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First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan

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Rs. 10.00 Vol. VII: No. 171

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Tuesday 31, March, 2026

# QUETTA VOICE



## Balochistan Education Crisis: 2.5 Million Children Still Out of School, Says Secretary Education

**Syed Ali Shah:**

In a candid assessment of Balochistan's struggling education sector, Lal Jan Jaffar has revealed that nearly 2.5 million children in the province are still out of school, exposing a deep-rooted education crisis.

Speaking in an exclusive interview, he said that out of an estimated five million children aged between five and 16 years, almost half are not enrolled in schools.

He further highlighted alarming findings from a recent learning outcomes survey, which showed that only 30 percent of students in government schools

are meeting basic learning standards, while nearly 70 percent are not acquiring essential education. He described the situation as deeply concerning, pointing to multiple challenges including the impact of recent floods, outdated education policies, and political interference, all of which have contributed to

weakening the system. Despite these challenges, Jaffar said the provincial government is determined to improve the education system.

He noted that a province-wide school enrollment campaign has been launched under the directives of Mir Sarfaraz Bugti to bring more children into

classrooms. He also shared that over 12,000 teachers have been recruited on merit to strengthen the education system and ensure better learning environments.

He termed these efforts a positive step toward ensuring that every child in Balochistan has access to education and a better future.

## Fast bowler Naseem Shah slapped with Rs20m fine for contract breach

**NEWS DESK:**

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday slapped a Rs20 million fine on fast bowler Naseem Shah for breaching several clauses of his central contract.

Last week, the cricketer was issued a show-cause notice for "violating the terms of [his] central contract as well as the media policy and regulations", requiring him to respond within the stipulated time.

The notice was ostensibly issued in response to a social media post in which Naseem had expressed a critical opinion about Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, who was the chief guest during the opening match of the Pakistan Super League played at the Gaddafi Stadium.

According to ESPNcricinfo, Naseem had Naseem's account responded to a post from the PCB media account, saying, "Why is she treated like the Queen at Lord's?"



Minutes later, the post was taken down and replaced with another post saying Naseem's account had been hacked and had been recovered by him, the report said.

According to a press release issued by the PCB on Monday, a personal hearing was held by a three-member disciplinary committee after Naseem's reply to the show-cause notice was "received and reviewed".

It said that after hearing and evaluation of Naseem's submissions, the committee determined that while the cricketer had tendered an unconditional apology, he had breached "various clauses of his central contract" and was subsequently fined Rs20m.

"It was noted that Naseem's social media adviser has already been terminated by Naseem and shall be blacklisted by the PCB from associating with any player falling under the PCB's jurisdiction," the release added.

"The PCB remains committed to upholding professional standards, contractual obligations and the integrity of the game," it reaffirmed.

According to ESPNcricinfo, clause 2.23 of the PCB's code of conduct states that any "public criticism of, or inappropriate comment in relation to the board, any of its officials or sponsors or policies, the International Cricket Council or any of its officers or sponsors, player, player support personnel or match officials including umpires and match referees, irrespective of when such criticism or inappropriate comment is made" is not permitted.

It is worth mentioning that the National Dialogue Committee (NDC) — formed by former PTI leaders — had condemned the PCB for issuing the show-cause notice to Naseem.

"While we recognise the right of any organisation to uphold its codes of conduct, we assert that the PCB's action in this instance represents a dangerous overreach that undermines a fundamental pillar of democracy: the right to peaceful, critical expression," the committee said on Saturday.

## Two Policemen Martyred in Quetta Firing, Gas Pipeline Explosion Disrupts Supply

**Staff Reporter:**

**Quetta:** Violence struck the provincial capital on Monday as two police officers were martyred in a firing incident on the Eastern Bypass, while a major gas pipeline was blown up in a separate act of sabotage on the Western Bypass.

According to police sources, unidentified accused targeted an Eagle Squad patrol, martyring Constable Muhammad Noor and Constable Muhammad Ayub on the spot.

Security forces reached the area shortly after the attack and launched a search operation to trace those responsible.

In another incident, an 18-inch diameter pipeline of Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) was damaged in an explosion near Akhtarabad.

Officials said explosive material had been planted beneath the pipeline, triggering a powerful blast that set off a large fire.

Flames were seen rising high into the air, causing panic among nearby residents. Technical teams from



Flames of fire after gas pipeline was blown off in Quetta

SSGC were immediately dispatched to the scene and succeeded in shutting off the gas supply, bringing the fire under control.

However, the explosion has resulted in a suspension of gas supply in Quetta and several areas of upper Balochistan, affecting a large number of households.

The worst-affected areas include Airport Road, Nawab Kili, Jinnah Town, Hazarganj, Kuchlak, Pishin, Zirat and adjoining localities, where residents are facing difficulties due to the disruption in cooking and heating facilities.

SSGC officials stated that repair work will begin once security clearance is granted by law enforcement agencies, adding that restoration of the damaged section may take up to 24 hours.

Law enforcement agencies, including Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) personnel, have cordoned off the area and initiated an investigation.

Preliminary findings suggest that the pipeline, located beneath a bridge, was deliberately targeted.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

### Balochistan High Court Opens the Doors of Justice Wider Than Ever Before



#### Editorial:

The Balochistan High Court's latest initiative — introducing a dedicated WhatsApp number and email address for public complaints — marks a meaningful shift toward openness, accessibility, and public empowerment within the judicial system.

This is not just a procedural reform; it is an invitation for citizens to engage directly with the justice system in ways that were previously difficult, time-consuming, and often intimidating.

For decades, obtaining certified copies of court judgments or dealing for experienced lawyers.

Long queues, procedural delays, and administrative hurdles made the process difficult, especially for people from remote districts of the province.

With digital communication now formally integrated, citizens, litigants, and counsel will be able to request and access judgment copies far more easily. This single step reduces barriers that have existed for years and ensures that justice is not only done — but also seen to be done.

Equally important is the ability for citizens to directly file complaints with the judiciary or court staff if they face

misconduct, delays, or unfair treatment. Many people lacked the courage, resources, or channels to raise such concerns.

This mechanism now provides them a safe and accessible option, reinforcing the idea that justice is a right, not a privilege.

The Balochistan High Court deserves recognition for taking a forward-looking approach to judicial transparency.

By embracing technology, the court has empowered the public, strengthened accountability, and made justice more approachable for millions. This is a good step — one that brings the judiciary closer to the people it serves.

## Forced Marriage in Islam: A Clear Violation of Women's Rights and Human Dignity

By Musavir Durrani:

Forced marriage remains one of the most damaging cultural practices in parts of the Muslim world today. Despite being justified in the name of honor, tradition, or family unity, Islam itself strictly forbids forcing any woman, or man, into a marriage they do not want. Islamic teachings make consent the core of marriage, while coercion makes a marriage *baiti* (invalid).

The Qur'an Clearly Forbids Forced Marriages. Allah states in Surah An-Nisa: "O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will." (Qur'an 4:19)

This verse was revealed to abolish the jahiliyyah practice of controlling or forcing women into marriages.

Islam replaced oppression with dignity, choice, and responsibility. Prophetic Example: Forced Marriages Declared Invalid.

A woman once came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) complaining that her father had married her without her permission. The Prophet (PBUH) gave her the full right to reject or accept the marriage, proving that consent is mandatory.



Hadith Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 5138. Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1419.

These narrations all confirm that the Prophet (PBUH) allowed the woman to annul her forced marriage.

One narration even states that she chose to remain married but wanted to teach women that fathers have no right to force their daughters.

Parents Can Advise, But They Cannot Force. Islam highly respects parents, but marriage choice is not their right. They can guide, suggest, and

advise, but they have absolutely no power to force their child into marrying someone. Even if parents think they "know what is best," they cannot override the choice of their daughter or son.

The final decision always belongs to the person getting married. Statements such as: "If you don't marry this one, who will marry you?" "You have no choice." "Do it for family honor."

