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Chief Minister Balochistan Meets Federal IT Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja

Syed Ali Shah:

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti held a meeting with Federal Minister for Information Technology Shaza Fatima

Khawaja, Federal IT Secretary and Chairman Pakistan Digital Authority Dr. Sohail also attended the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Bugti said that Balochistan is fully prepared for the formulation and imple-

mentation of the National Digital Policy. He highlighted that the provincial government has already initiated reforms by digitizing the Finance Department.

Bugti emphasized that through Artificial Intelligence,

merit-based appointments of youth are being ensured, eliminating corruption previously associated with recruitment commissions.

He added that complete digitalization of the Finance Department will block all av-

enues of corruption.

The Chief Minister invited the authority working on the digital policy to visit Quetta and stressed that joint efforts are essential for the constructive and positive use of social media.

Governor Balochistan Highlights Lawyers' Role in Promoting Justice and Democracy

News Desk:

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has said that lawyers are among the most aware and responsible members of society and play a vital role in promoting justice, equality, and democratic values.

He expressed these views while speaking to a delegation of lawyers from the Balochistan High Court Bar Association, led by its president Advocate Attaullah Lango, in Quetta.

The Governor said that due to the wide scope of their profession, lawyers carry significant responsibilities, including creating awareness among the public about their rights and duties and encouraging a sense of patriotism among the younger generation.

He added that lawyers serve as a bridge between the law and underprivileged segments of society, ensuring the provision of affordable and timely justice to those who need it most. By fulfilling their



responsibilities effectively, they can promote justice, equality, and public service, leaving a positive impact on society. Jaffar Khan Mandokhail further stated that lawyers are

protectors of the Constitution, law, and democracy, and their role is essential in strengthening democratic traditions and responsibility within society. He assured the legal com-

munity of his full support in addressing their issues and ensuring the protection of their rights, adding that efforts would be made to find lasting solutions to the challenges

faced by lawyers.

During the meeting, the delegation invited the Governor to address the High Court Bar Association, which he acknowledged.

2 'most-wanted terrorists' killed in Tank operation: CTD

NEWS DESK:

The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) personnel killed two "most-wanted terrorists" affiliated with the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban (TTP) during an intelligence-based operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Tank district on Wednesday, according to a press release issued by the CTD.

The press release said CTD personnel conducted the operation within the limits of Gomal police station on the basis of "credible intelligence".

It said that the suspects, upon encountering CTD personnel, opened fire on them. The press release added that the exchange of gunfire continued for around 40 minutes, following which a search operation was launched.

During the search operation, the press release stated, two "terrorists were found dead". It further said that two Kalashnikovs, along with six magazines and cartridges and two bandoliers, were found in the possession of the slain suspects.

According to the CTD, the suspects were affiliated with the TTP's Mushtaq group and had been involved in multiple attacks on police.

The press release said they had been involved in the target killing of a head constable and the abduction and killing of a constable.



They had also been involved in IED attacks on police, it said, adding that they were involved in an attack on a judges' convoy in Lakki Marwat in August 2024, in which two police personnel lost their lives.

KP Inspector General of Police (IGP) Zulfiqar Hameed and the additional CTD IG commended the CTD's Special Weapons and Tactics Team for the successful operation, the press release said. It added that the officials affirmed that law enforcers would remain vigilant at all times for the protection of the public, and such operations would continue to eradicate terrorism. KP has seen a rise in terrorist attacks in the past year. According to the Annual Security Report 2025 from the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), KP recorded a significant surge in violence last year as "fatalities rose from 1,620 in 2024 to 2,331 in 2025".

This marked an "absolute increase of 711 deaths, accounting for over 82 per cent of the net national rise and marking almost a 44pc year-on-year surge in violence in the province".

Ten days ago, six terrorists were killed in a joint operation in KP's Kohat district by the CTD and Kohat police.

Last month, nine police personnel, including a deputy superintendent of police (DSP), were martyred in separate terrorist attacks in Punjab's Bhakkar district and KP's Kohat and Wana areas.

Only days prior to that, three Federal Constabulary men were martyred in a terrorist attack in KP's Karak.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Balochistan's Tree Plantation Drive Must Go Beyond Ceremonies



Editorial: Every spring, usually between February and March, Balochistan witnesses the launch of tree plantation campaigns. Saplings are planted at official ceremonies, photographs circulate on social media, and hopeful statements are issued about a greener future.

While these efforts matter, they fall short of what the province truly needs.

Balochistan is one of the most climate-vulnerable regions in Pakistan and ranks among the hardest-hit areas globally by climate change.

Rising temperatures, recurring droughts, shrinking water resources, and disappearing wildlife are no longer distant threats—they are daily realities across the province.

In such circumstances, tree plantation cannot remain a symbolic activity limited to headlines and hashtags.

What is required is a serious shift toward sustainable plantation. Planting a sapling is only the first step.

Ensuring its survival—through protection, irrigation, monitoring, and community ownership—is what makes a difference.

The success of plantation drives should be measured by how many trees survive after one, three, or five years, not by the number of photo sessions held.

The Forest and Wildlife Department must move beyond publicity-driven campaigns and focus on long-term environmental impact.

Native and drought-resistant species should be prioritized, while schools, universities, and local communities must be made partners in protecting and nurturing plantations.

At a time when climate change threatens livelihoods, Balochistan does not need unnecessary construction projects or decorative infrastructure.

It needs a large-scale, province-wide plantation initiative—similar to a plantation tsunami—with clear targets aimed at reducing the effects of global warming, improving air quality, and restoring ecological balance.

A genuinely sustainable tree plantation campaign can help secure Balochistan's future. The province's environment cannot wait for another season of symbolic planting; it needs action that takes root and grows.

Delivering a spe-

BUIITEMS Organizes Open Day to Inspire Students Across Balochistan

Syed Dara Shikoh Amir, BUIITEMS Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Khalid Hafeez reaffirmed the university's mission of inclusive education and knowl-

edge sharing. He stated: "BUIITEMS is the university of every student in Balochistan. Our classrooms, research opportunities, and resources are open for all so that no young learner in the province remains deprived of quality education."

The event attracted an enthusiastic response, with more than 2,000 students from 18+ colleges attending. Visiting students and their teach-

ers explored BUIITEMS' facilities, interacted directly with professors, and participated in detailed career-guidance and counseling sessions designed to help them choose the right academic path. Special awareness stalls, departmental exhibitions, and program presenta-

tions provided students with insights into BUIITEMS' wide-ranging degree programs, research projects, and campus life. Many participants

strengthened the bridge between the university and youth across Balochistan.

By holding this large-scale Open Day, BUIITEMS has fur-



ther solidified its reputation as a center of excellence in higher education.

Innovation and student empowerment in Balochistan, encouraging young learners to strive for academic success and contribute to the province's development.

Prof. Dr. Khalid Hafeez applauded the organizing team for successfully conducting the Open Day, adding that such outreach efforts

praised the initiative, calling it a valuable opportunity to connect with higher education and future career options.

Prof. Dr. Khalid Hafeez applauded the organizing team for successfully conducting the Open Day, adding that such outreach efforts

South-West Asia and the War Against Narcotics: Where Does Pakistan Stand?

By Dr. B. Sultan: Lady Macbeth once remarked that "a little water clears us of this deed" after the assassination of the King. Yet, with time, she remained haunted, obsessively rubbing her hands in an attempt to cleanse the imagined stains of blood. The persistence of narcotics production and trade in South-West Asia resembles this unending struggle—a dark reality that cannot be easily washed away.

Afghanistan has long been recognized as the world's largest producer of opium, with its roots tracing back to the early 1900s. Over the decades, the repercussions of this industry spilled into neighboring Pakistan and Iran. In the late 2000s, Taliban leader Mullah Omar imposed a strict ban on poppy cultivation through threats, forced eradication, and severe punishments. However, as revealed by the UNODC Opium Survey 2007, the ban primarily targeted cultivation while the trade continued. After the fall of the Taliban, opium again became a major source of funding for logistics, weapons, and militia payments.

In 2022, the Taliban leadership once again announced a ban on poppy cultivation, with Hibatullah Akhundzada officially declaring significant reductions. Some Western reports, supported by satellite imagery, showcased de-



clining poppy fields in southern Afghanistan. However, this raises critical questions: Can Afghanistan realistically abandon such a central economic resource while facing sanctions? And what consequences does this shift have for Pakistan? While certain

international outlets hastily claim that Pakistan has become a new hub for narcotics, such narratives ignore key realities. The issue is not a simple matter of "shifting sands" but a complex regional security challenge. The porous border between Pakistan and Afghani-

stan, coupled with cross-border networks of drug traffickers, means temporary shifts in cultivation are often strategic rather than permanent. Moreover, Afghanistan's pivot towards methamphetamine production—highlighted by satellite

evidence of expanded ephedra processing hubs—reflects adaptive strategies of traffickers rather than genuine eradication. In Pakistan, however, the situation is markedly different. Since 2001, the country has largely maintained its "poppy-free"

status, despite sporadic spillovers from Afghanistan. Following the Taliban's 2022 ban, some illicit cultivations did emerge in border areas, particularly within Balochistan and Khuzdar. Yet, these were swiftly addressed through

Pakistan's Poppy Elimination Campaign (PEC-2025). This multi-agency effort, led by the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and provincial administrations, successfully destroyed thousands of acres of illegal poppy fields. Over 250 FIRs were registered,

dozens of arrests were made, and awareness campaigns were launched across educational institutions. Importantly, independent surveys after March 2025 confirmed the effectiveness of these eradication drives.

