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# QUETTA VOICE

Saturday 04, April, 2026



## Balochistan: Rs1.5M Interest-Free Loans for women, Youth Global Scholarships, Transgender Policy

**NEWS DESK:**

The Balochistan government has rolled out major welfare initiatives, including interest-free loans of up to Rs1.5 million for women and access to global scholarships, targeting youth, minorities, and transgender individuals to boost inclusive development across the province.

from Rs500,000 to Rs1.5 million to support entrepreneurship and financial independence.

At the same time, more than 100 annual scholarships have been allocated for minorities and the transgender community.

**Opportunities in Around 200 International Universities**  
The flagship Benazir Bhutto

Scholarship Program, described as the largest in the province's history, is enabling students to pursue education from matric to higher levels, with opportunities in around 200 international universities. The government is also covering up to 16 years of education expenses for children of martyrs and civilian victims.

These initiatives were discussed in a meeting between Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti and Uzma Yaqoob, Executive Di-

rector of FDI Pakistan, focusing on ongoing reforms and social uplift programs.

**Pink Bus Service and Pink Scooties Scheme**

In addition, projects like the Pink Bus Service and Pink Scooties Scheme are being expanded to provide safe and reliable transport for women, while the province's first comprehensive Youth Policy aims to create

better opportunities for young people. A transgender policy is also being implemented to ensure equal access to education and jobs, alongside the establishment of a dedicated endowment fund for minority welfare.

The chief minister reiterated that empowering youth, women, minorities, and other marginalized groups is key to achieving sustainable growth, adding that the government is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all segments of society.

## Suicide bombing at Domel police station in Bannu leaves 5 civilians dead, 13 injured

**NEWS DESK:**

A suicide car bomb attack at the Domel Police Station in Bannu killed at least five civilians, while 13 others were injured, including one policeman. Among the deceased are a husband, wife, daughter, and son from the same family. The explosion occurred when an explosives-laden vehicle rammed into the rear side of the police station, triggering a massive blast followed by an exchange of gunfire.

The intensity of the explosion was so powerful that it was heard miles away.

According to initial reports, the blast completely destroyed the sentry post of the police station, while a large portion of the building was reduced to rubble.

The explosion also caused severe damage to nearby residential areas, with multiple houses collapsing and several people trapped under the debris.

According to Rescue 1122, the injured were immediately shifted to nearby hospitals, where some are reported to be in critical condition.

District Emergency Officer Bakhtullah Wazir confirmed that five people were martyred and 13 injured were shifted to hospitals, including one police officer.

He added that search and rescue operations are ongoing and will continue until the area is fully cleared. Following the incident, Rescue 1122 teams reached the site promptly, however, continuous rainfall created difficulties in relief operations.

After the firing stopped, rescue personnel initiated a full-scale operation to remove debris and recover those trapped.

Meanwhile, announcements were made in local mosques appealing to the public for blood donations and assistance, while residents actively participated in rescue efforts.

Security forces have cordoned off the area and launched a clearance operation, while further details regarding casualties and damage are being collected.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attack, expressing sorrow at the loss of life, according to a statement issued via the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). "We are determined to completely eradicate all kinds of terrorism from the country," the premier was quoted as saying.

## Mach Jail Attack on Sardar Naseem: Probe Ordered by Balochistan Home Minister



**NEWS DESK:**

Balochistan Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove has ordered an inquiry into the alleged attack on Sardar Naseem Khan Tareen inside Mach Jail.

He directed the Additional Chief Secretary (Home) to submit an immediate report

questioning where jail staff were present at the time of the incident. Authorities have been instructed to conduct a full investi-

gation, including a review of CCTV footage, entry logs, and duty rosters.

The Home Minister warned that any negligence by prison staff will not be tolerated and demanded a detailed report without delay.

## Petrol at Rs458.40/Litre, Diesel at Rs520.35/Litre After Massive Price Hike



**NEWS DESK:**

The federal government has announced a sharp increase in petroleum prices, adding further pressure on consumers amid ris-

ing inflation.

Petrol prices have been raised by Rs137.23 per litre, bringing the new rate to Rs458.40 per litre.

Meanwhile, diesel has seen an even bigger jump of Rs184.49

per litre, with the new price fixed at Rs520.35 per litre.

The new prices will take effect from midnight tonight, likely driving up transport fares and the cost of essential goods nationwide.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

## Koh-e-Suleman and Pishin Divisions: A Necessary Shift Toward People-First Governance



**Editorial:** The announcement of the Koh-e-Suleman Division by Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti marks a long-overdue administrative correction for an area that has remained distant from effective governance for decades.

Declaring Rakhi as the divisional headquarters reflects a growing recognition that governance cannot succeed when decision-making centers remain far removed from the people.

For residents of Koh-e-Suleman, this step promises easier access to administration, faster service delivery, and greater state presence in everyday affairs.

Administering such a vast population through distant divisions has long strained public services, from

healthcare and education to revenue and law enforcement. In this context, the establishment of a new division is not symbolic—it is an administrative necessity grounded in population realities and governance efficiency.

Alongside this development, the provincial cabinet's approval of the Pishin Division deserves equal attention. What now remains is the issuance of a formal notification by the Board of Revenue and its public inauguration by the Chief Minister.

Comprising Chaman, Pishin, Barshore Karezat and Killa Abdullah districts,

the proposed Pishin Division also serves more than two million people. Delaying its notification risks prolonging administrative congestion and public hardship in an already overburdened system.

However, administrative restructuring must follow clear principles. Divisions and districts should be created on the basis of population size, service demand, and administrative feasibility—not political ambition, tribal influence, or electoral engineering.

When designed for political gain, such reforms fail the common citizen.

If implemented with sincerity, the Koh-e-Suleman and Pishin Divisions can become models of people-centric governance—where administrative boundaries exist to serve citizens, not power corridors.

### War, being one of the forms of human relations,

remained more pervasive than cooperation and amiability in human relations. The perception of life as a zero-sum game breeds selfishness and consequent animosity between individuals, groups, or states. Instincts of survival and procreation are reflexive thus natural for all living organisms including us humans.

War, being one of the forms of human relations, received due attention alongside increased societal complexities. War, being

one of the forms of human relations, received due attention of scientists for defining ethical and moral issues. Caine, who may have used a sharp stone, a strong branch of a tree, or simple brute force to strangle Abel, would be flabbergasted if he were to visit our times. The civilization we live in

today took centuries to materialize. The use of electromagnetic spectrum was considered a game-changer

opened which then was countered by Electronic Counter Measures ECCM. When the lethality of weapons created a situation of mutually assured destruction (MAD) the situation became unacceptable. Various treaties like Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

(START), and many more were signed to avert the unacceptable destruction of the human race.

Exercising restraint was never so important. Exercising restraint was never so important before the development of autonomous weapons—chemical, biological, radiological, and

the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in warfare brought a paradigm shift in the modus operandi of warfare. It eliminated the requirement of direct human involvement in selecting and engaging targets. Even the smartest of the weapons were hitherto launched and guided by humans.

This development has given rise to the debate of ethics and morality all over again. António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General joined the skeptics on Twitter where he wrote in March 2019, "Autonomous machines with the power and discretion to select targets and take lives without human involvement are politically unacceptable, morally repugnant and should be prohibited by international law."

