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QUETTA VOICE

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File Photo: Jaffar Express in Quetta Balochistan

Balochistan Train Service Suspended on March 27, 2026 Due to Track Repairs and Technical Issues

NEWS DESK:

Quetta: In a significant update for rail passengers, Pakistan Railways has announced a complete suspension of train services across Balochistan on March 27, 2026.

The decision has been made due to urgent railway track repairs, maintenance work, and technical issues to ensure passenger safety and prevent any potential accidents.

According to railway authorities, the well-known Jaffar Express (Quetta to Peshawar) will

not depart as scheduled.

Similarly, the Peshawar to Quetta Jaffar Express will be stopped at Jacobabad and sent back.

This disruption is expected to affect thousands of passengers who regularly travel between Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In addition, Bolan Mail (Quetta to Karachi) and the Chaman Passenger Train are already suspended.

As a result, there will be a complete halt of railway operations in Balochistan for the day.

Key Highlights:

Date of Suspension: March 27, 2026.

Reason: Track maintenance, railway repairs, technical faults.

Affected Trains: Jaffar Express, Bolan Mail, Chaman Passenger.

Regions Impacted: Quetta, Jacobabad, Karachi, Peshawar, Chaman.

Duration: Temporary (expected for one day).

Railway officials have confirmed that this is a temporary suspension, and train services will resume immediately after the completion of repair work.

Ticket Refund Policy

Passengers who have booked tickets for March 27 are eligible for a full refund. The refund process has been made simple and quick to ensure no financial loss.

Impact on Travelers

The suspension creates difficulties, especially for people in remote areas of Balochistan, where trains are considered the most affordable and reliable mode of transportation.

Alternative Travel Options

Passengers are advised to arrange alternative travel, including:

- Bus services
- Private transport
- Domestic flights (if available)

Two Miners Dead in Coal Mine Gas Leak in Duki Chamalang, Balochistan

NEWS DESK:

Duki: In a tragic incident, at least two coal miners lost their lives after a toxic gas leak inside a coal mine in the Chamalang area of Duki district, Balochistan.

According to reports, the miners were working deep inside the mine when poisonous gas accumulated, causing them to lose consciousness.

Rescue teams and fellow workers rushed to the site and launched an operation, but both miners were found dead.

Officials stated that such incidents are often caused by the buildup of methane or other toxic gases,

which are common hazards in coal mining operations. Similar accidents have repeatedly occurred in the region due to poor ventilation systems and lack of safety measures.

The bodies of the deceased miners were later recovered and shifted to a nearby hospital before being handed over to their families.

Ongoing Safety Concerns
Coal mining in Balochistan, particularly in areas like Duki and Chamalang, remains highly dangerous.



Frequent accidents are linked to:
Accumulation of toxic gases
Inadequate safety protocols
Lack of modern detection equipment
Poor enforcement of mining

regulations
Experts highlight that hundreds of miners face life-threatening risks daily, and many incidents go underreported.
Need for Urgent Reforms
This latest incident once

again underscores the urgent need for:
Improved mine safety standards
Proper ventilation systems
Gas detection technology
Strict monitoring by authorities

Authorities are expected to investigate the incident, while labor groups continue to demand better protection and compensation for miners working under hazardous conditions.

4th Pakistani national killed in UAE due to 'falling debris' from missile interception

NEWS DESK:

Another Pakistani national died due to "falling debris" from missile interception in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Thursday, the Abu Dhabi Media Office said.

The development takes the total number of Pakistani nationals killed in the UAE as a result of falling debris from missile interceptions amid the ongoing US-Israeli war on Iran to four.

In a post on X earlier in the day, the media office said that an incident "involving falling debris" from the interception of a ballistic missile resulted in

"deaths of two unidentified individuals, three injuries, and damage to a number of cars".

It said that the incident occurred on Sweihan Street.

In a later post, it confirmed that the incident resulted in the death of "two individuals of Pakistani and Indian nationality".

It added that the incident also resulted in "injuries ranging from serious to moderate sustained by three individuals of Emirati, Jordanian and Indian nationality".

"The public is advised to obtain information only from official sources and to avoid spreading rumours or unverified information," it said.

The Pakistan Embassy in the UAE, in a post on X, expressed grief at the loss of the Pakistani national.



"In this difficult time, we stand with the bereaved family, offering our heartfelt condolences and prayers," it said.

It added that the embassy was in "close coordination" with the local authorities to "extend all possible support and to facilitate the earliest repatriation of the deceased".

On March 17, a Pakistani national was killed due to "falling debris" following the interception of a ballistic missile in the UAE,

while on March 8, a Pakistani driver was killed when "debris from an aerial interception" fell onto a vehicle in Dubai's Al Barsha area late.

Another Pakistani national — identified as Mursed Zaman — was killed due to falling debris in Abu Dhabi on February 28,

the same day the war began, with the US and Israel launching attacks on Iran.

Separately, a fisherman from Gwadar was killed on March 8 after the debris of an Israeli projectile intercepted by Iranian air defence systems hit his boat in Iranian waters.

Armed men rob students in college van near Karachi's New Town area

NEWS DESK: Armed robbers looted a Innah Medical and Dental College transport van in Karachi on Thursday morning near Medicare, Karachi while it was picking up a female student, within the jurisdiction of New Town Police Station.

According to police, three suspects riding a motorcycle entered the van, pulled out weapons and said,

"Assalam-o-Alaikum, ladies and gentlemen. Hand over whatever you have".

Students in the van said the robbers frightened passengers, prompting some to scream. During the incident, the suspects snatched four mobile phones, one student's bag and another student's jewellery before fleeing the scene.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

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

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

A City Freezing While Authorities Look Away

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

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

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

SSGC's Repeated Excuses and Decades of Mismanagement

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

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

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

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

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

just inconvenient — it is dangerous.

F e d e r a l Government's Weak Oversight and Balochistan's Low Priority

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

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

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

The Looming threat of Climate Crisis in Pakistan



Sardar Mengal:

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

Balochistan Vulnerable to Climate Crisis

political crisis are currently drowning in a Natural disaster. Nushki, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Bolan and Jhal Magsi received much of the inflections of flash floods.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

radar.

It's high time for the provincial and federal coalition government to pay special attention to those whose lives are at the stake. Political parties need to rise above the traditional politics and launch concerted efforts to help out the calamity stricken at the earliest. Social welfare organisations should come forward to heal the lesions of suffering humans. On national level, there should be special discourse and discussion on settlement and rehabilitation of the affected people.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The event hosted conversations with mul-



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

salient feature of the project IRC

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

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

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

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

girls from all ethnic groups, and socioeconomic backgrounds."

We are committed to assist and contribute to building economically prosperous, and educated Balochistan, so every child has access to education.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Girl's education is correlated with lower rates of poverty

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

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

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

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

Personal struggles in overcoming the barriers to education

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

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

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

Initiatives to combat the barriers to education

Rescue 1122 issues high alert in view of worsening weather conditions

MURREE (INP): The Rescue 1122, Murree, has issued a high alert in view of worsening weather conditions, with heavy rain, strong winds, storms and possible hailstorms forecast in the coming days.