Pakistan's determination to combat narcotics often remains under-reported internationally, overshadowed by outdated or selective portrayals.

The fact remains: Pakistan continues to fight this menace not only for its own stability but also for global security.

What is urgently needed is greater recognition of these efforts by the international community and enhanced cooperation from agencies such as the UNODC.

As South-West Asia remains at the heart of global narcotics trade routes, Pakistan's role is both frontline and decisive. Balochistan, in particular, holds the potential to transform from a vulnerable transit zone into a hub of opportunity, stability, and resilience. Just as Lady Macbeth's imagined guilt could not be washed away with water, the global community cannot absolve itself of responsibility by ignoring Pakistan's sacrifices and achievements in this ongoing struggle. The fight against narcotics requires collective recognition, support, and action—not selective narratives.

PM Shehbaz hails Saudi Arabia's 'restraint', stresses urgent need for de-escalation of ongoing Iran war

NEWS DESK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday hailed Saudi Arabia for showing 'remarkable restraint' during the ongoing Middle East hostilities and stressed the need for urgent de-escalation.

He made the remarks during a phone call with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, wherein the two discussed Iran's retaliatory attacks sparked by the US-Israel military actions on February 28.

A statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) about the phone call early this morning termed their conversation "warm and cordial".

"While appreciating the leadership of the Kingdom for demonstrating remarkable restraint in the recent crisis, the prime minister reassured His Royal Highness that Pakistan would always stand by the Kingdom and the brotherly people of Saudi Arabia, just as they had always supported Pakistan, through thick and thin," the PMO stated.



It further said that the prime minister 'reiterated Pakistan's strong condemnation of the recent attacks on Saudi Arabia and expressed, once again, Pakistan's complete solidarity and un-

equivocal support for the kingdom and its people, in these challenging times". The prime minister called for an immediate end to hostilities and a return to normalcy so that the regional situation could be stabilised. "He called for unity and

harmony in the ranks of the Ummah, which was needed more than ever before," PMO noted. PM Shehbaz also briefed the Saudi crown prince on Pakistan's "constructive diplomatic outreach to all parties urging de-escalation and

resolution of differences through dialogue and diplomacy". The crown prince deeply appreciated Pakistan's peace efforts. Both leaders agreed to maintain their close coordination between the two countries, at all levels," the PMO said.

The premier conveyed his heartfelt Eidul Fitr greetings to the crown prince, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and to the brotherly people of Saudi Arabia. These sentiments

were "most graciously reciprocated by" the crown prince, the PMO statement added. PM Shehbaz also posted on social media platform X about their conversation.

Reiterating the details, he said: "Appreciating the Kingdom's restraint, I stressed the urgent need for de-escalation, an end to hostilities, and unity in the ranks of the Ummah."

He further said, "We agreed to remain in close coordination."

Gulf countries — including Saudi Arabia — are facing Iranian attacks, which Tehran says are aimed at US and Israeli sites in response to the latter's deadly large-scale strikes.

The conversation between the prime minister and the Saudi crown prince comes amid Pakistan's intended efforts to act as a mediator between the United States and Iran to end the ongoing war that has engulfed the Middle East.

On Tuesday, a day after a proposal was floated to hold Iran-US talks in Islamabad, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif formally pitched the federal capital as a potential venue for negotiations between Iranian and US officials.

The move followed reports that Pakistan, Turkiye and Egypt had talked the US out of attacking Iranian energy infrastructure — a move that many fear would mark a dangerous escalation in the already-ferocious conflict raging in West Asia.

On March 9, PM Shehbaz held a "restricted meeting" with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, according to a statement by the PM's spokesperson.

During the meeting, the prime minister expressed Pakistan's "full solidarity and support for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in these challenging times," and both leaders agreed to work together for regional peace and stability.

7 women, 13 children among 70 dead in attack on Sudan hospital

NEWS DESK: The death toll from a strike on a hospital in East Darfur has risen to 70, the WHO said on Tuesday, calling the hit an attack on survival in Sudan's devastating war.

The World Health Organisation said the number of people injured in Friday's strike on the El-Daein Teaching Hospital in the state capital of East Darfur had also increased from 89 to 146, with the facility now out of action.

Hala Khudari, the deputy WHO representative in Sudan and the UN agency's health emergency lead in the country, called it an "atrocious attack". She said the death toll included seven women and 13 children, one doctor and two nurses, and those who injured

included patients, their family members and eight health workers.

"The hospital sustained severe damage, particularly to the outpatient and emergency departments," she told a press briefing in Geneva, speaking from Port Sudan.

"This hospital had already been damaged in a previous attack in August 2024. Since this latest attack, the hospital is no longer functional." The facility served as a referral hospital for more than two million people across El-Daein city and nine localities in East Darfur state. Patients may now need to travel 160 kilometres (around 100 miles) to reach the next referral hospital, said Khudari.

"An attack on a hospital is not only an

attack on a building. It is an attack on people seeking care, on health workers risking their lives to save others, and on the very possibility of survival in times of crisis," she said. "Access to care is shrinking. And efforts to repair or restore damaged facilities and equipment are being undermined."

Khudari said the WHO's Sudan health response for 2026 was currently only 5.7 per cent funded. Since erupting in April 2023, the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has killed tens of thousands and forced 11 million people to flee their homes. Sudanese rights group Emergency Lawyers reported that the hospital was hit by an

army drone strike.

The RSF dominates the vast Darfur region in western Sudan, while Sudan's army is in control of the east, centre and north.

RSF-controlled El-Daein has been regularly attacked by the Sudanese army, which is trying to push the paramilitaries back towards its Darfur strongholds and away from Sudan's central corridor.

More than 500 civilians were killed in drone strikes in Sudan between January and mid-March, with the vast majority killed in the strategic Kordofan region, the United Nations said on Tuesday.

The UN rights office said it had noted a sharp increase in the use of drones in Sudan's civil war, underlining "the devastating impact of high-tech and relatively cheap weapons in populated areas".

"According to information received, over 500 civilians were killed in such strikes from January 1 to March 15," spokeswoman Marta Hurtado told reporters in Geneva, highlighting that "the vast majority of these civilian deaths were documented in three states in the Kordofan region".



Artemis II — Nasa's historic Moon mission set for lift-off

NEWS DESK: More than half-a-century after the groundbreaking Apollo programme's last crewed flight to the Moon, three men and one woman are preparing for a lunar journey set to turn a new page in American space exploration.

The long-delayed Nasa mission dubbed Artemis II is slated to lift-off from Florida and venture to Earth's natural satellite as early as April 1.

They won't land but are instead on a mission to fly by, much as Apollo 8 did in 1968.

Americans Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch along with Canadian Jeremy Hansen — will carry out the approximately 10-day trip.

The Artemis programme — named in the next step in our journey to Mars — said Wiseman, the Artemis II commander, on a Nasa podcast.

Space Race 2.0? The Artemis programme — named in the next step in our journey to Mars — said Wiseman, the Artemis II commander, on a Nasa podcast.

The mammoth orange-and-white rocket is designed to allow the United States to repeat



edly return to the Moon in years to come, with the goal of establishing a permanent base that will offer a stepping stone for further exploration.

"We're going back to the Moon because it's the goal of establishing a permanent base that will offer a stepping stone for further exploration."

"We're going back to the Moon because it's the goal of establishing a permanent base that will offer a stepping stone for further exploration."

sents an immense challenge, which is compounded by pressure to achieve it before China does.

China is currently aiming to land humans on the Moon by 2030.

Beijing is also targeting the lunar South Pole, not least for its rich natural resource potential.

competing with anyone but themselves.

Washington's lunar programme investment is significantly lower now than during the Cold War era — but the technology has changed dramatically.

The computer technology that supports the Artemis 2 crew would be almost unimaginable for the Moon in a spacecraft with the electronics of a but Harvard professor Matthew Hersch said.

And yet the Artemis II mission will not be without risks, even by Nasa's own admission.

Trump sends Iran peace plan as Strait of Hormuz reopens to 'non-hostile' ships

NEWS DESK: US President Donald Trump sent a peace plan to Iran as he voiced optimism Tuesday at ending nearly a month of warfare, with Tehran announcing that it will "non-hostile" oil vessels go through the crucial Strait of Hormuz.

The tentative signs of a diplomatic solution came despite new violence, with an Iranian missile causing injuries in Israel, which in turn pressed on multiple fronts and vowed to seize control of a strip of southern Lebanon.

Trump, whose pronouncements in recent days have swung widely from vowing massive attacks on Iran to declaring the nearly month-long war virtually over, said the United States was "in negotiations right now" with Iran, which has not confirmed any formal talks.

"They did something yesterday that was amazing, actually. They gave us a present and the present arrived today. And it was a very big present worth a tremendous amount of money," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. "That meant one thing to me — we're dealing with the right people."