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### THE DILEMMA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) WEAPONS

# Malnutrition in Balochistan

**Amber Munir** in Balochistan shared in Quetta Voice on Wednesday, April 14, 2020. The article highlights the role of essential nutrients in human resource development along with a brief introduction of malnutrition, characterization of malnutrition, procedure of taking measurements of SAM and MAM cases, medical complications, community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM), infant and young child feeding (IYCF), etc.

**Background:** Surveys regarding National Nutrition Survey (2001-2002): The National Nutrition Survey conducted in 2001-2002 assessed the nutritional levels and health status of mothers and children in Pakistan. Data was collected through a questionnaire consisting of four modules including a household questionnaire, biochemical and clinical questionnaires, and dietary form. Additional biochemical samples including serum retinol, serum ferritin, and zinc, were collected from mothers and children under-5. Urine samples were collected from ages 6-12 years for iodine deficiency. The survey sampled 10,656 households from 700 primary sampling units.

**National Nutrition Survey (2019):** The aim of NNS 2019 is to undertake a field survey and generate district-specific nutrition information related to malnutrition (both undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies among women and children in Pakistan).

**Malnutrition status in Balochistan:** Balochistan is the most under-developed of Pakistan's provinces, with a high proportion of children under five years of age who are stunted (52%) and 16 percent of who are wasted. Moreover, the prevalence of anemia among children in this age group is 57%

and nearly 49% among women of childbearing age. Numerous factors are thought to contribute to child undernutrition in Balochistan, including sub-optimal infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices; frequent child infections (especially diarrhea diseases and measles); maternal nutritional deficiencies and/or illness and death; absence/adequacy of micronutrient supplementation; and household food insecurity and gender inequity.

A survey conducted by the National Nutrition Cell revealed that 49% of women in Balochistan were suffering from malnutrition. Moreover, the ratio of maternal anemia was 49%, anemia among children below five years was 57% and iodine deficiency among women was 29%.

Balochistan Nutrition Program for Mother and Children (BNPMC)

In response to the challenging nutrition situation in the province, the Department of Health (DoH) launched the Nutrition Program for Mothers and Children (BNPMC) in 2016. They implemented nutrition activities among the rural and urban population of seven selected districts. The total population of these districts is 1,654,613, of which estimated target populations include 132,369 pregnant and lactating women (PLW). Stakeholders include the DoH, Peoples Primary Healthcare Initiative (providing health services at Basic Health Units in the districts), and local NGOs.

The total cost of the above project was 1,492,62 million PKR (US\$14.21 million) of which 80% were provided by the World Bank and 20% by the Government of Balochistan. A major part of the funding

(41%) was allocated to strengthen institutional arrangements which include staffing, technical assistance for capacity building, strengthening coordination mechanisms, addressing malnutrition among children and PLW (37%), and addressing micronutrient malnutrition (13.6%).

**Future Plans:** The aforesaid program ended in December 2019 and was limited to seven districts; whereas the malnutrition situation continues to exist in 22 districts of Balochistan.

Therefore, the Government of Balochistan has assigned DoH and PPHI to extend nutrition intervention in 22 districts for which project proposals are ready; implementation is expected from July 2021.

The author is a program officer in PPHI



is the largest national nutrition survey carried out in Pakistan. It is designed to provide policymakers, program managers, and academicians a unique set of nutrition-related data including environmental, anthropometric, and biochemical indicators.

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**Masoor ul Hassan** The danger associated with autonomous and semi-autonomous weapons systems is unacceptable. There exist a near consensus that such weapons must not be completely AI-controlled.

The design must include appropriate levels of human judgment while resorting to them. This line of thought gains more credence when the present degree of global polarization is taken into view.

The international order is tilting towards autocracy and the likelihood of employment of these weapons is becoming a reality. The norms and values of world politics were subjected to heavy Trumpian Strain in the recent past when the competition of naked power showed its ugliness in international relations.

### The Genesis of warfare

The history of warfare is as old as the human race. The Book of Genesis states that Cain killed Abel to satiate his vengeance. Ever since vengeance, confrontation and bellicosity have

remained more pervasive than cooperation and amiability in human relations. The perception of life as a zero-sum game breeds selfishness and consequent animosity between individuals, groups, or states. Instincts of survival and procreation are reflexive thus natural for all living organisms including us humans.

War, being one of the forms of human relations, received due attention alongside increased societal complexities. War, being

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today took centuries to materialize. The use of electromagnetic spectrum was considered a game-changer

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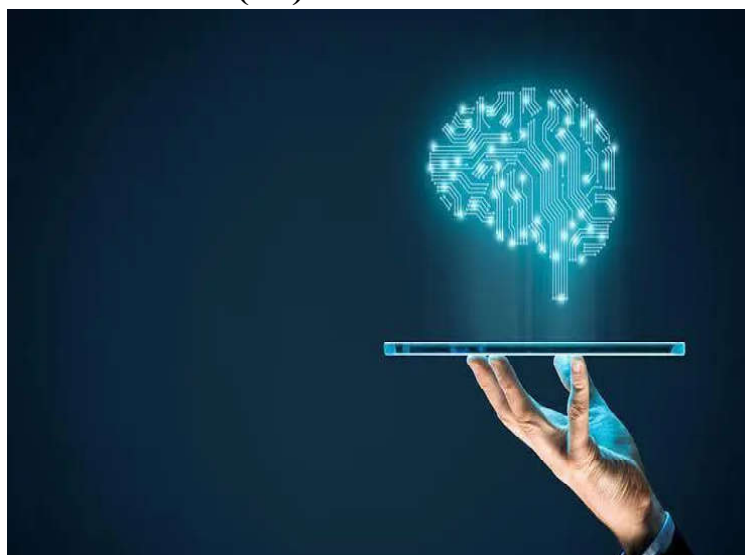
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nuclear. The Perils and Promises of Artificial Intelligence

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# US blows up key Iranian bridge, steel plants

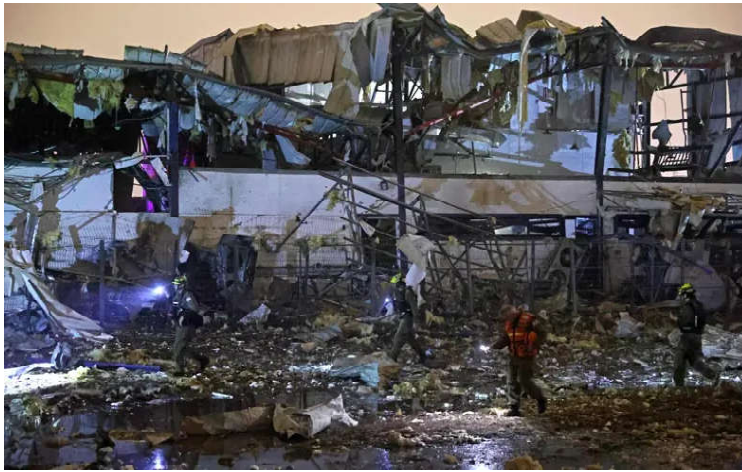
**NEWS DESK:** The US and Israel on Thursday stepped up attacks on Iran, targeting a century-old medical research centre in Tehran, a bridge near the capital and steel plants after President Donald Trump threatened to bomb Iran back to "the Stone Ages".

