trump's preference.

"The larger the better," she said,



not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Trump gold coin drew criticism from some Democrats and members of another federal arts committee.

"Monarchs and dictators put their faces on coins, not leaders of a democracy," Jeff Merkley, a Democratic US senator, told Reuters in a statement.

"Trump's administration moving to put his face on a commemorative coin is his latest effort to distort the meaning of America's 250th birthday."

Donald Scharinci, a member of the bipartisan Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee, a separate federal panel that refused to consider the gold coin proposal last month, acknowledged this is not the first time a sitting president's image has been on a commemorative coin.

In 1926, 150 years after America's colonies issued the 1776 Declaration of Independence from British rule, an image of Republican President Calvin Coolidge, in office at the time, appeared on a commemorative coin, although his profile was overlaid by an image of George Washington, America's first president.

Scharinci said the White House in Trump coin is different from the Coolidge coin because it will feature Trump alone.

The Trump administration has also proposed a different, \$1 coin featuring Trump's image that would go into circulation this year.

Legal loopholes as gold coin not currency

Scharinci said the \$1 coin would be in clear breach of a law that prohibits the image of a sitting or former president being on a dollar coin until three years after their death.

There is a potential loophole, however, when it comes to the gold coin, because unlike the dollar coin, which would be in circulation, the gold coin is a non-circulating collector coin.

Scharinci said under the law, both his panel and the Commission of Fine Arts are meant to approve any coins.

"But we still fully expect them to plough ahead and mint both coins," Scharinci said.

Since he reentered the White House in January 2025, Trump has affixed his name to prominent Washington buildings, a planned class of Navy warships, a visa programme for wealthy foreigners, a government-run prescription drug website and federal savings accounts for children.

IMF raises concern over global inflation, output over US-Israel war on Iran

NEWS DESK: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday it was monitoring the impacts of the US-Israel war on Iran on global inflation and output, but that no countries had so far approached it for emergency assistance related to the conflict.

"If prolonged, higher energy prices will lead to higher headline inflation," said IMF chief spokesperson Julie Kozaick at a press briefing.

Kozaick said that if oil prices remained above \$100 for a year or more, the estimated impact on global inflation could be a rise of up to two percentage-points, with output dropping one percentage-point, according to "a broad rule of thumb."

She also confirmed that the IMF had "not received any formal requests for emergency financing" in the wake of the US-Israel war on Iran. The US and Israel launched strikes on Iran on February 28, sparking a war that has engulfed the Middle East and seen Tehran virtually blockade the key Strait

of Hormuz waterway.

About 20 percent of the world's oil and natural gas passes through the strait, and the crisis has sent energy prices spiralling with potential knock-on effects on inflation worldwide.

On Thursday, international benchmark Brent crude was trading at around \$110 a barrel up 52 per cent from before the war.

Kozaick said the world's most economically vulnerable states would be first in line to feel the fallout.

"They have limited policy space, limited buffers and this in a world where financing conditions may be becoming more challenging for them," she said.

Kozaick highlighted that the Fund was monitoring developments on commodity prices, inflation and global financial conditions in the wake of the war. She stressed that countries would feel the effects in a variety of ways, particularly when it comes to commodity prices, depending on the structure of their economy. Food prices were another area of concern.

"Fertiliser shipment has been disrupted (due to the conflict), and this, along with transportation disruptions, raise risks that we could see increases in food prices, and these could be substantial, again, depending on the duration and intensity," she said.

Gold loses safe-haven shine amid escalating war

NEWS DESK: Often dubbed a safe haven in times of global crises, local gold prices for 10 grams and one tola have dropped to Rs428,208 and Rs499,462, respectively, down by Rs20,833 and Rs24,300, following a steep decline of \$243 to \$4,767 per ounce on international markets amid the escalating war in the Middle East.

On Feb 28, when an illegal attack was launched by the US and Israel on Iran, the rates for 10 grams and one tola stood at Rs472,018 and Rs550,562, based on a global gold price of \$5,278 per ounce.