According to the Rescue 1122 spokesman, all personnel have been directed to remain on alert, with emergency resources mobilised to ensure an effective and prompt response to any untoward incident.

He said teams had been deployed in the field with full preparedness, while the control room was operating round the clock and continuously monitoring the situation.

Ambulances, motorbike rescue units and other essential resources have been kept ready to respond promptly to any emergency call.

He warned that adverse weather could trigger hazards including riverine flooding, landslides, lightning strikes and hailstorms, adding that precautionary measures were already in place to mitigate risks.

The service has urged the public to avoid unnecessary travel during severe weather, stay away from rainwater drains and remain in safe locations. Citizens have also been advised to contact the emergency helpline 1122 immediately in case of any incident.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari chairing a high-level meeting at Aiwan-e-Sadr along with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), IJ, COAS & Chief of Defence Forces and cabinet members.

Karachi receives early morning rain

KARACHI (INP): Parts of Karachi on Thursday morning received rain under the influence of a Western disturbance.

As per details, dark clouds gathered under the influence of a western weather system, followed by rainfall accompanied by strong winds in various parts of Karachi on Thursday morning.

Rain, varying from light to heavy, has been reported across multiple areas, including Metroville, SITE Area, Nazimabad and surrounding neighbourhoods. Showers were also recorded on 11 Chundrigar Road, Saddar, Shahrah-e-Faisal, the Old City Area, walled Clifton Sea View, Lyari and adjoining localities. Scheme 33, Safoora Chowrang, NIPA, Hassan Square and other parts of the city also received rain.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, the system of western winds has begun to influence weather patterns across the country. Rain has already been reported in several parts of Chaman and other areas of Balochistan.

The Met Office has forecast rain accompanied by strong winds in Karachi and across Sindh from today until 29 March. Further rainfall is expected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir until 30 March.

Authorities have also warned of possible flash flooding in various areas due to heavy downpours. Islamabad sixteen degree, centigrade, Lahore twenty, Karachi twenty-five, Peshawar seventeen, Quetta eleven, Gilgit ten, Murree six and Muzaffarabad twelve degree centigrade. According to the weather forecast for Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, partly cloudy weather with chances of rain and wind thunderstorm is expected in Srinagar.

Govt plans Rs5 fuel levy hike ahead of IMF deal

ISLAMABAD (INP): The government plans to raise petrol and diesel taxes by Rs 5 per liter.

Additionally, Rs 100 billion has been cut from the development budget with IMF consultation. The IMF also objected to giving the government authority to appoint heads or CEOs of institutions, insisting that such powers remain with the respective boards.

A circular debt of Rs 1.2 trillion to control the circular debt in Pakistan's power and gas sectors has been shared with the IMF.

The fund is also reviewing the impact of rising oil and fertilizer prices, regional tensions, and the country's overall financial conditions.

The government is preparing proposals to support the real estate sector, including potential reductions in property taxes on purchases and sales, subject to IMF approval.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led government is preparing to increase the levy on petrol and diesel by Rs 5 per liter as part of broader revenue-raising measures ahead of a staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the next \$1.2 billion tranche.

The IMF is set to announce a staff-level agreement in the coming days after sharing the draft Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies with the Pakistan government.

Once consensus is reached, the Federal Finance Minister and the State Bank Governor will sign the agreement, paving the way for the release of the next tranche under Pakistan's loan program.

Sources revealed that the IMF has urged the government to increase both tax and non-tax revenues. Following the high-octane levy,

Reduced speed limits come into effect across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) on Thursday enforced reduced speed limits on motorways and national highways as part of the federal government's fuel conservation and energy efficiency measures.

The move follows directives from the Prime Minister aimed at promoting efficient energy use and encouraging nationwide fuel savings. In a statement shared on social media, the NHMP said the revised limits have been implemented in line with government instructions on austerity and fuel conservation.

Under the new directives, the speed limit for cars and light transport vehicles (LTVs) on motorways has been reduced from 120 km/h to 100 km/h. For passenger service vehicles (PSVs) and heavy transport vehicles (HTVs), including buses and trucks, the limit has been lowered from 110 km/h to 90 km/h. Similarly, on national highways, the speed limit for cars and LTVs has been reduced from 100 km/h to 80 km/h, while for PSVs and HTVs it has been decreased from 80 km/h to 65 km/h. The new speed limits came into effect on March 26, 2026.

The NHMP has also launched a nationwide awareness campaign to inform commuters about the revised limits and encourage compliance for smooth implementation.

Officials stated that the measures are intended to reduce fuel consumption, improve road safety, and support the government's broader energy conservation goals. Motorists have been urged to strictly adhere to the new limits.

According to automotive experts, driving at lower speeds can significantly improve fuel efficiency. As a vehicle moves, air resistance increases with speed, forcing the engine to work harder and consume more fuel. This resistance rises exponentially at higher speeds, making slower driving more economical.

Global oil supply disruptions caused by tensions in the Middle East have contributed to rising fuel prices. In response, several countries, including Pakistan, are adopting austerity measures to curb fuel consumption.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has also noted that reducing highway speed limits by 10 km/h could lower overall oil consumption from cars by 0.6 percent. The agency has issued recommendations to help countries conserve fuel during ongoing global energy challenges.

PM briefs Bilawal on Pakistan's ongoing diplomatic efforts in light of evolving Gulf situation

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday underscored Pakistan's active diplomatic outreach for global peace, as he met Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party here along with a delegation.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister briefed Bilawal Bhutto on Pakistan's ongoing diplomatic efforts in light of the evolving situation in the Gulf, emphasizing Islamabad's commitment to promoting stability, peace, and development, and its resolution on the international stage, a prime Minister's Office news release said.

PM Sharif highlighted that Pakistan is actively engaged in addressing emerging regional challenges through a balanced strategy that integrates foreign policy, internal security preparedness, and economic resilience. He stressed that safeguarding national interests while contributing to global peace remained a top priority of his government.

The two leaders also exchanged views on the case for establishment of issues of national importance.

LHC acquits two men in double murder case

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) acquitted two men who had been sentenced to death in a double murder case, allowing their appeals against the conviction and ordering their immediate release if not required in any other case before the prosecution's version of events.

It further observed contradictions in the timings of the post-mortem examinations of the deceased.

The bench noted that there was an unexplained delay of two hours in lodging the FIR, which raised doubts about the prosecution's version of events.

The bench further observed contradictions in the timings of the post-mortem examinations of the deceased.

The bench ruled that under such circumstances, the accused were entitled to the benefit of doubt, set aside the death sentence, and directed authorities to release both men immediately if they were not wanted in any other case.

Federal govt decides to keep petroleum prices unchanged

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has decided to keep petroleum prices unchanged in Pakistan, as global oil prices dropped by more than 6% amid hopes of de-escalation in the Iran conflict.

Oil prices fell sharply while global stocks rose on Wednesday following reports that Washington had conveyed a peace proposal to Iran through Pakistan. Tehran also indicated it would allow "non-hostile" oil vessels to pass through the strategically important Strait of Hormuz, easing supply concerns.

According to sources, the government opted to maintain current fuel prices and instead proposed a reduction of Rs 100 billion in the development budget to manage fiscal pressures.

