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# QUETTA VOICE

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## Pakistan, China Boost Cooperation on Iran Crisis as Ishaq Dar Visits Beijing

**NEWS DESK:**

Pakistan and China have agreed to enhance strategic coordination on the Iran crisis as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar arrived in Beijing for high-level diplomatic talks. The visit, undertaken at the invitation of Chinese Foreign

Minister Wang Yi, focuses on regional security, particularly tensions involving Iran. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning stated that both countries will strengthen communication and coordination while working jointly to promote peace and stability in the region. During his brief visit, Dar held a bilateral meeting with

Wang Yi at the Diaoyutai State Guest House, where discussions reportedly centered on possible diplomatic pathways, including facilitating dialogue between Iran and the United States to ease ongoing tensions. This marks Dar's second official visit to China in 2026, highlighting the growing importance of Pakistan-China relations amid

shifting regional dynamics. Both sides also reviewed bilateral ties and exchanged views on key global and regional developments. China has acknowledged Pakistan's increasing diplomatic role and expressed support for its potential mediation efforts. Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam, also appreci-

ated Islamabad's proactive diplomacy aimed at reducing tensions and restoring peace. The development comes after Pakistan hosted a recent multi-country meeting involving regional stakeholders, where leaders emphasized de-escalation and supported structured negotiations between Washington and Tehran.

## £190m case: IHC adjourns hearing of Imran, Bushra's pleas after defence seeks more time

**NEWS DESK:**

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday adjourned the hearing of the suspension of sentence applications filed by Imran Khan and his spouse, Bushra Bibi, in the £190 million case, after the defence counsel sought time to obtain fresh instructions from his clients. A division bench headed by IHC Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar and including Justice Muhammad Asif presided over the proceedings. During the hearing, defence counsel Salman Saifdar appeared alongside National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Special Prosecutor Javed Ashraf and prosecutor Rafiqy Maqsood. The hearing was also attended by the PTI founder's sisters, Aleema Khanum, Uzma Khan and Noreen Niazi. At the outset, the NAB prosecutor argued that two separate



applications for suspension of sentence had already been filed, stressing that such pleas could not be heard without issuance of notice in the main appeals, particularly after recent amendments to the NAB law.

He urged the court to proceed with arguments on the appeals if the defence was ready.

Responding to this, Barrister Saifdar contended that his clients were convicted on Jan 17, 2025, and despite the passage of over a year, the prosecution had repeatedly sought adjournments. He maintained that the defence had remained present throughout and pressed for suspension of sentence and release on bail, also citing medical grounds.

The bench, however, questioned whether the defence could proceed with arguments on the main appeals against the conviction, even suggesting allocation of two hearing days per week.

Saifdar replied that he had not been able to meet or obtain instructions from Imran and Bushra Bibi for the past five months, making it difficult to proceed on the appeals at this stage.

## Balochistan Schools to Reopen April 1 with New Five-Day Schedule



**NEWS DESK:**

The Balochistan School Education Department has announced that all public and private schools across the province will reopen from April 1, 2026, after a temporary shutdown caused by ongoing crises and fuel conservation measures. According to an official no-

tification, the decision follows earlier orders issued in March regarding the closure of educational institutions. With the reopening, authorities have introduced a revised five-day working schedule for schools and administrative offices. Under the new policy, all public and private schools, along with Provincial, Divisional, and

District Education Department offices, will operate from Monday to Friday. Saturday and Sunday will be observed as weekly holidays. The department has also confirmed that all examinations and academic assessments will take place as per the previously said schedule, with no changes despite the updated working days.

## Pakistani Man Killed in US Strike in Iran, Body Returned at Taftan Border



**NEWS DESK:**

The body of a Pakistani citizen who was killed in a reported US strike in Iran has been handed over to authorities at the Taftan

border, officials said. The deceased, identified as Yasir Khan, son of Iqbal Shah and a resident of Chagai district, died in Iran's port city of Bandar Abbas. According to police sources, he lost his life

during a reported US attack in the area. Following the completion of legal formalities, the body was transferred to Pakistani authorities at the Taftan crossing and later handed over to the family.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

## Modern Policing Training for Former Levies Is No Longer Optional — It Is Urgent



**Editorial:** Balochistan's decision to train 772 former Levies personnel under the Balochistan Police is not merely an administrative reform — it is a historic correction. For more than a century, security in large parts of the province relied on a tribal policing system introduced by Sir Robert Sandeman nearly 142 years ago — effectively one and a half centuries back. That system was designed around tribal customs, collective responsibility, and informal dispute resolution, not contemporary law enforcement.

While the Levies force earned respect within local communities, it was never equipped — not trained — for the complexities of today's crime, terrorism, digital threats, and urban policing. Many of these officers have never undergone structured, professional police training. Expecting them to perform modern

policing duties without proper preparation is unfair to them — and unsafe for the public.

This is why the ongoing program at Police Training College Quetta is critically important. It must go beyond parade drills and weapons handling. The former Levies personnel need comprehensive training in investigative standards, human rights, evidence preservation, intelligence-led policing, community engagement, and the ethical use of authority.

Equally important is training in First Information Reports (FIRs), complaint handling, victim support, and documentation — the backbone of justice. Without accuracy at the first point of contact, the entire legal chain collapses.

Upgraded hostels, mess facilities, sports grounds, and structured welfare support are welcome steps. A secure, dignified environment produces confident of-

ficers — and confident officers make better policing decisions.

However, modernization must remain continuous, not symbolic. Training must be supported with modern equipment, digital crime management tools, body cameras, forensic support, and performance accountability. Most importantly, officers should learn that policing today is not simply force — it is law, service, and trust.

Balochistan stands at a turning point. Transforming former Levies into professional, community-oriented police officers can rebuild public confidence, improve crime prevention, and strengthen rule of law across the province. But success depends on sustained investment and a mindset shift — from tribal guardianship to professional policing.

Reform is never easy. But in this case, it is necessary — and long overdue.

**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. Constructed under the 1964 Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) initiative by Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey, the highway remains a vital corridor for trade and cross-border travel. Despite its strategic importance, it operates with minimal safety infrastructure, limited traffic enforcement, and almost no dedicated emergency response facilities along most of its length.

Long stretches of the highway reportedly see reckless driving, with vehicles frequently overspeeding and overtaking dangerously. Some passenger coaches have been found operating without functional speedometers, high-lighting gaps in routine vehicle inspections.

Observers also note a lack of patrolling by the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) and minimal enforcement of traffic safety regulations along the route.

Balochistan's road safety record underscores the risks faced by highway users. According to Medical Emergency Response Centers (MERC) 1122, 53,457 accidents occurred on provincial highways between October 2019 and



September 2024, resulting in 73,084 injuries and 1,327 deaths. Motorcycles accounted for 82% of these accidents, followed by small vehicles at 12% and large vehicles at 6%.

MERC 1122 currently operates 22 fully functional centers on major highways including N-25, N-50, N-85, N-65, and N-70.

However, the N-40 remains largely uncovered. MERC 1122, established in October 2019, provides first aid to accident victims, transports them to hospitals, and maintains centralized coordination through its head 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.

Proposals to establish MSC-style service centers along the N-40 including rest areas, repair workshops, washrooms, and medical aid stations have not yet been executed due to shifting administrative priorities and bureaucratic delays.

Observations indicate that some stretches between Lakpass and Taftan remain without hotels,

repair shops, or any first aid facilities, forcing travelers to cover hundreds of kilometers without support in case of accidents or emergencies.

The highway's importance as a trade 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.

Officials warn that without enforcement, monitoring, and operational emergency services, the N-40 remains one of the

province's most dangerous highways.

Authorities have emphasized that the establishment of emergency response centers and enhanced policing along major highways is essential to improve road safety and protect travelers.