On Jan 29, 2026, Pakistan witnessed its highest-ever gold rates, with 10 grams priced at Rs491,135 and one tola at Rs572,862, as the global gold price reached \$5,505 per ounce.

"History shows that the precious metal has often lost its luster when intense conflicts escalate into full-scale wars among countries," said Qasim Shikarpuri, president of the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association (APSGJA), while speaking to Dawn on Thursday.

Prices slip below Rs500,000 per tola

He said gold prices would plunge further if the war intensifies, adding that another factor behind the decline is the loss of value in Dubai, once considered one of the largest gold markets with strong investor interest.

"The war has changed the dynamics of Dubai. I recently returned from there, where the airport is witnessing low passenger footfall, especially among arrivals. Investors and foreign buyers are leaving via connecting flights," he said.

"Foreign investors are selling gold in Dubai as they try to secure their safety and return to their homelands at any cost," he added.

"Previously, gold prices in Dubai used to rise by two to three dollars per ounce due to strong demand.

Now, investors holding inventory are willing to sell at up to \$40 below the market price to liquidate their assets and exit the market."

He noted that gold was previously smuggled out of Pakistan due to higher prices in Dubai, but the situation has now reversed as investor activity there has declined, with some awaiting a return to normalcy.

In Pakistan, some investors are taking a risk by buying gold at lower prices, hoping for a rebound after the Middle East conflict subsides, Shikarpuri said.



Tax discount on sugar imports extended

NEWS DESK: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has extended tax concessions on the import of white crystalline sugar, aiming to stabilise domestic prices and ensure adequate supply in the market.

The FBR has issued SRO527 of 2026 to retain a reduced sales tax rate of 0.25 per cent on imported sugar, compared to the standard 18pc, while also revising the value-

added tax structure to continue concessional treatment until February 28, 2026.

This decision is in line with the government's previous decision to extend income tax concession on sugar imports, which was notified through SRO455 of 2026 released on March 5.

As per this decision, the government allowed importers to pay income tax at a reduced rate of 0.25pc.

In July 2025, the government has introduced the concession scheme.

Since then, it has been extended multiple times, first until September 30, 2025, and later to November 30, 2025.

The government has already allowed commercial imports of up to 500,000 tonnes of sugar under specified conditions.

Sugar imports are being facilitated through the Trading Corporation of Pakistan as well as approved private sector entities under the supervision of the commerce ministry.

Authorities have made it mandatory for consignments to undergo strict quality verification through internationally recognised inspection firms.

Officials said an extension is intended to maintain price stability and prevent shortages.

Gold prices drop sharply in global, local markets ahead of Eid

NEWS DESK: Gold and silver prices have recorded a significant decline in both global and local markets amid escalating tensions in the Middle East and disruptions in regional trade.

The intensifying conflict, particularly Iran's attacks on the United Arab Emirates, has led to a suspension of gold and jewellery exports from Dubai, a key global gold hub.

Additionally, discount sales by Emirati traders have further accelerated the downward trend in precious metal prices worldwide.

The price of gold per ounce dropped sharply by \$243 in the global bullion market, bringing the new international rate down to \$4,767 per ounce.

Following the global trend, local bullion markets also recorded a major decrease. The price of gold per tola slashed by Rs24,300, settling at

Rs499,462 per tola.

Similarly, the price of gold per 10 grams in the domestic market declined by Rs20,833, reaching Rs428,208.

Meanwhile, silver prices also followed a similar trajectory. In the global market, silver fell by \$7.60 per ounce to \$72.50.

Consequently, in local markets, the price of silver per tola declined by Rs7,734, while the rate per 10 grams dropped by Rs652 to Rs6,630.

Market experts attribute the decline to disruptions caused by the ongoing conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran, which has affected flight operations across Gulf countries and severely impacted trade activities.

In this environment, gold traders in the UAE are offering discounted rates to sustain sales.