Meanwhile, the All Pakistan Petrol Pump Owners Association (APPPOA) has expressed serious reservations over the mechanism for determining petroleum prices. The association has urged the Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik to take stakeholders into confidence regarding the pricing formula. Vice Chairman Noman Butt said around 15,000 petrol pump owners have concerns over the current system.

He warned that if their demands are not addressed, petrol pump owners may shut down their pumps nationwide.

Given the current situation, no further crisis should be created, and the petroleum minister would be responsible if the issue remains unresolved. It should be noted that following the Iran war, the government announced Rs.55 per litre increase in petrol and diesel prices on 7 March 2026, taking petrol to Rs.321.17 per litre and diesel to Rs.335.86 per litre.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Mr. Attaulah Tarar addressing press conference.

KP Governor reviews passport services; Radio Pakistan revival

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi was given separate departmental briefings on Wednesday at Governor House on the performance of Immigration and Passport offices in the province, and the historical and operational status of Radio Pakistan Peshawar.

Officials of Immigration and Passport Department, including Zonal Head North Sheikh Ashiq Ahmad and Zonal Head South Faiz-ul-Hassan, briefed the Governor on overall performance and service delivery. It was informed that passport services in the province are being provided through two zones North and South with five regional passport offices, including Dera Ismail Khan.

The briefing highlighted that 15 passport offices are functioning in the province, while 24 offices are providing services in various districts of Peshawar zone. The Governor was also apprised of the upgrade of the Regional Passport Office Dera Ismail Khan.

Kundi was further briefed on online services, one-window operations, legal framework, fee structure and procedures for issuance and renewal of passports.

The Governor directed authorities to take up the matter with the Interior Department for increasing the number of regional passport offices in the province, terming it essential in view of the growing population.

He also instructed that the case for establishment of a regional passport office in the newly created district of Pahnarpur, as well as a passport office at tehsil level, be taken up with the Ministry of Interior, Dera Ismail Khan.

The Governor was informed that the station's transmissions are heard in remote areas of the province as well as bordering regions of Afghanistan. Broadcasts are aired in multiple languages including urdu, Pashto, Hindko, Khowar and Gojri, reflecting the region's cultural diversity.

In another briefing, the Governor was informed about the history and functioning of Radio Pakistan Peshawar. Station Director Tufail Ahmad, along with senior producer Sarfaraz Azam Khan, briefed the Governor.

It was shared that Radio Pakistan Peshawar was established on March 6, 1935, with transmissions initially starting from the Civil Secretariat. Later, on April 28, 1985, regular broadcasts began from the newly established Broadcasting Corporation's dedicated building, airing 16 hours of daily programming covering current affairs, political, social and cultural content.

The Governor was informed that the station's transmissions are heard in remote areas of the province as well as bordering regions of Afghanistan. Broadcasts are aired in multiple languages including urdu, Pashto, Hindko, Khowar and Gojri, reflecting the region's cultural diversity.

Officials also briefed the Governor on damages caused to the building during the May 9 incident, adding that restoration work was completed in January 2026 and all departments have resumed operations.

Governor Kundi termed the restoration of the historic institution a positive development and appreciated the efforts of the authorities.

He emphasized the importance of protecting national institutions, calling them an integral part of the country's cultural and informational heritage.

He also underscored the need to align Radio Pakistan with modern digital requirements to effectively engage the younger generation and directed officials to further improve broadcast quality, promote regional languages and culture, and highlight public issues.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Arifullah, holding a meeting with H.E. Mr. Nicolas Galey, Ambassador of France to Pakistan, at the Finance Division to discuss economic cooperation and bilateral engagement.

Turbat University Ranking Improves Significantly, Governor Mandokhail Praises Reforms

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jafar Khan Mandokhail has said that consistent monitoring and reforms in higher education institutions, particularly in Makran Division, are yielding positive results.

He shared that over the past two years, he has visited the three universities in Makran Division multiple times, attended convocations, and personally chaired several senate meetings of University of Turbat.

These efforts, he noted, have led to visible improvements, including a rise in the university's ranking from 69% to 87%.

The Governor appreciated the efforts of Vice Chancellor Dr. Gul Hassan and his team for digitizing the university system and shifting from conventional electricity to solar energy, calling it a commendable achievement.

During the meeting, Governor Mandokhail directed the university administration to introduce short skill-based courses aligned with market demands to better prepare students for employment opportunities.

He also emphasized the importance of strengthening the local economy, particularly highlighting Turbat's date production sector.

He suggested introducing new varieties of dates and developing strategies for international-standard packaging to boost exports.

The Governor reiterated that promoting higher education has been a top priority since day one.

He expressed satisfaction that the youth show great respect for their teachers and institutions, while also noting the need for strong teamwork to further improve the university's performance.

Keywords: Jafar Khan Mandokhail, University of Turbat ranking, higher education Balochistan, Dr Gul Hassan VC, Makran universities development, skill development courses Pakistan



relevant institutions. A detailed review was conducted regarding progress on making non-functional schools operational across the district. Key issues discussed included absent teachers and staff, removal of encroachments in schools, steps to improve the overall education system. Participants were directed to ensure school functionality, staff attendance, and provision of basic facilities through immediate and effective measures. Chairing the session, Muhammad Anwar Kakar emphasized that improving the education sector requires strong coordination and collaboration among all concerned departments. He urged officials to take serious and practical steps to address existing challenges and enhance the quality of education in the district.

Key Meeting in Quetta Reviews Activation of Non-Functional Schools



QUETTA: An important meeting of the District Education Group was held under the chairmanship of Muhammad Anwar Kakar to review key issues in the education sector.

The meeting was attended by officials from the Education Department and other

relevant institutions. A detailed review was conducted regarding progress on making non-functional schools operational across the district.

Key issues discussed included absent teachers and staff, removal of encroachments in

schools, steps to improve the overall education system. Participants were directed to ensure school functionality, staff attendance, and provision of basic facilities through immediate and effective measures.

Chairing the session, Muhammad Anwar Kakar emphasized that improving the education sector requires strong coordination and collaboration among all concerned departments.

He urged officials to take serious and practical steps to address existing challenges and enhance the quality of education in the district.

Keywords: Muhammad Anwar Kakar, District Education Group meeting, non-functional schools, education sector, Quetta, teacher absenteeism Pakistan, education reforms, school improvement initiatives

Gwadar Administration Restores Drainage System After Rainfall

GWADAR: Acting on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Nakeebullah Kakar, the district administration, along with municipal teams from Gwadar and Pasni, carried out swift operations to restore the drainage system following recent rainfall in the city.

Under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner Gwadar Saad Kaleem Zafar and Assistant Commissioner Pasni Khayro Durrani, emergency teams remained active throughout the night. Meanwhile, municipal

sources to drain accumulated rainwater from various parts of the city, providing immediate relief to residents.

Early in the morning, teams were still in the field using machinery and manual re-

sioner Nakeebullah Kakar urged citizens to follow SOPs issued by the administration and cooperate in maintaining cleanliness and proper drainage.

He emphasized that protecting the lives and property of citizens remains the top priority, adding that all relevant institutions are fully prepared to serve the public at all times.