Pressure is Also Harmful. Forced marriage is not only when someone is physically pressured. Even emotional, mental, or family pressure counts as force.

Modern Forced Marriages. A New Way of Burying Women Alive. Before Islam, Arabs used to bury baby girls alive. Today, many scholars say: "We no longer bury women in the ground, we bury their

dreams on the day of their Nikkah." When a girl is forced into a marriage, pressured emotionally, or told she has no other choice, we destroy her life while she is still alive.

This is the new form of burying women alive, and Islam came to end this injustice completely. Forced marriage has no place in Islam. It is against the Qur'an, against the Sunnah, and against the dignity that Islam gives to every woman and man.

Parents must love, support, and guide, but never control or force marriage decisions. "Allah gave women this right, and no one can take it away."

## How AI Is Making Modern Production Smarter and Faster

Syed Muhammad Waseem:

AI is changing the way we create and collaborate, with 41% of brands already using AI for video production. Production teams now have to create more content faster than ever.

Major studios such as Netflix and Warner Bros. are now using AI-driven tools to analyze audience preferences, optimize workflows, and enhance storytelling.

As the need for faster content grows, AI is becoming a key tool for handling repetitive tasks such as video editing, adding visual effects, and creating computer graphics.

Over time, it has transformed into a powerful creative partner that now supports teams at every stage of production.

In the beginning, AI was mainly used for video automation, and voice synthesis. These tools helped save time but still required significant human input. Today, AI plays an active role across pre-production, production, and post-production, making the entire process more efficient and consistent.

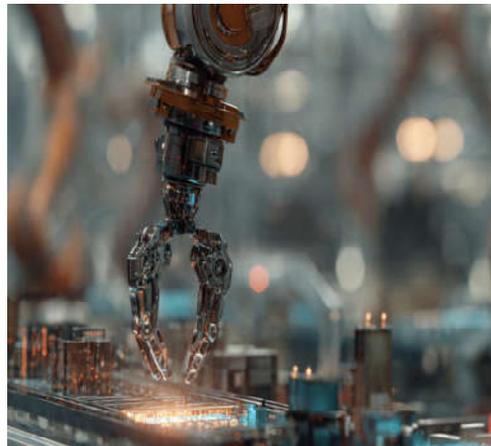
During pre-production, it assists with scriptwriting, budgeting, and storyboarding. In production, it en-

hances camera tracking, lighting adjustments, and virtual set design. Finally, in post-production, it streamlines editing, color correction, sound design, and even creates advanced visual effects.

Production houses are facing rising costs and tighter schedules. Keeping up with deadlines while staying creative has become a major challenge. To stay efficient, many studios are now using AI to manage time and 60% of post-production studios utilize AI-powered editing tools to reduce editing time, reduce expenses. This trend is growing rapidly as the global AI in media and entertainment market is projected to reach \$34.1 billion by 2027.

The demand for quick content is also increasing. Streaming platforms compete to release new shows faster, putting pressure on production teams. At the same time, 65% of advertising agencies are already using AI tools for content creation, helping them quickly the industry is adapting to new technology. There is also a shortage of skilled post-production professionals. AI tools step in to handle repetitive work like cutting scenes or syncing dialogue. This gives creative teams more time to focus on storytelling and innovation while keeping projects on schedule and within budget.

How Production



Houses Are Using AI to see how scenes might look before filming begins. This makes planning smoother and reduces the need for costly revisions later.

AI is also improving casting and budgeting. Some tools analyze data to predict how well an actor will connect with audiences. AI software like Celix and StudioBinder helps plan budgets and schedules. These tools make it easier for studios to manage costs, track spending, and stay on time in production.

AI is transforming the way films are shot on set. For example, AI-powered cameras can automatically track actors, adjust framing, and optimize lighting in real time. This helps directors capture perfect shots faster and reduces the need for repeated takes. According to MarketsandMarkets, the use of AI cameras in film production is expected to grow by 22%

annually by 2027. Virtual production is becoming more common. Tools like Unreal Engine and NVIDIA Omniverse allow filmmakers to create realistic digital environments before filming begins.

These virtual sets save time, cut costs, and give teams more creative freedom, especially for large-scale or fantasy projects.

AI supports crews during filming. Voice recognition systems can follow script lines or adjust camera settings through simple voice commands.

As a result, on-set work becomes smoother, and the crew can focus more on storytelling rather than technical details.

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founders wanted a smarter AI-based way to grade clips.

Working with the Australian Institute for Machine Learning (AIML), they built AI software that could analyze grain samples in seconds. Their system reduced testing time from 24 minutes to just 90 seconds and achieved 98% accuracy. This made the grain supply chain faster and more reliable.

In 2024, Croptify raised \$2 million AUD from investors to expand its technology. Their success proved that AI can bring real value to agriculture by making testing fairer, faster, and more consistent.

Falkner advises businesses to focus on real problems first and then see if AI is the right solution.

What's Next? Entertainment's Use of AI in Creative Production

Using NICE DCV and Amazon EC2 G4 instances, Netflix built fast and secure remote workstations. These cloud tools allowed artists to edit, animate, and render with high-quality visuals while keeping performance smooth. The system helped Netflix move from testing to full production in just one year.

By using AWS, Netflix reduced costs and technical barriers for creators. The company could now attract top VFX and animation talent from anywhere in the world. This innovation showed how cloud and AI tools can transform modern film production.

Case Study 2: Croptify's AI Innovation in Grain Grading

In South Australia, Anna Falkner and Andrew Hannan founded Croptify to make grain testing faster and more accurate. Traditional testing relied on human inspection, which often caused mistakes and disagreements.

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# Russia, France urge probe of Israeli 'murder' of 3 journalists in attack in south Lebanon

**NEWS DESK:** Russia on Saturday pushed for an investigation of the "murder" of three journalists in an Israeli airstrike in southern Lebanon, bringing those responsible to justice, and to "end this bloody practice once and for all."

France also denounced the deliberate killings of Lebanese journalists.

On Telegram, the Russian Foreign Ministry expressed its deepest condolences to the families and friends of the deceased correspondents.

"The strikes were aimed," the ministry underlined.

"Tellingly, they targeted an ordinary civilian vehicle carrying media workers en route to an editorial assignment."

The ministry stressed that the journalists were wearing press insignias, "which nevertheless did not protect them from the precision-guided munitions attack."

It said Israel is trying to absolve itself of responsibility for the



"serious crime" by claiming that terrorists posing as journalists were among the passengers in the car struck by the rocket.

"That the Israeli military is capable of

such attacks on civilians, which, according to international law, includes media workers, was demonstrated just 10 days ago when an RT television crew was nearly killed under simi-

lar circumstances," it added. On Friday, the ministry summoned Israeli Ambassador Oded Joseph to lodge a strong protest over an Israeli airstrike wounding RT

journalists in Lebanon. Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova called the attack "targeted," adding that it was carried out on unarmed civilians, who are protected by interna-

tional humanitarian law as journalists. She emphasised that the journalists were wearing jackets with easily seen press markings, carrying only cameras and microphones,

and that the strike occurred in an area with no military facilities. France denounced the killings. "Journalists must never be targeted in war zones," says French for-

eign minister after 3 killed in Lebanon.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot on Sunday denounced the killing of three journalists in an Israeli airstrike in southern Lebanon, noting that targeting journalists would be a violation of international law.

"Journalists must never be targeted in war zones, including if they have ties to parties in the conflict," Barrot told broadcaster France 3, according to BFM TV.

"If it is indeed confirmed that the journalists in question were deliberately targeted by the Israeli army, then this is extremely serious and a blatant violation of international law," he said.

Three journalists were killed on Saturday when an Israeli airstrike targeted a vehicle they were traveling in near the city of Jezzine in southern Lebanon, according to an Anadolu corre-

## Australia to halve fuel tax to keep prices within reach of citizens amid Iran war

**NEWS DESK:** Australia will halve a fuel tax to help motorists experiencing soaring petrol prices due to war in the Middle East, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Monday.