However, the N-40 continues to lack sufficient infrastructure despite its critical role in trade and cross-border connectivity.

The N-40 highway remains a crucial artery for commerce and travel in Balochistan. Without proper emergency and safety measures, travelers are left vulnerable to avoidable accidents and fatalities.

## Trump's Peace Plan: Legitimising Israel's Occupation

**Zia ud Din:**

A Peace agreement often loses its credibility when it fails to recognize the rights of the oppressed. This is the case with President Trump's much-surfaced Gaza peace plan. Far from being a genuine step toward peace, it presents a surrender document that legitimizes Israel's long-standing occupation of Palestine. Sadly, this so-called peace plan was endorsed by major Muslim countries, including Pakistan.

While standing with Trump, Netanyahu, accused of war crimes, accepted the plan and also threatened to finish the job if Hamas does not accept the plan wholeheartedly. However, outrage sparked among various analysts when Netanyahu claimed victory in Hebrew language at Tel Aviv. The question arises: How can Trump propose a plan for peace without involving an international arbitrator—the United Nations Organisation? Critics have rejected this plan on various grounds.

First, the plan has no two-state solution. In fact, it blurs the possibility of an independent Palestinian state in the future.

Sadly, Netanyahu has already repudiated the idea of an independent state. Also, President Trump called Palestine recognition by France, Britain, Canada, and Spain a reward to Hamas.

So far, the United States has stopped Israel from occupying the West Bank, but



Photo of an Israeli strike that killed 25 Palestinians including 9 children in Gaza.

some government officials of Netanyahu intended to do so.

Second, Hamas and the Palestine National Authority, the only representatives of Gaza and the West Bank, have been eliminated in the process. Even the United States barred the Palestinian Authority from entering New York during the UNGA annual session. It reflects the colonial plan because peace is mutual; it cannot be imposed at the dictate of ag-

gressors. Zahid Hussain in his essay pointed out that it practically brings to an end the concept of a Palestinian state.

Third, in the post-war administration, both Hamas and PA have no share. The proposed plan contains the demilitarization of Hamas.

They can live in peaceful coexistence after getting amnesty, and also safe passage will be given to those who want to exit. What kind of

peace is this, where those who suffer have no voice in the decisions that shape their future? This is total surrender to be forced on the group.

Fourth, this loss of credibility when the UN was excluded. It discredits the international organization. Although the question are raised about the ineffective role of the UN—unable to stop genocide—its sanctity must prevail. Critics always blamed the

United States. For instance, every time the US vetoed a resolution to stop Israel's evil deeds.

Fifth, Hamas has been given the ultimatum of 72 hours to accept the plan.

It is not a plan but a surrender charter for the group. It means Hamas has no choice but to go with the plan. They are not consulted on their fate.

The Trump-Netanyahu plan has fortified Israel further. It openly advocates

for Greater Israel. Sixth, this plan also outlines that Gaza will be governed by a political committee under the supervision of a Board of Peace which will be headed by Donald Trump and Tony Blair.

Seventh, no future guarantee is mentioned in the proposed framework.

It fails to prevent Israel from occupying. Most important, the aggressor's accountability has not been outlined. In fact, Israel has impunity in its every action. The President assured Tel Aviv that they can do what they want if Hamas

rejects the plan. Eighth, no recognition, no peace. Durable peace hinges on the recognition of Palestine. Both the US and Israel have rejected recognition. Seemingly, they have no plan to recognize Palestine in the near future.

The record of history demonstrates that illegal occupation and peace cannot move together. Peace remains impossible without an end to illegal occupation.

On the positive side of the plan, if this project is implemented, it will end ruthless killing and Gaza genocide.

The aid blockade will be drawn. The supporters of this plan also cited the same reason. The deputy prime minister, Ishaq Dar, also said that the first priority of Pakistan is to end uncontrolled killing of Gazans. He further said that we are on a bid to remove all Netanyahu's excuses to continue war. In the end, occupation, annexation, and illegal settlements cannot run with peace. Two states are the only answer to long-term peace.

This controversial plan is biased and destined to crumble. Gazans cannot be left to the mercy of warmongers. It is a wake-up call for the United States and the World to let Gazans live a free life in their own independent state.

Netanyahu's transgression must not go with impunity. The only solution lies in an independent Palestinian state.

# Italy refuses airbase access to US military aircraft involved in Iran war

**NEWS DESK:** Italy reportedly denied US military aircraft permission to land at its Sigonella air base in Sicily, local sources have confirmed. According to the local newspaper Corriere della Sera, a US flight plan was submitted for several bombers to stop at Sigonella before continuing their journey to the Middle East. However, the plan was submitted without prior authorization or consultation with Italian military authorities. The incident occurred a few days ago while the US planes were already en route.

This development follows Spain's decision on Monday to close its airspace to US planes involved in the Iran conflict. Spain's Defence Minister, Margarita Robles, stated, "We will not authorise the use of Morón and Rota [military bases] for any acts related to the war in Iran."

The further emphasis that Spain had clearly communicated this stance to the US government from the outset.

Crude oil tanker hit by Iranian strike after Trump's latest threat Iran attacked and

set ablaze a fully loaded crude oil tanker off Dubai on Monday, as US President Donald Trump warned the US would obliterate Iran's energy plants and oil wells if it did not open the Strait of Hormuz.

The strike on the Kuwaiti-flagged Al-Salm is the latest in a string of strikes on vessels disallowed to cross the Strait by missiles and explosive air and sea drones in the Gulf and Strait of Hormuz since the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28.

The conflict has spread across the Middle East, killing thousands of civilians in Iran, Lebanon and other Gulf countries, disrupting energy supplies and threatening to send the global economy into a tailspin.

Crude oil prices briefly spiked after the attack on the tanker, which can carry around 2 million barrels of oil worth more than \$200 million, but they have since fallen.

The jump in oil and fuel prices has started to weigh on US household finances and become a political headache for Trump and his



had been able to bring the fire under control following a drone attack on the tanker. No injuries have been reported, they said.

The national average retail price of gasoline crossed \$4 a gallon for the first time in more

than three years on Monday, data from price-tracking service GasBuddy showed, as tightening global supplies push US crude prices above \$101 a barrel.

According to the article, the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security (RUSI) says that Is-

rael has fired approximately 80% of its Arrow 2 and Arrow 3 interceptors, 54% of its David's Sling missiles, and 45% of the American-made THAAD interceptors it operates. Only 20% of Iron Dome interceptors have been used.

estimates that 60% of the THAAD missiles deployed to protect Gulf states from Iranian attacks have already been expended.

Trump seeks to end war without reopening Hormuz

Trump is "willing to end war without reopening Hormuz," according to the Wall Street Journal, citing US officials. Trump and his aides have assessed in recent days that attempting to pry open the chokepoint would push the war beyond the president's four-to-six-week timeline.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt later said Trump wanted to reach a deal with Tehran before an April 6 deadline he set last week after extending an earlier deadline he had set for Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz.

Leavitt said talks with Iran were progressing, adding that what Tehran says publicly differs from what it tells US officials in private. Trump decided that the US should achieve its main goals of crippling Iran's Navy and its missile stocks, winding down the fighting, WSJ reports.

## Trump warns Iran: Make deal or face 'obliteration'

**NEWS DESK:** US President Donald Trump sharply raised the stakes, warning that Washington could unleash widespread destruction on Iran's critical infrastructure if a deal to end hostilities is not reached "shortly".

The warning and increasingly volatile conflict showed no sign of abating on Monday, as fresh strikes, mounting military deployments and stark warnings of escalation underscored the risk of a broader regional and economic crisis.

Trump's threats in-

cluded targeting oil facilities, power plants and even desalination systems that supply drinking water. They came as Washington continued to project confidence about diplomatic progress, even as Tehran publicly rejected US proposals as "unrealistic, illogical and excessive".

