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Editor: Asim Khan.

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Email address: dquettavoic@gmail.com
Website: www.quettavoic.com

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CM Sarfraz Bugti Inaugurates Newly Established Barshore District, Announces Major Development Plan

ASMATHANAFI, QASEEM SHAH NEWS DESK:

QUETTA BARSHORE: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, on Friday addressed a large public gathering in Barshore, marking its elevation to the status of a district and unveiling a series of development and governance measures for the newly formed administrative unit. Speaking to a charged crowd comprising provincial ministers, lawmakers, tribal elders, and a large number of residents, the chief minister said the creation of new districts aims to bring neglected and underdeveloped regions into the mainstream of

progress. "Expanding administrative units is not just a bureaucratic exercise—it is about ensuring that remote areas receive their rightful share of development and public services," he said. **Focus on Governance and Services** The chief minister announced that a competent deputy commissioner has already been appointed on merit to lead the district administration. He further pledged that all schools in the newly formed district would be made fully functional to improve access to education. In a major healthcare boost, he declared that the Barshore

hospital would be upgraded to the status of a District Headquarters (DHO) hospital. Additionally, basic health units in the area will be connected with major hospitals in big cities through modern technology, enabling better medical consultation and emergency response. **Law and Order Measures** Highlighting the importance of security, Bugti said that existing police stations would be strengthened and new ones established to ensure improved law and order in the region. During the gathering, he also handed over the official notification of the Barshore Municipal Committee to local leader and Parliamentary Secretary, Asfandyar

Khan Kakar, signaling the start of local governance structures in the district. **Condemnation of Yaroo Incident** The chief minister strongly condemned the recent tragic shooting in the Yaroo area of Pishin, where three members of a family were killed. He vowed that those responsible would be brought to justice. "We will not tolerate such acts of violence. The perpetrators will be taken to task and punished according to the law," he stated. **Political Tone and Public Message** Addressing criticism, Bugti said that while political differ-

ences exist, they should not divide communities. "We may have disagreements, but we remain brothers," he remarked, adding that he would not succumb to pressure or "blackmail" on social media. In a candid comment, he also referred to the long-standing presence of Afghan refugees, saying that despite decades of hospitality, the response has sometimes been disappointing. **Commitment to Equal Development** Reaffirming his government's vision, the chief minister pledged to ensure equal development across all districts of Balochistan.

Afghan repatriations suspended after border security official injured at Torkham

NEWS DESK:

Repatriation of undocumented Afghan nationals was abruptly suspended on Friday after a border security official was injured in a late evening cross-border attack from the Afghan side on Thursday. The Torkham border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan was reopened on Thursday for the return of stranded and illegal Afghan nationals, after having remained closed since February 26 with the launch of Operation Ghazab Il-Haq. However, security officials at Torkham said local paramilitary forces went on high alert due to the injury of an FC official at the Awal Khan post near the border. The incident took place around 9:30pm on Thursday evening.



Sources at Torkham and the Hamza Baba transit point said that although the entire staff of the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra), the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), National Logistics Corporation (NLC), police and other government departments was present at the transit point and Torkham, they were directed to immediately stop the registration of undocumented Afghans. They said that around 220 undocumented Afghans were registered on Thursday and later sent back to their country via the Torkham border. Torkham security officials said today that the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation (IFR) facility had been stopped at Torkham, and border forces were placed on high alert, due to the deteriorating security situation at the border. They said that IFR facilitation was not possible due to the "aggressive attitude and behaviour of the Afghan side." Earlier this month, it was decided that action under the Foreigners Act 1946 will be taken against illegal Afghan nationals for the implementation of the single visa regime. The decision was made at a meeting held to review law and order and security arrangements in the capital city.

Mohsin Naqvi discusses counter-terrorism and security cooperation with Chinese envoy in Islamabad

NEWS DESK:

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zedong at the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad on Friday, where the two discussed matters pertaining to counter-terrorism, security cooperation and the Police Exchange Programme. The interior ministry posted on social media that Naqvi arrived at the embassy in Islamabad's Diplomatic Enclave earlier today, where he was welcomed by the ambassador. It also shared a video of him being received by Jiang at the entrance. "Discussion on the overall situation of the region also took place in the meeting," the ministry said. The interior ministry said it was decided to hold a business conference to address security issues faced by Chinese investors in Pakistan, according to the ministry. It elaborated that in the first phase, meetings will be held with the Chinese business community present in Pakistan; the second phase will involve meetings with those who are interested in investing in Pakistan.

Innocent Lives Lost: Pishin Shooting Exposes Failure to Prevent Violence

ASMATHANAFI:

A heartbreaking incident unfolded in the Yaroo area of Pishin, where an accused allegedly gunned down three members of a family after his proposal to marry a young woman was refused by her family. According to police, the accused had expressed his desire to marry the girl, but the family declined the proposal. Enraged by the refusal, the accused reportedly stormed into the family's house on Thursday evening and opened fire indiscriminately. As a result, Muhammad Naseem, his daughter — the young woman at the center of the dispute — and his nephew Shahryar were killed on the spot. Another woman present in the house sustained serious injuries and was immediately shifted to the District Teaching Hospital Pishin, where she remains under treatment. Police officials said the attacker managed to flee the scene after carrying out the assault. Law enforcement personnel, including the SHO of Yaroo police station, reached the site soon after the incident and shifted the



File photo of the hospital

victims to the hospital, where doctors confirmed the deaths. **Family Protests, Alleges Negligence** Late at night, grieving relatives staged a protest by placing the bodies on the Yaroo national highway, blocking traffic and demanding the immediate arrest of the suspect. The protesters accused the police of failing to act despite being aware of tensions surrounding the marriage proposal. The bereaved family members vowed to continue their protest until justice is served. **Investigation Underway** Police have launched an investigation and are conducting raids to apprehend the suspect. Officials stated that all efforts are being made to ensure the accused is brought to justice at the earliest. The incident has once again highlighted how unresolved personal disputes, particularly those related to marriage, can escalate into tragic violence, underscoring the need for timely intervention and stronger community protection mechanisms.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

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



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

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

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

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



Improving the education sector has always been the hallmark of all successive governments in Balochistan. Every government has allocated substantial funds to improve the education sector and quality of education to enable students to compete on national and international level. Health and education, all successive governments declared their priorities. Former Chief Minister, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch led nationalist government allocated around 24 percent budget to bring the province at par with other parts of the country. Dr. Baloch's government also declared emergency and announced implementation of article 25-A of the constitution to enroll all out of school children in Balochistan. The number of out of school children in Balochistan is currently over 1 mil-

lion. However, independent sources put the number high as compared to the official data. There are conflicting figures about the exact number of out of school children in Balochistan. To be precise, positive strides were made during Dr. Malik Baloch led government to improve the education sector. For the first time in the history of Balochistan, 5000 teachers were appointed through national testing service (NTS), launching an effective campaign against growing cheating during examinations and introducing the education management and information system to ensure the presence of teachers in schools. Track record shows, teachers were always recruited on political basis with no merit and transpar-

ency in the recruitment process. This has ruined the entire education sector. Dr. Malik Baloch, the then adviser on education Sardar Raza Muhammad Bareech led rallies against cheating to create awareness among the people regarding the curse of cheating in educational institutions. After the removal of Sardar Raza Bareech as an adviser on education and transfers of senior bureaucrats Ghulam Ali Baloch and Saboor Kakar, no effective step was taken to improve the quality of education in Balochistan. Now again the portfolio of education has been awarded to Sardar Yar Muhammad Rind who belongs to Pakistan Tehrik e Insaaf (PTI). Mr. Rind has made announcements to bring what he claimed

revolutionary changes. However, improvement in education sector, enrolling out of school children in schools and improving quality of education needs a multi-pronged strategy. Senior bureaucrat Ghulam Ali Baloch who had already served as secretary education has again been posted. Mr. Baloch is taking a number of initiatives to improve schooling and trace out ghost schools and teaches across the province. However, political speed breakers appear to be major obstacles in his way. Despite being the poorest province of Pakistan, Balochistan spends over 70 billion rupees on primary, middle, secondary and higher education in the province. The province spends thousands of rupees per month on a student. Unfortu-

nately, neither the quality nor the education standard meet national standards what to speak about international standards. Poor quality of education is the result of poor capacity of teachers that needs to be improved to compete on national and international level. The Balochistan government has announced to enroll 70000 kids in government run schools in the province. However, ground realities negate claims of the provincial government. So far, the government has not been able to mobilize the civil society, media, political parties and tribesmen to make sure maximum enrollment of kids in educational institutions of the province. Coordinated efforts and combined strategy by all segments of society can ensure implementation of article 25-A of the Constitution.