Albanese announced the step after meeting with the leaders of Australia's states and territories on Monday.

agrees a plan to tackle fuel shortages as the war in the Middle East continues.

Australia charges a sales tax of 52 cents on each litre of petrol sold at the pump, which will be halved for three months.

The measure will cost the government \$1.75 billion (Aus\$2.55 billion), officials said. "We are making fuel cheaper today because we understand that Australians are under serious pressure," Albanese said.

Albanese's government has sought to reassure motorists that shipments of fuel con-

tinue to arrive in Australia, and petrol shortages in rural towns stem from panic buying and distribution bottlenecks.

Victoria and Tasmania states have made travel on public transport free, and motorists nationally to what they can to conserve petrol by driving less.

"The less fuel we use in the cities obviously the more we can redirect to regional areas that are under

pressure," he told reporters in Canberra.

In New South Wales, state Premier Chris Minns said there were scores of petrol stations without any fuel, and the focus was on helping rural towns.

"If the situation gets worse, we will take extra measures," he said.

Australia's national parliament on Monday introduced a bill to give powers to the government to underwrite the purchase of shiploads of fuel that will add to supply in Australia.

Weekly data released by the government showed Australia has 39 days of petrol, a small increase on the previous week, and 30 days of diesel supply.

The government will also reduce costs for trucks by cutting a heavy vehicle road user charge.

The Fuel Check monitor showed average petrol prices had leapt from Aus\$1.82 in February to Aus\$2.48 on Monday in New South Wales, with diesel reaching Aus\$3.



## Iran warns of potential strikes on industrial sites in Israel, Gulf states



**NEWS DESK:** Iranian media on Sunday published a list of industrial facilities in Israel and five Gulf countries that Tehran warned could be targeted in potential attacks.

According to an Anadolu correspondent, the list included details of major steel and industrial companies, including Saudi

Iron and Steel Company (Hadeed) in Saudi Arabia, Emirates Steel in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar Steel, Fouadi Holding in Bahrain, the United Steel Industrial Company in Kuwait, and Yehuda Steel in Israel.

On Friday, Majid Mousavi, commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force, threat-

ened a "tit-for-tat" retaliation following US-Israeli strikes on Iranian infrastructure.

A US-Israeli airstrike hit Iran's Khuzestan Steel Company on Saturday, targeting key production facilities and forcing a halt to operations.

The US and Israel have maintained airstrikes on Iran since February 28, killing so

far over 1,340 people, including then-Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Iran has retaliated with trucks by cutting a heavy vehicle road user charge. The Fuel Check monitor showed average petrol prices had leapt from Aus\$1.82 in February to Aus\$2.48 on Monday in New South Wales, with diesel reaching Aus\$3.

## Trump calls Iran's current leaders 'very reasonable' as Pakistan prepares to host talks

**NEWS DESK:** US President Donald Trump said the US and Iran have been meeting "directly and indirectly" and that Iran's new leaders have been "very reasonable", as more US troops arrived in the region and "Tehran warned it will not accept humiliation."

Trump's remarks on Sunday came after Pakistan, which is acting as an intermediary between Tehran and Washington, said it was preparing "no per" messages about the coming days aimed at ending the month-long Iran war.

"I think I'll make a deal with them, I'm pretty sure, but it's possible we won't," Trump told reporters on Sunday evening as he travelled aboard Air Force One to Washington.

Trump said he thought the US had already accomplished regime change in Tehran after strikes killed the country's supreme leader and other top officials, but said twice that their replacements seemed "reasonable."

An initial Israeli strike on February 28 killed Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was replaced by his son Mojtaba.

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said talks between regional foreign ministers on Sunday covered ways to bring an early end to the war, and potential US-Iran

talks in Islamabad. "Pakistan will be honoured to host and facilitate meaningful talks between the two sides in the coming days, for a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the ongoing conflict," he said. It was not clear whether the US and Iran had agreed to attend.

Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, earlier accused the US of sending messages about possible negotiations while at the same time planning a ground invasion. Tehran was ready to respond "if US soldiers were deployed, he said.

"As long as the Americans seek Iran's surrender, our response is that we will never accept humiliation," he said in a message to the nation.

Suspected Iranian drones, rockets strike

US bases in northeastern Syria. Suspected Iranian drones and rockets targeted bases hosting US forces in northeastern Syria on Sunday, causing material damage but no casualties, a war monitor said.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said a rocket struck the Qasrak base in Hasakah province, followed by drone attacks around midnight and at dawn. US air defences intercepted several drones, while other projectiles hit the site, causing damage, it said.

The monitor said the Kharab al-Jir base near Rmeilan was also hit by multiple rockets early Sunday, some intercepted and others reaching their targets, with no immediate reports of casualties. Two additional drones were shot down near residen-

tial areas in Hasakah, it added. The attacks prompted heightened alert and increased aerial activity.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the killing of an Indonesian peacekeeper of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) amid hostilities late Sunday between Israel and Hezbollah. "This is just one of a number of recent incidents that have jeopardised the safety & security of peacekeepers," he said on the US social media company X's platform.

Guterres called on all parties to uphold their obligations under international law and to ensure the safety and security of UN personnel and property.

## Israeli strikes kill nine in Gaza

**NEWS DESK:** Gaza's civil defence agency said on Sunday that nine people were killed in Israeli strikes in the south of the Palestinian territory.

On Saturday evening, "Israeli strikes hit police posts... in the Al-Mawasi area" killing eight, said Mohammed al-Mughair, an official at the agency which operates under Hamas authority.

Another person was killed on Sunday "after being hit by fire from Israeli forces" at a roundabout in Khan Yunis, Mughair said.

According to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa, a young girl was among the dead on Saturday night. Images showed bodies being transported to the morgue of Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis then laid out on the



ground, wrapped in white shrouds. During the funerals, one woman was screaming, surrounded by crying men and children.

"Each day, the enemy hunts down and kills," said Ahmed al-Sufi, a Palestinian who had lost family. Israeli army issued a statement in which it said it had "eliminated" overnight a cell of 10 armed

terrorists from Hamas operating in the centre of Gaza, as well as another person the day before who had repeatedly crossed the yellow line behind which Israeli forces in Gaza have withdrawn.

Israel and Hamas continue to accuse each other of violating the ceasefire in place since October 10 that largely halted two years of war in the ter-

ritory. Israel has continued to strike Gaza, killing at least 702 Palestinians since the start of the ceasefire, according to the Gaza health ministry, which also operates under Hamas authority.

The United Nations considers the ministry's figures to be reliable. Israel says five of its soldiers have been killed since the start of the truce.

# Pakistan plans major budget reforms under IMF conditions

ISLAMABAD (INP) - Pakistan has decided to introduce significant reforms to its budgetary system in line with conditions set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). An IMF delegation is expected to visit Pakistan soon to review budget preparation and the proposed reforms. The government has assured the IMF that it will set clear targets to improve fiscal discipline and take steps to reduce delays in budgetary decisions. According to officials from the Ministry of Finance, work is already underway on budget proposals for the fiscal year 2026-27. A Tax Policy Office Finance Ministry has also been activated

within the ministry, and measures will be taken to prevent frequent changes to the budget. The government has further assured the IMF that better alignment between public expenditures and the budget will be ensured along with increased transparency in the budget-making process. An emergency fund has also been allocated for the upcoming budget. Rs300 billion had been allocated for this purpose in the current fiscal year. Relevant departments within the Ministry of Finance have been assigned responsibility for implementing these budget reforms, and new rules will be introduced to maintain stricter control over fiscal management. The new strategy also emphasizes boosting investor confidence and strengthening trust with international institutions.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting to review implementation of fuel conservation and austerity measures. INP

## KP CM announces Rs1 trillion development package for merged districts

PESHAWAR (INP) - Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Khan Afridi met with a delegation of leaders and tribal elders from Khyber district to address pressing public concerns, security issues, and regional development strategies. During the session, delegation offered various suggestions aimed at fostering long-term prosperity. Chief Minister in his address said that \$2 billion rupees of promised 700 billion for merged districts remain outstanding over last seven years. In response to these financial challenges, Chief Minister Afridi announced a comprehensive development package worth one trillion rupees specifically for the merged districts.