Liverpool thrash Galatasaray to reach Champions League quarters

NEWS DESK: Liverpool struggled off their Premier League malaise to storm into the Champions League quarter-finals by thrashing Galatasaray 4-0 at Anfield on Wednesday.

Goals from Dominik Szoboszlai, Hugo Ekitike, Ryan Gravenberch and Mohamed Salah overcame a 1-0 first-leg deficit for Arne Slot's men to set up a reunion with defending champions Paris Saint-Germain in the last eight.

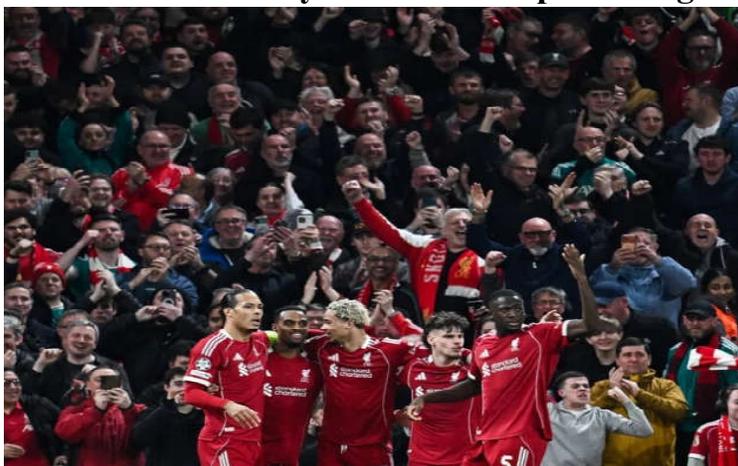
Slot needed a reaction from the English champions after they were booted off at Anfield on Sunday for the latest in a series of lacklustre displays in a 1-1 draw against struggling Tottenham.

Langishing fifth in the Premier League, the Champions League could save Liverpool's season and Slot's job.

The Dutchman had given a rest to some of his stars at the weekend and was rewarded with a dominant display that could have resulted in a far more comprehensive scoreline.

"We could (have) won 10-0, but we did a good job. We can be proud," said Ekitike.

The French international added on facing his former club in the last eight. "I can't wait to be there."



Galatasaray's hopes of causing an upset were dealt a massive blow inside the first few minutes when star striker Victor Osimhen injured his forearm in a clash with Ibrahim Konate.

The Nigerian international was clearly hobbled as he continued on until half-time before being replaced by Leroy Sane. By that point the Turkish champions' advantage had already been erased.

Szoboszlai has been Liverpool's outstanding performer in a troubled season and levelled the tie with a cushioned finish from a well-worked corner on 25 minutes.

Galatasaray somehow escaped further punishment before the break. Salah missed a glorious chance to immediately double the Reds' lead when he failed to chip Ugurcan Cakir.

Florian Wirtz's deflected effort flew just over and Cakir repelled another sweet Szoboszlai strike.

The Turkey goalkeeper then saved Salah's poor penalty after Gravenberch fired in the rebound after Salah's initial shot was saved.

Salah has been a shadow of his former self this season, either side of a public bust-up with Slot after being dropped in December.

He could and should have had many more on the night, but did register his 50th Champions League goal in some style with a spectacular strike from Wirtz's backheel.

Salah also hit the bar before asking to be replaced with an injury concern as Galatasaray offered little resistance to the waves of Liverpool attack.

The Reds face a very different challenge against PSG, who crushed Chelsea 8-2 on aggregate to reach the last eight.

Slot has repeatedly spoken in glowing terms of the French champions.

Liverpool came as close as anyone to stopping PSG last season as Luis Enrique's men emerged victorious on penalties in the last 16 after a titanic tussle.

Buttler hopeful of England return

NEWS DESK: Former England captain Jos Buttler said he still wants to play for the national side after taking a break from cricket in the wake of their semi-final exit from the Twenty20 World Cup.