Taftan border and Balochistan Govt's response

Quetta Voice Analysis

The sudden arrival of thousands of Zaireen at Pak-Iran border Taftan posed a serious challenge for government of Balochistan to make sure their screening and conduct medical tests in the aftermath of outbreak of COVID-19 in neighboring Iran. The federal government closed the border with Iran at Taftan on February 23rd to halt the spread of deadly corona virus. All of a sudden over 4,000 Zaireen, students, tourists and traders gathered at Taftan, Pakistan's bordering town with Iran. The poorly equipped health officials that too less in number tried to conduct screening and tests of those entered from Iran. However, many managed to flee from the administration and used their own means of communication to reach Quetta on way to their home provinces. The drivers were paid heavy fares by those fleeing the quarantine centers at Taftan. Perhaps, in the beginning, the Balochistan government and Islamabad did not realize the gravity of situation. A wind-blowing tent quarantine center was established to keep the



Zaireen and others to halt the spread of novel corona virus. However, the laboratory to diagnose the deadly disease and conduct tests of novel corona virus could not be arranged at the border soon after the closure of border. The National Institute of Health (NIH) dispatched machinery and laboratory to conduct the diagnosis 10 days after the closure of the border. Before installation of the laboratory, the health officials used to send tests of suspected patients to Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi for diagnosis. Though, it was imperative to install laboratory soon after

the closure of the border to make sure proper screening and diagnosis of the people. Apart from corona virus, the Balochistan government appeared to be concerned about the security of Zaireen as well. In the past, Zaireen were fre-

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

unfolding situation and all the time directing the concerned quarters to halt the spread of novel corona virus. However, loopholes in the system caused the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country. Although, the Chief Minister issued statements, precautionary measures through print, elec-

tronic and shares videos on social media to sensitize the people about the deadly virus. Nevertheless, the virus penetrated and made its way from Taftan to Sukkur prompting the Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah to say that Zaireen were not properly screened at Pak-Iran border

Taftan. Opposition political parties in Balochistan in general and the Balochistan National Party ideological, Sanaulah Baloch have strongly criticized the Jam Kamal led government for what they call its failure and incompetency to contain the corona virus. Political parties, members of civil society and legal fraternity had also objected over the establishment of quarantine center at Mian Ghundi area of Quetta. They feared spread of deadly virus after establishment of center near the city rather they demanded of the government to shift the Zaireen to their home provinces directly from Taftan. To be precise, the virus has already penetrated and now it is time for all political parties from left to right and religious to nationalists to join their hands to contain its spread. The government needs to take all stakeholders including political parties, media, civil society and lawyers to evolve a combined strategy in the province to tackle the situation. It is not alone the job of government rather every individual to play his/her role to contain the virus before it is too late.

NASA rover detects some of the oldest evidence of water flowing on Mars

NEWS DESK:Using ground-penetrating radar, NASA's Perseverance rover has detected underground remains of an ancient river delta on Mars in some of the oldest evidence yet obtained showing how water once flowed on the surface of Earth's planetary neighbour.

Researchers said the six-wheeled rover revealed geological features up to 115 feet (35 meters) underground while traversing 23.8 miles (6.1 km) of terrain inside Jezero Crater, an area in the Martian northern hemisphere believed to have been flooded with water and home to an ancient lake basin long ago.

Perseverance identified layered sediments and eroded surfaces indicative of a delta environment, a large-scale fan-shaped deposit of sediment formed at the location where a river enters a larger body of water like a lake.

They estimated that the now-buried delta dates to about 3.7 to 4.2 billion years ago. Mars, like Earth,



formed roughly 4.5bn years ago, meaning this delta existed relatively early in its history. The researchers said this delta predated a similar nearby surface feature called the Western Delta that dates to about 3.5 to 3.7 billion years ago.

The rover's RIMFAX instrument sends radar pulses downward and records pulses bouncing back off underground features, allowing a three-dimensional mapping of the subsurface. The new findings were based on RIMFAX's deepest data collected to date,

obtained from September 2023 to February 2024 over a span of 250 Martian days. Because water is considered crucial to the possibility of past life on Mars, the mounting evidence of its wet past is of particular interest. Mars, now cold and desolate,

long ago possessed a thicker atmosphere and warmer climate, allowing for liquid water on its surface. "From the features mapped by RIMFAX, we believe that Jezero Crater hosted an ancient water-rich environment, capable of biosignature preservation that existed prior to the formation of Jezero's Western Delta," said UCLA planetary scientist Emily Cardarelli, a member of the Perseverance science team and lead author of the research published on Wednesday in the journal Science Advances.

A biosignature refers to chemical or physical evidence indicating past or present life.

On Earth, river deltas are places that concentrate sediments and create "niches favorable to microbial life. Scientists last year announced that a sample of rock obtained by Perseverance in Jezero Crater contained a potential biosignature suggestive of ancient microbial life, though the minerals in the sample also can form through nonbiological processes.

The rock dated to roughly 3.2 to 3.8bn years ago. Perseverance since 2021 has been exploring Jezero Crater. Scientists believe river channels spilled over the crater wall and created a lake.

"It's very exciting that RIMFAX was able to provide such a detailed view of these deposits, and thus help solve the puzzle of their origin," UCLA planetary scientist and study co-author David Paige, also a member

of the Perseverance rover science team, said of the new findings.

"This further cements the notion that ground-penetrating radar is indeed an extremely valuable new tool for studying planetary geology."

Chinese scientists last year said ground-penetrating radar employed by China's Zhurong rover detected subsurface evidence of what look like sandy beaches from the shoreline of an ocean that may have existed on the northern plains of Mars.

"Over time, we've seen more and more evidence for liquid water on the Martian surface at various rover landing sites, areas we've traversed to, as well as from orbital imagery.

We have seen channels where water may have flowed, crater lakes where water once ponded, and deltaic sediments deposited as rock outcrops and now as buried remnants, with this (research) "paper," Cardarelli said.

Ukraine, Saudi Arabia sign air defence deal: senior officials

NEWS DESK:Ukraine and Saudi Arabia have signed an air defence agreement under President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to the kingdom, which has been under Iranian drone attacks, two senior officials told AFP on Friday.

Kyiv has sought to leverage its expertise in downing Russian drones to help Gulf nations, which are being attacked with the same kind of Iranian-designed Shahed drones that Russia fires on Ukraine.

"The point of the agreement is that Ukraine will support them in developing all the necessary components of air defence, which they currently lack," one official said of the document which, according to Iranian drone attacks, was signed on Thursday.

Both spoke to AFP on the condition of anonymity. Kyiv has been using a mix of cheap drone interceptors, electronic jamming tools and anti-aircraft guns to down Russian drones fired at its sites on a nightly basis for four years.

It touts its anti-drone defences as the best in the world.

Ukraine has proposed swapping its interceptors for vastly more expensive air-defence missiles that both countries are using to fend off Iranian drones.

Ukraine says it needs more of them to fend off Russian missile attacks. The deal signed between Ukraine and Saudi Arabia "is not only about interceptors as such, but about building a system, integrating it with other air defence components, Ukrainian experience in its use, AI, and all the other elements of data analysis needed to counter

Shaheds and other drones," one of the officials said. Zelenskyy confirmed on social media that both countries had "reached an important arrangement" on defence cooperation and that he had met Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during his visit.

"We are ready to share our expertise and systems with Saudi Arabia," Zelenskyy said, adding: "Saudi Arabia also has capabilities that are of interest to Ukraine, and this cooperation can be mutually beneficial." He did not disclose what exactly had been agreed as part of the deal.

Zelenskyy also met with Ukrainian anti-drone experts who have been deployed to the country since the US and Israel launched strikes on Iran that spurred retaliatory drone and missile attacks from Tehran.

Even in such a short time, Ukrainian experts were able to share extensive expertise," Zelenskyy said.

Ukraine's expertise is unique, and recognised as such, and that is why everyone is so interested in our technologies and experience."



Israeli ex-premier says Netanyahu unable to secure victories as government faces troop shortages

NEWS DESK:Former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said Thursday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "does not know how to win in any arena," criticising the government's handling of military operations in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran, according to Israeli media.

"The current government's political leadership is obstructing the army's ability to achieve victory across multiple fronts," Bennett said in an interview with Channel 12, accusing leaders of prioritising political considerations over security needs.

He said the military is facing a shortage of about 20,000 troops, arguing that drafting ultra-Orthodox Jews could help fill the gap but that "the government is avoiding the move for political reasons."

"The current leadership in Israel does not know how to win in any arena," Bennett added.

Separately, the Haaretz daily on Thursday cited Israeli military

spokesperson Effie Defrin as saying the army faces a shortfall of about 15,000 soldiers due to expanded operations on multiple fronts and the absence of legislation mandating ultra-Orthodox enlistment. Defrin said the military needs to reinforce forces in Lebanon, Gaza, the West Bank and Syria, adding that Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir is required to present his assessment of the army's readiness and stressing the need to pass a law mandating conscription of ultra-Orthodox Jews.