## All Punjab schools to reopen on April 1

LAHORE (INP) - Punjab Minister for Education Rana Sikandar Hayat Khan has said that all educational institutions across the province will start functioning from April 1 (Wednesday), 2026, and the educational process will start five days a week. Rana Sikandar Hayat said on Monday that no hybrid system is under consideration, and CCTV cameras had been ordered for monitoring of 246 examination centres. The Provincial Minister further revealed "we are introducing some changes in the educational system." Rana Sikandar Hayat said that full time will be granted to every candidate from next year to complete their studies before appearing in the examination. He agreed "Attending lectures by students online is a difficult process." He said that 70 percent of free textbooks are also distributed in different districts of Punjab. Earlier this month, the provincial government had ordered the closure of all educational institutions from March 10 to 31 as part of measures to ease economic pressure, particularly the sharp rise in petroleum prices triggered by the ongoing Middle East conflict. It was learnt that authorities had been weighing several options to tackle the emerging energy crisis, including extending school holidays and reducing market hours to curb fuel consumption.

## Pakistan calls for moving beyond symbolic gestures towards sustained environmental action: Aleem Khan

ISLAMABAD (INP) - Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Saturday said Pakistan stands on the frontline of the global climate crisis and called for moving beyond symbolic gestures towards meaningful and sustained environmental action. In his message on the occasion of Earth Hour, the minister emphasized that switch-off lights for an hour should serve as a reminder of the country's collective responsibility to ensure a sustainable future, said a press release. He said that he have personally witnessed the devastating impacts of climate change through catastrophic floods, unpredictable weather patterns and melting glaciers, all of which threaten our livelihoods. Aleem Khan emphasized that beyond this one hour, we must commit to a vision of green infrastructure and effective connectivity in the energy sector that can safeguard our environment for future generations. Appealing to the citizens, the minister urged them to adopt a culture of environmental protection by reducing unnecessary energy consumption, conserving water resources and supporting sustainable practices in their daily lives. He added that by incorporating climate resilience into road networks and communication corridors, efforts are underway to ensure that our infrastructure can meet future challenges while minimizing its carbon footprint. He concluded by saying that this one hour should mark the beginning of a year-round commitment to protecting

## Early cotton sowing must be completed by March-end

LAHORE (INP) - Farmers have been advised to complete early cotton sowing target till March 31. A spokesman for the department said here on Sunday that Punjab Agriculture department has fixed a target of 0.7 million acres for early cotton cultivation in the province. He said, "Districts of Multan, Sahiwal, Faisalabad, Sardogha and Dera Ghazi Khan divisions are most suitable for early cotton cultivation." The department had strictly recommended sowing only triple gene cotton varieties for early cultivation, he added. Spokesman further stated that the seeds used for early cotton should be certified by the Federal Seed Certification & Registration Department and should be of pure Triple Gene variety. Otherwise, applying glyphosate spray will result in the death of non-Triple Gene cotton plants, he added. He further said that for optimal growth, the recommended row spacing for early cotton sowing is 2.5 feet between rows and 1.5 to 2 feet between plants. He said Farmers have been advised to use high-quality, disease-free, and certified seeds of the recommended varieties. For drill sowing of early cotton, farmers should use 2 to 3 kg of seed per acre. They should also arrange additional 10% seed to compensate for any gaps in the field, he said and added that if the germination rate is 60%, farmers should use 5 to 6 kg of seed per acre, whereas for a germination rate of 75% or higher, 4 to 5 kg of seed per acre should be used. He said, "Average, early cotton cultivation yield is up to 50 to 60 maunds per acre."

## Another ship carrying transshipment cargo docks at Gwadar Port

ISLAMABAD (INP) - Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Junaid Anwar Chaudhry has said that Gwadar Port is emerging as a secure and strategic maritime hub, as global shipping lines seek safer alternatives to traditional Gulf routes amid shifting regional dynamics. He expressed these views when a specialized vessel, M/V HMO LEADER (IMO 9169811), successfully berthed at the port, carrying 35 pieces of general transshipment cargo, a milestone reflecting growing international interest in Pakistan's southwestern coastline. Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said that ongoing regional tensions have disrupted established shipping corridors, creating opportunities for Gwadar to position itself as a reliable transit point. He highlighted that more international shipping lines are approaching the port for cargo storage and onward movement, supported by incentives such as free transshipment cargo storage. With a capacity of 16,000 TEUs for containerized cargo and 90,000 square meters for general cargo storage, Gwadar Port, along with its integrated free zone, is steadily advancing to a key regional trade hub, boosting Pakistan's blue economy and enhancing maritime connectivity.

## Chinese Energy projects power Pakistan through Global Crisis: Experts

ISLAMABAD (INP) - As global energy markets reel from disruptions linked to escalating tensions in the Middle East and the closure of key supply routes such as the Strait of Hormuz, Pakistan is finding resilience through its long-term collaboration with China in the energy sector. Projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are increasingly positioning the country to withstand external shocks by reducing reliance on imported fuels and expanding indigenous and renewable energy sources. Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. In an exclusive interview with Gwadar Pro, Shah Jahan Mirza, Managing Director of the Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB), who has led the organization for the past decade and overseen the execution of almost all CPEC power projects, discussed Pakistan's evolving energy landscape, the growing role of renewable resources, and the expanding footprint of Chinese investment in ensuring energy security. Fast-Track Energy Development Under CPEC: "Basically, under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) maximum investment has come to the power projects. That time when CPEC was started in 2013, Pakistan was facing about 12 hours of loadshedding like the city of Islamabad was facing 12 hours loadshedding, so one hour electricity was available and one hour was off, so this was the situation when CPEC was started. Chinese government, Chinese enterprises they worked very hard with Pakistani counterparts and the result was the projects were set off on very fast-track basis. Some of the initial projects were setup on imported fuel to save the time but the ultimate aim of CPEC was to develop the local indigenous resources of Pakistan. In this context the local Thar Coal, that is very critical, and other more critical is the renewable energy which include mainly wind and solar projects and hydro of course. Wind, solar and hydro are the renewable resources. Under CPEC we have done six projects about 3300 MW on Thar Coal that is pure indigenous resource that will be actually sustainable in such a time when the imported fuels are not available when there is a shortage in the country."



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik, held a meeting with Nassar Abdulrahman Jasser Almutairi, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Youth Programme Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan presiding a meeting on Walk Pakistan initiative.