Keywords: Gwadar rain drainage, Nakeebullah Kakar, Saad Kaleem Zafar, Pasni administration, drainage restoration Gwadar, municipal action Balochistan

During the briefing, it was revealed that 718 schools are functional under 102 clusters across the district. However, 116 schools lack proper shelter, while 70 schools are being run under different projects.

The Deputy Commissioner expressed concern over the closure of several schools in rural areas and ordered immediate ground verification.

He also sought a report on chronically absent teachers, directing strict action and warning that absenteeism—especially among newly appointed teachers—will not be tolerated.

Officials were instructed to coordinate with headmasters, community elders, and local to prepare a comprehensive report on school functionality, attendance, and enrollment.

The DC also showed displeasure over delays in development schemes, ordering the blacklisting of negligent contractors and seeking a detailed report from the concerned department.

He further directed on-ground verification of newly constructed schools and emphasized transparent utilization of UNICEF funds.

Regarding the enrollment campaign, it was shared that over 3,000 children have been enrolled so far against a target of 18,000.

The Deputy Commissioner expressed concern over the absence of dropout data and directed officials to provide it immediately.

It was also noted that textbook distribution has been completed and teacher training programs are ongoing.

Concluding the meeting, Yasir Iqbal Dashti directed all departments to submit a detailed report within one week, announcing that the next review meeting will be held soon.

Keywords: Kech education meeting, Yasir Iqbal Dashti, Amjad Shehzad DEO, school closures Balochistan, teacher absenteeism action, Turbat

Keywords: Kech Education Review: DC Orders Action on Absent Teachers, School Closures

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Crackdown on Price Hike: Loralai Administration Seals Shops, Fines Violators

LORALAI: The district administration has intensified its crackdown against profiteers to provide relief to the public during Ramadan, following directives from Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Muhammad Haseeb Shuja. Under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner Nadeem Akram, teams conducted inspections in various markets across the city. During the operation, a butcher shop was sealed on the spot for overcharging beyond official rates.

Additional fines were imposed due to poor hygiene conditions and failure to properly cover meat. Several shopkeepers were also issued strict warnings to comply with official



price lists and maintain cleanliness standards. Speaking on the occasion, the Assistant Commissioner stated that such actions will continue to ensure public relief and that one will be allowed to engage in profiteering. Shopkeepers were instructed to prominently display government-approved price lists, failing which strict legal action will be taken. Meanwhile, the administration also reviewed prices of essential food items in different areas. Multiple vegetable vendors and grocery store owners were

finned for overpricing, while some shops were temporarily closed. According to officials, special monitoring teams have been formed during Ramadan to conduct daily inspections and keep prices under control. Citizens have been urged to report com-

plaints to the district administration for prompt action. Keywords: Loralai price control, Muhammad Haseeb Shuja, Nadeem Akram AC Bori, anti-profiteering crackdown Pakistan, Ramadan price monitoring, market inspection Balochistan.

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PDMA Balochistan Issues Monsoon Contingency Plan 2026 to Tackle Flood Risks

QUETTA: Provincial Disaster Management Authority Balochistan has released the Monsoon Contingency Plan 2026 to effectively deal with potential heavy rains and related emergency situations across the province.

The comprehensive plan aims to ensure advance preparedness, timely response, inter-agency coordination, and protection of lives and property, minimizing losses in case of natural disasters.

According to PDMA, the plan includes a detailed assessment of high-risk districts and vulnerable areas that may face threats such as flash floods, overflowing streams, landslides, and other cli-

mate-related hazards during the monsoon season.

The strategy has been developed by analyzing past rainfall patterns, climate change impacts, and previous disaster management experiences.

Under the plan, clear responsibilities have been assigned to all relevant government departments, district administrations, rescue agencies, and service providers. Arrangements have also been made to ensure the availability of essential resources, including heavy machinery and rescue equipment. Medical facilities and medicines/Ambulance services.

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Public Notice: Construction of Farm Ponds, Development of Dug Wells, Installation of Solar Pumping System on Farm Ponds & Dug Wells, Provision of Fruit Plants, Oil Seeds, Pulses & Fodder. Includes details on bid submission and contact information.

Notice Inviting Tender: Construction of Farm Ponds, Development of Dug Wells, Installation of Solar Pumping System on Farm Ponds & Dug Wells, Provision of Fruit Plants, Oil Seeds, Pulses & Fodder. Includes details on bid submission and contact information.

Oil slides 4pc amid fragile diplomacy signals

NEWS DESK: Oil prices slid about 4 per cent on Wednesday on reports that the US had sent Iran a 15-point proposal aimed at ending the war, prompting talk of progress toward a ceasefire.

Brent futures fell 3.96, or 3.8pc, to \$100.53 a barrel at 10:41am EDT (14:41 GMT), while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude fell \$3.57, or 3.9pc, to \$88.78.

Pakistan has delivered a US proposal to Iran, and either Pakistan or Turkey could be a venue for discussions to de-escalate the war, a senior Iranian official told Reuters on Wednesday.

Iran has denied that direct talks had taken place, and an Iranian military spokesman said the US is negotiating with itself, according to state media.

Despite market turmoil, Washington holds off tapping strategic oil reserves.

"This latest price downturn largely relates to a 15-point US plan to end the war," analysts at

energy advisory firm Rittenbusch and Associates said in a note.

"Iran has yet to indicate a positive response to the reported recent talks, and until a greater definition is forthcoming regarding major progress, the oil market will remain vulnerable to another price up-spike."

Extreme price swings in recent weeks boosted Brent's historic or actual 30-day close-to-close volatility to its highest since April 2022 and WTI's volatility to its highest since June 2020.

Shipments via Hormuz

The war has all but halted shipments of oil and liquefied natural gas through the Strait of Hormuz, which typically carries about one-fifth of the world's LNG and crude supply.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has called for the biggest oil supply disruption.

The result is a daily loss of around 20 million barrels of crude, mean-



ing after 25 days, a loss of some 500 million barrels, or five full days of global supply.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi asked IEA chief Fatih Birol for an additional coordinated release of oil stockpiles when they

met on Wednesday, as Tokyo seeks to shield consumers from higher energy prices.

Despite the expectations of some analysts, the latest data from the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) on Wednesday

showed the US did not start pulling crude out of its Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) during the week ended March 20.

Iran has told the UN Security Council and the International Maritime Organisation that "non-

hostile vessels" may transit the Strait if they coordinate with Iranian authorities, according to a note seen by Reuters on Tuesday.

To offset the Hormuz disruptions, oil exports from Saudi Arabia's Red Sea Yanbu

port rose to nearly four million barrels per day last week, a sharp increase from before the war broke out, shipping data showed.

Baltic ports under attack Russia's Baltic ports of Primorsk and Ust-Luga, major export

terminals, suspended crude oil and oil products loadings on Wednesday after Ukrainian drone attacks sparked a blaze which could be seen from Finland, two sources told Reuters.

It was one of the largest strikes against Russia's oil export facilities in the four-year war.

Two stray Ukrainian military drones entered the airspace of Estonia and Latvia on Wednesday morning via Russia, one of which slammed into a chimney at a local power station while the other crashed-landed, the two Baltic countries said.

US oil inventories The US EIA said energy firms added 6.9 million barrels of crude into stockpiles during the week ended March 20.