He did not explain further but said it related to the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has largely blockaded in retaliation for US and Israeli strikes, sending global energy prices soaring.

Iran, in a message circulated by the International Maritime Organisation shortly afterward, assured safe passage to "non-hostile vessels" going through the strait, the gateway for one-fifth of the world's oil.

Iran had already, in recent days, said it was not targeting friendly nations, although many vessels have shied away as insurance companies refuse to take risks.

The benchmark price of crude oil dropped close to six per cent after the latest developments. Prices at the pump have soared in the United States after the war with Trump, causing him a political headache. Iran rejects talk of negotiation.

Israel and Iran exchanged airstrikes on Wednesday, as President Donald Trump claimed that the US was in negotiations to end the war, which has roiled energy and financial markets, saying the US is negotiating with itself.

The rejection of negotiations by the unified command of the Iranian Armed Forces, which is dominated by the hardline elite Revolutionary Guards, comes amid reports that the US has sent a 15-point plan for discussion to Tehran. "Has the level of your inner struggle reached the stage of you (Trump) negotiating

with yourself?" the top spokesperson for Iran's joint military command, Ebrahim Zolfagari, said on Iranian state TV.

"People like us can never get along with people like you." "As we have always said... no one like us will make a deal with you. Not now. Not ever."

Iran's leadership has previously said it can not negotiate with the U.S. as it has attacked the country twice during high-level negotiations in "the past two years."

Trump had earlier threatened to "obliterate" Iran's power plants, which some argue would be a war crime, if it did not open the strait by late Monday Washington time. Before US markets opened on Monday, Trump abruptly extended that deadline by five days, citing diplomatic progress.

Pakistan's prime minister has offered to host US-Iran talks, which Trump said involved top officials, including Vice President JD Vance. Trump said that he had sent a plan and that it all starts with, they cannot have a nuclear weapon". The New York Times, quoting unnamed officials, said that the United States had sent the 15-point plan to Iran through Pakistan. Israel's Channel 12 said that Trump was proposing a one-month ceasefire during which the sides would discuss a proposal that would include handing over Iran's enriched uranium and banning further enrichment.

US expected to send thousands more soldiers to Middle East, according to sources

NEWS DESK: The Pentagon is expected to send thousands of soldiers from the US Army's elite 2nd Airborne Division to the Middle East, two people familiar with the matter told Reuters on Tuesday, adding that a massive US military buildup even as President Donald Trump talks about a possible deal with Tehran to end the war.

Reuters first reported on March 18 that Trump's administration was considering deploying thousands of additional troops to the Middle East, a move that would expand operations to include the deployment of forces inside Iranian territory.

Such an escalation could dramatically raise the stakes in the conflict, which is already in its fourth week and has



rolled global markets. The US military referred questions to the White House, which said all announcements on troop deployments would come from the Pentagon.

"As we have said, President Trump always has all military options at his disposal," White House spokes-

woman Anna Kelly said. No decision had been made to send troops into Iran itself, one of the sources told Reuters, but they will build up capacity for potential future operations in the region.

One of the sources said the Pentagon was set to send between 73,000 and 4,000 sol-

diers. The soldiers' deployment follows Reuters' March 20 report about the US decision to send thousands of Marines and sailors aboard the USS Boxer, an amphibious assault ship, along with its Marine Expeditionary Unit and accompanying warships to the Middle East.

Two injured in firing outside Lahore Session Court

LAHORE (INP): Two men were critically injured when two armed assailants opened fire on them outside the Session Court in Lahore. According to the channel report, the firing incident took place outside the Court of Additional Sessions Judge Saifullah Sohail. Soon after the incident, a police team arrived at the scene and arrested Latif, who is a resident of Rasoolpura.

The accused wanted to murder Faizan. Later, police shifted both injured persons to the local hospital. A District and Sessions Court of Islamabad acquitted a domestic worker, Rukhsana Bibi from case of theft amounting to Rs250 million. During the hearing, the Court was informed that during the investigation, police recovered only Rs2,000 from her custody while she is in-

involved in a case worth millions of rupees. Judicial Magistrate Islamabad East Rizwanuddin acquitted the petitioner filed by Rukhsana Bibi and acquitted her of the case. A theft case involving rupees four lakh, Pakistani rupees, five lakh UK pounds, and 5,00,000 million was filed against her. The court indicted the accused on September 18, 2025, and asked

the petitioner to submit evidence against her again and again, but all in vain. Her lawyer argued that the owners of the house gave such a huge amount to her because in the two investigations, she was able to show only Rs2,000. The lawyer said that the petitioner failed to provide any evidence against her despite being given repeated chances.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting on exports of essential food items to the Gulf countries and Pakistan's Maritime Operations in wake of current regional situation.

FIA arrests human smuggler from Faisalabad in light of Oman gov't report

FAISALABAD (INP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) arrested a notorious human smuggler from Faisalabad. According to details, the Government of Oman forwarded a report about a human smuggler who was later identified as Ajmal Hussain. Director-General of the Federal Investigation Agency Dr. Usman Anwar constituted a team to apprehend the culprit. The FIA team raided a location in Chichawatni and arrested Bilal. The FIA team also recovered evidence of human smuggling from the custody of the arrested accused. FIA started an interrogation to detect the network involved in human smuggling. Earlier on March 16, 2026, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) filed a bid to smuggle more than 30 women out of the

PM Shehbaz contacts Saudi Crown Prince MBS and discusses regional tensions

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, during which the two leaders discussed the evolving regional situation and the wider impact of escalating tensions in the Middle East. During the exchange, the prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering support for Saudi Arabia and strongly condemned any attacks targeting the kingdom's security and sovereignty. He emphasized that Pakistan would always stand firmly alongside Saudi Arabia in safeguarding regional stability. The two leaders also held detailed discussions on regional and global peace, including ongoing diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions and promoting stability across the region. Both sides underscored the impor-

tance of dialogue and cooperation to address emerging challenges. It is worth mentioning here that yesterday, in a message posted on X, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated that Pakistan was prepared to play a constructive role in facilitating peace by hosting negotiations to end the ongoing conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran. He said Pakistan welcomed and fully supported efforts to pursue dialogue and bring an end to the war in the Middle East, highlighting that peace and stability in the region remained a shared priority. The prime minister further noted that, subject to the willingness of the United States and Iran, Pakistan stood ready and honoured to host meaningful and result-oriented talks aimed at achieving a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

Hazara division marks Pakistan Day with tree plantation drive

ABBOTTABAD (INP): All eight districts of Hazara region on Monday marked Pakistan Day on March 23 with the launch of the "Ehsas-e-Shajarkari" campaign alongside flag hoisting ceremonies, aiming to promote environmental sustainability and national unity. On August 14, further strengthening efforts to expand green cover across the province. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in Mansehra, a dignified and enthusiastic flag hoisting ceremony was held at the Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) Office to mark Pakistan Day. The ceremony began with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by the national anthem and hoisting of the national flag. As part of the ongoing plantation campaign, fruit-bearing saplings were also planted at the venue, symbolizing a commitment to environmental protection and a better future for upcoming generations. In Abbottabad, Deputy Commissioner Sarmad Saleem Akram formally inaugurated the campaign by planting fruit-bearing saplings at the Deputy Commissioner's Office in collaboration with the

Naqvi responds to Gary Kirsten's 'interference' claims

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi has addressed the recent allegations made by former white-ball head coach Gary Kirsten, who cited external "interference" as a key reason behind his premature exit from the role. Kirsten, who was appointed in April 2024 alongside Test head coach Jason Gillespie, stepped down just six months into what was initially a two-year contract. His resignation came shortly after the PCB announced squads for the ODI and T20I series of Australia and Zimbabwe, decisions reportedly made without his involvement. In a recent interview, Kirsten openly criticised the working environment within Pakistan cricket, highlighting what he described as excessive outside influence. "The thing that surprised me more than anything was the level of interference. I don't think I have ever seen it at that level before," Kirsten said. "It is quite difficult for a coach to come and formulate a way that you can work with the players when there is just this constant noise from the outside." He further pointed out that coaching staff often become easy targets when results do not go a team's way. Kirsten further stated that coaches are always in the firing line when team ends on the losing side. He noted that removing coaches is often seen as the easiest option and questioned the very purpose of appointing them. Responding to these claims during a press conference at Gaddafi Stadium, Mohsin Naqvi adopted a measured stance, distancing himself from the controversy and indicating limited direct involvement with the former coach.

HR abuses escalate to alarming levels in IIOJK: Report

ISLAMABAD, March 24 (INP): Gross human rights violations perpetrated by Indian forces have reached alarming proportions since the Hinduva-led BJP government, under military coercion and curfews, revoked the special status of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019. A report released by Kashmir Media Service on the occasion of the International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims" said that human rights violations committed by Indian occupa-

tional forces—including the army, Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force, Special Operations Group, RAW, NIA, and SIA—have increased dramatically since the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A in the internationally recognized disputed territory. The report stated that Indian forces personnel are involved in arbitrarily arresting, torturing, and killing Kashmiris on a daily basis, with over 96,400 innocent Kashmiris having fallen to Indian bullets from January 1989 to date. It added that despite repeated warn-

ings from human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and annual reports by the US State Department, Indian troops, paramilitary forces, and police personnel—empowered by black laws—continue to conduct arbitrary arrests, torture, and killings during so-called cordon and search operations and house raids. The report highlighted that India is using draconian laws such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), Public Safety Act (PSA), and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) to stifle political dissent in the territory. "Even political leaders, activists, women, human rights defenders, and journalists in IIOJK are not spared by the Hinduva BJP regime under LG Manoj Sinha. Kashmiris are being silenced, threatened, stripped of property, tortured, and suspended simply for performing their duties," it said. The report maintained that the United Nations must take notice of these grave rights abuses and hold Indian forces, their personnel, and the government accountable for their crimes in the occupied territory.