Hours later, Trump said the tallest bridge in Iran had been destroyed. He posted footage on social media of smoke rising from the B1 bridge in Karaj, around 135 kilometers southwest of Tehran and warned that there would be further destruction unless Iran comes to the table to end the five-week war.

"The biggest bridge in Iran comes tumbling down, never to be used again - Much more to follow! It is time for Iran to make a deal before it is too late, and there is nothing left of what still could become a great country!" Trump said.

Iranian state television had earlier reported two US-Israeli strikes on the bridge.

"A few minutes ago, the American-Zionist enemy once again targeted the B1 bridge in Karaj," state TV said, adding that an initial



strike had caused two civilian casualties.

The B1 bridge, which was still under construction, is considered the Middle East's tallest according to Iranian media, with a 447-foot column.

Earlier in the day, Iran threatened "crushing" attacks on the United States and Israel, but warned its attacks would intensify if Iran did not reach a negotiated settlement.

"Over the next two to three weeks, we are going to bring them back to the Stone Ages, where they belong," he said. With his approval rating hitting new lows and Americans feeling a

pinch from soaring oil prices, Trump offered a retroactive explanation on why he joined Israel in the attack launched on Feb 28.

"I'm pleased to say that these core strategic objectives are nearing completion," Trump said in a 19-minute speech. There was little in his address about actual diplomacy.

Iran's response was immediate, with Israeli air defences pressed into action. Four people were reportedly lightly injured in the Tel Aviv area. AFP journalists in Jerusalem hear fresh blasts on Thursday evening.

At least four blasts were heard as sirens rang out in the city, and the military warned residents to take cover after it "identified missiles launched from Iran toward the territory of the State of Israel".

In Tehran, AFP journalists reported a series of loud explosions, sending reverberations across the city. The targets were unclear.

The country's two largest steel plants have meanwhile been forced offline by several waves of US and Israeli attacks, the companies said.

## Bangladesh cuts working hours to save energy amid Middle East crisis

**NEWS DESK:** Bangladesh has launched fresh measures to curb energy consumption, cutting office hours and trimming public spending as conflict in the Middle East disrupts global fuel markets and strains power supply in the South Asian nation.

Officials said the steps approved by the cabinet on Thursday aim to stabilise the energy situation in Bangladesh, heavily dependent on fuel imports and battered by price volatility and supply uncertainty from the US-Israeli war with Iran.



Under the new rules, government offices will run from 9am to 4pm, while markets and shopping centres must shut by 6pm to reduce electricity use.

The government has also ordered cuts in non-essential public expenditure and urged lower power consumption in industry, with curbs on excessive lighting, for example.

The education ministry will issue guidelines for schools from Sunday, with options such as adjusting timetables and shifting to online classes being considered.

Authorities will also allow duty-free imports of electric buses for schools, with incentives for those that participate.

The government has rationed fuel to mitigate shortages, besides limiting vehicle sales and shortening fuel station hours amid panic buying, hoarding and long queues.

Authorities have warned that supplies remain tight, despite some easing during major holidays.

Bangladesh's state-run agencies are scrambling to secure energy supplies for a population of about 175 million, while exploring alternative sources in the face of volatile global markets.

The government is also seeking external financing of more than \$2.5 billion to help pay for imports of fuel and liquefied natural gas, as rising energy costs further squeeze foreign exchange reserves.

Haifa is a strategically important city in Israel with a large number of residents. It is also home to Israel's most important oil refinery, processing 70% of the country's refining capacity.

It has already been hit twice during war. Strikes in Gulf countries

Kuwait said an Iranian attack damaged a desalination plant, and the attack came after an oil refinery was hit by drones on Friday morning. About 90% of drinking water in Kuwait comes from desalination.

The attack comes some days after US President Donald Trump threatened to

bomb the remaining desalination plants in Iran. Last month, the US attacked an Iranian desalination plant.

Falling debris from an intercepted projectile has caused a fire at the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) Habshan gas facility, a gas processing complex, the Abu Dhabi Media Office says.

"Operations have been suspended while authorities respond to a fire. No injuries have been reported," it added in a post on X.

Anadolu Agency reports that the UAE and Saudi Arabia came under a new wave of drone attacks Friday, with both countries reporting interceptions.

The UAE Defence Ministry said air defence systems were "actively engaging" incoming missiles and drones.

"The sounds heard across the country are the result of ongoing engaging operations of missiles and UAVs," it said in a post on the US social media platform X.

Saudi Arabia's Defence Ministry said in separate X posts that its forces intercepted and destroyed 14 drones during the latest attacks.

Iran said Friday it carried out a ballistic missile strike targeting a gathering of US aviation personnel in the United Arab Emirates, according to a statement by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The Guard said it conducted a "precise strike" on what it de-

## Iranian missiles hit Israel's oil hub Haifa, injuring six

**NEWS DESK:** Six people were injured, and several houses were damaged in northern Israel in an Iranian missile attack on Friday, Israeli media reported.

A 79-year-old individual was wounded as the missile hit Haifa and Kiryat Ata, the Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth reported. Al Jazeera reports that Israeli medical sources say six people were injured and another was hit by stones from the shockwave of an explosion.

The attack came after the Lebanese group Hezbollah launched 15 rocket attacks, triggering sirens in northern Israel.

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scribed as a secret meeting site for American aviation engineers and military pilots outside a base in the UAE, without providing further details.

The statement said field reports and heavy ambulance activity indicated the attack caused "a large number of deaths and injuries," but did not specify figures.

Sirens in northern Israel after rockets were fired from Lebanon

Air raid sirens sounded across northern Israel on Friday after rockets were fired from Lebanon, Israeli media reported. About 15 rockets were launched, triggering alerts in the border towns of Kiryat Shmona and Metula, Channel 12 said.

Tehran has retaliated with drone and missile strikes targeting Israel, along with Jordan, Iraq, and Gulf countries hosting US military assets, causing casualties and damage to infrastructure while disrupting global markets and aviation.

The US and Israel have maintained an air offensive on Iran since February 28, killing so far over 1,900 people to date, including then-Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

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## Luxury stores take hit in Dubai as Iran war drags on

**NEWS DESK:** Rows of luxury boutiques line an upmarket Dubai mall, yet a month into the Middle East war their sales staff sit idly, phones in hand, watching for the rare customer.

Salespeople in immaculate suits say they have been told not to speak to reporters, but one briefly described the mood.

"Of course, there are fewer customers, especially tourists," the salesperson told AFP. "Locals still come."

"Luckily, we have a strong local clientele and one is not panicking." This glamorous playground for the world's rich has taken a hit since the start of the US-Israeli offensive against Iran on February 28.

Dubai, long known for its peace and stability, has been targeted frequently by Tehran's retaliatory drones and missiles, sending tourists fleeing.

One industry figure, requesting anonymity, said the prevailing belief was that the situation is temporary and will improve soon.