## China Pavilion shines at 11th Pakistan Footwear Show

LAHORE (INP) - Around 100 Chinese enterprises from Guangdong, Zhejiang, Fujian, Henan and other major manufacturing hubs have taken center stage at the 11th Pakistan Footwear Show 2026, turning Hall No. 1 of the Expo Centre Lahore into a vibrant focal point of business activity and international cooperation, Gwadar Pro reported. The three-day exhibition, held from March 27 to 29, brought together more than 350 exhibitors from over 20 countries and occupied 3 halls. This year's event is organized around 5 specialized thematic zones: Innovative Fashion Design, Accessories and Semi-finished Products, Footwear Supply Chain, International Footwear Products, and Intelligent Shoe Machinery Equipment, covering the entire industrial spectrum from raw materials and design concepts to finished footwear and advanced manufacturing technologies. The strong and growing Chinese presence at the exhibition reflects deepening bilateral trade ties and rising confidence in Pakistan's market potential. Addressing the event, Chairman Senator Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani singled out Chinese footwear companies for bringing high-quality shoes, superior shoe-making materials, advanced production technologies and sophisticated design concepts to Pakistan. He also noted that these contributions provide a solid mate-

rial foundation for the growth and modernization of Pakistan's domestic footwear industry. Kent Kuang, president of the Guangzhou Yuexiu District Footwear Association, highlighted the remarkable growth in Chinese participation at the event. "This is my third consecutive year of participating in this show. Chinese exhibitors have reached around 100, up from just over ten in 2023," Kuang said. "Behind this growth is the confidence and commitment of China's footwear industry toward the Pakistani market, and it is also a testament to the deepening integration of the Chinese and Pakistani footwear industry and ascend the global value chain. Kuang pointed out that the global footwear and leather industry is accelerating its transformation toward green, intelligent, and international development, adding that Pakistan, as one of South Asia's most promising emerging markets, is becoming a key growth engine for the global footwear industry. As the expo wrapped up, Chinese exhibitors reported strong business inquiries and on-site orders, with many calling their participation highly rewarding. Industry observers believe that continued collaboration with China, together with the increasing internationalization of the event, leaves Pakistan's footwear industry well positioned to broaden its export base, upgrade product quality and ascend the global value chain.

Neglect of Emergency Services Puts Travelers at Risk on Balochistan's N-40 Highway

By Atta Kakar
QUETTA: The N-40, also known as the RCD Highway, is a 630-kilometer route connecting Quetta with Taftan, Pakistan's main border crossing with Iran.



Minimal enforcement of traffic safety regulations along the routes. Balochistan's road safety record underscores the risks faced by highway users.

office in Quetta. So far, the system has conducted 24,206 outpatient services across its centers. Authorities have indicated plans to expand MERC 1122 and other emergency response facilities to cover additional highways, including the N-40, but implementation has been delayed.

corridor and travel route for passengers, transporters, and those crossing the border into Iran makes its neglect particularly concerning. In 2025 alone, more than 24,000 road accidents were reported in Balochistan, resulting in over 400 deaths and around 30,000 injuries.

Governor Balochistan Highlights Role of PPAF in Poverty Reduction and Rural Development

QUETTA: Governor of Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail stated that Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) is playing a vital role in improving the lives of poor and vulnerable communities, particularly in rural areas of the province.



During a meeting with Provincial Coordinator Dr. Abdul Rehman Khan, the governor appreciated ongoing efforts aimed at providing access to resources and essential services to help people overcome poverty.

Impact of Climate Change Governor Mandokhail also pointed out the growing impact of global warming, stating that rising global temperatures are affecting ecosystems worldwide.

Open Katcheri Held in Ziarat for Public Input on BSDI Phase-III Development Projects



ZIARAT: Following the directives of Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti, an open katcheri (public forum) was organized at Government Degree College Ziarat under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Abdul Qadoos Achakzai.

He emphasized that all BSDI projects will be completed. On time. According to quality standards. Without any compromise on transparency. Government Focus on Public Welfare.

Deputy Commissioner Kech Chairs Key Meeting to Improve Healthcare Services in Turbat



TURBAT: Deputy Commissioner Kech Yasir Iqbal Dashti chaired an important meeting of doctors at the Teaching Hospital Turbat to review hospital performance and healthcare service delivery. The meeting was attended by Principal Makran Medical College Dr. Afzal Khaliq, Medical Superintendent Dr. Waheed Baloch, and other senior doctors.

Election Commission Postpones NA-256 Khuzdar by Elections

NEWS DESK KHUZDAR: The Election Commission of Pakistan has postponed the by-election in NA-256 Khuzdar. According to an official notification issued from Islamabad, the decision was taken following a request from the provincial government of Balochistan due to the prevailing law and or situation in the constituency.

2026, has been suspended until further notice. The Commission has directed the Chief Secretary and Inspector General of Police Balochistan to appear in person and brief it on the current security situation.

Advertisement for 'SHOW CAUSE NOTICE' and 'TENDER NOTICE' from the Director Planning & Development, Livestock & Dairy Development Department, Balochistan. Includes details about procurement rules and eligibility criteria.

# Govt taking steps to ease burden on lower and middle-class amid fuel price hike: PM Shehbaz

**NEWS DESK:** The government is undertaking efforts to provide relief to the lower and middle classes amid a fuel price hike triggered by the global fuel crisis due to the Iran war, Prime Minister Shehbaz said on Monday.

Over the past few weeks, the government has rolled out a series of austerity measures to minimise fuel consumption and announced significant cuts in development spending and restrictions on non-essential expenditures.

In a meeting chaired by the premier to review the impact of the Middle East war on petroleum stocks in Pakistan and public relief measures being taken, he was informed that the government was working in collaboration with the provincial government to "finalise the process of registration for motor-cyclic and rickshaw owners so they could benefit from the government's 'austerity schemes'," a statement via the Prime Minister's



House (PMO) said. On March 17, the government announced it was planning a subsidised fuel scheme for motorcyclists and rickshaw drivers to cushion the impact of a

massive hike in oil prices. "We will not leave the economically weaker section of the society alone in this hour of difficulty," the premier vowed.

Detailing further measures, the prime minister said the government has significantly reduced its expenses, including budget cuts in the development sector, as well as foregoing the

use of 60 per cent of the government's vehicles. The prime minister said that the government had decided not to increase the oil prices and instead direct the saved funds towards

public relief. He further added that the government will be using a "digital system" to provide relief to the public. The premier added that "due to the

government's timely decision regarding the fuel crisis, there was no disruption in fuel supply for the country". He also spoke of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts regarding peace in

the Middle East. The "implementation of measures aimed at fuel conservation, the future course of action and the current fuel stock" came under discussion as well, as per the statement.

The meeting was also presented with an Intelligence Bureau audit report on the implementation of the measures and the progress of the austerity campaign, the statement said.

"Adequate fuel reserves are available to meet the country's needs, and arrangements are being made for the future as well," the prime minister was briefed.

The meeting was further informed that the recent increase in high-octane for large vehicles "has not led to any change in jet fuel prices".

"There was also ample stock of medicines to meet the national needs," the meeting was further informed.

## Pakistan Day: more than a day of remembrance

**NEWS DESK:** Every year on March 23, Pakistan commemorates the Lahore Resolution – a defining moment that set the course for the creation of a sovereign state. It was a vision rooted in dignity, self-determination, and the right to shape an independent future.

More than seven decades later, Pakistan Day must be more than remembrance. It must also be reflection. Because sovereignty today cannot be measured by flags and borders alone.

In the modern world, sovereignty has evolved. It is no longer just political; it is deeply economic. A country that cannot sustain its economy without external support, which repeatedly returns to institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, must confront a difficult question: how independent is its decision-making in practice?

Economic fragility, narrow policy space, limits strategic options, and forces governments into short-term decisions that often come at



the cost of long-term stability. Over time, it creates an illusion of sovereignty – where political independence exists, but economic autonomy does not.

Pakistan is not alone in having emerged from colonial rule. Many nations that gained independence in the mid-20th century began their journeys with similar or even weaker starting points. Consider South Korea. In the 1950s, it was war-ravaged, resource-constrained, and heavily aid-dependent. Today, it is a global industrial and technological power.

Malaysia transitioned from a commodity-based economy to a diversified manufacturing and services hub through consistent policy direction and export-led growth. Vietnam, once devastated by conflict, has emerged as a major export economy, integrating deeply into global supply chains. These transformations were not accidental. They were the result of sustained policy discipline, institutional consistency, and a clear understanding that economic strength is the foundation of sovereignty.

Pakistan's economic story, by contrast, is defined by repetition. Crisis leads to stabilization. Stabilisation leads to temporary relief. Relief delays reform. And the cycle begins again. Export bases remain narrow. Productivity growth is slow. Fiscal pressures are constant. Policy direction often shifts with political transitions rather than long-term national priorities. The issue is not the absence of ideas. Pakistan has produced numerous reform frameworks and policy roadmaps.