The Yedioth Achronoth newspaper also reported Thursday that Zamir warned that the army is heading toward internal strain amid growing operational burdens and the lack of legislation regulating recruitment and military service.

The proposed law aims to impose gradual enlistment quotas on ultra-Orthodox communities in the north and east, launching a limited ground incursion in the following day.

In Gaza, Israeli forces continue daily violations of the ceasefire in place since October 10, 2025, killing 689 Palestinians and wounding 1,860 others, according to Health Ministry data.

Israel expanded its military operations in Lebanon on March 2 with airstrikes on Beirut's southern suburbs and areas in the south and east, launching a limited ground incursion in the following day.

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The remarks come as the US and Israel have continued attacks

Oil drops as Trump pauses Iran strikes, but stock traders nervous

NEWS DESK:US President Donald Trump warned last Saturday that he would obliterate the Islamic Republic's energy sites if it did not unblock the crucial waterway within 48 hours, but pushed that back five days, citing positive peace talks, which Tehran denied had taken place.

But after days of strikes by both sides and mixed reports of negotiations, including the trading of multi-point demands, he announced Thursday that he would again delay the attacks to April 6 after a request from Tehran. "Talks are ongoing and, despite erroneous statements to the contrary by the Fake News Media and others, they are going very well," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform.

"As per the Iranian Government request, I am pausing the period of Energy Plant destruction by 10 Days to Monday, April 6, 2026, at 8pm Eastern Time," he posted.

Trump had earlier denied he was desperate for a deal to end the war, despite the Islamic Republic's cool response to an American peace plan and fears the spike in oil prices would fan inflation.

Trump later told a cabinet meeting Iran had allowed 10 oil tankers passage through the

Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of world oil and gas passes, to show it was serious about talks.

The Iranian news agency Tasnim said the country's response to Washington's 15-point plan to end the war "was officially sent last night through intermediaries, and Iran is awaiting the other side's response". The report, citing an unnamed official, said officials had called for an end to US-Israeli attacks on Iran and Tehran-backed groups elsewhere in the region. It also called for war reparations and for Iran's "sovereignty" over the Strait of Hormuz to be respected.

However, Trump's announcement came as the Wall Street Journal

cited Department of Defense officials as saying the Pentagon was considering sending as many as 10,000 extra ground troops to the Middle East.

Oil prices fell more than 1% on Friday, though that only partially pared the previous day's surge amid growing anxiety that the conflict will last far longer than first thought.

Brent is up almost 50% since the war began on February 28, while West Texas Intermediate has risen around 40%. Equities struggled following hefty losses in Wall Street.

Tokyo and Seoul, which had been the standout performers in the first two months of the year, were among the biggest losers, while

Hong Kong, Sydney, Wellington, Taipei Jakarta and Manila were also sharply lower. Shanghai and Singapore fluctuated.

Investors are also increasingly sceptical about the messaging from the White House, with Trump often flipping between threats and talk of peace.

"A ten-day extension sounds like in market terms, it feels more like a trader rolling a losing position forward, hoping the next candle delivers what the last one refused to give," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes referring to an investors analysis tool.

"Time has been purchased, not clarity. And the market knows the difference."

Torrential rain lashes large parts of Abu Dhabi, Dubai in UAE

NEWS DESK:Heavy rainfall has lashed large parts of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), from Dubai to Abu Dhabi, as well as northern emirates, GulfNews reported on Friday. As per the UAE's National Centre of Meteorology (NCM), "unstable conditions driven by a low-pressure system have brought repeated waves of rain, strong winds, and thunderstorms across the country."

GulfNews said that flashes of lightning, booming thunder, and heavy downpours were reported by residents in major cities across the Gulf state, from Thursday night into Friday early morning.

The unstable weather also brought "thunderstorms, dust-raising winds, and reduced visibility". Heavy rain also flooded the streets in some locations, according to the report. In Sharjah, heavy rain caused wadis to flow, "temporarily disrupting traffic on roads".



Crisis and Disaster Management Authority (NCMA) has advised the public to avoid unnecessary outdoor activity and "stay away from billboards, unstable trees and loose objects during periods of strong winds". According to NCM, the rain is to continue into Friday with "convective clouds moving across Al Dhafra and the northern emirates".

As per the report, the National Emergency

Dubai and UAE Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum shared a visual of a lightning strike over the Burj Al Arab. Citing data from the NCM, GulfNews added that the highest amount of rain was recorded in the northern emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, where precipitation reached 77.5 millimetres — the wettest in the country during this weather event.

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2.132m illegal Afghan nationals repatriated from Pakistan so far

LAHORE (INP): Around 2.132 million illegal Afghan nationals have been repatriated from Pakistan so far, including over 150,000 from Punjab, under the ongoing campaign against illegal foreign residents.

A spokesperson for the Punjab Home Department said on Thursday that the Foreign National Security Cell of the department was continuing effective operations across the province in line with the national policy, under which illegally residing Afghan nationals were being sent back to their homeland.

During the closure of the Turkham border, 936 illegal Afghan residents were repatriated. The spokesperson reiterated that, according to the current policy of Pakistan's clear policy, the stay of Afghan nationals without valid visas is illegal.

He said that during the crackdown, authorities inspected 2,667 residential areas and 1,177 tents across Punjab. Over the past one month, 468 FIRs were registered and 591 illegal Afghan nationals were sent to jail.

At present, 36 holding centres are operational in Punjab, where the government's effective strategy and proactive administrative measures, adding that public cooperation was essential for the success of the national repatriation mission.



LAHORE: Honorable Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani inaugurated the 11th Pakistan Footwear, Material & Machinery Show 2026 on 27th March, 2026 at Expo Centre.

Gold prices decline in Pakistan

KARACHI (INP): Gold prices in Pakistan declined on Thursday in line with trends in the global bullion market, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

The price of 24-karat gold per tola fell by Rs11,000, closing at Rs468,262 compared to Rs479,262 on the previous trading day.

Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold decreased by Rs9,430 to Rs401,459 from Rs410,889. The price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold also dropped by Rs8,644 to Rs368,017 from Rs376,661.

Silver prices followed the same trend, with per tola rates declining by Rs340 to Rs7,484, while the price of 10 grams of silver fell by Rs291 to Rs6,416.

In the international market, gold prices dropped by \$110 to \$4,455 from \$4,565, while silver prices declined by \$3.40 to \$70.00, the association reported.

No negligence in public services to be tolerated: DC Abbottabad

ABBOTTABAD (INP): Deputy Commissioner of Abbottabad, Sarmad Saleem Akram chaired a meeting regarding district service delivery.

The meeting conducted a detailed review of the performance of Tehsil Municipal Administrations and the Water and Sanitation Services Company (WASA).

Service delivery indicators related to cleanliness, drainage, supply of clean drinking water, and other basic citizen facilities were discussed in detail.

Addressing the participants, Deputy Commissioner, Sarmad Saleem Akram directed all relevant institutions to further improve their performance to address the issues faced by citizens. He issued clear instructions that any negligence in the provision of services would not be tolerated.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need for immediate and effective measures to enhance the quality of service delivery.

He called for timely identification of problems, ensuring their resolution, and the regular submission of progress reports.

The meeting also reviewed in detail the facilities being provided to passengers at the General Bus Stand, as well as the determination of fares. The Deputy Commissioner instructed that inter-provincial fares be fixed in accordance with government policy and fuel prices, and that all basic facilities be ensured for passengers in compliance with the law.

The meeting was attended by TMO Abbottabad, TMO Lower Tanawal, TMO Lora, TMO Havelian, Deputy Manager WASA, and other relevant officers.

Govt to launch Islamabad School Sports Year next month

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark move to mainstream sports within the education system, the federal government has decided to make sports activities mandatory across all public and private schools, madaris, and non-formal education institutions in Islamabad, while announcing the launch of the "Islamabad School Sports Year" from April.

The decision was taken during a high-level meeting chaired by Federal Secretary Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Mohyuddin Wani, with participation from key education authorities and national sports federations. The initiative aims to integrate physical activity with academic life and promote active youth population.

It was agreed that the first week of April will mark the simultaneous commencement of the new academic year and the Islamabad School Sports Year, setting the tone for structured, year-round sports engagement in educational institutions.

Under the flagship program, "Khelega Islamabad - Taleem ke Saath, Maidan Mein Saath," the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), in collaboration with various sports federations, will host an Islamabad Sports Orientation Gala. The event will focus on primary and middle school students, offering interactive sessions, live demonstrations, and hands-on participation across multiple sports.