Just out of Chanel, one of the few shoppers put it more bluntly: "People shouldn't come (to Dubai) right now." "It's dangerous, it's war. For me it's different. I'm from here - if I die, I die with my family," she said, dressed in a black abaya and niqab and carrying an orange Hermes bag.

More than half the region's luxury stores are in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The most profitable ones are clustered in Dubai Mall, a vast shopping complex that sits below Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building.

With its waterfalls, massive aquarium and more than 110 million visitors a year, the mall, a monument to bling claims to be the most visited place on the planet.

No tour groups drifted through its wide, air-conditioned corridors on a late March evening, but the regulars were out.

And more shoppers were lining up at Primark - a newly opened budget chain - than inside the mall's glitzy "Fashion Avenue" area, lined with chic luxury chains.

## US, Israeli aircraft strike key bridge in northern Iran

**NEWS DESK:** A US-Israeli attack hit a key bridge on a main highway in northern Iran on Thursday, in the latest escalation in the region, Iranian media reported.

According to Fars News Agency, multiple sites were struck in the Azmich area near the city of Karaj, including the B1 Bridge, described as the highest bridge in the Middle East.

The news outlet also said at least two people died in the attack.

The outlet said several people were injured in the attack, and rescue teams were dispatched to the scene.

The strike caused damage to the bridge, which is part of a major road infrastructure project and was expected to be inaugu-



rated soon, according to the report.

Power outages were also reported in some areas, with regional electricity authorities working to restore service.

US President Donald Trump said on social media that it

was now time for Iran to make a deal before it was too late.

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# Petroleum sales rise despite govt austerity plan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Despite the government's announced austerity plan, the sale of petroleum products in the country increased. Sales by oil marketing companies (OMCs) rose by 13 per-

cent in March. According to sources, petroleum product sales reached 1.44 million tons in March, reflecting a 19 percent year-on-year increase. During the first nine months of the current fiscal year, total OMC sales stood at 12.40 million tons, showing an overall annual growth of 5 percent.

Petrol sales amounted to 0.67 million tons, up 16 percent year-on-year, while diesel sales reached 0.62 million tons, marking a 21 percent increase. Fuel price oil sales recorded a significant 98 percent month-on-month surge. Among individual com-

panies, PSO's sales were 0.63 million tons, while Attock Petroleum's sales totaled 0.11 million tons. Earlier Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had announced a comprehensive fourteen-point austerity plan to tackle economic severity stemming from war in the region. He made the announcement in his televised address to the nation after chairing a meeting on austerity mea-

sures. The Prime Minister said to avoid extra fuel consumption, fifty percent staff of public and private sector institutes will work from home except for essential services departments. He said there will be four working days except for banks, industries and agriculture sectors. Also, there will be a total ban on iftar parties and dinners.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Canada to Pakistan Mr. Tarik Ali Khan called on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at Parliament House.

## Govt aims to make electricity tariffs competitive: Awais

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari has said the government is aiming to make electricity tariffs competitive so that the country's main economic drivers can benefit from it.

He was talking to the World Bank Country Director, Ms Bokorama Amgambaz who called on him in Islamabad on Thursday.

Sardar Awais Leghari said the Power Division, after assessing concessional tariffs for industries, is currently working on Time of Use proposals for industries to further improve the country's energy competitiveness.

He said that the aim is to benefit from the country's solar potential and provide concessional tariffs to industries. He said the Power Division is currently in consultation with all stakeholders.

## Naqvi inspects major development in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday visited four major development projects in Islamabad, including the Model Jail, Capital Police College, Police Khidmat Markaz and Ataturk Avenue expansion, during a four-hour inspection tour to review progress.

During the visit, the interior minister also laid the foundation stones of the under-construction Islamabad Model Jail, Capital Police College, Police Khidmat Markaz and the Ataturk Avenue expansion project.

Work on the barracks, administrative block and boundary wall at the Model Jail is nearing completion, and it has been decided that the first phase will function as a high-security prison. He also directed that the training of personnel to be deployed at the Model Jail be completed by April 30.

Upon his arrival at the Capital Police College, a well-equipped police contingent pre-

## Heavy rain, meteorstorms expected across country: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD)

ISLAMABAD, April 02 (INP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast widespread rain, windstorms, and thunderstorms to sweep large parts of the country during next 24 hours, with isolated heavy downpours and hailstorms likely to impact several regions.

According to the latest advisory, Islamabad, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are expected to receive widespread rainfall accompanied by strong winds and thunderstorms. Meanwhile, isolated rain and thunderstorms are also likely in Punjab, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir, particularly during the evening and night hours.

The Met Office has issued a warning that heavy to very heavy rains may trigger flash flooding in northeastern districts of Balochistan, including Zhob, Musakhel, and Dera Bugti, as well as hill torrents in Dera Ghazi Khan and Multan.

The authorities have also warned of windstorms, hailstorms, and lightning could damage vulnerable infrastructure such as electric poles, billboards, and solar panels during the forecast period. Standstill crops in Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are also at risk of damage due to severe weather conditions.

In Islamabad, partly cloudy to cloudy weather is expected, with a 30 percent chance of rain and thunderstorms during the evening of night. Region-wise, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is likely to experience widespread rain and thunderstorms in southern districts, with isolated heavy falls and hailstorms. Northern areas may receive rain along with snowfall over higher mountains.

Punjab is expected to witness widespread rain in southern districts such as Dera Ghazi Khan and Multan, while other parts, including Lahore and Rawalpindi, may experience isolated thunderstorms and gusty winds.

Sindh will see intermittent widespread rain and thunderstorms across major cities, including Karachi and Hyderabad, with chances of heavy falls and hailstorms in southern districts.

In Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir, cloudy weather with rain and thunderstorms is expected at isolated places, along with snowfall over mountainous areas during evening and night hours.

## FO rejects 'wrong impression' of putting pressure on Iran through Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's Foreign Office on Thursday clarified that it is premature to view emerging cooperation among regional countries as a formal military alliance, while rejecting speculation about Islamabad being used to pressure Iran.

At the weekly media briefing, Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahira Hossain Andrabi said that any comparison of a grouping involving Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to a military bloc was unfounded.

He emphasized that "it is wrong to talk about putting pressure on Iran through Pakistan," noting that Iran is a sovereign country with independent policies.

The spokesperson added that Pakistan remains engaged diplomatically with multiple stakeholders, including the United States, European partners, and Gulf countries some of which also maintain relations with Israel.

## Punjab completes master planning for 37 districts, 128 tehsils

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Minister for Local Government Zeeshan Rafique said that master planning of 37 districts and 128 tehsils of the province had been completed.

Chairing a meeting regarding PSPA at the Civil Secretariat, he said that training of Artificial Intelligence (AI) system of the Punjab Special Planning Authority (PSPA) was underway. With time, the AI would automatically improve its monitoring standards, he added.

The Minister said the land use plans and zoning work had also been completed in the province. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has directed to create a Pakistan's first satellite surveillance system, he revealed.

He said that new connection activities would be detected every month through the PSPA system. "PSPA has developed, he went on, an entire digital ecosystem. The work is also being done on classifi-

## Pak-China Hospital holds free mental health camp in Gwadar

GWADAR (INP): The Pak-China Friendship Hospital, run by the Indus Hospital and Health Network under the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), organized a one-day free medical camp in Gwadar, offering mental health consultations and treatment to local residents at no cost.