KARACHI: Minister of State for Railways & Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani visited Senator Sherry Rehman to offer condolences over her daughter's demise. PPP senior leader Qamar Zaman Kaira was also present.

PIA to resume London flights from March 29

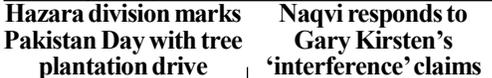
ISLAMABAD, March 25 (INP): National airline re-launches UK operations with non-stop flights from Islamabad and Lahore. In a major boost for Pakistan's aviation sector, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has announced the resumption of flights to London after a six-year gap. The long-awaited move is set to restore direct connectivity between Pakistan and the UK. PIA has officially announced the restart of its London operations, bringing back a key international route that had remained suspended since 2020. The airline will use Boeing 777 aircraft for these operations, ensuring long-haul travel comfort for passengers. PIA emphasized that the introduction of non-stop flights will provide faster and more convenient travel options for passengers traveling to the UK. Direct connectivity is expected to reduce travel time and improve overall passenger experience. The airline has also started the booking process for these flights, allowing travellers to plan their journeys in advance. The PIA spokes-

person described the move as an important step toward improving the airline's global route network. Before the suspension in 2020, PIA was operating up to ten weekly flights to London. The airline plans to gradually increase the number of flights again in the future. The London route holds historic significance for PIA, as it was among the airline's earliest international routes. PIA first launched flights to London in 1955, making it one of the oldest and most important connections in its network.

Tuberculosis elimination one of Pakistan gov't's public health priorities: PM

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said the government of Pakistan made the elimination of tuberculosis (TB) one of its public health priorities and under a comprehensive strategy, measures were being taken to ensure early diagnosis of the disease, universal access to quality treatment, disease prevention, and patient care. In a message on World Tuberculosis Day observed on March 24, he said for this purpose, the expansion of modern diagnostic facilities, improvement of the laboratory network, and strengthening of the surveillance system were being done and TB services were being integrated into primary health centers so that continuous treatment could be provided across the country. He said, "Today, on World Tuberculosis Day, Pakistan, together with the international community, reaffirms its commitment to completely eliminate the treatable and preventable disease of tuberculosis." "Even in the present era, TB remains one of the leading infectious diseases and remains a serious health, social and economic challenge for many countries, in-

cluding Pakistan," he said adding, "The disease particularly affects the vulnerable and has health, social and economic impacts in the form of poverty, malnutrition and inequality." "World TB Day is observed every year to raise public awareness about the impact of the disease and to further intensify efforts to eliminate this epidemic," he remarked. He said public participation was essential for the complete elimination of TB. Community health workers, civil society organizations, researchers, and private sector medical institutions were helpful in eliminating social stigma, encouraging timely diagnosis, and ensuring continuity of treatment. "However, international cooperation, technical partnerships, and sustained global funding are indispensable for the complete elimination of TB," he observed. He appealed to all relevant stakeholders, the federal and provincial governments, development partners, universities, private sector, media, and social leaders to further strengthen collective efforts to ensure that no person with TB was left untreated.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry chairing a meeting to discuss measures aimed at facilitating maritime trade at port.

99% Representatives from Quetta Do Not Belong to the City,' Says Dr Abdul Malik Baloch

Staff Reporter:

QUETTA: Former Chief Minister of Balochistan Dr Abdul Malik Baloch has said it is "unfortunate" that nearly 99% of representatives elected from Quetta do not belong to the city, calling it a serious concern for local representation and governance.

Addressing political workers in Quetta, the National Party chief highlighted what he described as a widening gap between elected representatives and the local population. He stressed that such a disconnect undermines the democratic process and weakens public trust.

Dr Malik said the struggle of the people of Balochistan is both national and class-based, focusing on securing justice, equality, and rightful ownership of resources. He reiterated that his party firmly believes in the supremacy of the Constitution, rule of law, and the strengthening of democracy in Pakistan.



Reflecting on the past, he noted that earlier generations had faced military dictatorships but remained committed to democratic values. "Dictatorships are now part of history, but our struggle continues, and our elders' legacy remains alive," he said.

He emphasized that all nationalities must have rights over their own resources and opportunities, adding that this demand is central to their political vision.

Dr Malik also made it clear that their movement is purely political and democratic in nature, rejecting violence and the use of force. "Our path is peaceful, constitutional, and based on democratic principles," he concluded.

The statement adds to the ongoing debate on representation, governance, and resource distribution in Balochistan.

anonymous complaints will not be entertained under the revised procedure. Only verified complaints falling within the jurisdiction of NAB will be taken up, and applicants may be required to submit an affidavit on stamp paper. In addition to the Open Court, complaints can also be submitted at NAB offices in Quetta, through email, or by visiting the complaints cell at the DC Office on Anscorb Road.

The Open Court is part of NAB Balochistan's monthly outreach aimed at strengthening accountability and providing relief to citizens facing corruption-related issues.

action. Citizens raised issues related to water supply, electricity, sanitation, revenue matters, land records, and other municipal concerns. Addressing the respect. He further stated that the purpose of holding open kachehris is to provide justice at people's doorstep by directly hearing their concerns and resolving them



issues and address citizens' concerns.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Muhammad Anwar Kakar met citizens directly and listened to their problems in detail.

Officials from government departments were also present to register complaints on the spot and take immediate

session, Muhammad Anwar Kakar directed concerned officers to ensure timely and effective resolution of all complaints, stating that any delay in addressing public issues will not be tolerated. He emphasized that all government departments must prioritize public service and treat citizens with courtesy and

without delay. He added that such initiatives will continue regularly to strengthen public trust in the district administration.

Key words: Quetta open kachehri, Muhammad Anwar Kakar, public complaints, Quetta district administration services, municipal issues, Pakistan, governance, Balochistan

NAB Balochistan to Hold Open Court in Quetta on March 26

Staff Reporter:

QUETTA: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Balochistan has announced that it will hold a public Open Court (Khuli Kachehri) in Quetta to hear complaints related to corruption and financial scandals.

According to officials, the Open Court will be conducted on Thursday, March 26, 2026, from 11:00am to 1:00pm at the NAB Balochistan Complex on Shahra-e-Gulistan Road, Quetta Cantt. The session will be attended by senior officials, where citizens will be given an opportunity to present their complaints directly. Authorities said



the initiative aims to improve public access to accountability and ensure that complaints of financial irregularities are addressed in a transparent manner. The Director General

NAB Balochistan will personally hear the cases and issue directions, per law. Citizens have been advised to bring complete documents, including a copy of

CNIC, full name with parentage, postal address, contact details, and signature or thumb impression to facilitate timely processing of complaints. Officials further clarified that

Loralai Municipal Committee Launches Cleanliness Drive After Rainfall

LORALAI: Following recent rainfall, the Municipal Committee launched an immediate cleanliness and drainage campaign to



address waterlogging and sanitation issues across the city.

Acting on the directives of Chairman Tahir Khan Nasir and Chief Officer Muhibullah Baloch, municipal staff mobilized across zones to ensure timely relief for residents facing ?????? due to accumulated rainwater.

The sanitation teams carried out drain clearance operations, removed garbage from streets, and worked to restore proper drainage flow. In the Saleem Dad

Complaint Zone, a blocked drain near Guideline School Hazara Mohalla was cleared, where stagnant rainwater had caused inconvenience to residents. The swift action restored water flow and prevented immediate relief.

Similarly, in the Baran Zone area of Mail Gali, municipal workers actively cleaned drains and removed waste to prevent obstruction in rainwater flow and reduce

cas to improve sanitation and drainage systems. Officials emphasized that providing a clean and healthy environment remains their



top priority, and all available resources are being utilized for this purpose.

Residents appreciated the timely response of the Municipal Committee and expressed hope that such efforts will continue to ensure a long-term solution to sanitation and drainage issues in Loralai.

Keywords: Loralai cleanliness drive, drainage issues, Loralai, Tahir Khan Nasir, Muhibullah Baloch, municipal committee sanitation campaign, rainwater management, Pakistan

Newly Appointed DC Loralai Visits SSP Office, Emphasizes Strong Coordination for Law and Order

LORALAI: Newly

appointed Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Muhammad Haseeb Shuja paid an official visit to the SSP Office Loralai, where SSP Dr. Fahad Ahmed warmly received him.

On arrival, the Deputy Commissioner was presented with a bouquet, while a smartly turned-out police contingent offered a guard of honor. A formal ceremony and tea gathering were also organized at the SSP Office.