The 35-year-old managed only 87 runs in eight matches at the tournament as England were eliminated by India earlier this month, and he has recorded only one half-century across his last four International Cricket Council events.

Buttler said he hopes to be part of England's squad when they host India for a white-ball series in July but knows selection is out of his hands.

"Obviously I had a poor tournament, which is disappointing, but I've been playing some of the best cricket of my (career) in recent years, so

hopefully I can get back to 'playing my best," he said on his podcast for the Love of Cricket.

"I certainly have ambitions but no longer being a captain, I'm not a selector and whatever, so what will be will be. We will see."

Buttler spent time with his family in France after the tournament and said cricket was the furthest thing from his mind.

"Obviously the tournament didn't go personally how I'd have liked it to go, and I just felt like I needed some space from cricket and not to think about the game, and I could not have been further away from cricket where I was in that week," he added.

While questions were raised over England coach Brendon McCullum's position following the team's 4-1 Ashes defeat in Australia as well as their World Cup exit, but Buttler backed the leadership group and T20 captain Harry Brook.

"There's lots happened to him over the last six months - great performances, a few off-field things - and he's dealt with that really well and led very well as a captain in his first ICC tournament as captain," Buttler said.



Barcelona demolish Newcastle 7-2

NEWS DESK: Barcelona stormed to a 7-2 victory over Newcastle on Wednesday to reach the Champions League quarter-finals, winning 8-3 on aggregate.

Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha struck twice each for the Catalan giants as Eddie Howe's side crumbled under a scintillating attacking display from the hosts at Camp Nou.

Lamine Yamal, Marc Bernal and Fermin Lopez were also on target as Hansi Flick's side ran riot and recorded a landslide last 16, second leg victory.

The five-time champions are dreaming of lifting the trophy again, 11 years after they last won it, and showcased the attacking firepower which could make their ambition a reality.

By contrast with Newcastle were hoping to reach the quarter-finals for the first time in their history but the Premier League side departed bruised and battered.

"With the fans supporting us like that for 90 minutes it's hard to beat us at home," Raphinha told Movistar.

Barcelona led 3-2 at the break after a thrilling first half but after Lopez netted early in the second they romped to victory.

"The confidence that we got in the second half was good to



see," said Flick. After Joan Laporta was re-elected president at the weekend, spirits were high around the club and they came out flying.

They were outplayed in the 1-1 first-leg draw but pledged to improve back on home soil and claimed an early lead through Raphinha.

Teenage star Lamine Yamal turned brilliantly away from Malick Thiaw in midfield, leaving the German defender on the turf and released the Brazilian winger to score.

Barcelona are notoriously fragile defensively though and Newcastle quickly forced their way back into the game.

The Catalan giants were carved open with

just a couple of passes between Lewis Hall and Harvey Barnes, and Anthony Elanga timed his run right to stay onside and sweep past Joan Garcia.

Three minutes later Barca were back in front with 18-year-old midfielder Bernal turning home from close range after Gerard Martin nodded down Raphinha's diagonal free-kick.

Yamal was so often Barca's hero on their run to the semi-finals last season but was guilty of a mistake which led to Newcastle's second equaliser.

The teenager attempted a backheel in his own final third and gave the ball away, with Elanga profiting at the back post as he turned home Barnes's cross.

Striker Lewandowski has had a tough season for Barca, looking shorn of confidence, and he sprained two fine chances for the hosts in the first half, with Yamal also blazing over from close range.

The Spain international made amends from the spot to give Barca the lead at half-time when veteran defender Trippier pulled back Raphinha. Ramsdale got his fingertips to Yamal's penalty, low to his left, but could not claw it out.

Raphinha sent Lopez through on goal to bag the fourth early in the second half and it broke Tottenham's hearts.

From that point on Newcastle gave up the ghost and Barcelona scored to their hearts' content.

Pakistan to face India in hockey World Cup on Aug 19

NEWS DESK: Pakistan will play on arch-rivals India on Aug 19 in this year's hockey World Cup, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) announced on Wednesday.