Gwadar Pro reported. The initiative aimed to raise awareness about mental health issues and provide accessible care to the community. UK-based psychologist Dr Naqem ur Rehman Khan led the camp at the GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital, where he examined patients and provided expert consultations.

A large number of men, women, and children from different parts of the city participated in the initiative. "During the camp, more than 50 patients received free medical checkups, professional psychological consultations, treatment, and medications," read an official statement, adding that the services focused on addressing conditions such as depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, substance abuse, and other mental health issues.

As per the statement, the camp was held under the special direction of GDA Director General Moir ur Rehman and aimed to improve access to mental health services in Gwadar. The initiative was part of ongoing efforts to strengthen community health services and raise awareness about mental well-being in the region.

Head of Campus Dr. Afan Faiq Zada highlighted that mental health conditions can no longer be neglected in society and stressed the need for continued outreach programs. He added that similar camps would be organized in the future to expand access to essential healthcare services.

With a wide range of specialized departments, consistent patient inflow, and the provision of free medicines, diagnostics, and inpatient care, the GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital has steadily emerged as a leading healthcare facility in Gwadar and the wider Makran division.

The hospital's growing capacity and comprehensive services continue to strengthen its role as a primary center for accessible, quality healthcare in the coastal region.



ISLAMABAD: Hon'ble Chief Justice of Pakistan in a group photograph with a delegation of 24 Senior Civil Judges from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who are under training at the Federal Judicial Academy Pakistan under Professional Exchange Program.

## Rising fuel costs drive Pakistan's shift to electric scooters, bikes

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan is steadily shifting toward electric mobility as rising global oil prices and increasing fuel costs push commuters to seek affordable and sustainable alternatives. Electric vehicles (EVs), particularly scooters and bikes, are becoming increasingly popular in urban areas, with women emerging as a key segment of new riders.

Recent months have seen petrol and diesel prices reach record highs due to global market trends, according to a Gwadar Pro report on Thursday.

The steep rise in fuel costs has prompted many commuters, especially in cities, to look for cost-effective alternatives, accelerating the adoption of electric scooters and bikes.

Experts believe that for many women and first-time riders, EV scooters offer both financial savings and convenient, low-maintenance urban mobility. While EV adoption in Pakistan is still in its early stages, sales—particularly of electric bikes and scooters—have grown rapidly over the past few years.

Industry estimates indicate that sales rose from about 2,000 units in 2022 to 6,000 in 2023, jumped to nearly 33,000 in 2024, and surged to around 57,800 units in just the first seven months of 2025.

Total two-wheeler sales are projected to surpass 100,000 units by the end of 2025, while electric car sales remain limited to the hundreds, highlighting the early growth of the four-wheeler market.

Leading Chinese EV brands, including Yadea, Luyuan, Revoo, Crown Electric, and Eeven, are driving much of this growth.

Their models, equipped with lithium-ion or graphene batteries, are widely distributed through partnerships with local dealerships and AGN New Energy Vehicles, offering ranges between 80-120 km—suitable for daily urban commuting.

Industry estimates indicate that Chinese EV brands are benefiting from the surge in two-wheeler sales. Yadea Pakistan targeted capturing 20% of the local EV market, while other brands like Revoo, Eeven, and Crown Electric are expanding their model lineups and dealership networks.

The total projected EV two-wheeler market is expected to exceed 100,000 units in 2026, with continued growth in the coming years.

Market Snapshot: Top Chinese EV Scooters in Pakistan: Revoo Electric, and Eeven. Reducing duties will make clean transport accessible for everyone."

Government-backed subsidy programs. However, he also pointed out the significant price gap compared to China. "In China, they cost just \$90-\$175, while in Pakistan they reach around Rs 235,000 due to high taxes and customs.

Commenting on the growing trend, Ousai Khan said that "electric scooters are an eco-friendly and cost-saving solution for daily transport. However, he also pointed out the significant price gap compared to China. "In China, they cost just \$90-\$175, while in Pakistan they reach around Rs 235,000 due to high taxes and customs. Reducing duties will make clean transport accessible for everyone."

### Minority Rights Fully Protected in Pakistan, Says Governor Mandokhail

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

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

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



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

Governor Mandokhail highlighted that the traditions and cultural values of Pashtun and Baloch societies promote inclusion, ensuring minorities remain part of social life even at the district level. He said that unity, coexistence, and har-

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

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

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

Christian community and other minorities.

He stressed the importance of promoting tolerance, interfaith harmony,

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

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

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

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

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

### Khuzdar By-Election Preparations Reviewed for NA-256 Constituency

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

of government employees until the completion of the and ensure full for election duties. The DC warned that any absenteeism or negligence would result in strict legal action against both the employee and the con-



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

During the briefing, the Returning Officer shared detailed statistics:

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

He instructed the District Health Officer to provide medical facilities at all polling stations and keep ambulances ready for emergencies.

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

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

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

### Stakeholders Validation Workshop on Drought Preparedness Held in Quetta

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction to Resilience Building Initiatives During the opening session, participants were introduced to the Resilience Building Project (IDP).

Representatives from Provincial Dis-

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

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

He emphasized: Timely and anticipatory actions are essential to tackle challenges like drought, and this is only possible through strong institutional collaboration and community engagement.

In the technical session, Dr. Muhammad Adil delivered a detailed presentation on climatic risks, natural disasters, and their socio-economic impacts in Nushki.

He noted that drought significantly affects: Food security Livelihoods Environment Sustainability Focus on Anticipatory Action Planning.

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

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

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

administration's commitment to restoring order and ensuring public convenience.

Keywords: Mastung encroachment, Behram Saleem Baloch, Muhammad Jan Jamaliddin, anti encroachment campaign, Mastung, illegal structures, traffic relief measures

### Crackdown on Encroachments Launched in Mastung, Illegal Structures Removed

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

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

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

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

compliance, strict action was taken.

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

No one is above the law," he emphasized, reiterating the

administration's commitment to restoring order and ensuring public convenience.

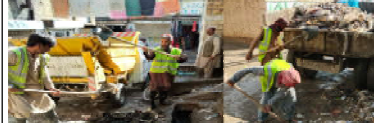
Keywords: Mastung encroachment, Behram Saleem Baloch, Muhammad Jan Jamaliddin, anti encroachment campaign, Mastung, illegal structures, traffic relief measures

### Loralai Launches Cleanliness Drive After Rain to Restore Drainage

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

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

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



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

ignated places to help maintain cleanliness.

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

### Balochistan Strengthens Women Empowerment Initiatives, Says Women Development Secretary

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

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

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



to ensure safe working environments for both women and men. The law requires institutions to:

Establish inquiry committees to implement clear anti-harassment policies. Ensure transparency in investigations. Provide awareness to employees. Challenge progress. Despite ongoing initiatives, she ac-

knowledge that challenges. Statistics up to 2025 show multiple cases of violence against women, including Domestic Abuse Workplace harassment. Other gender-based crimes. She stressed that effective implementation of laws is as important as legislation itself. Need for investment in education and Health. The secretary emphasized that

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

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

These initiatives aim to educate youth about: Gender equality Women's rights Prevention of gender-based violence Police Reforms Supporting Women DIG Headquarters Balochistan Police, Hassan Asad Ali, stated that the police department is making significant reforms to empower women and create a people-friendly system.