At the centre of tensions lies the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global energy artery through which roughly one-fifth of the world's oil passes. Iran has effectively blocked the narrow waterway, triggering fears of prolonged supply dis-

ruption and fuelling a sharp surge in global oil prices. Brent crude climbed to around \$115 per barrel, marking a nearly 60% increase since the war began on February 28, as markets braced for further escalation.

The International Monetary Fund and G7 finance leaders have warned of serious spill-over risks to global economic stability.

"The United States of America is in serious discussions with a NEW AND MORE RESPONSIBLE REGIME to end our Military Operations in Iran," Trump

wrote in a social media post, adding that "great progress" has been made in the talks.

"But, if for any reason a deal is not shortly reached, which it probably will be, and if the Hormuz Strait is not immediately 'Open for Business', we will conclude our lovely stay in Iran by blowing up and completely obliterating all of their Electric Generating Plants, Oil Wells and Kharg Island (and possibly all desalination plants), which we have purposefully not yet 'touched'," he said.

On the battlefield, both sides intensified attacks. Iran launched fresh waves of missiles targeting Israel and struck infrastructure across the Gulf. In Kuwait, an Iranian strike hit a power and desalination plant, killing one worker and injuring 10 soldiers. Saudi Arabia intercepted multiple missiles aimed at its oil-rich Eastern Province, while air defences in the United Arab Emirates shot down a projectile over Dubai. Turkey also reported intercepting a ballistic missile that briefly entered its airspace, highlighting the conflict's expanding geographic reach.



## Two large Chinese container ships transit Strait of Hormuz in 2nd attempt amid Mideast conflict

**NEWS DESK:** Two large container vessels operated by the Chinese shipping giant Cosco transited through the Strait of Hormuz after aborting an initial crossing attempt on Friday amid the Middle East conflict, according to data from MarineTraffic released Monday.

The voyages of two of its ultra-large container vessels, the CSCL Indian Ocean and the CSCL Arctic Ocean, signal "a potential shift in conditions for commercial shipping," the marine monitor said on the US social media company X's platform.

The CSCL Indian Ocean crossed the strait at 14:47pm PKT and the CSCL Arctic Ocean at 2:14pm PKT.

Both vessels are listed as China-owned and are currently headed to Port Klang, Malaysia. MarineTraffic noted the successful transit as the "first confirmed crossing by a major container carrier since the start of the conflict."

The transit could also "be a diplomatic breakthrough between Beijing and Tehran over passage rights through the contested chokepoint," according to Lloyd's List news on X. Business Recorder reports that Beijing expressed "gratitude" on Tuesday as it said three Chinese ships had transited the crucial Strait of Hormuz.

"Following coordination with relevant parties, three Chinese vessels recently transited the Strait of

Hormuz, we express our gratitude to the relevant parties for the assistance provided," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told a regular press conference.

Cosco is one of the world's most dominant maritime entities, holding for total fleet size by deadweight tonnage. The company suspended cargo services to and from several Gulf countries earlier this month.

On Wednesday,

Cosco said that new bookings were open for container transport from Far East countries to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Iraq.

Shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a key route for global trade and energy, has been heavily disrupted since the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran late last month, prompting Tehran to retaliate with strikes on US-linked bases in at least six Gulf nations.

## Pakistan, seven other countries condemn Israeli curbs on Muslim and Christian worship in occupied Jerusalem

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan, along with seven other countries, condemned the restrictions imposed by Israel on the freedom of worship for Muslims and Christians in occupied Jerusalem, the Foreign Office (FO) said on Tuesday.

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

In a joint statement alongside the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the FO condemned and rejected the continued restrictions imposed by Israel on the freedom of worship for Muslims and Christians in occupied Jerusalem.

The restrictions have included preventing Muslim worshippers from accessing Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as well as preventing "the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Custos of the Holy Land from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to celebrate the Palm Sunday Mass."

"These continued Israeli measures constitute a flagrant violation

of international law ... and represent an infringement on the unrestricted right of access to places of worship," the joint statement said.

The ministers rejected the "illegal and restrictive" Israeli measures against Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem and stressed the necessity of respecting the legal and historical status quo in Jerusalem and its Muslim and Christian holy sites. They reiterated that Israel, being an occupying power, held "no sovereignty over occupied Jerusalem".

According to the FO, the ministers also renewed their condemnation of Israel's continued closure of the gates of Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif to worshippers for 30 consecu-

five days, including during Ramadan. They said that the restriction of freedom of worship was a "serious violation of international law, the existing legal and historical status quo, and Israel's obligations as the occupying power".

"They warned of the dangers of these escalatory measures to regional and international peace and security," the statement added.

The foreign ministers also said that the Jerusalem Endowments and Al-Aqsa Mosque Affairs Department, affiliated with the Jordanian Ministry of Aqaf and Islamic Affairs, held the exclusive jurisdiction to administer the mosque's affairs and regulate entry to it.

They called on Is-

rael to immediately cease the closure of the gates, remove access restrictions in the Old City of Jerusalem, and refrain from obstructing Muslim worshippers' access to the mosque.

"They also called on the international community to adopt a firm position that compels Israel to halt its ongoing violations and illegal practices against Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, as well as its violations of the sanctity of those holy places," the statement added.

On Sunday, the Israeli police prevented the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to celebrate Palm Sunday Mass.



## China bans entombing cremated remains in empty flats

**NEWS DESK:** Chinese authorities have banned entombing cremated remains in cheap apartments, a practice that had gained popularity as mourners took advantage of the stubbled housing market to dodge rising funeral costs.

Bone-ash apartments are units in often barely occupied residential complexes used by some families as resting places for their loved ones' remains.

They can be cheaper than a public cemetery plot, according to local media, as well as giving families more control over the site.

Acquiring one "kills two birds with one stone" — it's an investment and eases the process of carrying out ritual practices.

But regulations that came into force on Monday explicitly ban

the use of residential dwellings specifically for the interment of ashes.

Bone-ash apartments are often identifiable by sealed-off windows or closed curtains, traditionally visited by media reports.

A resident quoted by the Communist Party's Legal Daily newspaper described peering inside an apartment in his estate to see two black boxes and a black-and-white portrait, a

typical arrangement in China for commemorating the dead.

The ban comes days before the Qingming Festival, also known as Tomb Sweeping Day, when families traditionally visit relatives' graves to tidy them and make ritual offerings.

Human remains are only permitted to be buried in designated areas such as public cemeteries, according to the State Council, China's cabinet.

Demand for cemetery plots is increasing though, as China's population ages and deaths outpace births.

In 2020, funerals cost nearly half of the country's average annual salary, according to a survey by British insurance firm SunLife.

On Tuesday, a market watchdog announced new rules to tackle fraud and a lack of transparency in funeral pricing to "reduce the burden of funerals on the masses".

## 'Practical steps being taken to improve public hospitals, upgrade infrastructure'

SARGODHA (INP): Deputy Commissioner of Sargodha Hussain Ahmad Raza Chaudhry said that practical steps are being taken to improve public hospitals, upgrade infrastructure, and provide modern medical facilities so that citizens can access better healthcare at their doorstep.

During his visit to Tehsil Head Quarters (THQ) Hospital Chak no 90-South on Tuesday, he reviewed the condi-

tion of the facility, particularly a portion of the building that has been declared unsafe.