Students will be granted free access to PSB sports facilities and will benefit from structured coaching programs conducted by certified trainers. A comprehensive talent identification mechanism will also be introduced to spot and nurture promising athletes at an early age.

The program features a wide range of sports, including cricket, hockey, football, tennis, padel, athletics, cycling, rock climbing, rugby, chess, and martial arts such as judo and taekwondo. It also promotes gender equality and extending outreach to underserved communities across the federal capital.

The initiative has received endorsement from key education bodies, including the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education and the Inter Board Committee of Chairmen, who termed it a significant step toward aligning physical development and youth engagement.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing a high-level consultative session at the Finance Division on petroleum prices and targeted subsidy reforms.

High-level meeting reviews economy, energy & regional situation

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday chaired a high-level consultative meeting at Aitwan-e-Sadr to review the evolving economic and energy situation in the backdrop of oil supply constraints and rising global oil prices, alongside regional security developments.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Federal Minister for Finance Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Energy and Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema and Chief of Defence Forces also attended the meeting, according to a President House press release.

Other participants included Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Chairman PPP and ex-Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Minister for Interior Senator Syed Mohsin Raza Naeek, Federal Minister for Finance Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Energy and Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema and Secretary Finance.

The meeting 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 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. The broader regional situation also came under discussion, including its implications for Pakistan's security, economic outlook and food security.

The meeting emphasised 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.

Pakistan currently has adequate stocks of petrol, diesel

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan currently has adequate stocks of petrol and diesel to meet domestic demand for April and beyond, officials said on Thursday.

The assessment was shared during a meeting chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar to review the country's petroleum reserves.

In addition to evaluating fuel stocks, the meeting also reviewed the government's preparedness in light of the evolving situation in the Middle East.

The deputy prime minister expressed satisfaction over the existing supply position and directed relevant ministries and authorities to maintain close coordination, ensure uninterrupted availability, and take all necessary measures to safeguard supplies in the coming weeks.

The meeting was attended by the federal ministers for petroleum and economic affairs, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Bajwa, senior federal secretaries, as well as chief secretaries and officials from the provinces.

Earlier reports indicated that Pakistan had devised a plan to cushion the impact of rising global oil prices. The government has released an initial Rs27 billion to help keep petrol prices stable for consumers.

On the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has been provided the first tranche of Rs27 billion from the Prime Minister's Austerity Fund.

Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhary reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to strengthening ties with Japan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhary on Thursday met with senior officials from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Masakatsu Morotani, Director of the Southwest Asia Division and Ayako Shimizu, Senior Deputy Director.

Welcoming the delegation, Dr. Tariq Fazal highlighted the longstanding and cordial relations between Pakistan and Japan.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to working closely with the Japanese government to further expand bilateral ties. The Japanese officials appreciated the Minister's remarks, emphasizing that both countries would continue to enhance cooperation across all sectors and work jointly for mutual progress.

During discussions on the regional situation, the minister said that Pakistan fully supports all diplomatic efforts and negotiations aimed at ending the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

He added that the Prime Minister of Pakistan, in a statement on X, had expressed the country's readiness to host meaningful and result-oriented talks with the consent of the United States and Iran to seek a comprehensive solution.



RAWALPINDI: Federal Parliamentary Secretary Information & Broadcasting Barrister Danyal Chaudhary addressing the inauguration ceremony of the Gas pipeline.

Pakistan to roll out legal reforms for construction, housing sector growth

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed relevant authorities to formulate and implement a practical strategy to promote investment in the construction and housing sector.

He instructed that all stakeholders—both public and private—including provincial governments, as well as Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, be involved in the process.

Chairing a meeting to review measures for promoting investment in the housing sector, expanding low-cost housing and increasing employment opportunities, the prime minister said homeownership is a fundamental right of every citizen.

He added that providing loans on easy terms for housing remains a top government priority.

"There is vast potential for investment in the country's housing sector. Obstacles in the way of investment should be removed to fully utilize this potential," the prime minister assured.

He also assured that the investments of foreign investors and overseas Pakistanis in the sector would be fully protected.

The prime minister pointed out that promoting investment in the construction sector will not only drive economic growth but also create millions of employment opportunities.

During the meeting, participants were briefed on proposals presented by the task force and relevant working groups on the construction and housing sector, along with updates on the implementation of previously approved measures. Officials informed the meeting that special initiatives are being introduced to facilitate investment by foreign investors and overseas Pakistanis. These measures are expected to boost residential construction, stimulate economic activity, and create employment opportunities.

It was further informed in the meeting that work on legal reforms in the sector was progressing rapidly, and legislation was in its final stages. "A system for low-cost loans for affordable housing projects has been implemented; in the next phase, banks will be assigned targets in this regard."

The meeting was told that work on developing a complete mortgage finance ecosystem in the country was progressing swiftly. "A comprehensive developer-led financing system for construction, stimulate economic activity, and being developed."

Minority Rights Fully Protected in Pakistan, Says Governor Mandokhail

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jafar Khan Mandokhail has stated that minorities in Pakistan enjoy extensive rights, religious freedom, and social respect, unmatched by many countries in the region.

He emphasized that the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 guarantees equal citizenship to all minorities, while reserved seats in national and provincial assemblies ensure their political representation, freedom of expression, and participation in legislation.

The Governor expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of the Pakistan Minority Wing led by Tariq Qul. The delegation included minority leaders such as Amir Masih, Zakaria Patrick, Senat Masih, Miraj Masih, and Yohanna Khokhtai. During the meeting, discussions were held on minority rights,



parliamentary representation, protection of fundamental freedoms, and the overall situation in the province and country.

Governor Mandokhail highlighted that the traditions and cultural values of Pashtun and Baloch societies promote inclusivity, ensuring minorities remain part of social life even at the district level.

He said that unity, coexistence, and har-

mony between majority and minority communities are key to national progress and stability.

He also paid tribute to late minority leader Senat Masih, calling him a people-friendly representative whose absence is still felt.

The Governor assured that the Pakistan Muslim League-N will continue efforts to safeguard the legitimate rights of the

Christian community and other minorities. He stressed the importance of promoting tolerance, interfaith harmony,

respect for differing opinions, and brotherhood to ensure lasting peace in the province.

He also acknowledged the valuable contributions of the Christian community, particularly in the education and health sectors, and expressed

hope that they will continue playing a positive role in the province's economic development and political stability.

Keywords: Jafar Khan Mandokhail minorities rights, Pakistan constitution minority rights,

PMLN minority wing meeting, religious freedom Pakistan, Balochistan minority representation, interfaith harmony Pakistan

Khuzdar By-Election Preparations Reviewed for NA-256 Constituency

KHUZDAR: Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq Sasoli chaired an in-depth review of preparations for the upcoming by-election in NA-256 Khuzdar. The meeting was attended by key officials, including Returning Officer Akbar Ali

and other officials. He instructed the District Health Officer Umar Abbas Babar and other administrative and departmental heads to ensure foolproof arrangements for the elections.

of government employees until the completion of the and ensure full for election duties.

The DC warned that any absenteeism or negligence would result in strict legal action against both the employee and the con-



Mazarzai, SSP Khuzdar, Shehzada Umar Abbas Babar and other administrative and departmental heads.

During the briefing, the Returning Officer shared detailed statistics:

Total registered voters: 319,217 Male voters: 174,336 Female voters: 144,881 Polling sta-

tioned department head. He stressed that no disruption will be tolerated, ensuring the election process remains transparent and efficient.

Keywords: NA-256 Khuzdar election, Abdul Razzaq Sasoli, Akbar Ali Mazarzai, election preparations Pakistan, polling stations Khuzdar, election security arrangements

He further emphasized strict security measures at all polling stations to ensure a smooth voting process. All department heads were ordered to cancel leave requests

in the area, partially damaging several houses and a mosque, while

Stakeholders Validation Workshop on Drought Preparedness Held in Quetta

QUETTA: An important provincial-level stakeholders validation workshop was held today at the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) office in Quetta.

The workshop focused on "Validation of Context Analysis for Anticipatory Action Planning to Address Drought," bringing together representatives from various government and non-government organizations.

Collaborative Effort for Drought Resilience. The workshop was organized with the support of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World

Food Programme (WFP), and SCAP Balochistan. Its primary objective was to assess drought risks in Nushki district and develop effective strategies to mitigate their impact.

The session began with participant registration and a recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by a formal welcome note for attendees.

Introduction to Resilience Building Initiatives During the opening session, participants were introduced to the Resilience Building Project (IDP). Representatives from Provincial Dis-

aster Management Authority highlighted the organization's role and responsibilities in disaster preparedness and response across the province.

Expert Insights on Drought Challenges CEO of SCAP Balochistan, Mr. Hassan, addressed the participants and shared key details about Anticipatory Action Planning.