## Govt comes up with hybrid plan to tackle power crisis

**NEWS DESK:** While the focus currently remains on managing petroleum supplies and prices, the government is expected to adopt a hybrid arrangement of load-shedding, compulsory conservation and tariff hikes in the power sector to meet summer demand amid the ongoing Middle East crisis.

Senior government officials told Dawn that the Power Division and its entities were working on multiple models to balance rising summer demand, reduced availability of imported coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG) and the higher cost of alternative fuels, particularly furnace oil, to run power plants.

Officials said there would be virtually zero availability of LNG from next month and beyond – a fuel that accounts for more than one-fifth (over 21pc) of total power generation – even if the US-Israel war on Iran ends immediately. Availability of imported and local coal would also be on the lower side. Together, the two fuels account for close to 30pc of power supply to the national grid.

The key replacement fuel is furnace oil, which is seldom used otherwise in normal conditions, except in the case of peak summer de-

mand. The cost differential is enormous, although furnace oil stocks at present are more than 360,000 tonnes, sufficient for more than 25 days of full requirement, and the government has restricted the domestic oil calculations could not be worked out in advance, an off-the-cuff estimate suggests the fuel cost adjustment could be on the higher side of Rs10-12 per unit given non-utilisation of about 5,000 megawatts of LNG power plants – among the most efficient and economic generation facilities. Such a

big difference could not be passed on to any consumer category, particularly the industry, an official said. The cost of high-speed diesel (HSD)-based generation, which previously exceeded Rs45 per unit before the US-Israel strikes on Iran, may now have risen beyond Rs80 per unit, the official said. However, he added that HSD would not be considered for power generation due to both its high cost and its critical demand in transport and agriculture, especially with the crop harvest season approaching.

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## Climate change challenges

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change has come into sharp focus at the start of 2026, with alarming signals emerging from its northern highlands.

Data from the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) indicates an unusually warm winter in Gilgit-Balistan. During the first 22 days of February, daytime temperatures were 3-5°C above normal, while nighttime temperatures remained 1-3.5°C above the 1981-2010 average.

Persistent warmth, low snowfall, and clear skies have sped up snowmelt and glacier retreat at mid- to lower altitudes. In the Hindu Kush Himalaya region, a "crisis unfolding in real time," with ice loss rates having doubled this century.

Data presented to the National Assembly in 2025 identified over 3,044 glacial lakes in northern Pakistan, of which 33 were classified as high-risk. These lakes threaten an estimated 7.1m people downstream. With temperatures remaining above historical norms, the PMD has repeated warnings about higher Glof and flash flood risks as warming disrupts fragile mountain hydrology.

Long-term assessments confirm intensifying extremes with seri-

ous flooding and drought-like conditions possible throughout the country in the coming times.

Experts note that snowfall patterns are shifting, arriving later in the season and reducing ice compaction. A Dawn report quoted Khudim Hussain, Director General of the Gilgit-Balistan Environmental Protection Agency, as saying late snowfall "can melt rapidly when the summer season starts, increasing flood risks downstream".

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# Karachi Kings edge past Lahore Qalandars in PSL thriller

**NEWSDESK:** Karachi Kings pulled off a tense four-wicket victory over traditional rivals Lahore Qalandars in a low-scoring HBL Pakistan Super League encounter at the Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday, successfully chasing a modest 129 with three balls to spare.

The win was built on a disciplined bowling display and a gritty chase that survived a middle-order wobble before Abbas Afridi's explosive finish.

Opting to bat first on a surface that offered assistance to spinners and some seam movement, Lahore Qalandars never found rhythm. They were restricted to 128 for 9 in 20 overs, a total that always looked under par on a ground where chasing has often been straightforward.

Karachi's varied attack, led by Adam Zampa's economical spell and Moeen Ali's craft, dismantled the Qalandars' top order and middle order with clinical efficiency.

The home side's innings got off to a shaky start when



Fakhar Zaman was dismissed off Moeen in the first over for just one. Moeen provided some early impetus with a six off Mir Hamza but fell for 13, caught and bowled by the same bowler.

Abdullah Shafique looked fluent, stroking 33 off 24 balls, but his

dismissal to a half-tracker from Zampa triggered a collapse. Parvez Hossain Enam (12) and Sikandar Raza (19) could not accelerate sufficiently.

Haseebullah Khan waded a lone battle at the top, finishing with 28 off 30, but the lower order crumbled under pressure.

Shaheen Shah Afridi (7) and Usama Mir fell to lbw decisions, while Harris Rauf managed only four. Lahore lost wickets at regular intervals, managing just 20 runs in the last five overs — a telling statistic on a pitch that demanded careful accumulation rather than reckless hitting.

Karachi's bowling was a textbook display of variety.

Zampa was the standout with figures of 2-11, proving once again why he remains one of the world's most effective wrist-spinners on helpful surfaces.

Moeen claimed 2-31, while Hamza and Hasan Ali chipped in with two and one

wicket respectively. Salman Ali Agha and Abbas also contributed to the stranglehold. Lahore's decision to bat first,

perhaps hoping to post a defendable total on a spin-friendly track, backfired spectacularly.

Karachi's chase began cautiously. Shaheen, leading from the front, gave Karachi an early jolt by removing David Warner (8) and Salman in the space of two deliveries in the third over.

Saad Baig (19) and Mohammad Wassem (38) then steadied the ship, but Mustafizur Rahman's clever variations accounted for Saad, leaving Karachi at 39 for 3.

Wassem and Moeen (18) added 43 crucial runs, but Shaheen returned to strike twice in the 15th over, removing both set batters.

At 88 for 5, the game hung in the balance.

Azam Khan and Khushdil Shah then played sensibly, rotating strike and keeping the required rate under control.

With 23 needed off 12 balls, tension peaked. Mustafizur conceded 14 runs in the 19th over, including a five-run penalty for ball tampering after the ball was changed, which shifted momentum decisively.

Khushdil fell to a superb catch by Raza off Harris, but Abbas walked in and delivered the knockout punch.

The all-rounder smashed a boundary and a towering six off Harris in the final over, sealing victory with a six that sailed into the night sky.

His unbeaten 10 off just two balls turned a nervy finish into a statement.

Azam remained not out on 14.

## Sabalenka beats Gauff in Miami final



**NEWSDESK:** Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka beat hometown favourite Coco Gauff 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 in the Miami Open final on Saturday to join an exclusive club by completing the coveted 'Sunshine Double'.

World number one Sabalenka, who reached the final without dropping a set, won 73% of her first-serve points and faced just two break points on route to victory in a rematch of the 2025 French Open final won by Gauff.

Sabalenka is only the fifth woman to win

the Indian Wells and Miami titles back-to-back, a feat known as the 'Sunshine Double' given the tournaments' respective locations in California and Florida.

"I want to start with (Coco). You're a fighter and you also push me so hard to be a better player, and I like our rivalry," Sabalenka, who improved to 7-6 all-time versus Gauff, said during the trophy ceremony.

Sabalenka raced out to a 2-0 lead but Gauff, from nearby Delray Beach and appearing in her first Mi-

ami final, got on the board with a love hold and then repelled three break points in her next service game to get within 3-2.

But Sabalenka did not lose focus and eventually went up a double break on the world number four before closing out a dominant 'opening on 'her serve'.

There was very little to separate the two players in the middle set which remained on serve until Gauff broke Sabalenka for the only time in the match to force a third set.

Sabalenka broke

Gauff to open the deciding set, held at 1-0 in two consecutive service games to go 5-3 up and then sealed the victory with her fourth break of the match when Gauff sent a backhand wide.

Sabalenka is the first player to win back-to-back Miami titles since Ashley Bartly in 2019 and 2021. The 2020 edition was cancelled due to COVID-19.