The Chief Executive Officer, Health Dr Saifur Saif and Executive Engineer (Buildings) ac-

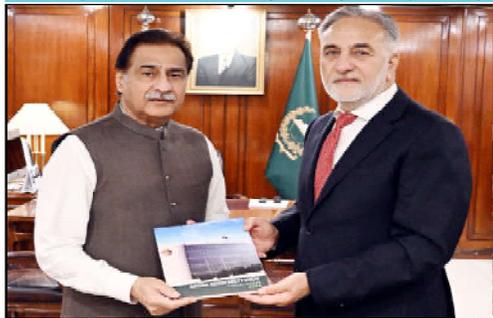
companied him. The DC conducted a detailed inspection of the deteriorating structure and directed the concerned officials to initiate immediate revamping and repair work on a pri-

ority basis to ensure the safety of patients and hospital staff. Officials informed that an estimated cost of approximately Rs. 160 million has been proposed for the revamping and repair project.

He stated that, in line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, providing quality and safe healthcare services to the public remains a top priority for the govern-

ment. He further added that efforts are being made to strengthen the healthcare system by ensuring cleanliness in hospitals, the availability of medicines, and the regu-

lar attendance of medical staff. The Deputy Commissioner directed the relevant authorities to closely monitor ongoing development works and report any issues promptly.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman NAB Lt. Gen. (R) Nazir Ahmed Butt presented NAB Annual Report-2025 to Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at Parliament House

## Pakistan's active mediation role to resolve Iran conflict widely praised in KP

PESHAWAR (INP): International relations and political experts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tuesday widely praised Pakistan's active mediation role in efforts to resolve the Iran conflict and restore peace in the Middle East. Former ambassador Manzoor Haq told APP that Pakistan enjoys cordial relations with both Iran and the United States, making its mediation efforts crucial in easing tensions between the two countries. He emphasized that diplomacy and dialogue remain the most effective means for resolving disputes between states. He said that the recent visits of foreign ministers from brotherly countries, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Türkiye, to Islamabad and their meetings with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister underscored Pakistan's growing importance in addressing the evolving Middle East situation.

## Motorway Police inspector killed after speeding truck slammed into him

ABBOTTABAD (INP): In a tragic incident, Inspector Yasir Arafat of the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) was killed on the spot after a speeding truck slammed into him from behind while he was assisting at a traffic accident on the Hazara Motorway near Abbottabad.

According to the Motorway Police spokesman, Inspector Yasir Arafat was performing his duty by providing help at the scene of an earlier accident when the high-speed truck struck him. The impact was so severe that he lost his life instantly.

Initial investigations suggest that the accident occurred due to the negligence and reckless driving of the truck driver. Legal proceedings against the driver have been initiated. The deceased inspector has left behind a grieving wife and four young children.

## Pakistan begins exporting food items to ME countries to help address shortages

ISLAMABAD (INP): Amid the ongoing US-Israel conflict with Iran, Pakistan has begun exporting food items to Middle Eastern countries to help address shortages caused by disrupted maritime routes.

According to a Ministry of Commerce official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, six shipments of food supplies have been sent to Kuwait, which is further distributing them to other countries in the region. The official added that daily meetings are being held to closely monitor and assess the evolving situation. The exports were initiated on the directives of the prime minister.

A senior Commerce Ministry official emphasized that strict measures are in place to ensure only surplus items are transported, preventing any potential shortages within Pakistan.

## Ishaq Dar departs for Beijing as Pakistan steps up Middle East mediation efforts

ISLAMABAD (INP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar departed for Beijing today (Tuesday) as part of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to mediate and reduce tensions in the Middle East.

The visit comes after a four-nation meeting held in Islamabad, where foreign ministers from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Egypt discussed the evolving situation in the Middle East. According to a statement from the Foreign Office, Dar will visit China on March 31 at the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

The visit aims to facilitate detailed discussions on regional developments, as well as bilateral and global issues of mutual interest. The statement also reaffirmed that Pakistan and China remain "all-weather strategic cooperative partners."

## Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) urged to intervene against politically motivated convictions of Kashmiri women

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP) has urged the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to take urgent notice of the unlawful conviction and sentencing of three Kashmiri women activists under India's draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The JKDFP Acting President, Mehmoed Ahmed Saghar, in a letter addressed to OIC Secretary General Hissen Brahim Taha, expressed grave concern over the life imprisonment awarded to prominent resistance leader Aasiya Andrabi and 30-year

sentences handed to her associates Fehmeeda Sofi and Nabida Nasreen on March 24, 2026. He stated that the court failed to prove any involvement of the women in acts of violence, terming the verdict politically motivated and aimed at silencing dissenting voices.

The letter highlighted that the charges against the women were primarily based on speeches and social media expressions reflecting political opinions and historical perspectives on the Kashmir dispute, which were criminalized under the UAPA. It noted that the law has been widely criticized for violating international human rights stan-

dards, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which India is a signatory. Saghar emphasized that the verdict reflects a broader pattern of judicial repression in the occupied territory, where thousands of Kashmiris, including political leaders and human rights activists, remain imprisoned. He pointed out that several prominent figures, including Dr. Qasim Fattoo and Muhammad Yasin Malik, have also been handed life sentences, while senior leader Shabbir Ahmed Shah continues to languish in jail despite serious health concerns.

The DFP maintained that Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally recognized disputed territory and its people have the right to freely express political views and pursue their right to self-determination. It warned that criminalizing political dissent and historical discourse would further shrink democratic space and undermine the rule of law in the territory.

The party called upon the OIC to investigate the misuse of UAPA against peaceful political activists, press for a review of the convictions, and urge India to align its laws with international human rights obligations. It stressed that urgent international intervention is essential to safeguard the rights of Kashmiri political prisoners and prevent further violations.



ISLAMABAD: The Hon'ble Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mr. Justice Yahya Afridi, chairing the Tenth Interactive Session to Review Progress on Judicial Reforms at the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

## Met Office forecasts rainfall across Pakistan from tomorrow to April 04

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Met Office has forecast rainfall in Punjab, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Kashmir from tomorrow to April 04. The weather advisory board predicted widespread rain, wind, and thunderstorms across various parts of the country from April 01 to 4, while in Sindh from April 02 to 04. According to the advisory, a westerly weather system will approach the southern western areas of

Balochistan on April 1 and continue affecting several regions until April 4, bringing heavy rainfall and hailstorms in isolated areas. The PMD said that several Balochistan districts including Panjgur, Turbat, Kech, Awaran, Makran Coast and Lasbella, are likely to receive heavy rain, while thunderstorms, along with isolated hailstorms.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, rain and thunderstorms are expected in districts including Chitral, Dir,

Swat, and Kalam. Snowfall is predicted for mountainous areas. Several districts of Punjab and Islamabad are also expected to receive rain with strong winds and thunderstorms.

Murree, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Sargodha may receive rainfall, while heavy rain is likely in Dera Ghazi Khan and adjacent areas. Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir will also experience rain, wind, and thunderstorms, while snowfall ex-

pected in mountainous regions. Some areas may receive heavy rain and hailstorms. The PMD said that parts of Sindh, including Karachi, Thatta, Badin, Hyderabad, and Sukkur, are likely to receive rain, wind, and thunderstorms with isolated hailstorms from April 02 to 04. The weather department has added that daytime temperatures are expected to fall across the country. The weather system may persist even after April 04.

## Pakistan begins exporting food items to ME countries to help address shortages

ISLAMABAD (INP): Amid the ongoing US-Israel conflict with Iran, Pakistan has begun exporting food items to Middle Eastern countries to help address shortages caused by disrupted maritime routes.

According to a Ministry of Commerce official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, six shipments of food supplies have been sent to Kuwait, which is further distributing them to other countries in the region. The official added that daily meetings are being held to closely monitor and assess the evolving situation. The exports were initiated on the directives of the prime minister.

A senior Commerce Ministry official emphasized that strict measures are in place to ensure only surplus items are transported, preventing any potential shortages within Pakistan.

## Ishaq Dar departs for Beijing as Pakistan steps up Middle East mediation efforts

ISLAMABAD (INP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar departed for Beijing today (Tuesday) as part of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to mediate and reduce tensions in the Middle East.