Key components of Anticipatory Action (AA) were discussed during the workshop, including: Early warning systems, Advance planning mechanisms, Availability of financial resources Participants also en-

gaged in group work sessions, where they discussed institutional preparedness, Criteria for selecting vulnerable populations, Future action plans, Commitment to Joint Action. The workshop concluded with a strong commitment from all stakeholders to continue collaborative efforts in addressing drought challenges in Balochistan.

Participants reaffirmed the importance of coordinated strategies to enhance resilience and protect vulnerable communities from the long-term impacts of climate change.

Dr. Muhammad Adil delivered a detailed presentation on climatic risks, natural disasters, and their socio-economic impacts in Nushki. He noted that drought significantly affects: Food security, Livelihoods, Environmental sustainability, Focus on Anticipatory Action Planning.

He emphasized: Timely and anticipatory actions are essential to tackle challenges like drought, and this is only possible through strong institutional collaboration and community engagement. In the technical session, strict action was taken. He warned that the anti-encroachment campaign will be further intensified across Mastung, urging all encroachers to voluntarily remove illegal structures or face strict legal action, including confiscation of goods.

No one is above the law," he emphasized, reiterating the administration's commitment to restoring order and ensuring public convenience.

Keywords: Mastung encroachment operation, Behram Saleem Baloch, Muhammad Jan Jamalidini, anti-encroachment crackdown, restoration of goods, structures removal Mastung, traffic relief measures

affected immediately wherever needed to minimize hardships. Following his directives, relief goods across affected areas. During a meeting with Deputy Director PDMA Malik Rehan Dashti and other officials, the Deputy Commissioner instructed all departments, including the district administration and PDMA teams, to remain fully active during ongoing rains and maintain constant contact with the pub-

household belongings were swept away, resulting in financial losses for many families. Residents appreciated the swift response of the district administration and thanked Yasir Iqbal Dashti, calling the move a people-friendly initiative. Keywords: Kech flood relief, Yasir Iqbal Dashti, PDMA Kech, Ghafoor Bazaar flood, Turbat rain damage, emergency response Balochistan

Relief Operations Accelerated in Kech After Flood Situation

TURBAT: Deputy Commissioner Kech Yasir Iqbal Dashti has



taken immediate notice of the recent flood situation and directed authorities to speed up relief operations across affected areas.

During a meeting with Deputy Director PDMA Malik Rehan Dashti and other officials, the Deputy Commissioner instructed all departments, including the district administration and PDMA teams, to remain fully active during ongoing rains and maintain constant contact with the pub-

lic. He emphasized that relief must reach

the area, partially damaging several houses and a mosque, while

Keywords: Kech flood relief, Yasir Iqbal Dashti, PDMA Kech, Ghafoor Bazaar flood, Turbat rain damage, emergency response Balochistan

Crackdown on Encroachments Launched in Mastung, Illegal Structures Removed

MASTUNG: Acting on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Behram Saleem Baloch, Assistant Commissioner Muhammad Jan Jamalidini led a major operation against illegal encroachments in the city. The operation, carried out with heavy police presence and municipal staff, targeted Major Chowk and the national high-

way, where unauthorized structures and roadside encroachments had been causing traffic congestion and public inconvenience. During the crackdown, illegal and encroachments were demolished. Debris was taken into custody. Roadside stalls, carts, and vendors were removed. Fuel selling

units placed outside petrol pumps were issued two-day removal notices. Assistant Commissioner Muhammad Jan Jamalidini stated that encroachments had been established for a long time, severely affecting traffic flow and creating hardships for residents.

He added that prior warnings had been issued, but due to non-

compliance, strict action was taken. He warned that the anti-encroachment campaign will be further intensified across Mastung, urging all encroachers to voluntarily remove illegal structures or face strict legal action, including confiscation of goods.

No one is above the law," he emphasized, reiterating the administration's commitment to restoring order and ensuring public convenience.

Keywords: Mastung encroachment operation, Behram Saleem Baloch, Muhammad Jan Jamalidini, anti-encroachment crackdown, restoration of goods, structures removal Mastung, traffic relief measures

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Loralai Launches Cleanliness Drive After Rain to Restore Drainage

LORALAI: Following recent rains, municipal authorities in Loralai have launched an extensive cleanliness and drainage restoration campaign to address post-rain challenges. The operation is being carried out on the directives of Commissioner Wali Muhammad Barech and under the supervi-

neighborhoods. Restoring proper drainage flow Heavy machinery, including tractor trolleys, is being used to ensure efficient waste removal. According to details, cleaning work has been completed in areas including Hashim Colony, Dr. Saleh Colony, Jalal Afghan Ward, and other parts under the Saleem Dad

Kakri Masjid Road). Chief Officer Muhibullah Khan Baloch stated that providing a clean and healthy environment is the top priority of the municipal committee, and the campaign will continue across the city. He also urged citizens to cooperate with sanitation teams by disposing of waste at des-



Wali complaint zone. Similarly, operations were carried out in Khaltia (Harif Gali, Chhoti Pahari, Rashid Laboratory, and Excise Office surroundings) and Bazar Zone (Darul Uloom Road, Sadar Bazaar, Bagi Bazaar, and

ignated places to help maintain cleanliness. Keywords: Loralai cleanliness drive, Wali Muhammad Barech, Muhibullah Khan Baloch, drainage restoration Loralai, municipal committee action, post rain cleanup Balochistan

Keywords: Loralai cleanliness drive, Wali Muhammad Barech, Muhibullah Khan Baloch, drainage restoration Loralai, municipal committee action, post rain cleanup Balochistan

Balochistan Strengthens Women Empowerment Initiatives, Says Women Development Secretary

QUETTA: Provincial Secretary for Women Development, Saira Atta, announced that under the special directives of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, the Government of Balochistan is actively working to eliminate gender discrimination and create a safe, respectful environment for women across the province.

Speaking at an event in connection with International Women's Day, she emphasized that women in Balochistan are being provided opportunities in education, employment, and skill development to ensure their empowerment and inclusion in society.

Focus on Gender Equality and Safe Workplaces Saira Atta highlighted that women's rights must move beyond speeches and translate into practical actions. She noted that women are already excelling in various sectors and deserve equal opportunities to thrive. She referred to the Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2016) in Balochistan, which aims



to ensure safe working environments for both women and men. The law requires institutions to: Establish inquiry committees, Implement clear anti-harassment policies, Ensure transparent investigation processes, Provide awareness to employees, Challenges Remain Despite Progress. Despite ongoing initiatives, she ac-

knowledge that safe sustainable development in Balochistan depends on increased investment in education. Improved health care facilities, Expanded employment opportunities for women, Inclusion of women in decision-making processes, Role of NGOs and Awareness Campaigns. Representatives from various organizations, including Aurat Foundation, UN

Women, and Balochistan Rural Support Program, shared their efforts in organizing awareness campaigns across districts in 2026.

These initiatives aim to educate youth about "Gender equality," Women's rights, "Prevention of gender-based violence," Police Returns Supporting Women, "Role of NGOs and Awareness Campaigns." Representatives from various organizations, including Aurat Foundation, UN

Women, and Balochistan Rural Support Program, shared their efforts in organizing awareness campaigns across districts in 2026.

Surprise Inspections of Fuel Stations in Loralai to Curb Adulteration

LORALAI: On the directives of Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Muhammad Haseeb Shuja, Assistant Commissioner Nadeem Akram conducted surprise inspections of various fuel stations, including BYCO and PSO petrol pumps in the city.

During the inspections, authorities found selling adulterated fuel will be cancelled immediately. The move is part of the district administration's efforts to ensure quality fuel supply and protect consumer rights.

Keywords: Loralai fuel inspection, Muhammad Haseeb Shuja, Nadeem Akram AC, petrol adulteration Pakistan, PSO BYCO inspection, fuel quality checks Balochistan

Keywords: Loralai fuel inspection, Muhammad Haseeb Shuja, Nadeem Akram AC, petrol adulteration Pakistan, PSO BYCO inspection, fuel quality checks Balochistan

Global economy struggles to deal with trade disruptions

NEWS DESK: The escalating conflict in the Middle East has knocked the global economy off a stronger growth path, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) warned on Thursday, as a near-halt in energy shipments through the Strait of Hormuz threatens to push inflation sharply higher.

The Paris-based organisation said the global economy had been on course for stronger-than-expected growth before the war in Iran erupted, but that prospect has now all but disappeared.

Global GDP growth is now projected to be 3.3 per cent in 2026, down from 3.5 per cent last year to 2.9pc in 2025 before edging up to 3.0pc in 2027, as an energy price surge and the unpredictable nature of the conflict offset tailwinds from strong technology-related investment, lower effective tariff rates and momentum carried over from 2025.

With energy prices now soaring, G20 inflation is projected to be 1.2 percentage points higher than previously expected in 2026, before easing to 2.7pc in 2027.