The 2026 World Cup is expected to showcase top-quality hockey, with fans set to witness thrilling and competitive encounters during the event to

be co-hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands.

The game's international governing body unveiled the schedule of the World Cup, featuring teams from 16 nations, being staged from Aug 15 to 30.

Former four-time World Cup winners Pakistan are placed in pool 'D' alongside England, India and

Wales.

The Green-shirts, who will be competing in a World Cup after eight years, begin their campaign in the event with a match against the England on Aug 15 at the Wagener Hockey Stadium in Amstelveen, Netherlands.

Pakistan in their second pool-stage match face Wales on Aug 17 at the same

venue before locking horns with India two days later.

Pakistan secured qualification for the mega event by reaching the final of the qualifier held in Ismailia, Egypt, will be aiming to make a strong impression and progress to the knockout stage.

Pakistan suffered a 4-1 loss to England in the Ismailia final.



HBL PSL 11 to go ahead as per schedule, confirms PCB

NEWS DESK: Despite a war-like situation in the region, the cricket festival will go ahead on time. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has shared the training schedule with HBL PSL teams, according to which players will assess their preparations on March 24 and 25.

So far, no foreign player, including Australians, has informed their franchise or board about unavailability, and officials are expecting everyone to arrive. Even the only scheduled match in Peshawar is still "on."

According to details, the opening match of the Pakistan Super League will be held on March 26 at Gaddafi Stadium between defending champions Lahore Qalandars and Hyderabad Kings.

Currently, war in the Middle East has disrupted flight schedules, and after the T20 World Cup, teams also faced major difficulties returning home from India.

Due to these circumstances, concerns were raised about possible delays in the PSL, but PCB officials say the event will take place on time.

The training schedule has been shared with



all teams, and practice sessions will be held on March 24 and 25, with two teams training at a time.

According to foreign media, Australian cricketers are hesitant about traveling to Pakistan, but the PCB says no player has reported unavailability so far.

Franchise officials also confirmed that all players and staff are expected to arrive on time.

Due to issues with flights from the UAE and Qatar, alternative routes are being considered. Players from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh will arrive via direct flights, while those from Australia, New Zealand, and England will travel via Thailand, Singapore, and Turkish Airlines.

Travel schedules have been sent to players and agents, and all players will gather in Lahore on March 23.

Meanwhile, PCB sources say the March 28 match in Peshawar between Zalmi and Rawalpindi is still "on."

A meeting was also held to review security arrangements. In case of any issues, the PCB usually considers the UAE as a backup venue, where matches have been held in the past.

However, current conditions there are also not ideal. PCB sources said that shifting matches to another country is not under consideration at this time, and they are hopeful the event will be held in Pakistan as scheduled.

As always, players will be provided security equivalent to that of a head of state.

It is worth noting that the PSL final will be held on May 3. The 39-day tournament will feature a total of 44 matches across six cities: Lahore, Karachi, Multan, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, and Faisalabad. For the first time, eight teams will participate in the league.



2 terrorists killed following attack on under-construction police station in Kurram: security sources

NEWS DESK: Security sources said on Sunday that on the second day of Eidul Fitr, two terrorists belonging to the banned Fitna al Khawarij were killed after they attempted to attack an under-construction police station in Kurram. The police station is a term designated by the state for the banned Teh-reek-i-Taliban Pakistan. Security sources said that labourers were busy with the construction while police officials had been deployed for security. During this time, Fitna al Khawarij terrorists demanded that the work stop, which resulted in their clashing with police. As a result, two terrorists were killed, they said. Security sources said that the terrorists also kidnapped a few of the workers and policemen. However, negotiations were held with tribal elders.

which resulted in them being let go, they said. They said that additional police personnel also reached the scene and the situation was brought under control. Meanwhile, one person was killed and three others were injured after a mortar shell fell in Kurram's Para Chamkani area. The injured and the dead were shifted to Sadda Hospital and police said they were investigating the incident.