That was higher than the 0.5m barrel build analysts forecast in a Reuters poll and the 2.4m barrel build that market sources said the American Petroleum Institute trade group reported on Tuesday.

Petrol pump owners threaten nationwide shutdown

NEWS DESK: The All Pakistan Petrol Pump Owners Association (APPPOA) on Wednesday warned of a country-wide closure of petrol pumps if urgent concerns surrounding the petroleum industry are not addressed by the government.

In a letter sent to Power Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, the association's Vice Chairman Nouman Ali Butt called for an immediate meeting to discuss the pressing issues facing petrol pump owners.

"We would like to have a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss and address the concerns of petrol pump owners taken into account in future policymaking."

Three weeks ago, the government sharply increased diesel and petrol prices by Rs55 per litre or 20% — due to the ongoing US-Israel and Iran war, which has disrupted supply chains and pushed crude oil prices to two years' highest level.

The increase in petrol prices was more



sudden situational changes stemming from force majeure events. Butt stressed that the concerns of petrol pump owners be taken into account in future policymaking.

However, he warned that if the situation remained unaddressed, the entire responsibility for the ensuing crisis would lie with the government.

The letter also pointed out the lack of consultation with indus-

try stakeholders when key decisions affecting the sector are made. Butt urged that the concerns of petrol pump owners be taken into account in future policymaking.

Both federal and provincial governments have since introduced a range of austerity steps, including an additional weekly holiday, cutting free petrol allocations for ministers, limiting protocol vehicles, and proposing subsidised fuel for students.

than the surge in the international market, as the government chose to collect more money than required from motorists and car owners to subsidise the use of diesel, mostly by the public transport and the agriculture sector.

Freight, fuel hikes squeeze consumers

NEWS DESK: Prices of essential items have shown a mixed trend as the Gulf war, which started on Feb 28, pushed up transportation costs following a surge in energy prices due to disruptions.

Since shipping companies have raised freight and war risk charges, the landed cost of imported finished goods and raw materials has skyrocketed.

A random market survey before and after the outbreak of the war in the Middle East, shows that vendors of beef, mutton and chicken jacked up prices before Ramadan and during the lead-up to Eid.

The current increase in age rate of beef (with and without bones) is Rs1,000-1,500 per kg. Beef prices had seen a Rs100-Rs200 increase ahead of Eid. The rates for veal surged to Rs1,800 per kg from Rs1,600 during Ramadan.

War-driven costs push up wholesale prices, with retail impact looming, energy shock threatens inflation spike

Mutton prices have been hovering between Rs1,800 and Rs2,750 in various cities, showing no change since Feb 28. Consumers expected a drop in beef and mutton prices because the war had stalled exports, but high domestic demand during Eid festivities kept meat prices out of reach for many. According to meat

merchants, export shipments were being sent by air.

Chicken, another most sought-after Eid item, saw a jump to Rs360-Rs500 per kg from Rs300-420 two days before the war began on Feb 28.

As per the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), the prices of Masoor, Moong, Maash and gram pulses have stayed almost unchanged at Rs220-320, Rs340-Rs460, Rs400-540 and Rs210-340 per kg, respectively, since Feb 28.

Rauf Ibrahim, who heads the Karachi Wholesalers and Grocers Association (KWGA), said the Rs55 per litre rise in diesel had an impact of Rs5-Rs7 on wholesale prices of edible items.

But retail prices

have shown no impact so far due to the Eid holidays.

Cooking oil As per SPI, the prices of branded cooking oil (five kilo pack), 2.5kg of ghee tin and one kg ghee have been unchanged at Rs2,850-3,110, Rs1,400-1,587 and Rs560-592, respectively.

A retailer at Tariq Road Market said the distributors of oil products had hinted at a jump of Rs200 per five kg/litre ghee and cooking oil cartons.

Sheikh Amjad Rasheed, a former chairman of the Pakistan Vanaspati Manufacturers Association (PVMA), said manufacturers had raised prices by Rs5-10 per kg/litre for ghee and cooking oil.

The rate of palm oil has surged to \$1,220-

1,240 per tonne in the international market, up from \$1,020 before the war.

The domestic palm oil rate has gone up to Rs16,000 per maund from Rs15,000, while futures are being quoted at Rs8,000, he added.

Ghee and cooking oil prices will not go up drastically as the country has palm oil stocks of 550,000 tonnes — enough for three months.

Potato, onion and tomato prices also held unchanged at Rs20-70, Rs40-130 and Rs40-140 per kg.

The prices of wheat and wheat flour fluctuated amid the arrival of the new crop in Sindh. For example, a 20kg flour bag costs Rs1,810-710, while a 10kg bag costs Rs1,068.

Industrial tariff reform plan under review

NEWS DESK: The Power Division is considering the introduction of a new optional tariff mechanism for industrial consumers, aimed at improving electricity utilisation efficiency and enabling cost-reflective pricing based on time-of-use consumption patterns.

According to an official statement issued on Wednesday, the proposal is being developed under the direction of Federal Minister for Power Division Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari, with several internal consultative and technical meetings already held to shape the

framework. Under the proposed model, industrial consumers will have the option to adopt a multi-slab tariff structure, where electricity pricing is linked to average marginal cost signals across defined time-of-use slabs. The approach is intended to better reflect the actual cost of electricity supply during different periods of demand. The tariff will comprise two main components. Fixed charges will be determined based on Maximum Demand Indicators (MDI) and are expected to be relatively higher, reflecting rising consumer costs to manage

and reduce peak demand. Variable energy charges will be rationalised and aligned more closely with actual energy costs, allowing more cost-reflective pricing.

The structure is expected to support improved load management by enabling industries to shift operations to lower-cost periods. It is also aimed at promoting electricity consumption during off-peak hours, improving the system load factor and reducing pressure on the grid during peak demand periods. Officials said the proposed mechanism is also intended to reduce

the need for costly capacity additions by incentivising peak demand reduction. The framework is expected to support industrial productivity and competitiveness through more predictable energy costs. The minister has directed that the proposed tariff regime be refined through extensive stakeholder consultations to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness. Consultations will be held with industrial consumers, chambers of commerce and trade bodies across the country, with feedback to be incorporated into the final design. The first consultative conference will be held online on March 26. Separately, the minister said the National Grid Company's indigenisation policy had resulted in contracts worth Rs12.673 billion awarded to local industries, along with around 40% savings on transmission line conductors compared to imported alternatives.

He said the policy had enabled local manufacturing through educational orders, joint ventures and the establishment of local subsidiaries.



Geopolitical tensions rattle PSX, down 5,405 points

NEWS DESK: Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a sharp decline on Thursday, with the benchmark KSE-100 Index plunging 3.41%, erasing the previous session's gains amid rising geopolitical uncertainty and persistent technical weakness.

At close, the KSE-100 Index settled at 152,908, down 5,405 points, as broad-based selling pressure dominated market activity. Market breadth remained negative, with 92 stocks declining against just 7 advancers, reflecting weak investor sentiment, according to AHL.

Heavily weighted stocks led the downturn, with UBL falling 7.07%,

and the absence of a clear resolution path is keeping risk appetite subdued," a market participant noted.