In an adverse scenario where energy prices peak higher and stay elevated longer, global growth would be 0.5 per cent points lower by the second year of the shock and inflation would be 0.9pc points higher, the OECD said.

US outlook
The war is compounding an already complex picture on trade.

US bilateral tariff rates have declined following the US Supreme Court ruling against tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, with particularly large reductions for several emerging market economies including Brazil, China and India. Nonetheless, the overall US effective tariff rate remains well above that prevailing prior to 2025.

In China, growth is projected to ease to 4.4pc in 2026 and 4.3pc in 2027, both in line with the OECD's previous



forecasts. Euro area GDP growth is anticipated to slip to 0.8pc in 2026, as higher energy prices weigh on activity, before increasing to 1.2pc in 2027 helped by stronger defence spending. That marked a sizeable downgrade from December when the OECD had forecast 1.2pc growth in 2026 and 1.4pc in 2027.

In Japan, growth is projected at 0.9pc in both 2026 and 2027 — both unchanged, as the rising cost of energy imports offsets robust business investment.

WTO chief called on countries on Thursday to overhaul global trade rules, telling them the old world order had gone for good, following a year of turmoil sparked by US tariffs and wider geopolitical tensions.

World Trade Organisation - including the paralysis of its dispute-settlement mechanism - at the start of a four-day meeting of the body in Cameroon.

Trade Organisation - including the paralysis of its dispute-settlement mechanism - at the start of a four-day meeting of the body in Cameroon.

Trump says Washington is pursuing diplomacy with Iran while threatening even more intense military action, American allies are hoping that the United States will set out its position clearly.

The start of the two-day meeting was marked by the absence of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

In contrast to usual protocol, and in a sign of the distance between the United States and its allies, there is to be no joint communication at the end of the meeting.

Meanwhile, Asian countries including Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka are lining up to buy Russian oil as the Iran war blocks supplies, raising the possibility that demand may exceed supply, several sources including Russia said.

Gold extends losses for second day in global, domestic markets

NEWS DESK: Gold prices declined for a second consecutive day in both international and domestic markets on Friday.

In the international market, gold fell by \$10 per ounce to \$4,445, leading to a further drop of Rs1,000 in the local market.

Following the decline, the price of gold per tola fell to Rs467,262, while the price per 10 grams decreased by Rs858 to Rs400,601. In the international market, the price of silver per ounce stood at \$69.70, a gain of 3.5% to \$71.10 per ounce. Spot platinum gained 3.5% to \$1,891.02, while palladium rose 3.3% to \$1,398.30. Earlier on Wednesday, gold prices in Pakistan recorded a sharp increase, continuing the trend of massive fluctuations seen in recent days.

The per-tola price rose by Rs15,200 to reach Rs479,262, while 10-gram gold climbed to Rs410,889



after a gain of Rs13,031, according to the All-Pakistan Gems and Jewellers Sarafi Association. On Tuesday, gold had surged by Rs16,300 to Rs464,062 per tola. Before that, it had plunged by around Rs43,000.

The local gains mirrored movements in the international market, where spot gold rose nearly 2% to \$4,554.97 per ounce after hitting a four-month low on Monday. US gold futures for April delivery jumped 3.5% to \$4,553.60, as per Reuters. Analysts said the rise comes amid easing inflation concerns following a drop in oil prices, although geopolitical uncertainty in the Middle East continues to influence market sentiment. Silver also saw a modest uptick, with prices increasing by Rs370 per tola to Rs7,824.

WTO conference opens amid global trade tensions

NEWS DESK: The 14th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has kicked off at a time when the multilateral organisation is facing an 'existential crisis' due to rising unilateralism and an increase in tariff and non-tariff barriers imposed by various countries.

A high-level official delegation representing Pakistan, led by Minister of State for Finance and Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani, has reached Yaounde, Cameroon, to participate in the

ministerial conference (March 26-29). Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the WTO, Ali Sarfraz, was also part of the delegation along with his team from Pakistan's WTO Mission in Geneva.

Cameroon's Minister of Trade Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana chaired the conference. Ministers from around the world discussed the challenges and opportunities facing the multilateral trading system, and to take action on WTO's future work.

Ministers gathered as rising protectionism challenges multilateralism. The ministerial was taking place in a highly volatile time when the WTO is facing, what many trade experts term as, 'existential crisis' due to unilateralism, rising number of tariff and non-tariff barriers in the world and increasing preference for national priorities over a rule-based international order.

Meanwhile, the chair of the conference has selected Bilal Azhar Kayani as Minister-Facilitator for WTO's Committee on Agriculture — Special Session (CoA-SS), which has been tasked to chart the way forward with regard to negotiations on agriculture related issues.

Talks on agriculture trade have remained stalled for many years now due to inflexible positions taken by different countries due to their internal policy considerations regarding farmers' subsistence and food insecurity.

Mr Kayani will underscore the importance of foundational issues, including the principles of Most Favoured Nation treatment, National Treatment, and the preservation of Special and Differential Treatment for developing and least-developed countries.



Bike, loader prices soar

NEWS DESK: Rising freight charges, war risk premiums and diesel prices in the wake of the ongoing Middle East conflict have forced local bike and three-wheeler loader assemblers to raise prices by Rs1,500-10,000, effective April 1.

While carmakers have yet to announce any price increases, market participants believe they may also follow suit. Pak Star Automobile Ltd has raised prices of 100cc-200cc loaders by Rs10,000, citing an increase in the cost of Chinese-made parts, freight and transportation charges.

N.J. Auto Industries

has announced a price hike of Rs1,500 on all models of Super Power motorcycles due to higher parts prices and transportation costs.

Higher fuel, freight and parts costs drive increases. D.S. Motors has increased the price of 70cc Unique motorcycles by Rs3,500, attributing the hike to the economic situation, higher petroleum prices and rising costs of sheet metal parts and aluminium.

Following a Rs55 per litre increase in petrol prices, along with expectations of a further Rs30 per litre hike, coupled with an inefficient public transport system, more consumers

may turn to two-wheelers as a fuel-efficient alternative to cars. Bike sector expert Muhammad Sabir Shaikh told Dawn that after a sharp increase in petrol prices, many car owners are opting to buy motorcycles as it may become difficult to continue using cars if fuel prices rise further.

"A fear also looms among consumers over possible petrol shortages and further price increases. This is pushing buyers towards two-wheelers," he said.

He added that higher petrol prices have also triggered increased demand for electric bikes, particularly models priced between

Rs150,000 and Rs300,000.

According to data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), imports of completely and semi-knocked down kits by local bike assemblers rose 75pc in July-February FY26 to \$56m from \$28.6m in the same period last fiscal year, indicating that bike sales may remain strong in the coming months.

The country's two- and three-wheeler sales increased 24pc year-on-year but declined 12pc month-on-month to 159,512 units in February.

This brought cumulative demand for electric bikes, particularly models priced between 1.3m units, up 31pc year-on-year.



Monetary expansion surges 4.5pc

NEWS DESK: Monetary expansion rose to 4.5 per cent during the first eight and a half months of the fiscal year, compared to just 0.5pc last year, reflecting doubling of government borrowing and excess liquidity in the banking system.

Monetary expansion refers to an increase in the overall money supply within the economy, driven primarily by the government's heavy borrowing from banks and a cut in the Cash Reserve Requirement (CRR) by the State Bank of Pakistan

(SBP). The SBP slashed the average CRR for banks by 100 basis points, from 6pc to 5pc, effective Jan 30.

The decision was taken to boost lending to the private sector and accelerate economic growth. The daily requirement was reduced from 4pc to 3pc, unlocking an estimated Rs300-315 billion in liquidity.

However, the US-Israel war against Iran, which began on Feb 28, changed the entire scenario, affecting the economy — particularly oil and gas prices

— and creating uncertainty over the availability of these commodities.

Government's borrowing from banks doubles in over eight months.

Though the government raised additional funds by increasing oil and diesel prices by Rs55 per litre on old stocks, it also borrowed Rs2,453 trillion from banks, compared to Rs1,271 trillion last year.

The uncertainty caused by the war in the region has further reduced the chances of domestic investment,

despite surplus funds available in the market. Despite low inflation, the SBP kept the interest rate unchanged at 10.5pc in the last monetary policy.

However, inflation may now increase sharply due to rising oil prices.

The surplus liquidity was created with the aim of stimulating economic growth, but it may now fuel inflation as broad money growth has exceeded economic output.

Monetary expansion during July 1 to March 13 of FY26 was 4.5pc, or Rs1,804.3bn, compared to 0.5pc, or Rs180bn, in the same period last fiscal year.