The event was attended by Assistant Commissioner Iqbal Lango, and other officials from the police district administration. During the visit, SSP Dr. Fahad Ahmed briefed the Deputy Commissioner on the overall law and order situation, crime performance, and ongoing security measures



SDPO Iqbal Lango, and other officials from the police district administration. During the visit, SSP Dr. Fahad Ahmed briefed the Deputy Commissioner on the overall law and order situation, crime performance, and ongoing security measures

in the district. He highlighted that police are actively working to protect lives and property while continuing operations against criminal elements. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali Aftab also attended the session. During the open forum, citizens actively participated and highlighted longstanding issues and development needs. Key demands included: Construction and repair of roads and improvement of drainage systems. Provision of clean drinking water. Better condition

ensuring a safe environment for citizens is the state's top priority and warned that negligence in this regard will not be tolerated. He also assured full administrative support to further improve the security situation.

During the meeting, it was decided to enhance security across the district, increase monitoring of sensitive locations, and ensure prompt resolution of public complaints.

Authorities also agreed to strengthen intelligence-based operations and increase police patrols to curb crime effectively. Sources indicate that the Deputy Commissioner is expected to visit police stations and sensitive areas in the coming days to review security arrangements.

Pakistan Day Celebrated with Enthusiasm at DIG Office Loralai

LORALAI: Like the rest of the country, Pakistan Day (March 23) was celebrated in Loralai with great national spirit. A dignified ceremony was held at the DIG Office Loralai, presided over by Inspector General of Police Loralai Range Junaid Ahmed Sheikh attended as the chief guest.

The event was attended by SSP Loralai Dr. Fahad Ahmed, SDPO Karzeem Mandokhail, Arzal Utmankhail (son of MPA Haji Toor), along with police officers, personnel, and other distinguished guests in large

numbers. The ceremony began with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by the national anthem. A well-disciplined police contingent presented a guard of honor, and the national flag was hoisted amid chants of "Pakistan Zindabad."

In his address, DIG Junaid Ahmed Sheikh highlighted the historical importance of March 23, 1940, stating that it

marked a decisive moment for Muslims of the subcontinent, ultimately leading to the creation of Pakistan. He emphasized that the day is an opportunity to renew commitment to Quaid-e-Azam's guiding principles of unity, faith, and discipline. He urged the police officers and personnel to prioritize public service, uphold the rule of law, and ensure the protection of citizens' lives and property.

Open Kachehri Held in Harnai Under BSDP to Address Public Issues and Promote Development

HARNAI: Under the supervision of FC Khosro 130 Wing and leadership of Colonel Umar Khan, a dignified open Kachehri (public forum) was organized in Harnai under the Balochistan Sustainable Development Program (BSDP).

The event was attended by senior district officials, departmental heads, and a large number.

The primary objective of the gathering was to ensure public consultation in development planning and to address local issues promptly through coordinated efforts. Key officials present included Additional Deputy Commissioner Muhammad

B & R Muhammad Nawaz, DHO Dr. Shoaib Akram Mengal, DMPP PPHI Alamgir Achakzai, DDEO Shahrag Kaleemullah Kakar, Finance Officer PPHI Sameelullah Somro, and SHO Police Khost Muhammad Ismail Bugti. Representative of Human Rights

Muhammad Ali Aftab also attended the session. During the open forum, citizens actively participated and highlighted longstanding issues and development needs. Key demands included: Construction and repair of roads and improvement of drainage systems. Provision of clean drinking water. Better condition

of educational institutions. Improved healthcare facilities and availability of ambulances. Other essential public services.

Officials attentively listened to public concerns and emphasized that community participation makes development planning more transparent and effective. Authorities assured that projects identified by the public would be prioritized under the BSDP to ensure inclusive and sustainable development across the region. Participants appreciated the initiative by FC Khosro and the district administration, expressing hope that the proposed

TENDER NOTICE table with columns: S#1, TBE No, Name of Works, Last Date and Time of Submission, Tendering Opening, Total Estimated Cost (Rupees). Includes details for Agricultural Phosphorylation and Solar Operated System.

TENDER NOTICE text regarding BPPRA 2014, eligibility of bidders, and procurement procedures for restoration of HURMAGARY FORT WASHKAK.

Mobile app-based fuel quota system finalised for motorcycles, rickshaws amid global oil crisis

NEWSDESK: The government has finalised a mobile application-based quota system for fuel for two- and three-wheelers, which may possibly include up to 800cc vehicles, to ensure a targeted subsidy to the low-income strata and to minimise oil consumption through pricing signals.

The details of the quota-based fuel supply system have been tested and finalised by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) and the ministries of finance, petroleum and information technology, a senior government official told Dawn.

Based on these workings, the government will now take a final decision on whether the scheme should extend to small cars or remain restricted to two- and three-wheelers.

The government plan involves "a quota-based fuel supply system" to be operated through a mobile application and would be end-to-end automated.

"A free, pre-installed app for retail operators will be pro-

vide," said a senior official, adding that consumers will use a separate application. Meanwhile, the government will mandate a minimum of two mobile phones per retail outlet to run the system.

The Ministry of Information Technology (IT) has been coordinating with cellular phone manufacturers to provide specialised phones system. The system is estimated at an initial cost of Rs36,000 per unit, with retail pricing around Rs7,000. Petrol stations have been required to deposit funds into a designated government account to ensure the immediate delivery of devices. The account number will be communicated to them by Ogra.

Talking about the quota mechanism and the official said vehicle-based quotas will be linked to the user's app via a registration number and their Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC). However, quota limits will be finally decided by the cabinet committee concerned.

The users will generate a digital voucher through the app, while the retailers will scan or enter the voucher, leading the system to auto-validate the available quota. For example, if a user requests 20 litres but has a 15-litre quota, only 15 litres will be dispensed. The official said the mechanism was similar to the previously successful Ramadan Package model. On the financial pricing side, the government will be providing subsidies for two- and three-wheelers. Retailers and petrol stations will be required to dedicate specific dispensers or nozzles for these vehicles to facilitate subsidised fuel distribution. The critical decision is still pending on whether subsidies will also be extended to four-wheelers or if they will be eliminated. The official said that the govern-



ment was trying to ensure timely pricing to protect retailers from licensing issues and price fluctuations to avoid the crisis of 2020.

All oil marketing companies (OMCs) will also be required to appoint focal persons for each retail site for seamless operations of the scheme and provide their contact details to Ogra for round-the-clock monitoring of the scheme to redress consumer complaints. The details of focal persons — including their name, mobile phone numbers and CNIC — will also be available to Ogra.

For implementation and oversight, the details of retailers' focal persons and contact numbers will also be provided to OMCs and the petroleum division. The IT ministry will provide demos and video tutori-

als on how to operate the system. In case of emergencies, a dispensation system will be made available for approved through a designated process.

Officials said the government was facing critical conditions regarding fuel supply chains. They said demand did not decline despite challenging conditions and heavy foreign exchange requirements, while the additional fiscal burden was currently being met through cuts in the development programme and special emergency allocations in the budget. So far, for two weeks of unchanged petrol and diesel rates, the cost has been estimated at \$570 billion.

The ongoing Middle East war and the resulting shipping panel paralysis in the Strait of Hormuz have sent the global oil prices haywire.

Influential quarters within the government advocate that changing petrol and diesel rates to reflect the global environment could send a compelling signal to consumers to conserve fuel

and forego unnecessary travel. After initially increasing petrol and diesel prices by Rs55 per litre on March 6, the government has kept rates unchanged for two subsequent weekly revisions, while continuously increasing kerosene and jet fuels by about 125pc and 150pc since the start of the Middle East conflict.

The ministries of finance and foreign affairs are separately engaged in parallel efforts regarding Iran and Saudi Arabia to manage the situation. The quota-based fuel system is being fast-tracked to ensure consistency across all pumps and prevent operational discrepancies, the official said.

Petroleum Division Secretary Hamed Yaqoob Shaikh had told that the government was working on a subsidised fuel scheme for motorists and rickshaw drivers to cushion the impact of a massive hike in oil prices, following a similar move by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government.

Govt announces optional multi-tariff time of use mechanism for industrial consumers

NEWSDESK: The government on Wednesday announced that it was introducing an optional multi-tariff time of use (ToU) mechanism for industrial consumers to optimise utilisation of grid supply through pricing signals.

The Power Division is considering introduction of a new optional tariff mechanism aimed at facilitating industrial consumers and enhancing overall efficiency in electricity utilisation, an official statement said.

The division said that several internal consultative and technical meetings had already been undertaken by Power Minister Sardar Awaiz Khan Leghari in this regard.

Under this proposed framework, industrial consumers will have the flexibility to opt into a multi-slab tariff structure, where energy pricing is based on average marginal cost signals across defined time-of-use slabs. This approach is designed to better reflect the actual cost of electricity supply during different periods.

The tariff will

consist of two primary components that include fixed charges and variable energy charges in line with existing tariff structure.

Fixed charges will be determined based on Maximum Demand Indicator (MDI) and are expected to be relatively higher. This will incentivise consumers to optimise and reduce their peak demand.

Variable energy charges will be significantly rationalised and aligned closer to actual energy costs, enabling more cost-reflective pricing.