The visit comes after a four-nation meeting held in Islamabad, where foreign ministers from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Egypt discussed the evolving situation in the Middle East. According to a statement from the Foreign Office, Dar will visit China on March 31 at the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

The visit aims to facilitate detailed discussions on regional developments, as well as bilateral and global issues of mutual interest. The statement also reaffirmed that Pakistan and China remain "all-weather strategic cooperative partners."



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, holding a meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mr. Sohail Afridi at the Finance Division today.

## Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) steps up action against illegal housing schemes

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) has stepped up action against illegal housing schemes after the commissioner directed strict legal measures against developers and issued a public advisory to protect investors.

According to an RDA spokesman, said multiple violations of the Punjab Development Authorities Private Housing Schemes Rules, 2021 had been identified, including the launch of schemes without prior approval, unauthorised development and sale of plots, non-submission of mandatory unauthorised schemes operating within its controlled areas. He added that the

violations were detected through inspections, public complaints and monitoring of advertisements across print, electronic and social media platforms. In line with the commissioner's directives, enforcement measures have been accelerated, including the issuance of notices, registration of offices and project sites, demolition of illegal structures, bans on property transactions and referral of cases to the Federal Investigation Agency's Cyber Crime Wing and other relevant bodies.

The RDA warned all sponsors and developers of illegal housing schemes to immediately cease unlawful activities, including development, marketing, advertisement, booking and sale of plots, or face further legal action without notice. The authority also advised the public, including overseas Pakistanis, investors and property dealers, to avoid investing in unapproved schemes and to verify project status with the RDA before making any transaction. It clarified that terms such as "file submitted", "under process", or "under scrutiny" did not constitute approval.

Citizens were encouraged to consult the official RDA website for verification and further information.



# Ban on low-grade diesel lifted for harvest

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan on Monday allowed the import of cheaper and low-quality high-speed diesel (HSD), which it had banned a decade ago.

Additionally, it would dispatch ships through the Strait of Hormuz with Iranian permission to increase diesel imports for the upcoming harvest season.

Informed sources told Dawn that Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb-led Special Cabinet Committee on Petroleum Prices allowed exemption for import of 500ppm (sulphur particles per million) diesel cargo, which is described as Euro-II-III, in view of tight availability of 10ppm HSD (Euro-5) standard in the market.

Pakistan had banned the import of 500ppm diesel in 2015 with formal effect from 2017 to introduce 10ppm product as its key export, the Kuwait Petroleum Company, upgraded its refining.

The committee was told that upcoming harvesting season required higher diesel stocks and Euro-5 product was either very expensive or



Iranian permission being secured to route imports via Strait of Hormuz.

This also envisaged 56-7 per barrel of lower import premium when compared to \$26-27 per barrel on 10ppm diesel. The Committee granted temporary relaxation in import specifications. Moreover, the committee asked the relevant authorities to obtain an approval certificate from Iran for its ships to pass through the Strait of Hormuz to lift products from Kuwait for immediate imports.

Such a certification would also reduce insurance costs, as shipping lines require documentation for their premium calculations. Pakistan's HSD consumption during the April-May harvest is substantially higher than in normal months, and stock build-up was considered important to bolster market confidence and avoid hoarding.

In the long term, the committee noted a proposal on fuel specification and pricing optimisation to enhance efficiency in domestic consumption patterns and support local refining capacity.

It was decided that the proposal would be examined further in consultation with stakeholders, including refineries and oil marketing companies, before being brought back for consideration.

An official statement said the committee undertook a comprehensive review of petroleum product stocks, supply arrangements, and import plans, and noted that the current supply position was

stable, with diesel stocks providing approximately 23-24 days of cover, while petrol availability remained comfortable.

The committee was informed that crude oil stocks currently provide around 11 days of cover, with additional cargoes in transit and committed volumes expected to sustain refinery operations and product availability through April.

The Petroleum Division briefed the committee that import plans for April were being actively managed, with significant volumes already secured through commercial and government-to-government engagements.

Refinery operations are being maintained at optimal levels, with efforts underway to maximise throughput and ensure conversion of crude into refined products to support domestic demand.

The committee was informed that international oil markets remain highly volatile and tight, with notable increases in benchmark prices and cargo premiums in recent days.

## Digital trade dispute fractures WTO unity

**NEWS DESK:** World Trade Organisation talks collapsed on Monday without reaching an agreement on a reform plan or extending a moratorium on e-commerce, adding further pressure on the trade body, which is becoming increasingly marginalised by economic nationalism.

The four-day ministerial talks in Cameroon's capital, Yaounde, ended in the early hours, with Brazil blocking a bid by the US and others to extend a moratorium on duties on electronic transmissions such as digital downloads and streaming.

"It marks another crack in the foundations of the WTO system," said Andrew Wilson, Deputy Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce, urging delegates to renew the moratorium before states hit digital services with new charges. Expectations for progress had been low before the talks.



but there were hopes the moratorium — which has been regularly renewed since 1998 — would at least be extended.

US and allies fail to secure long-term moratorium amid rising economic nationalism. That ultimately proved impossible. Trade ministers could not agree to extend it beyond two years, which was not enough for the United States, diplomats said.

US officials and business groups voiced frustration, and Britain's Business and Trade Secretary Peter Kyle called the failure to reach consensus a "major setback for global trade".

The talks were deemed a test of the WTO's relevance after a year of huge trade turmoil and more recent disruptions due to the US-Israeli war on bilateral initiatives, and plurilaterals," said Dmitry Gрозubinski, executive director of the Geneva Trade Platform think tank.

Agreeing on an e-commerce moratorium was seen as key to securing US support for the WTO, which, under President Donald Trump, has retreated from global multilateral bodies.

WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said the trade body hoped the moratorium could be restored and that Brazil and the US were trying to reach an agreement on it.

## New oil pricing formula opposed

**NEWS DESK:** An emerging task force over corridors is likely to push the country towards a fuel crisis at a time when the government is struggling to manage supplies and stave off disruption threatened by the Middle East war.

Sources told The Express Tribune that the former petroleum minister had entered the fray after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif formed a committee to review the existing oil pricing formula, which had been rejected by the oil industry with a warning that it could trigger a crisis in the country amid tensions in the Gulf.

Sources revealed that the ex-petroleum minister, who was heading the committee, proposed to delink the inventory cost-based pricing formula from the international market. Under the current mechanism, oil prices are linked with global markets and are revised every week.

So far, current Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik and the oil industry have successfully managed oil supplies, though some countries are facing severe scarcity due to the regional disruption. Russia has announced it will halt oil shipments across the world from April 1, which may worsen the crisis.

Pakistan's leadership has also struggled to convince Iran to allow safe passage to its oil cargoes. Later, in a tweet, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar announced that Iran has allowed supply of 20 oil cargoes to Pakistan to help avert shortage.

The smooth availability of petroleum products in Pakistan is a significant accomplishment, especially given the external pressure stemming from fluctuating international prices and supply chain constraints.

However, this delicate equilibrium now faces potential risks. According to industry sources, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) held consultations with oil sector stakeholders on Sunday evening and Monday morning regarding proposed changes in the pricing formula.

The response from the industry was unequivocal. All major players unanimously rejected the proposal, warning that abrupt policy changes would severely disrupt the supply chain and undermine the sustainability of an industry already operating under significant financial and operational pressures.

Recent attempts by certain quarters to intervene in petroleum pricing mechanisms and broader policy frameworks threaten to destabilise the very system that has ensured supply continuity. Proposals that appear attractive on the surface may, in practice, have serious unintended consequences, they said.

The oil supply chain operates on commercial viability. No oil marketing company can sustainably procure products at higher international prices and sell them domestically at artificially suppressed rates.

Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz and damage to regional infrastructure had caused the largest disruption to the global market in history, according to the International Energy Agency. Much would depend on how long the war lasts, how far it spreads and how much damage it in-

fluctuates on infrastructure and supply chains.

The IMF said low-income countries were at particular risk of food insecurity due to higher food and fertiliser prices and may need more external support, even as many advanced economies were scaling back their international assistance.

"Although the war could shape the global economy in different

## Port Qasim cargo rises 8.2% despite fewer ships

**NEWS DESK:** The Port Qasim Authority (PQA) has reported a significant increase in cargo throughput across its terminals for the July-March period of fiscal year 2025-26, with total cargo handled rising to 36,548 million tonnes during the same period last year, marking an 8.2% growth.

Key terminals contributed strongly to this growth, with Pakistan International Container Terminal (PICT) recording a surge from 3,533 million tonnes last year to 5,430 million tonnes, while Huaneng Fuyun Port & Shipping Private (HFPS) rose from 803 million tonnes to 1,203 million tonnes.

Other terminals, including Faruq Akbar Portia Marine Terminal (FAP) and Engro Vopak Terminal (EVT), also showed healthy increases, reflecting operational efficiency and expanded handling capacity.

Conversely, some terminals like Engro Energy Terminal (EET) and Pakistan Gas Port LNG terminal (PGCL) experienced slight declines in cargo volumes, highlighting localised challenges.

The overall increase in cargo volume, despite fluctuating terminal performance, signals improved efficiency, with larger volumes being handled per vessel.

The PQA's strategic focus on enhancing infrastructure and operational capabilities continues to strengthen its role in regional maritime trade.

Despite fewer ships, terminals managed to maintain or increase cargo throughput, indicating higher efficiency and larger volumes being handled per vessel.

Ongoing Middle East tensions have also supported higher cargo volumes in some segments, as rerouting of trade flows and precautionary stockpiling have increased shipment sizes and throughput at regional ports, PQA officials said.

"Middle East tensions have boosted cargo volumes at Port Qasim Authority as vessels are rerouted to safer ports," commented PQA Public Relations Officer Asad Warsi.

While overall operations continue smoothly, certain shipments, particularly petroleum products and containerised cargo, have experienced variations in volume due to rerouting of vessels and adjustments in shipping schedules.

## 'All roads lead to higher prices and slower growth': IMF says Iran war is dimming outlook for many economies

**NEWS DESK:** The war in the Middle East has caused serious disruption to the economies of frontline countries, and is dimming the outlook for many economies that had just started to recover from previous crises, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned on Monday.

In a blog published by the global lender's top economists, the IMF said the war started by US and Israeli strikes against Iran on February 28 was causing a global, but asymmetric shock and leading to tighter financial conditions.

Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz and damage to regional infrastructure had caused the largest disruption to the global market in history, according to the International Energy Agency. Much would depend on how long the war lasts, how far it spreads and how much damage it in-



fluctuates on infrastructure and supply chains.

The authors wrote, noting that sustained oil-price spikes have historically tended to push inflation higher and growth lower.

The war would also fuel expectations that inflation will remain higher for longer, which could translate into higher wages and prices, making it harder to contain the shock without a sharper slowdown, they said.

The IMF said it will release a fuller assessment in its 'World Economic Outlook', to be published on April 14, during the IMF and World Bank spring meetings in Washington.

If elevated energy and food prices persist, they will fuel inflation worldwide,

# Raza admits hosting visitors but cites lack of awareness of new PSL rules

**NEWS DESK:** Zimbabwe all-rounder Sikandar Raza has said that neither he nor Lahore Qalandars captain Shaheen Shah Afridi were aware of the updated Pakistan Super League (PSL) security protocol prohibiting players from hosting close relatives or friends in their hotel rooms.

Raza made the remarks at a post-match press conference on Sunday following Lahore Qalandars' four-wicket defeat to Karachi Kings in PSL 11 at Gaddafi Stadium.

According to a letter sent by Punjab police to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), four visitors — described as close relatives or friends of Raza — were allegedly escorted to his room No. 865 on the eighth floor of the team hotel on Saturday night, despite repeated refusals by the PCB's security and anti-corruption unit.

The Lahore Qalandars liaison officer and team owner Sameen Rana reportedly made requests to allow the meeting, which were turned down.

However, the visitors were taken to the room at around 11:05pm and remained there until



12:55am, prompting the Lahore police to lodge a formal complaint with the PCB, terming it a serious breach of established security protocols.

Raza, who was born in Pakistan, clarified that he had always followed previous PSL standard operating procedures (SOPs), which allowed family and friends to meet players inside the

hotel, though players were barred from leaving the premises.

"By birth I am a Pakistani, so some family members or friends have to meet me and it has happened in the last five editions of the PSL," he said.

"In the past the protocols were that we cannot go out of the hotel to meet anyone but someone can meet us in

the hotel, and that I had fully respected."

He added that he personally knew the visitors and had requested Shaheen to bring them to his room because he could not meet them in the business centre.

Shaheen did not do any forceful act. I requested him to please bring them... so I am the culprit for that," Raza said, emphasising that

their IDs were handed over to security and they had brought bats for him to select from.

The 39-year-old insisted that Lahore Qalandars were in touch with the PCB over the matter and maintained that he was holding at long on where dew was an issue.

Shaheen fined Raza in a statement issued on Wednesday, Lahore Qalandars said it had taken strong notice of the reported incident and initiated a compre-

hensive internal review to establish the facts and ensure alignment with PSL regulations.

The franchise confirmed that an isolating incident had occurred at the team hotel but said it had been overstated in public discourse and amplified beyond its actual context.

As a voluntary disciplinary measure, the franchise imposed a fine

of \$1 million on captain Shaheen for his involvement and submitted a detailed response along with its observations to the PCB.

The franchise said the matter arose from a misunderstanding rather than a deliberate attempt to violate procedures, reiterating its respect for all security protocols and commitment to strict adherence to SOPs. It also stressed the need for clearer communication of updated protocols to prevent similar incidents in future.

Expressing regret over the publicity surrounding the episode, Lahore Qalandars said the issue had unnecessarily affected the reputation of both the franchise and the PSL at domestic and international levels.

As of Monday, the PCB had not issued any official decision or statement regarding the disciplinary action against the players or the franchise.

The incident has once again highlighted the strict security measures in place for PSL 11, which is being played amid various challenges, including a fuel crisis that has forced several matches behind closed doors.

## Solano backs local talent ahead of Myanmar qualifier

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan's head coach Nolberto Solano expressed optimism ahead of the AFC Asian Cup qualifier against Myanmar scheduled to be played here at the Pakistan Sports Complex on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference on Monday, the former Peru international said preparations had gone well despite the challenges facing football in the country.

"Preparation has been good. These boys are really exciting, really humble, easy to work with. They want to learn, they want to do well," Solano said.

"Despite all the issues around football in Pakistan, they remain positive.

They are looking forward to getting a good result against Myanmar — because that will keep our confidence going. We are building a strong squad for the future."

The coach said his

plan was to give local players the opportunity to prove themselves at the international level.

"Of course, I know the diaspora players will play by now. But I want these local boys to understand how important it is to look after themselves — whatever the system here, not playing professionally every weekend, they need to prepare themselves," the former Newcastle United midfielder said.

"The idea is to build that — to introduce more players into the national team setup. I know Abdullah, I know Otis, all the diaspora players, what they can do. But these local boys also need to be given that chance."

Solano acknowledged the quality of the opposition, noting that Myanmar recently faced a difficult result against Afghanistan, where they triumphed 2-1.

"Myanmar are a very good team — they

just had a difficult result at home against Afghanistan a few days ago. But we are always preparing," he said.