Punjab's first skill city planned

NEWS DESK: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved in principle a plan to establish the province's first 'skill city' and sought detailed proposals for the purpose at the earliest. The project will feature technical educational institutes aligned with industry requirements, while existing skill education institutions across Punjab will be upgraded into centres of excellence.

It was also agreed that Punjab's Technical and Vocational Education Board will be affiliated with institutions in Scotland and the United Kingdom to enhance the quality and global recognition of technical education. A comprehensive plan was presented in consultation with industry experts to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Chairing the meeting on "Matric Tech" and school-based development. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz emphasised her vision of making every young person in Punjab highly skilled and proficient in their fields. She stated that all available resources will be utilized to provide youth with market-driven technical education, enabling them to become the true strength of Punjab.



Eid traffic crashes claim 44 lives

NEWS DESK: At least 44 people were killed and more than 5,400 injured in road traffic accidents across Punjab during the first two days of Eid.

Official figures show that 23 people lost their lives and 2,792 were injured in 2,206 accidents on Saturday. On the following day, 21 fatalities were reported in 2,087 road crashes, with 2,643 people suffering injuries. The two-day figure stood at 4,293 road accidents, resulting in 44 deaths and 5,435 injuries across the province, highlighting a spike in road mishaps during the festive period.

Rescue officials said that on the second day, 1,230 critically injured victims were shifted to hospitals, while 1,413 others were treated at the sites of accidents. A similar pattern had been observed on Eid day, where a large number of victims received first aid at the spots, easing pressure on emergency departments.

The provincial capital remained the most affected city on both days, reporting 322 accidents each day. These incidents collectively injured more than 800 people and caused at least three fatalities in the city.

Other major urban centres, including Faisalabad, Multan and Gujranwala, also recorded significant numbers of accidents, reflecting increased mobility and traffic congestion during Eid celebrations. An analysis of the data indicates that motorcyclists were the most vulnerable group, with around 84 per cent of accidents involving motorcycles.



Western weather system to lash Balochistan, Sindh between March 25-28

NEWS DESK: A western weather system is likely to affect the country between March 25 and 28, with its effects expected to be more pronounced in Balochistan, the Meteorological Department warned on Monday.

According to Anjum Nazir Zaigham, Deputy Director of the Karachi Meteorological Department, the system is expected to enter Balochistan via Iran, bringing strong winds and heavy rainfall to the province. It will also affect Sindh, including Karachi, where strong winds and sudden heavy rain are likely under its influence.

The weather in Karachi today is clear, with bright sunshine. Over the next two days, the sky is expected to remain partly cloudy, with daytime temperatures likely to range be-



tween 30 and 32 degrees Celsius. Temperatures across the country have remained above normal in February and March, the deputy director said, adding that higher-than-normal temperatures tend to increase the intensity and variability of weather patterns in the coming days.

On Sunday, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said a western weather system is affecting most parts of the country, with rain and thunder expected in Karachi. Further, rain with thunder is also likely in several districts of rural Sindh, including Larkana, Qambar, Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Sukkur, Naushahro Feroze and Dadu.

Rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning, lashed several parts of Karachi early on the first day of Eidul Fitr. The downpour, which intensified at intervals, turned the festive morning into a wet and chaotic affair, forcing many citizens to alter their plans as movement became difficult in several areas.

'Meethi Eid' lights up Lahore with festive spirit

NEWS DESK: As the crescent of Shawwal appeared over the skyline of Lahore, a wave of celebration swept across the city, transforming its streets, homes and hearts.

From the bustling boulevards of Gulberg to the narrow lanes of the Walled City, Eidul Fitr brought with it not just festivity, but a powerful sense of connection, tradition and belonging.

At Allama Iqbal International Airport, scenes of emotional reunions captured the true spirit of Eid. Among the arrivals was Kamran, who had returned from the United Kingdom after five years.

The moment he reached home, he embraced his elderly mother, breaking down in tears.