The Belarusian joins Iga Swiatek (2022), Victoria Azarenka (2016), Kim Clijsters (2005) and Steffi Graf (1994, 1996) as the only women to complete the 'Sunshine Double'.

Sabalenka also improved to 23-1 on the year, her only loss coming in the Australian Open final at the hands of Elena Rybakina, whom she went on to 'beat in the Indian Wells final and Miami semi-final'.

"I'm so proud of the work that we've done - the fight that I was able to bring on court and the level and everything, like just wow," Sabalenka told.

## Malinin earns Olympic redemption with gold

**NEWSDESK:** American Ilia Malinin returned to the pinnacle of his sport as he skated to a third world title on Saturday and shrugged off the shock of an eighth-place finish at last month's Olympics.

Laurence Fournier Beaudry and Guillaume Cizeron of France added their first world ice gold and intent on redemption, scored 218.11 points for a free programme that included five quadruple jumps, and 329.40 points overall.

"I definitely felt very pushed and loved from the crowd," Malinin said. "Every single element I did, they were all behind me and I felt that the whole way through my programme."

"My expectation was to leave the long programme in one piece and I definitely think that happened."

Olympic silver medalist Yuma Kagiyama of Japan climbed from sixth after the short programme to finish second with 306.67

and featuring his own voiceover — fell short of his massive world-record score of 238.24 at the Grand Prix Final in December, when he performed seven quad jumps, including the quad Axel, a jump only he has landed in competition. But it was a huge improvement of almost 62 points from Milan.

Malinin tripled the quad Axel, the jump that started the unravelling of his free programme at the Olympics, but his five quads were enough to remind the sport why he remains its most formidable force.

"It was really challenging and really hard,"

he told 'the crowd.' "But 'with you guys I was able to make it through."

F O U R N E E R BEAUDRY AND CIZERON TAKE GOLD

Fournier Beaudry and Cizeron, six-point leaders after the short dance, scored 138.07 points for their elegant and lyrical free dance to the soundtrack of the movie 'The Whale,' and 230.81 points overall.

"It felt amazing. It was a suspended moment with all of you, and it's such a special feeling to feel all of your eyes and your energy on what we created, so thank you so much," Cizeron told the audience.



## Gladiators keep Kingsmen winless to record first victory

**NEWSDESK:** Impressive half-centuries by Shamyil Hussain and Hasan Nawaz and Abrar Ahmad's fine show won't help the leather guided Quetta Gladiators to a facile 40-run victory over Hyderabad Kingsmen in their HBL Pakistan Super League match here at the Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday.

This was Gladiators' first victory of the season after they lost their opening game against Karachi Kings on Friday while Kingsmen suffered their second successive defeat after being routed by defending champions Lahore Qalandars in the PSL 11 opener.

Player-of-the-match Shamyil and Hasan lifted Gladiators to a respectable 174-8 after skipper Saud Shakeel elected to bat first.

Kingsmen crumbled in the chase and were restricted to a paltry 134-8 off 20 overs thanks to mystery spinner Abrar, who snared three wickets for 23 runs. Medium-paceer Ahmad Danialy also fared well picking up two wickets for just 13 runs.

Kingsmen's chase got off to a disastrous start as Sam Ayub (eight) departed in the first over after getting caught by wicket-keeper Ben McDermott. Off-paceer Alzart Jossert (5) and Sam followed



by fellow opener Maaz Sadaqat, who was caught for nought by defending champions Lahore Qalandars in the second over as the Marcus Labuschagne-led team slumped to 17-2. After losing the openers, Kingsmen never recovered despite fighting cameos by Irfan Khan and Hassan Khan later in the innings.

Usman Khan (14 off 18) nicked the ball to McDermott in the sixth over, giving Abrar his second wicket as Kingsmen ended powerplay at a feeble 37-3. Just two balls after they reached 50 off 5.4 overs, Labuschagne's brigade lost Saad Ali as he failed to clear the long-on boundary to get caught by Joseph off the bowling of off-spinner Usman Irfan. They were now 51-4.

Labuschagne's cautious stay of 23 off 21 ended in the next over when he fell to occasional slow left-arm orthodox spinner Saud as Kingsmen required 57-5. Irfan (33 off 25) and Hassan (31 off 19) combined to make an effort as they added 48 runs for the sixth wicket and in the process got past 100 in 14 overs.

McDermott's superb grab down the leg-side off Ahmed sent Hassan back to the hut as Kingsmen required 70 off the final five overs. The tough ask became tougher when Irfan was stumped by McDermott in the 18th over bowled by Abrar as the scoreboard read 129-7.

When Hamad Azam (six) was caught by Hasan at deep mid-wicket off Ahmed's slower ball in the 19th

over, all hopes of Kingsmen ended when he fell to occasional slow left-arm orthodox spinner Saud as Kingsmen required 1-26 while Joseph had 1-39.

Earlier, entertaining knocks by Shamyil (54 off 41 balls) and Hasan (53 off 40) helped Gladiators post a fighting total that proved more than enough in the end.

The loss of two key wickets of Saud (four) and Rilee Rossouw (0), both to pacer Riley Meredith, left Gladiators reeling at 25-2 in the fourth over.

However, a superb 89-run partnership between Shamyil and Hasan, who struck two fours and three sixes, off just 43 balls steadied the innings. They in the process first moved to 45-2 in powerplay and then reached 100 in 11.4

## Egypt warns Salah over MLS move

**NEWSDESK:** Egypt's national team director Ibrahim Hassan has cautioned Mohamed Salah against moving to Major League Soccer after he leaves Liverpool at the end of the season as it would see the forward "fade into obscurity."

Salah, 33, has yet to decide his next move after he leaves a hugely successful nine-year spell at Liverpool, where he won two Premier League titles and the Champions League.

MLS Commissioner Don Garber has said he would love to see Salah in the league, though it is unclear whether any MLS teams want to sign him.

"Personally, I would prefer him to stay in Europe," Hassan told On Sports. "I have heard about offers from Paris Saint-Germain, Bayer Munich and clubs in the Italian league."



You won't remember Salah anymore than I remember (Lionel) Messi now. I don't even try to watch him."

After trophy-laden stints with Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain, Argentina captain Messi joined Inter Miami in 2023, "months" after lifting the World Cup, and became the club's all-time top scorer. He would be far too out of the spotlight.

Salah would be a suitable option if Salah chose not to stay in Europe.

"If he does not receive offers from Europe, he will have to go to the Saudi league, which is a good option, especially with big names such as Cristiano (Ronaldo), Hassan, twin brother of Egypt coach Hossam Hassan, added.

Salah is currently sidelined by injury and will miss Egypt's ongoing "training camps as they prepare for the World Cup in North America."

Egypt face Spain in a friendly in Barcelona on Tuesday after a 4-0 win over Saudi Arabia "in Jeddah" on Friday.

The seven-times African champions are in Group G with Belgium, New Zealand and Iran at the World Cup, which runs from June 11 to July 19.

# FM Ishaq Dar to embark on official visit to China on March 31: FO

**NEWS DESK:** Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar will embark on an official visit to China on March 31 at the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, according to a statement issued by the Foreign Office (FO) on Monday.

The FO said that Pakistan and China enjoy an all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, characterised by "close coordination and regular consultations" on regional development and international issues.

"In this context, the upcoming visit will provide an opportunity for both sides to hold in-depth discussions on regional developments, as well as bilateral and global issues of mutual interest," said the FO statement.

It added that "FM Dar's decision to un-



dertake the visit, despite medical advice, rest following a hair-line shoulder fracture sustained yesterday, reflects the importance Pakistan attaches to its relationship with China".

Earlier on Friday, Dar held a telephone call with Wang Yi, during which they exchanged views on the evolving regional situation and broader global developments.