On the domestic front, the index's failure to reclaim its 200-day moving average (200-DMA) has reinforced a consolidation phase, with the benchmark remaining largely flat on a week-on-week basis despite heightened volatility. Additionally, policy developments added a mixed undertone to the market.

The government's plan to introduce a mobile application to manage fuel quotas for motorcycles, rickshaws, and small cabs up to 800cc — aimed at providing targeted

subsidies to low-income households — failed to provide an immediate positive trigger for equities.

Sector-wise, banking, cement, and exploration & production stocks remained under pressure. Among actively traded stocks, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines, WorldCall Telecom, and Pak Elektron Limited featured prominently in volumes.

On the flip side, select stocks posted gains, with Nestlé Pakistan, Packages Limited, and Bata Pakistan closing in positive territory, although their impact on the broader index remained limited.



Market participants expect continued volatility in the near term, with external factors — particularly geopolitical developments and global commodity price movements — likely to dictate direction. Analysts suggest that a decisive break above the 200-DMA is crucial for any sustained bullish momentum, while failure to do so may keep the market range-bound.

In the absence of strong local triggers, investors are expected to remain cautious, closely tracking global cues and macroeconomic signals.

PSL 11 set to start with Lahore-Hyderabad clash

NEWS DESK: Preparations are complete for the opening match of the 11th edition of the HBL Pakistan Super League, with defending champions Lahore Qalandars taking on debutants Hyderabad Kings-men in a behind-closed-doors contest at the Gaddafi Stadium on Thursday.

Captains of all eight participating teams addressed a joint pre-tournament press conference here on Wednesday, while the sides also conducted practice sessions at the LCCA ground.

Signs of PSL activity were evident throughout the Gaddafi Stadium vicinity.

Shaheen Shah Afridi (Lahore Qalandars), Babar Azam (Peshawar Zalmi), David Warner (Karachi Kings), Shadab Khan (Islamabad United), Mar-nus Labuschagne (Hyderabad Kingsmen), Ashton Turner (Multan Sultans), Mohammad Rizwan (Rawalpindi Pindiz) and Saud Shafeeq (Quetta Gladiators) expressed optimism about a competitive tournament ahead, even as they lamented the absence of spectators due to the Pakistan

Cricket Board's austerity measures.

The decision follows the government's energy conservation policy amid the ongoing USA-Israel conflict with Iran.

Pakistan's ODI captain Shaheen Shah Afridi voiced confidence in Lahore Qalandars mounting a strong title challenge, aiming for a fourth triumph.

"We will try our best to win the title once again. The boys prepared well during practice sessions in Islamabad before arriving in Lahore and we are looking forward to playing good cricket," he said.

Shaheen noted that the PSL had produced several quality players for the national side over the past decade and hoped the trend would continue. However, he declined to comment when asked whether he should relinquish the T20 captaincy in favour of focusing solely on ODIs.

"Let us keep our discussion limited to the PSL," he remarked.

Former Pakistan captain Rizwan, who is leading Rawalpindi Pindiz, offered measured remarks on the league's



contribution to national cricket when questioned about expectations for the next 10 years.

"PSL is a commendable initiative of the PCB. Credit for taking it to this stage also goes to Najam Sethi, who launched it in 2016. The recent sale of a team for Rs245 crore shows how far we have come. While the nation may be disappointed with the current state of

Pakistan cricket, as Shaheen mentioned, promising players are emerging from the junior ranks and we should remain hopeful," Rizwan said.

He added that the national team's combination was not yet settled, with some players perhaps not in their ideal roles.

"Once we sort these things out, Pakistan will

rise again and the nation and they will miss us too. But we will try to play entertaining cricket so that fans can enjoy the action on their television screens," he said.

Hyderabad captain Labuschagne said his team, making its PSL debut, was ready to compete despite the pressure inherent in any major league.

"We will miss them and they will miss us too. But we will try to play entertaining cricket so that fans can enjoy the action on their television screens," he said.

Hyderabad captain Labuschagne said his team, making its PSL debut, was ready to compete despite the pressure inherent in any major league.

"We have discussed the roles of our players and our match strategies in detail and we trust their skills.

This is a new chapter for the Kingsmen and a great opportunity to showcase what we can do," he remarked.

Karachi Kings' Warner highlighted the strength of his squad and expressed hope that the team would build on

its performance from the previous season.

Multan Sultans captain Turner described the PSL as one of the finest T20 leagues in the world, featuring several talented players.

"I am eagerly looking forward to competing alongside them in the coming days," he said.

Islamabad United skipper Shadab was asked about his inconsistent performances and whether they might affect his prospects of captaining the national T20 side, but he did not get the opportunity to respond as the questioner directed different queries to multiple captains.

In the previous 10 editions of the PSL, Lahore Qalandars (2022, 2023, 2025) and Islamabad United (2016, 2018, 2024) have each won three titles.

Peshawar Zalmi (2017), Multan Sultans (2021), Quetta Gladiators (2019) and Karachi Kings (2020) have lifted the trophy once apiece.

Two new franchises — Rawalpindi Pindiz and Hyderabad Kingsmen — have joined the league this season.

IPL's Bengaluru to keep 11 seats empty in honour of stampede dead

NEWS DESK: Indian Premier League champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru will keep 11 seats at their M. Chinnaswamy Stadium empty in memory of the fans crushed to death in title celebrations last year, the team said Tuesday.

Eleven supporters aged between 14 and 29 died in a stampede outside the stadium in June after RCB won the IPL for the first time.

The lucrative T20 tournament begins its 2026 season on Saturday when RCB host Sunrisers Hyderabad.

The Bengaluru team, including star batsman Virat Kohli, will warm up for the game in tops sporting the number 11 and wear black arm bands for the match.

Along with the permanently empty seats, CEO Rajesh Menon said: "This is a tribute

to our fans, who will always remain a part of our journey."

After the tragedy, authorities deemed the venue unsafe due to structural and crowd management deficiencies, and moved important fixtures elsewhere.

But earlier this month the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said that the stadium would host games, including RCB home fixtures.

Menon said crowd management measures have been "significantly strengthened", including setting up AI-led cameras.

"This system provides real-time alerts, including stand-specific crowd counts, to ensure better monitoring and control," he said.

The stampede took place a day after RCB won the final against Punjab Kings and returned to a

homecoming trophy parade.

Hundreds of thousands gathered on the streets to welcome their hero Kohli and his victorious team-mates. More than 50 people were injured.

Several officials, including a senior RCB executive, and representatives of event organisers DNA and Karnataka State Cricket Association, were questioned by a



PM urged to postpone 'unconstitutional' PHF Congress meeting

NEWS DESK: Terming the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) Congress meeting scheduled for Friday unconstitutional, several representatives from different parts of the country who claim to be the genuine members of the Congress and some former players have urged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to postpone the said meeting.

The Congress meeting, called by the Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani-led ad-hoc PHF body, is scheduled to be held in Islamabad.

While member of the National Assembly Shehla Raza, who is a PHF Congress member from Sindh, wrote a letter to the prime minister who is the federation's patron-in-chief, other aggrieved Congress members from Sindh, Punjab, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and other parts of the country sent their letters to Wani, members of the Standing Committee of the Inter-Provincial Coordination Ministry, Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) and the IPC Ministry, for not inviting them to the March 27 gathering.