Overall, this structure is expected to encourage efficient load management by allowing in-

dustries to align their operations with lower-cost time periods.

This is also expected to promote higher electricity consumption during off-peak hours, improving system load factor.

The new mechanism is designed to incentivise load reduction, thereby reducing stress on the grid and minimising the need for costly capacity additions and support industrial productivity and competitiveness through more predictable and potentially lower energy costs.

Overall, this tariff reform is expected to act as a catalyst for sustainable industrial growth in Pakistan, improving energy efficiency while supporting long-term economic development, the power division said.

It added that the power minister, after technical proposals, had now issued directions to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness for the proposed regime through extensive stakeholder consultations.

In this regard, stakeholder consultations will be conducted with industrial co-operators, chambers of commerce, and trade bodies across the country. Feedback from these engagements will be incorporated to refine the mechanism.

Pakistan's non-textile exports shrink 17pc

NEWSDESK: Exports of non-textile goods plunged 16.6 per cent to \$8.25 billion in the first eight months of FY26 from \$9.89bn a year ago as shipments of agricultural produce and value-added products suffered steep declines.

The downturn underscores mounting demand have eroded earnings. By contrast, non-agricultural exports managed a modest 2.96pc uptick, rising to \$4.86bn from \$4.72bn over the same period last year. Within this segment, engineering goods posted a 5.05pc increase, led by stronger shipments of industrial machinery, transport equipment, electric fans, auto parts, and rubber tyres.

Proceeds dip to \$8.25bn in FY26 Cement exports also showed resilience in volume terms during July-February FY26. Export value was up 10.03pc year-on-year.

However, a 5.9pc dip was recorded in quantity terms.

In the footwear seg-

ment, export performance was mixed. Overall footwear exports rose by 4.23pc during 8MFY26, largely supported by a sharp 29.72pc surge in shipments categorised as other footwear. The increase in this segment helped offset declines in traditional categories.

The slight decline was primarily driven by a 6.14pc decline in leather goods. However, leather garments posted growth of 7.51pc, and other leather manufacturers posted 6.50pc growth.

In contrast, exports of raw leather declined by 5.92pc underscoring continued weakness in unprocessed and semi-processed segments.

Pakistan is one of the main suppliers of surgical instruments globally. However, the export value of these instruments remained negligible as famous brands re-marketed these in Western countries. It recorded a negative growth of 1.12pc during the period under review.

Traditional handicraft segments also faced pressure. Exports of carpets and rugs declined by 11.20pc in 8MFY26 compared with the same period a year earlier. In contrast, the sports goods industry delivered a stronger performance. Exports surged by 13.26pc during the review period, driven largely by a 18.98pc increase in football shipments.

The export of garments (which are not classified under the food category) declined by 24.15pc in 8MFY26 compared with a year ago. The decline is mainly because of the closure of the Farkhan border.

The export of jewellery dipped by 52.70pc followed by a 75.60pc fall in the export of molasses and handicrafts by 69.41pc and furniture 0.30pc. However, gem exports grew by 83.42pc during 8MFY26 compared with a year ago.

IMF blocks move to control SOE chiefs

NEWSDESK: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) did not accept a request to empower the government to appoint heads of the state-owned entities (SOEs) by withdrawing this authority from the boards, blocking a move that could have again strengthened the grip of the executive on these companies.

The global lender also did not agree to another suggestion that the ex-officio members of the SOEs should be appointed from outside the relevant ministries, according to officials privy to the discussions held recently. Government sources told The Express Tribune that the proposals were made during the recent inconclusive talks for the \$1 billion loan tranche of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF). They said that the issue about the appointment of the chief executive officers (CEOs) had also been raised during the second review talks, but the IMF did not agree.

The Pakistani authorities requested the IMF to allow it to amend Section 18 of the SOEs Act of 2023, which empowers the boards of these SOEs to appoint CEOs or the president of the companies.

The finance ministry spokesperson did not reply to a request for comments. According to the law, the board in the case of a company or the concerned authority

in the case of a statutory SOE, shall appoint the CEO to the SOE under a performance-based contract for a specified period. The board is also empowered to set performance benchmarks of the board and to ensure the accountability of the heads of these entities.

However, the government wants these powers back in its own hands, as some of the boards did not accept its nominees for the appointment of CEOs, the sources added. The directors on the boards are appointed by the government, after being duly vetted by the Cabinet Committee on the SOEs. But the government does not trust its appointed directors to make the right decision.

This is the second time in less than a month that a covert or overt attempt has been made to regain the authority to appoint the CEOs has

failed. In February, the finance ministry had also proposed amendments to the Exim Bank law. According to the proposed amendment, the Exim Bank president would be appointed by the board with a three-fourths majority, including a mandatory vote from the ex-officio board member representing the Ministry of Finance, the secretary said.

But the proposal that the board could not hire or fire a president without the finance division's vote sparked debate over bureaucratic control. Legitimate control of a competent and professionally qualified Chief Executive Officer is essential for smooth functioning of an enterprise. SOE boards must adhere to merit-based transparent selection processes that prioritise competence and integrity, as provided under the SOE Act," reads the report.

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To break bureau-

Currencies pause amid uncertainty over US efforts to end Iran war

NEWSDESK: Currency markets took a breather on Wednesday, with traders cautious over United States President Donald Trump's efforts to bring an end to the war with Iran. While Trump told reporters at the White House the US was making progress in talks with Iran, Tehran denied that direct negotiations had taken place, keeping investors on edge.

The US dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was 0.13pc higher at 99.317, with the euro little changed at \$1.0403. The British pound was 0.16pc weaker at \$1.3388 as data

showed that British consumer price inflation held at an annual rate of 3.0% in February, unchanged from January's rate. However, inflation is broadly expected to pick up as the war in the Middle East pushes up prices.

The subdued volatility contrasted with a pickup in equities and a fall in crude oil prices after Trump said on Tuesday the US was making progress in its efforts to negotiate an end to the war.

"For those reacting to every breaking headline around dialogue between the US and its allies and Iran, including speculation of high-level talks and temporary

ceasefire proposals, an element of fatigue is now firmly setting in," said Chris Weston, head of research at Pepperstone Group Ltd in Melbourne.

Against the yen, the US dollar was up a slight 0.2% at 158.99, after the release of minutes from the Bank of Japan's January policy meeting showed many board members saw the need to keep raising interest rates without any specific pace in mind. The Australian dollar weakened 0.33% to \$0.6974 before heading for a rise prior to the start of the US-Israeli war with Iran, a slightly slower

pace than expected by analysts. Although markets still anticipate no change in US interest rates this year, expectations of policy tightening are rising. Fed funds futures now imply a 26.1% chance of a 25-basis-point hike at the Federal Reserve's December meeting, compared to a 69.5% probability of a cut a week ago, according to CME Group's FedWatch tool.

The Fed may need to keep interest rates steady "for some time" before further cuts are warranted. Fed Governor Michael Barr said on Tuesday, noting continued inflation above the Fed's 2% target and the risks posed by the conflict in the Middle East. Bond markets rebounded after a volatile week, with the yield on the US 10-year Treasury bond down 3.4 basis points at 4.356%.

"Higher oil prices added to expectations of increasing inflationary pressures and tighter monetary policy," analysts from Westpac wrote in a note.

In cryptocurrencies, bitcoin climbed 1.6% to \$71,202.33, while ether rose 1.2% at \$2,174.14.



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Barcelona, Liverpool, Bayern and Atletico reach CL quarter-finals

NEWS DESK: Barcelona hit Newcastle United for seven to reach the Champions League quarter-finals on Wednesday, while Liverpool overturned a first-leg deficit to beat Galatasaray in their last-16 tie and both Bayern Munich and Atletico Madrid advanced to the next round.

Raphinha and Robert Lewandowski both scored twice as La Liga leaders Barcelona tore apart Newcastle at the Camp Nou, winning 7-2 in the second leg of their last-16 encounter to progress 8-3 on aggregate.

A spectacular match saw Anthony Elanga twice score for Newcastle inside the opening half-hour to cancel out goals by Raphinha and Marc Bernal.

However, the Catalans went back in front when Lamine Yamal converted a penalty deep in first-half stoppage time to make it 5-2 on the night, and they never looked back.

Fermin Lopez ran through for 4-2 early in the second half before Lewandowski added a quick-fire double either side of the hour mark, and Raphinha completed the scoring in the

72nd minute. "The confidence that we got in the second half was good to see," said Barca coach Hansi Flick.

It was a chastening defeat for Newcastle and just the third time since 1955 that an English team has conceded at least eight goals on aggregate in a European tie — one of the other occasions was this week, when Chelsea lost 8-2 on aggregate to Paris Saint-Germain.

"When the game was effectively over we didn't react well to that so it became a very difficult second half," said Newcastle coach Eddie Howe.

It was also just the third time Barcelona have scored seven in a Champions League game, and Flick's side can now look forward to an all-Spanish quarter-final next month against Atletico.

Diego Simeone's men lost 3-2 on the night to Tottenham Hotspur in London, but progressed 7-5 on aggregate thanks to their 5-2 victory last week.