"I had everything abroad, but I didn't have this peace," he said, reflecting the emotions of many expatriates who return home for the festival.

Across the city, homes came alive with visiting relatives. By the second day of Eid, vehicles from southern districts such as Multan, Bahawalpur and Dera Ghazi Khan

lined Lahore's streets, as families gathered to celebrate together. Modern houses quickly transformed into lively, traditional spaces filled with laughter, shared meals and constant movement.

In one such household, mattresses were spread across rooms, children queued outside bathrooms, and kitchens bustled with activity.

Visitors described the atmosphere as "beautiful chaos," where the warmth of relationships outweighed any inconvenience.

"Eid isn't complete without our traditions and food," said a guest from Multan, highlighting the cultural exchange that defines the festival.

Amid the celebrations, the role of women in hosting and managing households remained central. Fehmida Kasur, a homemaker, spent the three days of Eid preparing meals and attending to guests. Despite the demanding routine, she remained cheerful.

"If the guests are happy, that is my Eid," she said, embodying the spirit of hospitality deeply rooted in local culture. The aroma of traditional dishes like safraon pulao and mutton gorma filled the home, adding to the festive charm.

Public spaces across Lahore also witnessed large crowds. Families thronged parks and recreational spots, with children taking centre stage as they enjoyed their Eid celebrations.

At Lahore Zoo and Jilani Park, laughter and excitement were evident as children spent their Eidi on rides, snacks and treats. "I'm buying ice cream for everyone,"

said a young boy proudly, clutching his cash gifts. Beyond celebrations, Eid also served as a time for reconciliation and healing. Outside a mosque in the city, two brothers, estranged for years over a property dispute, embraced after Eid prayers, putting aside their differences.

Their reunion drew emotional responses from onlookers, highlighting the festival's deeper message of forgiveness and unity. As the three days of Eid came to a close, families began to part ways. Visitors returned to their hometowns, while expatriates prepared to leave once again. Yet, the memories created during these days lingered, from heartfelt reunions to shared meals and renewed bonds.

Eid in Lahore, often referred to as "Meethi Eid," proved once again that the festival is not merely about new clothes or lavish food. Rather, it is a celebration of human connection — a reminder that true happiness lies in togetherness, compassion and the simple act of being present for one another.

Suspected measles outbreak sparks alarm

NEWS DESK: Reports of seven child deaths within a week in a village near Khanewal have raised alarm among residents, with initial fears of a measles outbreak later challenged by health authorities.

According to local sources, the deaths occurred in Chak 2KM of Kot Islam, where residents claimed that a suspected outbreak of measles had led to the deaths of several young children.

The deceased were identified as Ali Zamin, Manzoor Abbas, Zahra Bibi, Alshah Bibi, Inaya Bibi and Jamshed Ali, while reports suggested that other children in the area were also suffering from similar symptoms.

The situation created panic among residents, who feared the spread of a contagious disease and urged the health department to take immediate action. Locals warned that the situation could worsen if timely measures were not taken.

Following media reports, the district administration responded promptly. Deputy Commissioner and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)



Health Dr Asif Mahmood dispatched a medical team to the affected village to assess the situation.

According to the initial findings of the health team, the children who died, aged between one and 10 years, did not show confirmed symptoms of measles.

Officials said preliminary examinations

and early test results suggested that the deaths may have been caused by gastroenteritis or another illness, rather than measles.

Health authorities further stated that no visible signs of measles were found during physical examinations of the affected children, including skin inspections.

However, they

added that final conclusions would be drawn only after detailed laboratory reports are received.

Dr Asif Mahmood said that further investigations were underway and that additional test results would determine the exact cause of death.

He also pointed to poor hygiene conditions in the affected house-

holds, which may have contributed to the spread of illness.

Meanwhile, several children in the area are still reported to be unwell, prompting continued concern among residents. Health officials have assured that monitoring will continue and necessary measures will be taken once the final diagnosis is confirmed.