Excess liquidity resulting from the lower CRR and a 100pc increase in government borrowing from banks has raised the Net Domestic Assets of the banking system to Rs649bn, compared to negative growth of Rs115bn during the same period last year.



Fakhar hits fifty as Qalandars tame debutants Kingsmen in PSL 11 opener

NEWS DESK: Defending champions Lahore Qalandars made a powerful statement on the opening night of the 11th season of the HBL Pakistan Super League, posting a commanding 199 for six before dismissing debutants Hyderabad Kingsmen for just 130 to secure a convincing 69-run victory at Gaddafi Stadium here on Thursday.

Fakhar Zaman provided the perfect launchpad with a brisk 53 off 59 deliveries, studded with 10 boundaries.

Muhammad Naeem chipped in with a lively 30 off 19, but it was the lower order that turned the game into a one-sided affair.

Haseebullah Khan remained unbeaten on 40 off 28 balls, while Sikandar Raza blasted 24 off just 10 deliveries.

Skipper Shaheen Shah Afridi capped the innings in style with two successive sixes in the final over.

The Qalandars got off to a flying start as Fakhar and Naeem raced to 64 without loss in the powerplay.

Fakhar looked in imperious form, punish-

ing anything short or wide, and brought up his 24th PSL fifty in characteristic fashion.

Naeem too played his shots freely, dispatching a massive six off Riley Meredith.

Kingsmen struggled to stem the flow of runs. Akif Javed and Meredith were expensive early on, while the aggressive batting of Saif Ayub and Marnus Labuschagne could not contain the aggressive batting.

Lahore reached 94 for two in the 10th over after losing Naeem to Hassan Khan and suffering a needless run-out of Abdullah Shafique.

Fakhar's departure shortly afterwards for 53 left the Qalandars at 97 for three.

Parvez Hossain Emon (14) and Haseebullah steadied matters before the death overs witnessed a spectacular surge.

Raza smashed two sixes and two fours, Asif Ali cleared the ropes ones, and Shaheen's explosive finish helped the defending champions plunder 80 runs from the last six overs.

The Kingsmen's bowling and fielding left much to be desired in the closing stages.

Hassan Khan emerged as the most successful Kingsmen bowler with figures of 2-30, while Meredith picked up two wickets.



bowling and fielding left much to be desired in the closing stages.

However, their poor over-rate and several fielding lapses proved costly.

In pursuit of 200, the Kingsmen began brightly but soon found themselves in trouble.

Ubaid Shah then accounted for Saim Ayub (17), and the middle order collapsed under sustained pressure.

Raza was the star with the ball, claiming two vital wickets including the scalp of captain Marnus Labuschagne, who was brilliantly caught and bowled for 26.

Harris Rauf and Mustafizur Rahman bowled tightly, while Ubaid returned impressive figures of 2-27.

never build any momentum. Brief cameos from Hassan (14) and Hamid Azam (10) were not enough as the asking rate climbed rapidly.

Meredith battled till the end with an unbeaten 19, but the innings folded in the final over as Mohammad Ali was run out.

The Qalandars' attack looked formidable throughout. The pace trio of Shaheen (1-28), Harris Rauf (2-22) and Mustafizur (1-19), complemented by Raza's two wickets for 27, proved too much for the new franchise.

The surface offered decent pace and occasional grip, which the home side exploited well.

This dominant win gives Lahore Qalandars an ideal start to their title defence.

For Hyderabad Kingsmen, playing their maiden PSL match, it was a harsh reality check.

They will need to regroup swiftly for the challenges ahead. The match was played in empty stands, a reflection of the decision to stage the tournament behind closed doors this season.

Shiffrin wins sixth overall title

NEWS DESK: U.S. Alpine ski great Mikaela Shiffrin won a record sixth overall women's World Cup title in the final race of the season in Norway.

The 31-year-old needed only a top 15 place in the giant slalom to clinch the title, having already secured the overall crown in the previous season.

The 2025-26 season was a rollercoaster for Shiffrin, who had already secured the overall crown in the previous season.

Shiffrin was 17th after the first run but ended up 11th, for 24 points, with 22-year-old Aicher then making a mistake and dropping from third to 12th.

"It's quite emotional," said the American. "This thing sums up the whole season of work and fighting... I have to say to Emma that her skiing has been just outstanding and today it was just so cool to watch her."

Canada's Valerie Grenier won the race, a combined 0.43 seconds clear of Norway's Mima Fuest Holtmann and Austria's Julia Scheib, who had already secured the overall crown in the previous season.

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The final overall points tally was 1,410 for Shiffrin with Aicher 87 behind.

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her sixth in 1979. On the men's side, Austrian Marcel Hirscher holds the outright record of eight.

"I'm really, really grateful to be in this position now," said three-times Olympic champion Shiffrin, whose slalom gold medal at last month's Milano Cortina Games was another highlight of her year.

"It's really a big emotion but I'm also grateful for the fight."

Mercedes eyes Suzuka hat-trick

NEWS DESK: Formula One leader Mercedes has secured a hat-trick of wins at Suzuka in 2026, with Max Verstappen leading the charge.

The team's dominance was further solidified by Lewis Hamilton's victory in the opening race.

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schedule in the league, the FA Cup and the Champions League.

"I now feel completely fit. I need the one or other game from the start to reach 100 percent but I feel fit to start lasting over 90 minutes," he said.

Havertz added that Arsenal's busy schedule came just at the right time.

"We have many matches in three competitions. I missed the first six months of the season and I will give it all for the club, and to be confident to the World Cup. I want to be successful at this World Cup and lead the way," he said.

Germany have set their sights on winning the World Cup following shock group-stage exits in 2018 and 2022, determined to restore their reputation as a global football powerhouse. The tournament starts in June and is co-hosted by Mexico, the United States and Canada.

The Germans, who have not reached a final in any major international tournament since winning their fourth World Cup in 2014 in Brazil, have been drawn in Group E with Ecuador, Curacao and Ivory Coast for the June 7-11 July 19 tournament.

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Germany bank on team spirit to end World Cup woes

NEWS DESK: Germany's collective strength will be key to their World Cup chances later this year, coach Julian Nagelsmann said ahead of the four-time world champions' international friendlies in the coming week.

Germany were long known as a "Tourenmannschaft", or tournament team, due to decades of success on the biggest stages.

The term recognised Germany's history of performing at major tournaments regardless of form or individual quality, but took a hit with group stage exits at the 2018 and 2022 World Cups.

And while they may have some talented individuals, Germany probably do not have a squad to match those of England, Spain or France.

"If you have the best squad in the world, you can just play your game," said Nagelsmann, whose team play Switzerland in Basel on Friday and then host Ghana in Stuttgart on Monday.

"We have a very, very good squad, but we didn't have the best squad in the world at the Euros in 2024 or last year."

"We need to achieve a level of variability where we can help a very, very good squad deliver a very, very good performance."

At the heart of Nagelsmann's squad for the two upcoming friendlies are seven Bayern Munich players — the most he has selected from the German giants for an international squad.

Bayern midfielder Jamal Musiala would have been the eighth but was left out to continue his injury recovery.

Since taking over in 2023, Nagelsmann has picked on form rather than reputation and has spoken about the need to pick a coherent team built on players who are willing to work hard, rather than the best individuals.

In recent squads, this has meant a heavy reliance on players from



2023-24 double winners Bayer Leverkusen or German cup holders Stuttgart.

With Bayern back to their best this season — having won 36 and lost just two of 42 games played in all competitions — it is no surprise so many players in this squad.

One of those is Germany captain Joshua Kimmich.

"It helps the national team when many Bayern players are on the pitch, because we're a well-oiled machine and we train together every day," he said on Tuesday. "We have certain automatism."

Germany's Bayern core is complemented by a Premier League attacking trident of Kai Havertz, Florian Grill and Nick Woltemade, along with in-form

Stuttgart striker Deniz Undav, who has 18 goals in 23 Bundesliga games this season.

Often deployed by Nagelsmann as a forward, Havertz embodies the type of flexibility the coach is looking for.

Speaking on Wednesday, Havertz said that he was happy to play wherever he was needed.

"I feel very comfortable in all attacking roles. I'm a very versatile player."

I've played in various positions for the national team and Arsenal," Havertz reported.

Praising the atmosphere in camp, Havertz said that Germany would use the March friendlies to put the finishing touches on what is already a strong collective.

Mercedes eyes Suzuka hat-trick

NEWS DESK: Formula One leader Mercedes has secured a hat-trick of wins at Suzuka in 2026, with Max Verstappen leading the charge.

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wrong." Hamilton has a record 105 career victories from 382 starts.

Verstappen has won 71 grands prix and is third on the all-time list after Schumacher on 91.

Mercedes last won the first three races of a season in 2020. They last won the first three with one-two finishes in 2019, Ferrari chasing win since 2004.