Randal Kolo Muani headed in on the half-hour to give Spurs the lead on the night and suggest a stunning comeback in the tie was possible. A superb Julian Alvarez strike just after half-time doused the home side's hopes, even if a fine Xavi Simons effort put Tottenham back in front.

David Hanzek headed in Atletico's second on the night, before Simons converted a last-minute penalty for his second of the game as Spurs rescued some pride by ending a run of



eight matches without a win. Half-centuries for Kane, Salah.

Liverpool were too good for Galatasaray, overturning a 1-0 first-leg deficit against the Turkish side with a comprehensive 4-0 win at Anfield.

Arne Slot's side went ahead on 25 minutes through a lovely first-time finish at a corner from Dominik Szoboszlai. Mohamed Salah then had a poor penalty saved in first-half stoppage time, but the Egyptian made up for that in style after the break. He laid on two goals in the space of three minutes, one for Hugo Ekkitike and the other for Ryan Gravenberch. Salah then scored the fourth himself just after the hour, curling a superb effort into

the far corner from the edge of the area from a Florian Wirtz lay-off.

It was his 10th club goal this season, was also his 50th in the Champions League, and it sealed a 4-1 aggregate victory which takes the Reds through to a quarter-final against PSG.

That will be a repeat of a last-16 tie a year ago which PSG won on penalties — the French club

have won four knockout ties against English opponents since the start of 2025. "We could (have) won 10-0, but we did a good job. We can be proud," said Ekkitike.

Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk has urged his side to keep their composure following their dominant performance. "There was a lot at stake, that was pretty obvious, so we had to

show how much we wanted it," said Van Dijk. "I think occasionally we have been playing good games but not consistently on a regular basis and it's been frustrating for all of us and for the fans as well."

Things got even worse for Galatasaray as Victor Osimhen broke his right arm in the defeat with Dutch international Noa Lang set to undergo surgery on his thumb, the Turkish club confirmed on Thursday.

Bayern's progress against Atalanta was never in doubt after their 6-1 win in the first leg in Italy, and they followed that with a 4-1 success in Munich. Harry Kane opened the scoring with a retaken first-half penalty — his initial effort had been saved — and then added a brilliant second on 54 minutes.

The brace took the Englishman to a half-century of Champions League goals, as he joined Salah and Thierry Henry on that overall mark. Kane has done it in 66 games compared to 97 for Salah. Teenager Lenmarr Karl got Bayern's third and Luis Diaz the fourth, with Lazar Samardzic pulling one back as the Germans progress 10-2 on aggregate.

City's League Cup glory adds twist to title race

NEWS DESK: As Pep Guardiola wiped away the sting of the Champions League final loss to Arsenal, City boss was confronted with a burning question.

Nico O'Reilly's second-half double had just sealed a 2-0 win over Wembley showpiece, handing City a psychological boost at the expense of their Premier League title rivals.

But will Guardiola's record fifth League Cup serve as a catalyst against Arsenal in the title race?

They are the best so far, no doubt about that, so let's prove ourselves and in the second half, I could not believe we could do it against Arsenal.

"But this win will have no impact (on the title race). It is a different competition."

City have a game in hand on Arsenal and the Gunners at the Etihad Stadium in April.

Yes, Guardiola acknowledged even winning those two matches would not be enough for City unless Arsenal slip elsewhere.

"They will be more controlled when they come to the Etihad. Maybe for that game it will help us, but the Premier League is in their hands," he said.

"Is that team going to drop points? We will try to win our games and then see what happens."

After recent damaging draws in the league against lowly West Ham United and Nottingham Forest, as well as a limp Champions League last-16 exit against Real Madrid, City badly

needed a trophy to lift the mood at the Etihad.

They went without silverware last term, but Guardiola believes this can be the start of a new era for a club with 19 trophies in all competitions since he arrived a decade ago.

"When you start to win and the generation is young you can continue that. I need to know how they behave in certain moments."

Guardiola said of a team expensively revamped in the last 18 months.

"I can smell something that can flourish. Winning helps to participate the process."

Luciano Spalletti.

But two heavy defeats dished out by group winners Norway were a stark reminder of how far the national team has fallen since last winning the World Cup 20 years ago — when Gattuso in midfield.

Since then Italy haven't played a knockout match in a World Cup finals, dumped out in the group stage as defending champions in 2010 and four years later, before failing to even reach the last two editions in Russia and Qatar.

Both of those qualification failures came via the play-offs and were deeply traumatic events to a footballing hotbed which has lost its self-esteem while rival nations like France and Spain have flourished.

The poor performance of Italy's clubs in this season's Champions League has only exacerbated a feeling of being left behind, to the point that missing this year's finals in the USA, Canada and Mexico would have been seen almost as a death knell.

"I really hope with all my heart that we can reach this goal, this

Italy hoping to end World Cup pain

NEWS DESK: Italy are hoping to end a 12-year absence from the World Cup as one of the planet's most important footballing nations heads into the midst of an identity crisis.

Northern Ireland come to Bergamo for what promises to be a tense semi-final on Thursday as Italy desperately try to not miss a third consecutive World Cup.

Genaro Gattuso led Italy to second in qualifying Group I and has obtained some stability for the Azzurri following the sacking of the

group of players deserves it," Gattuso told reporters on Monday.

"We can't stress the lads, they're well aware of what the stakes are. There will obviously be a bit of tension but we have to make sure we transmit positivity."

Pressure and injuries Gattuso has to deal not just with the pressure of the occasion but also a clutch of injuries which threaten to leave him without several important players for what he hopes will be two matches.

One of Wales or Bosnia-Herzegovina await Italy in the final should they get past Northern Ireland as expected.

Probably the key doubt is surrounding Sandro Tonali, who suffered a groin injury in Newcastle United's Champions League exit at Barcelona last week.

Gattuso said on Monday that he hoped to have Tonali, an all-action midfielder, available for training in the lead-up to Thursday's match but the 25-year-old is by no means guaranteed to start.

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Sinner, Sabalenka march on in Miami as more seeds crash out

NEWS DESK: Jannik Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka kept their "Sunshine Double" dreams alive with emphatic victories at the ATP/WTA Miami Open on Monday as defending men's champion Jakob Mensik joined a slew of seeds who crashed out.

Sinner and Sabalenka are bidding to join an elite band of players who have won Indian Wells and the Miami Open back-to-back, and arrived in Florida brimming with confidence after their respective victories in the California desert earlier this month.

Women's world number one Sabalenka, defending the Miami title she won for the first time last year, cruised into the quarter-finals with a 6-3, 6-4 demolition of China's 2024 Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen.

Sinner, who is chasing a second victory in Miami after lifting the title in 2024, was similarly comfortable in his third-round clash with French 30th seed Corentin Moutet, winning 6-1, 6-4 to advance to the last 16.

Sabalenka is aiming to become only the fifth woman to complete the Indian Wells-Miami double after Steffi Graf, Kim Clijsters, Victoria Azarenka and Iga Swiatek.

On Monday's form, few would bet against the big-hitting four-time Grand Slam champion from Belarus, who comfortably disposed of 23rd seed Zheng in 1hr 25min. "She's a tough opponent and I'm super happy with the level I played at today," Sabalenka said in her on-court interview. "I can definitely say that it felt like home."

Sinner, who is getting better, serving better, getting used to these conditions, which are tricky. But I'm getting more and more comfortable with every match," added Sabalenka, who faces unseeded American Hailey Baptiste in the quarter-finals.

Baptiste was one of three American women to advance to the last eight on Monday.

Fourth seed Coco Gauff downed Romanian veteran Sorana Cirstea

6-4, 3-6, 6-2, while fifth seed Jessica Pegula beat another Romanian, Iqbal Khan 6-4, 6-1. "I think overall I'm most proud of just mentally staying in there," Gauff said. "As the match got longer I was able to raise my level."

added Gauff, who will face Karolina Muchova in the quarter-finals after the Swiss player downed home hope Amanda Anisimova 6-2, 6-2.

Canada's Victoria Mboko, seeded 10, upset 12th seed Belinda Bencic in the latest win among the latest of a player auction and trade system.

The excitement, however, was dampened when the Pakistan Cricket Board announced on Sunday that all matches would be played without spectators at only two venues — Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore and National Stadium in Karachi — instead of the originally planned six cities. The decision was also cancelled.

The decision was taken in line with the government's austerity measures prompted by the ongoing conflict in West Asia, which has led to restrictions on large public gatherings and movement across the country.

Almost all foreign players of the participat

ing teams have arrived in Lahore, where the first leg comprising 14 matches, including three double-headers, will be held until April 6. The tournament will then shift to Karachi from April 8. From April 21 to 26, Lahore and Karachi will each host one group match per day. Karachi will stage the qualifier on April 28, while Lahore will hold the two elimi-

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Players vow to deliver despite empty stands in PSL II

NEWS DESK: Fans will be sorely missed as the HBL Pakistan Super League enters its 11th edition behind closed doors, but the quality of cricket on the field will ensure an enjoyable contest, say Peshawar Zalmi all-rounder Iftikhar Ahmed and Quetta Gladiators captain Saud Shakeel.

The tournament, which gets underway on Thursday, has been billed by organisers as the league's "new era," featuring eight teams for the first time after the addition of two new franchises and the suspension of a player auction and trade system.