Initiating peace talks in the war involving Iran "is no easy task," Wang said, but noted that such efforts would be "conductive to restoring normal navigation through the Strait of Hormuz".

The two sides agreed to jointly promote a ceasefire, cessation of hostilities, and the resumption of peace talks, while ensuring the safety of non-military targets and key waterways, according to a summary released by the Chinese ministry.

During the call, Wang also conveyed

China's support for Pakistan's role as a mediator.

Dar later said that the Chinese foreign minister appreciated Pakistan's ongoing efforts in this regard.

He added that both sides agreed to continue their endeavours for the resolution of all disputes through dialogue and diplomacy.

The Chinese foreign minister had also spoken to Dar on March 10, where he had commended Pakistan's constructive role in promoting de-escalation and stability in the Middle East amid war.

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 Riyadh, Ankara and Cairo, with officials confirming that indirect exchanges between Washington and Tehran are continuing through structured message relays, rather than direct contact.

## Security forces retaliate 'vigorously' after Afghan Taliban open fire in KP's Bajaur sector: sources

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistani and Afghan forces exchanged fire in the Bajaur sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday, said security sources.

They added that Pakistan's security forces "retaliated vigorously" after Afghan Taliban fighters opened fire with "small and large weapons" along different areas of the border district.

Security sources further said retaliatory fire by Pakistani forces silenced the enemy's guns and "Afghan posts from which Pakistan was being fired at were also destroyed".

According to local security officials, Pakistan "did not target any civilian population, but only targeted those posts from which continuous firing was being done".

The Foreign Office (FO) on Thursday said that the temporary pause in Operation Ghazab li-Haq against the Afghan Taliban over Eidul Fitr had concluded, and the operation will continue "until its objectives are achieved".

FO spokesperson Tahir Andrabi made these remarks while responding to questions during his weekly press briefing.

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for verifying compliance and a decision to continue talks. The third round concluded without any concrete agreement.

if the Taliban regime "renounced their support for terrorism and terrorist organisations".

Relations between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban are at their lowest point in the four years since the group came to power. Last year in October, border clashes had erupted between Pakistan and Afghanistan across their 2,600-kilometre frontier. Following these clashes, Turkey and Qatar had stepped in to mediate.

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for verifying compliance and a decision to continue talks. The third round concluded without any concrete agreement.

## PM Shehbaz reiterates Islamabad's call for collective efforts to end Middle East conflict

**NEWS DESK:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday reaffirmed Islamabad's call for collective efforts to end ongoing hostilities in the Middle East "that were causing heavy loss of life, economy and property not only in Iran, but across several brotherly Muslim countries".

The premier stated this in a post on X while expressing his pleasure at meeting the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt, following a quadrilateral meeting held on Sunday by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar regarding the ongoing Middle East conflict.

PM Shehbaz shared details of his meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and Egyptian Foreign Minister Dr Badr Abdelatty.

Along with calling for an urgent halt to hostilities, he reaffirmed Pakistan's "strong commitment and resolve to play a positive role in bringing both Iran and the US to the negotiating table," appreciating Turkey and Egypt's "valuable contributions" to the matter.

Shehbaz concluded by expressing gratitude

for the countries' "confidence in Pakistan's sincere efforts for regional peace and stability."

In a separate post on X, Shehbaz stated, "It was a pleasure to receive His Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan this evening," adding that he conveyed his regards to King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. "I reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the Kingdom and appreciated Saudi Arabia's remarkable restraint in these challenging times," PM Shehbaz stated.

He highlighted the importance of unity among Islamic countries and recognised Saudi Arabia's leading role in the Muslim Ummah.

"We agreed to remain in close coordination in our shared pursuit of peace and stability in the region," the post concluded.

Following the conclusion of the four-way talks, the visiting dignitaries departed Islamabad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed on X early Monday morning.

Yesterday's meeting concluded with initial discussions reportedly

focused on proposals to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to shipping. Foreign ministers from the three regional powers landed in Islamabad for the talks.

The discussions came as Iran warned the US against launching a ground attack "and oil prices surged amid continued fighting between Iran, the US and Israel."

The countries meeting in Pakistan "have floated proposals to Washington tied to maritime traffic and reopening the Strait of Hormuz," five sources familiar with the matter told Reuters, as part of wider efforts to stabilise shipping.

The Strait of Hormuz was previously a conduit for about a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies, but Iran has effectively "throttled shipping around it" in response to the US and Israeli air strikes that began a month ago.

The countries meeting in Pakistan "have leveraged its close ties to both Tehran and Washington to emerge as a key diplomatic channel in the conflict, while Ankara and Cairo have also played a role."

A source from Pakistan said proposals, including from Egypt, had been "forwarded to the White House by the countries before Sunday's meeting and that they included Suez Canal-style fee structures."

Two other Pakistani sources "said Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia could form a consortium to manage oil flows through the waterway, and had asked Pakistan to participate."

The first Pakistani sources said Islamabad had not been formally asked to join and maintains that it will not.



## Fire erupts at super store in Karachi's Zamzama area

**NEWS DESK:** A fire erupted in the basement of a superstore during the early hours of Monday in the Zamzama area of Karachi, officials said.

A spokesperson for Karachi's Rescue 1122 said the central command and control room immediately dispatched fire and rescue teams, along with ambulances and fire brigade trucks, after receiving the alert.

"Rescue 1122 is working to control the fire," the spokesperson added. No casualties have been reported in the incident so far.

The fire broke out in Intiaz. Superstore's Zamzama branch, the locality is a high-end shopping area and the store is frequented by thousands daily. In a later update, the 1122 spokesperson said firefighting teams have entered the store's premises and are continu-

ing efforts to extinguish the blaze, adding that the cause and nature of the fire are still unknown.

The director-general of Rescue 1122 also dispatched a specialised response team to the scene. Meanwhile, Karachi Traffic Police issued a traffic advisory, saying fire brigade vehicles are on site. "No traffic issues have been reported, but the public is advised to drive safely," the advisory added. Traffic is being managed, and the public is advised to contact the Karachi Traffic Police helpline at 1915 for assistance, the advisory said.

Superintendent of Rehabilitation Gian Chand Essram, has taken notice of the fire and has reported the incident to the Rehabilitation Centre. He said that the fire broke out in a parked container-mounted trailer in the Federal B Area, Karachi.

Rescue 1122 spokesperson Hassan Ul-Haq said the fire broke out in the front portion of the trailer, which was badly damaged, and was extinguished by firefighters.

Esrami said that 24 to 25 people present in the building were successfully rescued, describing the timely response as commendable. He added that the area falls under the Cantonment Board, where a fire safety audit had previously been conducted. "Completing the rescue operation swiftly and further damage remains our top priority," he said.

He further said that a transparent investigation into the incident would be carried out once the fire is brought under control. Earlier on Sunday, a fire broke out in a parked container-mounted trailer in the village of Dad Kachlot, a roof collapsed, killing two children and a woman, and 42 injured.

Several incidents of roof collapsing were reported in Bannu. In the village of Dad Kachlot, a roof collapsed, killing two children and a woman, and 42 injured.

Abbotabad reported five deaths, including four children. Kohat saw two fatalities, North Waziristan one, and Battagram one woman was killed.

## At least 17 killed as heavy rains trigger roof collapses in K-P

**NEWS DESK:** At least 17 people, including 14 children, have been killed and 56 others injured after heavy rains triggered roof and wall collapses in parts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa since March 25, according to a report released by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Monday.

Bannu recorded the highest casualties, with eight deaths, including seven children and one woman, and 42 injured. Abbotabad reported five deaths, including four children. Kohat saw two fatalities, North Waziristan one, and Battagram one woman was killed.

The report also noted that 11 houses were damaged in the rains, five of which were under control. Earlier on Sunday, a fire broke out in a parked container-mounted trailer in the village of Dad Kachlot, a roof collapsed, killing two children and a woman, and 42 injured.

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