Despite Wolff's caution, either Russell or Antonelli should be celebrating a first win at Suzuka as a 3.8km figure-eight layout widely hailed as a drivers' track that hosts the 40th running of the Japanese Grand Prix.

Mercedes' last kicked off with a hat-trick of wins in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic-hit season in which Austria's Red Bull Ring hosted the first two races.

The last time they started with three one-two finishes was in 2019.

Having made a similarly dominant start to the sport's new era this season, including locking out the front row in every qualifying session, they could tick off both milestones on Sunday.

"We have made a positive start to the season. That it is only that," said Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff. "We know that the moment you think you've got this sport figured out, you are usually proven

Ferrari, who last won at Suzuka with Michael Schumacher in 2004 and have been second-best to Mercedes in the opening two races, will hope to rise to the challenge.

Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton, thanks to their fast starts and intra-team duels, have served up plenty of wheel-to-wheel entertainment.

Seven-time world champion Hamilton, in particular, has shown plenty of fight and ended his podium drought in China with a third-place finish. A four-time Suzuka winner, the Briton will be hoping that run continues.

chequered flag would be big progress for the Japanese manufacturer that powered Max Verstappen to four successive wins on the circuit from 2022 to 2025 when they were partners to Red Bull.

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In call with PM, Kuwait crown prince endorses Pakistan's efforts to mediate between US and Iran

NEWS DESK: In a phone call with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday, Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al Khaled Al Hamad Al Sabah "fully endorsed" Pakistan's efforts for mediation between Iran and the US, according to a statement by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The statement said that PM Shehbaz held a phone call with the crown prince and "appreciated the Kuwaiti leadership of Pakistan's sincere diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the war in the Middle East".

During the conversation, PM Shehbaz reiterated "strong condemnation" of the attacks on Kuwait and expressed solidarity and support for the people of the Gulf country in these challenging times, the statement said.

PM Shehbaz also offered condolences on the loss of precious lives and prayed for the recovery of the injured, it added.

"While expressing deep appreciation of the prime minister's



leadership, the crown prince of Kuwait fully endorsed Pakistan's efforts for mediation between Iran and the US," the statement said.

The crown prince thanked the prime minister for Pakistan's support to Kuwait in the

current crisis as well as his recent letter of solidarity addressed to the Kuwaiti leadership, according to the statement. It added that the crown prince expressed his desire to visit Pakistan as soon as the regional situation

improves.

The prime minister thanked the crown prince and assured him that Pakistan would continue to play a constructive role for bringing peace and stability in the region," the statement concluded.

The development comes as Pakistan has taken centre-stage in a process to mediate between the US and Iran, being carried out in collaboration with Ankara and Cairo, with officials confirming that indirect exchanges

between Washington and Tehran are continuing through structured message relays, rather than direct contact.

In a post on X on Thursday, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar

confirmed that "US-Iran indirect talks are taking place through messages being relayed by Pakistan", adding that a 15-point US framework had been shared and is under Iranian deliberation, while the "brotherly countries

of Turkiye and Egypt" are supporting the effort. Islamabad, meanwhile, has emerged as the preferred venue for any initial engagement, even as the gap between the two sides remains wide, diplomats from the region told Dawn.

According to a senior regional diplomat involved in the process, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir has been key in sustaining the channel, maintaining direct contact with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and relaying positions conveyed by the US side and getting their stance. Tehran looks at Islamabad's role favourably because of what Iranians term its "comparatively balanced position" during the crisis and its perception as "a more reliable partner" than most of the other Muslim countries.

Additionally, Field Marshal Asim Munir's rapport with US President Donald Trump is seen in Tehran as a factor that could be decisive in opening the door for dialogue.

Pakistan-led diplomacy raises prospects of de-escalation

NEWS DESK: Chances of negotiations between the United States and Iran opening up at the end of President Donald Trump's five-day pause remain limited, but a Pakistan-led initiative — in coordination with Turkey and Egypt — has created a narrow de-escalation window in Islamabad, meanwhile, has emerged as the preferred venue for any initial engagement, even as the gap between the two sides remains wide, diplomats from the region told Dawn.

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Officials familiar with the process say Pakistan has been acting as a go-between for some time, but stepped up its outreach in recent days as the conflict escalated and the risk of a wider regional spillover increased. Additionally, Field Marshal Asim Munir's engagements also taking place through Turkish and Egyptian channels involving senior level contacts on respective sides.

Senate chairman approves surrender of over Rs200m to national exchequer to support gov't's austerity drive

NEWS DESK: Senate Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani on Friday approved the surrender of the Rs265 million to the national exchequer in efforts to support the government's austerity drive.

On March 9, the government announced a host of austerity measures to conserve fuel in view of the global fuel crisis triggered by the US-Israel war on Iran.

In a post on his X account, the Senate said that the chairman has approved the surrender of Rs265m as an "immediate measure".

to the Finance Division, adding that efforts were also underway to "identify additional savings by curtailing expenses in the coming weeks to deposit into the national exchequer".

According to the

statement, he directed the Senate Secretariat to ensure the implementation of the austerity measures in accordance with the austerity drive announced by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Gilani emphasised that "the Senate, as a key constitutional institution, fully recognises the importance of fiscal discipline in the

current economic circumstances and remains committed to supporting the government's efforts for economic stability".

He issued instructions for "strict" adherence to austerity measures, including "rationalised expenditures, reduction in operational costs and ef-

icient utilisation of resources while ensuring parliamentary functions, legislative responsibilities & oversight mechanisms remain fully effective".

He expressed faith that the "responsible financial management and collective institutional efforts" will yield positive results for the economy.

"Senate Secretariat will continue to uphold transparent and accountable financial practices while safeguarding public funds and ensuring the smooth functioning of parliamentary affairs," the statement added.

On March 17, Gilani directed the implementation of "wide-ranging austerity measures".

preventing a reduction of more than 50 per cent in the Senate Secretariat's remaining budgetary utilisation for the current fiscal year, which is believed to translate into savings of around Rs700-750m.

A day earlier, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) approved a Rs100 billion supplementary grant for the prime minister's austerity fund created to finance the petroleum pricing subsidy.



IHC to hear Imran, Bushra's pleas seeking suspension of sentences in £190m graft case on March 31



NEWS DESK: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday fixed the hearing for PTI founder Imran Khan and his spouse Bushra Bibi's petitions against their conviction in the £190 million Al-Qadir Trust corruption case on March 31.

According to the cause list issued by the IHC registrar's office, a division bench — comprising IHC Chief Justice

Sardar Muhammad Sarfaraz Dejar and Justice Muhammad Asif — will hear the pleas seeking suspension of Imran and his spouse's sentences on March 31.

An accountability court in Islamabad had earlier requested a decision before the Eid vacations. The appeals and suspension pleas have faced numerous procedural hurdles.

case. At the last hearing of the case, held on March 11, the IHC imposed a fine of Rs100,000 on the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for employing "delaying tactics" in the case.

However, a later written order did not include any direction regarding the imposition of a fine. The court had directed the anti-graft body to come prepared on the next date of hearing, with the plea seeking a fine.

The defence team had urged the court to dispose of the petition early, requesting a decision before the Eid vacations.

NEWS DESK: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast chances of rain and thunderstorms in Karachi and across Sindh on Saturday, as a westerly wave continues to affect the country.

According to its three-day weather outlook issued on Friday, the PMD said that Saturday would likely bring thunderstorms or rain.

"of light to moderate intensity" to the province due to a westerly wave entering the country from south west Baloachistan.

Mostly sunny weather is expected in Karachi today, with a maximum temperature of 32-34 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 24°C.

Humidity will reach 76 per cent before dropping to 45-55pc in the evening as a northwesterly wind is expected to turn west/southwesterly.



On Saturday, the PMD forecast "partly cloudy" weather with "chances of isolated wind [or] thunderstorms/rain".

Temperatures will stay similar, at around 31-33°C highs and 22-24°C lows. Humidity will be lower, between 65-75pc in the daytime and 45-55pc in the

evening. A west/southwesterly wind is expected to prevail on both Saturday and Sunday.

According to the weather outlook, rain is also likely in Jamshoro, Dadu, Qambar, Shikarpur, and

Kashmore, Sukkur, Ghotki, Badin, Umerkot and Tharparkar districts of Sindh on Saturday.

It warned that windstorms or hailstorms and lightning may damage weak structures such as electric poles, billboards and solar panels during the forecast period.

while wind and hail may also damage standing crops.

The PMD advised farmers to manage their crops accordingly.

The PMD on Monday had predicted rainfall and thunderstorms across the country from March 24-30 with

"occasional gaps" due to a western disturbance 32 approaching the southwestern parts of Baloachistan.

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

Rain, thunderstorms likely in Karachi, other parts of Sindh tomorrow: PMD