The coach emphasised that the match forms part of a longer-term strategy, with no official competition scheduled for Pakistan until 2027.

"It is always really exciting when fixtures like this arrive. We are looking forward to the match. As usual, it will be a very difficult match — Myanmar showed a very good result just a few days ago. But yes, we are prepared and we continue our preparation."

Solano said, "We have a plan for this year. That is the reason you can see a lot of local boys here — we are given the opportunity to show this nation what they can do, because they have a lot of quality."

He added: "We have a plan for Pakistan, and as everyone knows,

we do not have an official competition until 2027. This year is about giving chances to different players, seeing how they respond at national team level."

When asked about the absence of Shaheeb Durrani, Solano explained the decision was related to injury and a desire to assess other players.

"The plan for this match was also to look at other opportunities, other players. I know Shaheeb very well — he has been doing well for us. But unfortunately, due to injury, we had to call him in at the last minute. Samad had to leave. I told him he just needs to recover."

Solano said, "I know he is very disappointed to miss the match — but it is part of the game, it is football. The message to all players is: always be ready. The national team journey is a very long one — when you start qualifying games, it takes two years."

## New Zealand thrash Chile for first win over South American team

**NEWS DESK:** New Zealand thrashed 10-man Chile 4-1 on Monday in Auckland in their last home match before the World Cup, their first win ever against South American opposition.

Fellow World Cup qualifiers Cape Verde earlier won a penalty shootout against Finland at Auckland's Eden Park, having drawn their match 1-1.

Chile beat Cape Verde 4-2 on Friday but started poorly against the hosts with Dario Osorio sent off in the 27th minute after two yellow cards in quick succession.

The All Whites capitalised straight away, with Costa Barbarouses lashing home a volley from a 31st-minute corner, before Elijah Just added a second in the 40th minute.

It was 3-0 in the 60th minute when Jesse Randall scored from close range, and a fourth was fired home by substitute Ben Waine in the 71st minute. Gonzalo Tapia scored a consolation for Chile in the 83rd minute after a swift counter-attack.

New Zealand will face Belgium, Iran and Egypt in the group phase this summer in North America.

Cape Verde came from a goal down to draw



1-1 with Finland, before winning the penalty shootout. Finland were coming off a 2-0 win over New Zealand and went into half-time with the lead, Naatan Skytta scoring with the last kick of the half. Cape Verde struck back in the 67th minute from a corner, Sidney Cabral finding Kelvin Pires at the far post to head home.

Marcio Rosa made two saves in the penalty shootout to secure Cape Verde the victory.

Cape Verde played Spain, Saudi Arabia and Uruguay in their World Cup bowl.

On Sunday, Desire Doue scored twice as France showcased their attacking firepower and strength in depth with a 3-1 friendly win over Colombia, in their final outing before coach Didier Deschamps

names his World Cup squad. Fielding an entirely different lineup from the first-choice side who beat Brazil 2-1 on Thursday, Les Bleus still proved too strong for Colombia, with Doue's double and another goal from Marcus Thuram securing a comfortable victory. Jaminton Campuz pulled one back for Colombia, who were quickly overwhelmed despite a decent start.

So in the 11th minute, Deschamps was criticised for favouring cold calculation over flair, France over the course of two warm-up matches combined style with efficiency and head towards the June 11th 19 World Cup with growing certainty ahead of Deschamps' final tournament in charge.

"What we've produced over these two games is really interest-

ing. We can't wait to be in June," said Rayan Cherki, who looked comfortable in France's 4-2-3-1 formation.

Deschamps was equally positive in his assessment.

"A very positive sporting assessment taken if a penalty is imposed. At Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore Qalandars batter has stood firmly in support of their player, and according to sources, he admitted there is room for improvement across all departments. "We haven't really come together as a team in the first two games... not just in one area but overall."

"In T20s, players can fail for a couple of innings and then come back strongly," he said. "We're not talking about form slump — it's about giving them confidence to trust their game. When they perform, the rest of us can build on that and put pressure on the opposition."

## Labuschagne backs team to improve in PSL 11

**NEWS DESK:** Hyderabad Kingsmen captain Marnus Labuschagne says his first experience in the Pakistan Super League (PSL 11) has been "exciting", despite his side losing their opening two matches.

The Australia international, featuring in the PSL for the first time, believes the new franchise is still finding its rhythm as players adapt to each other's styles.

"It's been a great experience... we're a new team and it's been exciting getting to know everyone," Labuschagne said.

"I think for us, it's about confidence and getting to know each other's games. We need a good start with both bat and ball. Once we get ourselves into a good position and put pressure on the opposition, we'll be in a strong position to win matches."

Responding to concerns over Hyderabad Kingsmen's bowling attack, he admitted there is room for improvement across all

departments. "We haven't really come together as a team in the first two games... not just in one area but overall."

"In T20s, players can fail for a couple of innings and then come back strongly," he said. "We're not talking about form slump — it's about giving them confidence to trust their game. When they perform, the rest of us can build on that and put pressure on the opposition."

Labuschagne said, "We have two of the best young players in Pakistan opening for us, Maaz and Saim. It's about giving them confidence to trust their game. When they perform, the rest of us can build on that and put pressure on the opposition."

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## Fakhar Zaman denies ball-tampering charge in PSL match

**NEWS DESK:** There is a looming threat of a two-match ban on Fakhar Zaman over allegations of ball tampering. The match referee has completed the hearing and informed the concerned parties of the decision, which is expected to be announced on Tuesday.

The Lahore Qalandars batter has once again denied accepting the charges.

Meanwhile, the Lahore Qalandars team has stood firmly in support of their player, and according to sources, he admitted there is room for improvement across all



umpire took the ball from Haris and replaced it, while also awarding a 5-run penalty against Lahore Qalandars. As a result, Karachi Kings' target in the final over was reduced from 14 to 9 runs, which they successfully chased in just three balls.

This action was taken under PSL Playing Conditions Clause 41.3, which gives umpires the authority to frequently and closely inspect the ball if they suspect any attempt to

alter its condition. Under Clause 41.3.5.1, the batter at the crease has the right to choose a replacement ball from a selection of six balls with varying degrees of wear.

According to Clause 41.3.5.3, if umpires can identify the player(s) responsible for altering the ball's condition and the batting side requests a replacement, a 4-run penalty is awarded to the batting team.

Earlier, on Sunday night, the Pakistan

Cricket Board stated in a press release that Fakhar Zaman had violated PSL Playing Conditions Article 41.3. He has been charged under Article 2.14 of the Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which constitutes a Level 3 offense involving any action that alters the condition of the ball. Fakhar Zaman had also denied the allegations during the initial hearing before match referee Roshan Mahanama.

# Provinces to share oil subsidy burden under NFC formula

**NEWS DESK:** In a significant development, the provinces have finally agreed to share the burden of the oil subsidy being passed on to local consumers amid prevailing global economic challenges, while the government shelved the issue of proposed lockdowns in the country.

The decisions were made in a crucial meeting presided over by President Asif Ali Zardari on Mon-day. Besides Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, federal ministers and all four chief ministers.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi's presence was considered significant, as he usually does not attend such meetings due to the political differences of his party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), with the ruling alliance.

"The issue of proposed smart lockdowns was shelved, while provinces have agreed to share the burden of the oil subsidy being



given to the people according to their share in the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award," a participant of the meeting told Dawn.

He said the issue of proposed smart lockdowns was discussed and would continue to be considered in the days to come.

Pakistan is one of the countries facing fuel crisis due to the ongoing US-Israel war in Iran and subsequent attacks of the latter on oil-producing Gulf states.

Earlier, the provinces had expressed their inability to contribute about Rs200 billion to the Ministry of Finance to shield consumers across the country from further hikes in petroleum prices.