He noted that female police officers are now serving in key roles such as: Complaint clerks Computer operators Their presence has improved response to cases. Increased violence and increased public trust in law enforcement.

Values Support Women's Rights Officials also highlighted the importance of respect, protection, and equal rights for women.

### Surprise Inspections of Fuel Stations in Loralai to Curb Adulteration

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

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

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

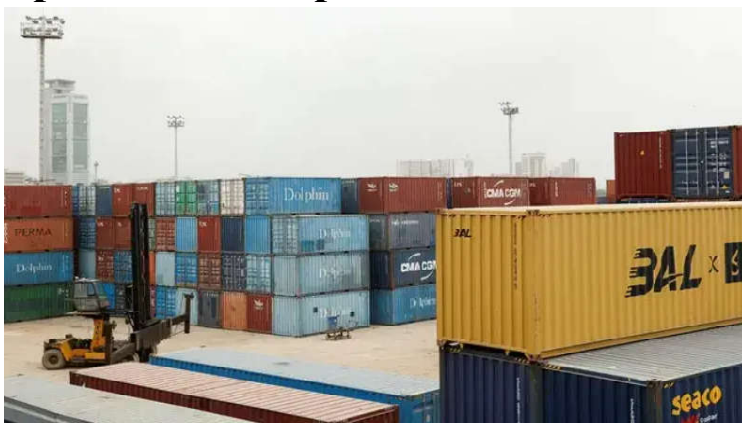
stating that any station found selling adulterated fuel will be sealed, and its license

# Exports shrink 14pc as Mideast crisis bites

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan's merchandise exports declined by 14.4 per cent in March, marking a second consecutive monthly contraction as disruptions linked to the Middle East crisis weighed on external trade. The export sector had already been under pressure in the months leading up to February, but the situation has worsened due to the conflict. The disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have pushed up shipping costs for exporters and disrupted supply chains.

Trade analysts warn that the continuation of the Middle East war could weigh further on export performance, particularly by disrupting trade routes, dampening demand in key regional markets and adding uncertainty to global supply chains.

In absolute terms, export proceeds fell 14.4pc to \$2.26 billion in March from \$2.65bn a year ago, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said on Thursday. On a month-on-month basis, export proceeds dipped by 0.55pc in



March imports decline 5.4pc; trade deficit widens to \$2.73bn in March

Negative growth in imports has continued since August of the current fiscal year, except in

July, when proceeds grew by 16.4pc year-on-year. Export earnings posted negative growth, with proceeds declining by 20.4pc in December.

This follows a 14.54pc drop in November, 4.46pc in October, 3.88pc in September, and 12.49pc in August, reflecting persistent pressures on the country's external trade

performance. However, in January, exports posted modest 3.3pc growth, but returned to negative growth of 8.76pc in February. In the nine months (July-

March), export proceeds recorded a negative growth of 8pc, falling to \$22.73bn from \$24.72bn in the corresponding period last year. Two months ago, the govern-

ment announced several measures, including a reduction in energy rates, to minimise pressure on the country's trade performance. Currently, the exporters are

grappling with subdued global markets and the high cost of doing business in the country.

In FY25, export proceeds rose 4.7pc to \$32.1bn against \$30.68bn in the preceding year.

Trade deficit According to PBS data, imports fell 5.4pc to \$4.99bn in March from \$5.28bn in the same month last year, while on a month-on-month basis imports declined by 5.57pc. In the first nine months of FY26, the import bill increased by 6.64pc to \$50.54bn from \$47.38bn in the corresponding period last year. Imports rose 6.57pc to \$58.38bn in July-January FY25 compared to \$54.78bn a year earlier.

The trade deficit widened by 3.7pc to \$2.73bn in March from \$2.63bn in the same month last year. In July-March FY26, the deficit surged by 22.65pc to \$27.8bn from \$22.67bn in the corresponding period last year.

For FY25, the trade deficit increased by 9pc to \$26.27bn compared to \$24.11bn in the previous year.

income of non-resident persons earning income from remunerative social media content viewed in Pakistan. "Every non-resident person deriving income from interaction with users in Pakistan through social media platforms to the extent such income constitutes Pakistan-source income state these rules will be over exceeding 50,000 users during a tax year or 12,250 users during a quarter," read these rules. The FBR said the minimum income of a person from remunerative social media content shall be calculated on the basis of total remuneration received from social media content and total expenses made, up to maximum of 30% of total revenue.

The threshold for number of users for the purposes of these rules will be over exceeding 50,000 users during a tax year or 12,250 users during a quarter," read these rules. The FBR said the minimum income of a person from remunerative social media content shall be calculated on the basis of total remuneration received from social media content and total expenses made, up to maximum of 30% of total revenue.

territories, as may be specified. The FBR has proposed that it will charge Rs195 per 1,000 views on the video shared on YouTube. For the purpose of this special procedure, it shall be taken as Rs195 and is subject to revision from time to time." At present, the revenue per mile (per thousand) usually ranges from \$1 to \$3 but can go as high as \$9, if the audience is in the US and Canada. The Rs195 per 1,000 views from income earned from Pakistan could translate from 16% to 66% rate. Such measure cannot be enforced without the active support of the YouTube management.

The FBR stated that the proposed special procedure will only apply to computation of

## Oil prices surge 11pc



**NEWS DESK:** Hopes for a swift end to the Middle East war faded on Thursday after US President Donald Trump vowed more aggressive strikes on Iran, sending oil prices soaring up again in a blow to consumers around the world.

US oil prices jumped more than 11 per cent, while Brent soared 7pc on Thursday in volatile trading, as traders worried about prolonged disruptions to oil supply.

Brent crude futures were up \$6.34, or

6.3pc, to \$107.5 a barrel at 1610 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures were up \$11.19, or 11.15pc, at \$111.27 per barrel. WTI hit a session high of \$113.97 a barrel, its biggest absolute price rise since 2020.

WTI, whose price is generally below Brent's, was pricing nearly \$3 over Brent. It was the highest premium US crude futures have commanded over the global benchmark in a year.

Still, both benchmarks remained below the highs near \$120 a barrel touched earlier in the conflict.

Stocks slid and the dollar gained after Trump said military operations would be intensified without offering the timeline that investors had sought for ending hostilities against Iran.

Iran's armed forces responded to Trump with a warning for the US and Israel of "more crushing, broader and more destructive" attacks in store.

The war will continue until the "permanent regret and surrender" of Iran's enemies, said Ibrahim Zolfaqari spokesperson for the Iranian military's Khatam al-

Ambya, in a statement carried by Iranian media.

Fears are growing that the conflict may leave Iran with a stranglehold over Middle East energy supplies now that it has shown that it can block the Strait of Hormuz by targeting oil tankers and attacking Gulf countries hosting US troops.

The analysis shows that the mining and quarrying industry is experiencing negative growth of -2.46pc due to declines in production of gas (-3.98pc), marble (-10.68pc), limestone (-8.35pc), and other minerals (-5.91pc).