In their letters, the members pointed out that though they were elected in the 2022 PHF elections, neither the IPC nor the PSB endorsed those elections.



Later, previous PHF president Farid Hussain Bugti in 2023 and 2024 changed several Congress members unconstitutionally, which caused a dispute between the PSB, IPC and Bugti, the upset Congress members expressed.

Now, the concerned members pointed out, the same Congress members, who were approved by Bugti, were called to Friday's meeting despite the fact that neither the IPC nor the PSB endorsed that list of members.

According to PHF's constitution, they underlined, a Congress member could only be changed in three conditions: in case of a death, a resignation or a no-confidence motion passed against a member by his respective

district body.

Whereas Bugti, the omitted Congress members contended, had changed many Congress members, ignoring all three conditions of the constitution, adding the "unconstitutional members" were asked to attend the meeting.

Moreover, they emphasised, the Wani-led body, despite presently having no functioning secretary or treasurer, had decided to amend the PHF constitution in Friday's meeting, which they claimed was not included in its mandate that was only to hold fresh PHF elections.

Meanwhile, Shehla Raza, in her letter to the Prime Minister, IPC, PSB and all members of the Senate and National Assembly Standing Commit-

tees on the IPC Ministry, pointed out that "serious concerns have arisen regarding the notice issued for an extraordinary Congress meeting of the PHF, reportedly called by the ad-hoc President PHF on March 27, 2026 under Article 12.10.1 & 12.10.3 of the PHF Constitution.

This development warrants immediate attention in light of established facts and prior official directions. Through a clear trail of documented decisions and a series of meetings of the Standing Committee on IPC and the PSB, it is widely known within the hockey fraternity and the nation that the Honourable Prime Minister of Pakistan, through the IPC and the PSB, has already suspended the PHF," she said in her letter.

Only biological females, determined by gene screening, will be allowed in Olympic's female events

NEWS DESK: Only biological female athletes, whose gender will be determined by a one-time gene-screening test, will now be eligible to take part in female category events at the Olympic Games, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said on Thursday.

The IOC unveiled its new policy, following an 18-month consultation phase, on the protection of the female category as part of its initiative to have a universal rule for competitors in female elite sports after years of fragmented regulation that led to major controversies.

All athletes wanting to qualify or take part in female category events from the LA2028 Olympics onwards "will have to undergo an SRY gene test to determine their eligibility."

Based on scientific evidence, the IOC considers that the presence of the SRY gene is fixed throughout life and represents highly accurate evidence that an

athlete has experienced male 'sex development,' the IOC said in a statement. The IOC had long declined to apply any universal rule on transgender participation in the Olympics "and, in 2021, instructed international federations to come up with their own guidelines."

New IOC President Kirsty Coventry said the IOC would immediately after taking "over in June last year," saying her organisation would take the lead for a uniform

approach. "At the Olympic Games, even the smallest margins can be the difference between victory and defeat," Coventry said in the statement.

"So, it is absolutely clear that it would not be fair for biological males to compete in the female category. "In addition, in some sports it would simply not be safe."

The new rules have no retroactive power and no impact on grassroots or "amateur sports. There are exceptions, the IOC

said, for rare cases of sex development. "With the rare exception of athletes with a diagnosis of Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (CAIS) or other rare differences/disorders in sex development (DSDs) who do not benefit from the anabolic and/or performance-enhancing effects of testosterone, no athlete with an SRY-positive screen is eligible for competition in the female category at an IOC event," the IOC said.



Sinner powers past Michelsen to reach Miami quarter-finals

NEWS DESK: Janik Sinner powered into the Miami Open quarter-finals on Tuesday, defeating second seed Alexander Michelsen in straight sets to stay on course for the "Sunshine Double".

Italian second seed Sinner, who is bidding to follow up his triumph at Indian Wells with victory in Miami, bided his time before completing a 7-5, 7-6(7/4) win in 1hr 41min.

The four-time Grand Slam champion, who will face 19th seed Frances Tiafoe in the last eight, was made to work hard by the 40th-ranked Michelsen.

After a cagey opening Sinner began to put pressure on Michelsen's serve in the ninth game of the first set, carving out three break points.

Michelsen rode out that storm, but Sinner finally broke through in the 11th game before serving out for the first set.

Michelsen hit back in the second set, breaking Sinner for a 4-2 lead before holding to go 5-2 up.

Michelsen appeared to struggle with the bright late afternoon sunlight on the Hard Rock Stadium's main court and Sinner came roaring back to force a

tiebreak.

Sinner sealed the win with a thumping serve that Michelsen could only return wide.

Alex Michelsen in straight sets to stay on course for the "Sunshine Double".

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world, upset American 32nd seed Sebastian Korda to score a 2-6, 7-6(8/6), 6-4 victory.

The win marked another impressive victory for the 20-year-old Landaluce, who eliminated Russian 14th seed Karen Khachanov.

Korda, who had beaten world number one Carlos Alcaraz in the previous round, had a match point late in the second set, but

"She would have been 101 last week, and she passed away a few months ago. I wanted to give her the victory," Landaluce said.

Lehecka booked his place in the quarter-finals by ousting sixth seed Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-7(4/7), 6-2 in 2hr 25min.

"I just felt that in the third set, if I wanted to beat a guy like Taylor, I just needed to go for it and be aggressive,"

Landaluce survived to set up a quarter-final against Czech 21st seed Jiri Lehecka.

Landaluce, who had failed to register a single win at four level in 2026 before arriving in Miami, dedicated his latest success to his late grandmother.

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High-level meeting chaired by president stresses national consensus, institutional coordination amid regional volatility

NEWSDESK: President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting that stressed the importance of national consensus and institutional coordination in view of emerging regional challenges arising from the ongoing US-Israel war on Iran.



According to a handout by the President's Secretariat, the meeting was held at the Aiwan-i-Sadr in Islamabad. It was attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir. According to the handout, the broader regional situation also came under discussion, including its implications for Pakistan's security, economic outlook and food security. The meeting stressed the need for a coordinated national response, noting that policy decisions must prioritise stability while safeguarding the interests of the public. "The meeting underscored the importance of maintaining national consensus and strengthening institutional coordination in view of emerging regional challenges. It was agreed that economic management, energy planning, food security and broader security considerations must remain closely aligned to meet this challenging situation," the handout stated. It said the meeting reviewed the evolving economic and energy situation in the backdrop of oil supply constraints and hike in petroleum prices, alongside regional security developments. The meeting also reviewed the "impact of fluctuations in global oil and gas supplies and prices on Pakistan's economy, with particular focus on managing inflationary pressures and ensuring energy security," the handout said. "The ministers for finance and petroleum briefed the meeting on ongoing measures to stabilise petroleum prices, manage the effects of rising fuel costs on other sectors of the economy and enforce fiscal discipline through austerity measures to reduce expenditure pressures," it added. The meeting also emphasised the need for public awareness to reduce fuel consumption, encourage the use of public transportation and promote shared ride systems.

Unidentified attackers blow up government school in KP's Bannu

NEWS DESK: A government school in Ghora village in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu was destroyed on Thursday in a powerful explosion.