Both Punjab and Sindh — the two largest provinces, supposed to share more than Rs102bn and about Rs60bn, respectively — had instead suggested pass-

ing global prices on to the domestic market to create a price signal for behavioural change.

Meanwhile, a press release issued by the Presidency said that President Zardari had directed that, amid oil and gas supply pressures, escalating energy costs, and the evolving regional environment, all possible measures should be taken to ease the burden of rising prices on the common man, especially for essential goods and services.

The meeting was briefed on the steps being taken by the governments of the four provinces, as well as Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK, to manage price pressures, ensure the availability of essential supplies, and mitigate the impact on the public, enabling a coordinated national response.

It also reviewed the broader regional situation and its potential effects on Pakistan's security environment, economic outlook, and food security. The meeting was assured that, despite the global crisis, timely decisions had ensured no disruption to fuel supply, and that adequate fuel stocks were currently available, with arrangement for future needs also underway.

The meeting was informed that proposals to increase oil prices had repeatedly been rejected by the prime minister, and that funds saved through austerity measures were being channelled towards public relief. It was noted that austerity efforts had begun with the government cutting down its own expenditures, including cuts to the development budget and the immediate grounding of 60 per cent of official vehicles. President Zardari reiterated that economically vulnerable people would not be left alone in this difficult time. He directed that co-ordinated decision-making be ensured, with alignment between economic management, energy planning, food security measures, and security preparedness.

## PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar's WhatsApp account hacked

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Tuesday said his WhatsApp account had been hacked, warning the public to ignore any financial requests made from it.

In a statement posted on X, Gohar said his WhatsApp number was hacked this morning at around 11:00 am, adding that the account had since been deleted from his phone.

He said that hackers were sending messages requesting money and urged people to disregard any such financial demands, saying that he had approached the relevant authorities regarding the matter.

While speaking to the media, he said, "I was informed that my WhatsApp was hacked this morning

I am concerned about a possible information leak. I have reported the matter to the FIA and also to Ifone, and I have sent an email as advised by the FIA Cyber Wing. I have also contacted WhatsApp via email."

He further added, "The account is still showing as active, and I do not know why this has happened, as there was nothing unusual on my phone."

I am part of many groups, so naturally, I am concerned about my data."

"If a WhatsApp account is hacked, there should be an immediate solution — there should be an option to report or block it instantly with a single button", he says.

Earlier in January, Pakistan's National Cyber Emergency Re-

sponse Team had issued a nationwide advisory warning of a sharp rise in WhatsApp account hijacking incidents, saying the attacks were active, widespread and targeting users across all demographics.

Later, the matter was discussed in the National Assembly as members expressed serious concern over the rising incidents of digital and cyber scams across the country, with lawmakers from all party lines calling for urgent policy formulation to curb such crimes.

Speaker Ayaz Sadiq disclosed that his voice had been impersonated to fraudulently seek money from citizens, promising assurances from the government that action and legislation were underway to counter organised digital crime.

The election petition in which he alleged that the respondent had manipulated and forged Forms-45 and -47 to declare the respondent a returned candidate.

Khokhar had asked the tribunal to set aside the impugned notification and declare the petitioner a returned candidate from NA-127.

The election petition in which he alleged that the respondent had manipulated and forged Forms-45 and -47 to declare the respondent a returned candidate.

He said Pakistan is committed to providing all possible facilitation for result-oriented dialogue, while



## Tribunal dismisses petition against info minister Tarar's win from Lahore's NA-127

**NEWS DESK:** An election tribunal on Tuesday dismissed an election petition against Information Minister Attaullah Tarar's victory from NA-127 in the 2024 general elections as non-maintainable.

The decision was announced by the tribunal, comprising retired justice Rana Zahid Mehmood, on the election petition filed by PTI-backed independent candidate Zaeer Abbas Khokhar, who had contested against Tarar. Khokhar had lost his election to Tarar with a margin of 15,980 votes as the latter bagged 68,210 votes against 82,230 of the former.

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had also contested the 2024 general election from the same constituency; however, he stood third with 15,005 votes. The tribunal dis-

missed the petition on technical grounds, declaring it not maintainable for failing to comply with statutory requirements under the Election Act 2017.

In his petition, Khokhar had alleged the impugned notification of the respondent's victory was a result of "corrupt and illegal practices" committed on the polling day.

He alleged that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had manipulated and forged Forms-45 and -47 to declare the respondent a returned candidate.

Khokhar had asked the tribunal to set aside the impugned notification and declare the petitioner a returned candidate from NA-127.

The KP Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) said that five members of a family were killed and four were injured in a house collapse in Havellian tehsil, Abbottabad, in the small hours of Monday. They died in a roof-collapse incident. A Wapda employee was killed after a tree fell on him in the same tehsil. Rescue 1122 said a motorcyclist, who was a Wapda lineman, was on his way to duty when a tree fell on him due to strong winds on Lora Link Road. The accident was so sudden and severe that he died on the spot and was buried under the tree, it added.

Separately, Bannu reported two deaths, taking the two-day toll to eight. In the district, two roof-collapse incidents left as many chil-

dren dead and one woman and a child injured. Likewise, two children were killed after a roof collapse in an area along the Bilitang Kot Road in the Kohat district. A woman and four children were injured. The PDMA said that a house collapse in Chalonai tehsil of Battagram left a person dead and another injured. Similarly, two persons were injured in Bajaur and five in the Peshawar district.

## Downpour claims 11 lives across KP

**NEWS DESK:** As torrential rainfall continues to wreak havoc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the second consecutive day on Mon-day, 11 more people lost their lives, including five in Abbottabad, and 18 sustained injuries due to the downpour, which flooded neighbourhoods and blocked roads across the province.

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Low-level flooding in Swat. Downpour in the plains and highlands of Swat, which began on

Sunday night and continued into Monday, swelled several streams, resulting in flooding at various points. A stream flowing through the centre of Mingora surged once again, raising concerns among residents living near rainwater drains and waterways.

A massive avalanche, on the other hand, blocked the road between Kal-am and Mahodand Lake, leaving hun-dreds of tourist vehicles stranded on both sides.

A spokesperson for the Up-per Swat Development Authority, Saeedur Rehman, said

that heavy ma-c-hinery had been deployed to clear the debris and that efforts were under-way to reopen the road for traffic.

Moreover, heavy rain continued to lash parts of Shangla for a second consecutive day, triggering landslides and blocking key roads, including the main Bisham-Swat road at multiple points, officials said on Monday.

Rainfall was reported in Alpin, Bisham, Pura, Shahpur, Chakesar and adjoining areas.

Landslides in Hazara. The upper parts of

in Iran during the latter's visit to China on Tuesday, according to the Chinese foreign ministry.

This marks the foreign minister's second visit to Beijing this year.

His trip follows a similar one to a four-nation meeting in Islamabad with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia,

Turkiye, and Egypt, which focused on the US-Israel war on Iran.

The meeting concluded with initial discussions reportedly focused on proposals to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to shipping. Foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt landed in Islamabad for the talks.

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



ness Foreign Minister Wang Yi, according to a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Dar and Yi will review bilateral ties and discuss regional and global issues of mutual interest during their meeting.

It added, Reuters reports that they will discuss the situation

state-sponsored terrorism emanating from Afghanistan.

He further said the burden of rising prices on the common man, especially for essential goods and services.

The meeting was briefed on the steps being taken by the governments of the four provinces, as well as Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK, to manage price pressures, ensure the availability of essential supplies, and mitigate the impact on the public, enabling a coordinated national response.

It also reviewed the broader regional situation and its potential effects on Pakistan's security environment, economic outlook, and food security. The meeting was assured that, despite the global crisis, timely decisions had ensured no disruption to fuel supply, and that adequate fuel stocks were currently available, with arrangement for future needs also underway.