Large-Scale Manufacturing (LSM) growth is driven by QM, which grew 5.71pc in Q2 of 2025-26. Major contributors have been Automobiles (52.95pc), transport equipment (40.81pc), and petroleum products (24.65pc). A growth of 13.1pc has been reported in electricity, gas, and water supply, driven by an increase in the quarterly subsidies (from Rs217 billion to Rs232 billion) and a decline in the CPI electricity deflator (from 283.60 to 256.41).

Important crops have shrunk by 1.87pc in Q2, mainly due to a decline in cotton production (-0.9pc) and increases in inputs such as seeds (6pc) and fertiliser (7.2pc).

Other crops contracted by 5.69pc compared to 19.14pc last year, driven by falling green fodder production (-12.8pc) and higher input use. Livestock increased by 5.59pc versus 5.56pc last year because of a decrease in input costs. The forestry and fishing industries are growing by 3.76pc and 0.77pc, respectively, maintaining their usual growth trends.

The industry sector has witnessed growth of 7.40pc, compared with

## FBR eyes Rs195 tax per 1,000 YouTube views

**NEWS DESK:** The government has proposed new amendments to hit non-resident Pakistani YouTubers who were earning hefty amounts by selling their content in Pakistan, seeking to recover Rs195 per 1,000 views on videos.

The proposed income tax rate translates to 16% to 66% of every cent earned from Pakistan, depending upon the region and the price for every cent or dollar earned against each 1,000 views of a video. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has proposed the amendments in the Income Tax Rules and gave seven days for objections to these amendments. These special procedures have been notified by exercising special powers available to Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb to change these rules.

The law states that the FBR with the approval of the minister-in-charge (finance minister) may by notification in the official gazette, prescribe special procedure for scope and payment of tax, record keeping, filing of return and assessment in respect of small businesses, construction businesses, medical practitioners, hospitals, educational institutions, and any other sector specified by the FBR with the approval of the minister-in-charge, in such cities or

territories, as may be specified. The FBR has proposed that it will charge Rs195 per 1,000 views on the video shared on YouTube. For the purpose of this special procedure, it shall be taken as Rs195 and is subject to revision from time to time." At present, the revenue per mile (per thousand) usually ranges from \$1 to \$3 but can go as high as \$9, if the audience is in the US and Canada. The Rs195 per 1,000 views from income earned from Pakistan could translate from 16% to 66% rate. Such measure cannot be enforced without the active support of the YouTube management.

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income of non-resident persons earning income from remunerative social media content viewed in Pakistan. "Every non-resident person deriving income from interaction with users in Pakistan through social media platforms to the extent such income constitutes Pakistan-source income state these rules will be over exceeding 50,000 users during a tax year or 12,250 users during a quarter," read these rules. The FBR said the minimum income of a person from remunerative social media content shall be calculated on the basis of total remuneration received from social media content and total expenses made, up to maximum of 30% of total revenue.



## Economy expands 3.89pc in Oct-Dec

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan's economy grew by 3.89 per cent in the October-December quarter of 2025-26, showing an increase from 2.18pc recorded in the same period last year.

The economy also recorded a slight improvement compared to the revised 3.63pc expansion in the first quarter (July-September), despite a slight slowdown in the growth of the agriculture and industrial sectors, according to data released by the National Accounts Committee (NAC) on Thursday.

The services sector posted a slight improvement over the first quarter, partly offsetting the deceleration observed in the other two sectors.

The year-on-year quarterly growth was mainly driven by a 7.40pc increase in the industrial sector, followed by 1.76pc growth in the agriculture sector and 3.69pc in the services sector. The combined performance of these three key economic contributors slightly exceeded the overall economic expansion during the quarter.

Industrial services sectors drive growth despite agriculture slowdown.

The NAC slightly revised the GDP growth to 3.63pc in Q1 FY26, down from the earlier 3.71pc. It finalised GDP growth at 2.62pc in



FY24, slightly lower than the previous estimate of 2.63pc, and the revised growth for FY25 is 3.06pc, down slightly from the earlier estimate of 3.09pc.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) expects GDP to grow at 4pc in FY26, a target that seems ambitious.

The 115th meeting of the NAC, chaired by the Planning Commission secretary, took place on Thursday at the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics headquarters. The meeting approved the updated annual growth rates for FY25. The analysis of the second quarter showed

that the agriculture sector grew by 1.76pc in Q2 compared to the same period last year.

Important crops have shrunk by 1.87pc in Q2, mainly due to a decline in cotton production (-0.9pc) and increases in inputs such as seeds (6pc) and fertiliser (7.2pc).

Other crops contracted by 5.69pc compared to 19.14pc last year, driven by falling green fodder production (-12.8pc) and higher input use. Livestock increased by 5.59pc versus 5.56pc last year because of a decrease in input costs. The forestry and fishing industries are growing by 3.76pc and 0.77pc, respectively, maintaining their usual growth trends.

The industry sector has witnessed growth of 7.40pc, compared with

## Nepra fines power companies Rs85m



**NEWS DESK:** The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on Thursday fined two state-run power companies a total of Rs85 million for actions that burdened consumers with over Rs35 billion in extra fuel costs in a single month, in addition to causing continuous losses and a major power breakdown.

Nepra initiated proceedings after the CPPA in January 2024 claimed a fuel cost adjustment based on an actual pooled fuel cost of Rs14.602 per unit, a major deviation from the reference cost of Rs7.4894 per unit set for the fiscal year.

The fines relate to misreporting, faulty forecasts, critical project delays and a nationwide breakdown. Both companies were directed to deposit the fine within 15 days.

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The regulator's investigation found that the CPPA failed to provide accurate monthly generation forecasts, specifically excluding RLNG-based power generation for January 2024, despite take-or-pay contract obligations.

# Azam Khan dazzles as Kings edge Rawalpindiz to stay unbeaten

**NEWS DESK:** Azam Khan produced a blistering half-century that lit up the Gaddafi Stadium as Karachi Kings overpowered down 198 with five wickets and four balls to spare against Rawalpindiz on Thursday night in the HBL Pakistan Super League match here at the Gaddafi Stadium.

Coming in at number four with the Kings needing momentum after early losses, the swash-buckling wicket-keeper-batter unleashed an explosive 74 off just 34 balls, studded with six fours and six sixes.

His aggressive strokeplay, particularly against the spinners and pace, turned a challenging chase into a comfortable victory, extending Karachi's unbeaten run in the tournament.

Azam's innings, laced with powerful pulls, sweeps and lofted drives, culminated in a memorable display of clean hitting before he fell in the 18th over.

Prior to Azam's arrival, the Kings had made a promising but stuttering start. Openers Mohammad Wassem and David Warner began cautiously against Mohammad Amir, with Wassem striking two early fours.



Wassem then exploded, hammering Naseem Shah for a six and another maximum in the third over, racing to 23 off 11 before chopping to a cutter.

Salman Ali Agha joined Warner and showed intent with a six off Mohammad Amir

Khan, but struggled against the swing and bounce, eventually falling for 29 when he nicked a reverse-lap attempt off Daryl Mitchell to Rawalpindiz captain and wicket-keeper Rizwan.