According to the details, unidentified militants planted explosives at the Government Primary School Noor Jan Baka Khel, located in Ghora village in the Baka Khel area of Bannu, and blew up the building. As a result of the explosion, the school structure was completely destroyed. Police sources have claimed that militants were all together staying inside the school and were busy preparing an improvised explosive device (IED) when the explosion occurred. However, this claim has not yet been officially confirmed.

Meanwhile, security sources have also reported the presence of a suspected suicide bomber in Bannu. In response, police and other law enforcement agencies have issued a high alert across the city. A police official stated that reports of a possible suicide attacker have been received, with Bannu Police Lines believed to be the potential target. Considering the sensitivity of the situation, immediate and effective security measures have been taken, he said.

The Bannu Police Lines Road has been closed to all traffic and security has been tightened across the city to prevent any untoward incident. A wave of concern has spread among local residents, while law enforcement agencies continue to closely monitor the situation.

Earlier this month, four bodies were recovered near the Tora Khula Bakakhel area of Bannu and one person was found injured.

DPM Dar says US-Iran 'indirect talks' taking place through messages being relayed by Pakistan

NEWS DESK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday said that US-Iran "indirect talks" were taking place through messages being relayed by Pakistan. "There has been unnecessary speculation in the media regarding peace talks to end ongoing conflict in the Middle East," he said in a post on the social media platform X. "In reality, US-Iran indirect talks are taking place through messages being relayed by Pakistan. In this context, the United States has shared 15 points, being deliberated upon by Iran," he said. "Brotherly countries of Turkey and Egypt, among others, are also extending their support to this initiative," he said. "Pakistan remains fully committed to promoting peace and continues to make every effort to ensure stability in the region and beyond," he said, adding that dialogue and diplomacy were the only way forward. He also tagged US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US President Donald Trump's Middle East Envoy Steve Witkoff in the post. Shortly after Trump took to his Truth Social platform to say Iranian negotiators were "beginning" for a deal despite what he described as



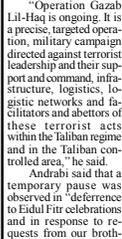
having been "militarily obliterated." "They better get serious soon, before it is too late, because once that happens, there is NO TURNING BACK, and it won't be pretty," he said. "The developments come a day after an acknowledgement of Pakistan's role in backchannel diplomacy between the warring sides, as Iranian officials confirmed that Pakistan had passed on a proposal from the US to Iran for ending the war. These include: a complete halt to "aggression and assassinations" by the enemy; the establishment of concrete mechanisms to ensure that the war is not reimposed on the Islamic Republic; guaranteed payment of war damages and reparations; the conclusion of the war across all fronts and for all resistance groups involved throughout the region; and, international recognition and guarantees regarding Iran's sovereign right to exercise authority over the Strait of Hormuz. Meanwhile, Reuters reported that despite its initial negative response, Iran was still reworking the US proposal and had not rejected it outright, citing an unnamed senior Iranian official. Subsequently, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, in a briefing on Wednesday, said that talks were still on, and described them as "productive."

Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq is ongoing. It is a precise, targeted operation, military campaign directed against terrorist leadership and their support and command, infrastructure, logistics, logistic networks and facilitators and abettors of these terrorist acts within the Taliban regime and in the Taliban controlled area," he said. Andrabadi said that a temporary pause was observed in reference to Eidul Fitr celebrations and in response to requests from our brotherly Islamic countries". "The pause has concluded [on] midnight between, I think, March 23 and 24. So, operations under Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq continue now until the objectives are achieved, and until the Afghan Taliban regime reviews its misplaced priority of supporting terror infrastructures and terror proxies over the welfare of their own Afghan people. So, our position is anchored in this broad policy statement," he said. On March 18, Information Minister

Attaulah Tarar had announced that Pakistan had decided on a "temporary pause" in Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq in view of Eidul Fitr and "at the request of brotherly Islamic countries". "The pause has concluded [on] midnight between, I think, March 23 and 24. So, operations under Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq continue now until the objectives are achieved, and until the Afghan Taliban regime reviews its misplaced priority of supporting terror infrastructures and terror proxies over the welfare of their own Afghan people. So, our position is anchored in this broad policy statement," he said. On March 18, Information Minister

Zabihullah Mujahid also said the decision was taken in response to requests from Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Qatar. Earlier this week, a group of clerics from Pakistan and Afghanistan had appealed to the authorities on both sides to extend the pause in hostilities to Eidul Aza. There has been a resurgence in terrorism in Pakistan since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in Kabul in 2021. Islamabad has repeatedly urged the Taliban administration to dismantle terrorist sanctuaries on Afghan soil, particularly those linked to the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan. Officials say those appeals have gone unheeded. Torkham crossing reopened for return of Afghan nationals. Meanwhile, the Torkham border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan was reopened on Thursday for the return of stranded and illegal Afghan nationals after remaining closed since February 26. Officials at the temporary transit centre established near Hamza Baba mausoleum in Landi Kotal said that as many as 50 Afghans, awaiting their deportation since the last week of February, were the first to undergo the clearance process after they received a green signal from Islamabad for resumption of the registration process. They said all 50 Afghan nationals were lodged at a mosque in Landi Kotal bazaar since Feb 26 and they were brought to the center on Thursday morning after permission for registration was granted by the interior ministry.

Temporary pause in Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq has concluded, FO says



ECP disqualifies PTI senator Murad Saeed following conviction in May 9 case

NEWS DESK: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has disqualified PTI's Murad Saeed from his Senate seat following his conviction in a May 9 case, it emerged on Thursday. The ECP's notification for Saeed's disqualification mentioned his sentencing by an anti-terrorism court (ATC) on March 7. Saeed was named among 47 proclaimed offenders sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in the May 9 case General Headquarters (GHQ) attack case by a Rawalpindi ATC. In a notification dated March 25 and available with Dawn, the ECP cited the court's March 7 order, stating: "Murad Saeed, notified as returned candidate on a general seat of Senate from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province [..] has become disqualified under Article 63(1)(h) of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan and is hereby notified that, his seat has become vacant." Article 63(1h) of

the Constitution stipulates that a person shall be disqualified from Parliament if they have been convicted for any offence involving moral turpitude or sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than two years. Saeed was elected as a senator in July 2025. Two years prior to that, the arrest of PTI founder Imran Khan on May 9, 2023, had triggered widespread riots across Pakistan, during which government buildings and military installations — including the army's GHQ in Rawalpindi — were stormed and vandalised. Following the unrest, authorities launched a crackdown against the PTI, registering dozens of terrorism cases against its leaders and supporters. Among those convicted in the GHQ case alongside Saeed were Shahbaz Gill, Omar Ayub, Zartaj Gul, Zaffar Bukhari, as well as former MNAs Kanwal Murtaza Iqbal, Shoukat Ali Bhatti, Usman Saeed Basra, Ijaz Khan Jazi, Malik Abid Hussain, Sheikh Rashid Shafique. Several of the PTI, registered cases against its leaders and supporters.



Other convicts included Rai Muhammad Murtaza Iqbal, Shoukat Ali Bhatti, Usman Saeed Basra, Ijaz Khan Jazi, Malik Abid Hussain, Zahid Abbas Choudhary, Faisal Mukhtar, and Muzamil Masood Bhatti.