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"Peshawar players are huge cricket lovers. Believe me, during the National T20, the stadium was packed to the brim," he said. "So many people were calling me — I got tired of answering calls: 'When is the

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Railways minister says Tezgam Express derailment likely due to 'mechanical and human error'

NEWS DESK: Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi said on Wednesday that "human error and some mechanical issues" were most probably the reasons behind the derailment of the Karachi-bound Tezgam express train the day before.

Twenty-six passengers were injured, including one critically, when seven coaches of the train derailed near Adam Wahan Railway Station near Punjab's Lodhran on Tuesday night.

"I can not confirm before time... the reasons behind this derailment. But most probably, the reasons seem related to mechanical and human error," Abbasi said while talking to Dawn on Wednesday morning.

"You know they (Pakistan Railways) have very old coaches to run. And they have not addressed such issues well," he deplored, adding that for the last nine years, there was no

25 injured as Tezgam derails near Lodhran

NEWS DESK: At least 25 passengers were injured, including one in critical condition, after the Tezgam, travelling from Rawalpindi to Karachi, derailed near Lodhran on Tuesday.

According to Lodhran Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ashraf, the accident occurred at around 9pm near Adam Wahan railway station, located between Lodhran and Bahawalpur, when four coaches overturned and three derailed, disrupting both up and down railway tracks.

He said a total of 25 passengers sustained



injuries in the incident. Of these, 17 were provided first aid at the site and discharged, while eight injured passengers were shifted to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital.

One critically injured passenger was later referred to the Bahawalpur Victoria

Two women among six found dead

NEWS DESK: The bodies of six people, including two women and a student, were found in different parts of the city.

According to details, within the jurisdiction of Gulshan-e-Iqbal police station, a several-days-old body of a young man was discovered beneath the lift of a residential apartment building in Block 2. The body was shifted to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital.

Police identified the deceased as 22-year-old Faisal Karim, who belonged to the Aga Khan community

proper maintenance of the locomotives." He said that 1960 model coaches are still in use by railways, "and we are currently refurbishing them one by one—not to the extent of paint work alone, but mechanical and other works too."

The minister said the rakes of the Sukkur Express and Awam Express would soon be refurbished with work underway in this regard. Abbasi further added that the railways and provincial departments performed an excellent joint rescue and relief operation at the incident site.

"Thank God there was no casualty or serious injuries to any passenger due to timely relief and rescue works," he said.

Meanwhile, the train was later dispatched to Karachi in a five-coach configuration.

"I took a five-coach train to Samasatta Station. There, the train

after a coupling rod broke. The two overturned coaches included one business class coach, a dining car and two economy class coaches.

Railway officials said the tezgam was later dispatched towards Karachi with five remaining coaches.

Track restoration work is expected to begin following the arrival of a relief train, as authorities continue efforts to resume normal train operations.

Seven eyewitnesses said the engine moved ahead, while the rear

coaches derailed, with several overturning.

Over a week ago, one person was killed and 12 others injured when the Lahore-bound Shalimar Express collided with a freight train standing on a loop line near Laha Road Station in Sindh's Nowshero Feroz.

Station Master Adnan Wahab Ahmad Hussain, said the train split into two sections

and hailed from Gilgit-Baltistan. He had been staying at the apartment with his bachelor friends and was preparing for an entry test at the University of Karachi. His friends had reported him missing a day earlier, stating that he had been untraceable since March 22 and that his mobile phone was switched off. In another incident, within the limits of Soldier Bazaar Police Station, the body of an unidentified 40-year-old woman was found near a stream close to Charpai Hotel. Rescue officials said the deceased has yet to be identified.

PMD forecasts rain in Karachi tomorrow, more showers across Sindh this week



NEWS DESK: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast rain in Karachi on Thursday, along with showers in other areas of Sindh over the rest of the week.

In its daily weather outlook issued on Wednesday, the PMD said that a westerly wave was "affecting southern parts and spread over most parts of the country today."

It forecast partly cloudy weather in Karachi today, with a maximum temperature of 32-34 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 24.5°C. A separate statement by the PMD added that there was a chance of light rain or drizzle in some areas of the city.

The humidity was expected to reach 84 per cent in the morning before dropping to 45-55 per cent in the evening, with a west/southwesterly wind prevailing, it said.

On Thursday, mostly cloudy weather was expected in the city with "rain-wind or thunderstorm at isolated places". The PMD predicted highs of 31-33°C and lows

of 23-25°C with humidity levels of 75-85pc in the daytime, and a west/southwesterly wind.

Friday will bring mostly sunny weather, with mercury surging to 32-34°C during the day and dropping to between 23°C and 25°C at night. Humidity is expected to stay at the previous daytime levels before declining to 50-60pc in the evening, while a west/northwesterly wind is expected to turn west/southwesterly. Screengrab of PMD forecast.

In its forecast, the PMD said mostly cloudy weather with "chances of rain-wind or thunderstorm" was expected in the Karachi division on March 28-29 (Saturday and Sunday) with occasional gaps.

Meanwhile, under the influence of the westerly wave, "rain-wind or thunderstorm with isolated hail-storm" was predicted in Sindh's Ghotki, Larkana, Qambar, Sh h a h d k o t, Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Sukkur, Jamshoro, Naushahro Feroze, Shaheed Benazirabad, Dadu, Hyderabad,

Umerkot, Mirpurkhas, Thatta, Sujawal, Badin and Mattari districts on Wednesday and Thursday, as well as on March 28 and 29 with "occasional gaps".

The PMD warned that windstorms, hail storms and lightning may damage weak structures such as electric poles, billboards and solar panels during the forecast period. Lightning strikes may occur at isolated places, it added.

It further warned of damage to standing crops due to hail and

wind, advising farmers to manage their crops according to the prevailing weather conditions.

The PMD on Monday had predicted rainfall and thunderstorms across the country from March 24-30 with "occasional gaps" due to a western disturbance approaching the south-western parts of Balochistan.

Last week, 20 people died and eight were injured as a result of a thunderstorm that swept through Karachi, the city police said.

MQM-P calls for revisiting proposed 28th Amendment, transforming 'feudal democracy into participatory democracy'

NEWS DESK: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) urged authorities to revisit the proposed 28th constitutional amendment and make necessary changes to safeguard citizens' rights and uphold democracy.

Speaking at a press conference in Karachi, MQM-P Chairman Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, alongside Mustafa Kamal and Farooq Sattar, highlighted what they described as the escalation of long-standing political tensions.

"Today, to address this properly, the 28th Constitution Amendment needs to be reviewed, and if necessary, amended. This would allow a decisive resolution to be made urgently," Siddiqui told reporters.

"Pakistan seems prepared, and political parties do not appear to oppose the 28th Amendment with the same intensity," he added.

He added that after the amendment is tabled and cleared by the country's lawmakers, people should know they did it for the sake of the country.

Farooq Sattar also weighed in, emphasising local governance and citizen participation. "Now's the time to transform Pakistan's feudal democracy into a participatory democracy that's inclusive. Every citizen in Pakistan should have the right to decide its own fate."

"A system of em-

powered local governments should be established in Pakistan, including Karachi. This will ensure progress, stability, and strengthen Pakistan's unity, territorial integrity, and development."

Mustafa Kamal added a broader perspective, linking constitutional reform to national security. "When you look at today's tense regional scenario, countries are preparing for crises. Pakistan's civil administration must be em-

powered alongside the military to ensure stability."

"Local governments need authority to manage their own districts; otherwise, internal instability will be exploited by external threats. This is why MQM-P's constitutional demands are not just political—they are a national security necessity," he said.

On March 13, MQM-P leader Kamran Tessori was removed as governor of Sindh and replaced

by PML-N stalwart Nehal Hashmi.

The surprise move to appoint Hashmi had drawn a strong reaction from MQM-P, which complained that it had not been taken on board before the decision to remove its nominee from office, calling it a "grave mistake" by Islamabad and vowing to soon decide its future course of action.

Tessori suggested that his removal might be linked to his initiatives, including the Gul Plaza issue and the 'Karachi Bachao Conference'. He said, "I knew who was behind the decision but would remain politically silent in the larger national interest."

Tessori said if I am punished for raising issues related to Gul Plaza and the 'Karachi Bachao Conference', I will continue to speak up for the city. I could reveal who removed me and on whose instructions, but I choose not to do so."

Supreme Court affirms right to preliminary hearing before framing of contempt charge

NEWS DESK: The Supreme Court has affirmed that in contempt of court matters, the concerned court must provide an alleged contemnor an opportunity for a preliminary hearing before taking cognisance or fixing a date for framing charges against him.

Only after being duly satisfied that a prima facie case exists may the court fix a date for hearing to frame the contempt charge in open court and then proceed to decide the matter, observed Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar in a judgement he authored.

Justice Mazhar, who headed a three-judge SC bench, was hearing a criminal appeal filed by petitioner Hira Rauf against the November 2024 Sindh High Court (SHC) contempt proceedings.

The SC set aside the contempt proceedings initiated by the single bench and upheld Hira Rauf's appeal before the SHC, holding that the fundamental require-



ment of a preliminary hearing for the alleged contemnor had been completely overlooked.

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