Warner anchored the innings with a measured 50 off 36 balls (six fours and a six), but the required run-rate hovered around 11 as the middle overs progressed.

At 146 for three in the 16th over after Warner's dismissal to Mitchell, the game remained in the balance. It

was Azam's protechnics that shifted the momentum decisively.

Earlier, Rawalpindiz posted a competitive 197 for six after opting to bat first, thanks largely to aggressive middle-order contributions, though their innings lost steam in the death overs.

Hasan Ali starred with the ball for Karachi, claiming three wickets for 24 runs in his four overs. His disciplined spell, mixing short-pitched deliveries with clever variations, disrupted the Pindiz top order and later cleaned up the tail. The right-arm

pace removed Rizwan early for 21, gloving a pull to Azam behind the stumps in the third over.

He returned in the death to castled Sam Billings for a fluent 58 off 35 (eight fours and a six) with a skidding hard-length ball, and then bowled Cole McConchie to leave the visitors reeling at 192 for six.

Khushdil Shah provided excellent support with two wickets for 37, including the key scalps of Yasir Khan and Kamran Ghulam.

Mir Hamza, despite going for 49, picked up Mitchell for 65 off 41 balls (five fours, three sixes), while Adam Zampa and Abbas Afridi contained the scoring in patches without taking wickets.

Rawalpindiz had made a flying start, racing to 55 for two in the powerplay.

Rizwan and Yasir attacked Moeen Ali's opening over for 13 runs, but Hasan's introduction brought the first breakthrough as the saw them slip to 55 for three, before Mitchell and Billings surged a 120-run partnership that threatened to take the game away.

Billings, in particular, entertained with cheeky reverse sweeps and powerful hits, reaching his fifty in style. However, Hasan's 18th over proved pivotal, removing Billings and applying brakes that restricted the final overs to just 23 runs.

The chase began under lights with Wassem and Warner taking on Amir. Wassem's aggressive approach yielded quick boundaries, but Naseem's variations accounted for him.

Warner and Agha steadied the ship, yet Mitchell's military-medium pace proved effective, claiming two wickets including the skipper. Azam then took centre stage. His fifty came off just 29 balls in the 16th over with a massive six off McConchie, followed by another maximum to keep the scoreboard ticking.

Even after his departure, Khushdil remained not out on five, while Abbas sealed the win in dramatic fashion with a towering six off Mitchell on the second ball of the final over.

The win keeps Karachi Kings as the only unbeaten side in the competition, while Rawalpindiz continue their search for a maiden PSL win.

## PSL committee rejects Fakhar's appeal

**NEWS DESK:** The Pakistan Super League (PSL) technical committee has dismissed an appeal by Fakhar Zaman, upholding the two-match ban imposed on the Lahore Qalandars batter for will tampering, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) confirmed on Thursday.

The 35-year-old had earlier been suspended for two PSL matches after being found guilty of breaching the league's code of conduct during Lahore Qalandars' narrow four-wicket defeat to Karachi Kings on Sunday. Fakhar subsequently challenged the decision, seeking relief from the sanction, but the appeal was rejected following review by the PSL's technical committee.

"In accordance with the Code of Conduct, any decision made by the PSL technical committee shall be the full, final and complete disposition of the matter and will be binding on all parties," the PCB said in an official statement, leaving no room for further appeal.

Fakhar was charged under Article 41.3 of the PSL playing conditions, which relates to altering the condition of the ball to gain an unfair advantage. The incident occurred late in the match when the ball passed between Shaheen Afridi and Fakhar before the start of the final over.



On-field umpire Faisal Afridi grew suspicious and requested the ball from Haris Rauf. After a prolonged discussion with fellow umpire Sharfuddin, the officials decided to replace the ball, deeming it to have been tampered with. In addition, Lahore Qalandars were penalised five runs.

The penalty proved decisive in a tense chase, as Karachi Kings edged to victory with three balls to spare, capitalising on the added runs in a closely contested finish.

As a result of the upheld ban, Fakhar will miss Lahore Qalandars' upcoming fixtures against Multan Sultans on Friday and Islamabad United on April 9.

## Barca reach WCL semifinals

**NEWS DESK:** Barcelona demolished rivals Real Madrid 6-0 to progress to the women's Champions League semi-finals 12-2 on aggregate.

Alexia Putellas shone for the Catalan giants on her 500th appearance for the club in their first game at the rebuilt Camp Nou, building on their 6-2 quarter-final first leg victory.

Three-time winners Barca reached an eighth consecutive semi-final, with winger Caroline Graham Hansen netting twice and Putellas also on the scoresheet in the rout.

Pere Romeu's dominant side, runners-up to Arsenal last year, will face Bayern Munich in the semi-finals after the German side knocked out Manchester United on Wednesday.

Despite missing key players and long-term absentee Aitana Bonmati, Barca put on a tour de force to entertain a 60,000-strong crowd, the fourth-highest attendance in the competition's history. "We did a good job last week as a team, to be able to come here today (with the lead) and we wanted to put on a good game for all the fans who came," Graham Hansen told.

"It obviously helps when you have 60,000, 80,000 or 90,000 fans because they support you and help you sink the opposition."

Two-time Ballon d'Or winner Putellas put Barca ahead early on, turning home a rebound after Misa Rodriguez saved from Ewa Pajor. That set Barca on their way to beating Clasico rivals Madrid for a sixth time this season. They have scored 25 goals in the process against only two conceded.

Graham Hansen swiftly added the second for the Liga Leaders with a header from a Putellas cross.

Irene Paredes nodded home from a corner for Barca's third, just as she had done in the first leg, as Madrid crumbled.

Polish striker Pajor grabbed the fourth with a close-range finish after Rodriguez struggled to push away a header.

Athena del Castillo poked wide for Madrid shortly before half-time, spurning their team's best chance.

Norwegian winger Graham Hansen netted Barca's fifth early in the second half, turning away from her marker and producing a fine lofted finish.

Pajor and Graham Hansen wasted further openings as Barca continued to dominate, with Esme Brugts notching the sixth with a tap-in after a neat move involving Patri Guijarro and Clara Serrajordi.



## Sameer Minhas, Shadab shine in United's first win

**NEWS DESK:** A whirlwind knock by youngster Sameer Minhas backed by a superb all-round display from captain Shadab Khan steered Islamabad United to their first victory of the HBL Pakistan Super League 11 as they crushed Quetta Gladiators by eight wickets here at the Gaddafi Stadium on Thursday.

Chasing 184, United achieved the target with 10 balls to spare for the loss of only two wickets thanks to Sameer's unbeaten career-best knock of 82 and 69 not cracked by Shadab.

United had lost one match in the ongoing season while their second game was washed out. For Gladiators, it was their second loss of the edition Shadab, earlier in the day, fared impressively with the leather (3-23) too to earn the player-of-the-match award.

United lost opener Devon Conway (18 off 19 balls), caught by Ahmed Daniyal at short third man off mystery spinner Abrar Ahmed, as United ended powerplay at a solid 58-1.

Andries Gous (two) was cleaned up by Abrar in the seventh over to leave United at 61-2 in the seventh over.

At this stage, opener Sameer and Shadab took charge to make sure they do not lose any more wickets as they built a match-winning partnership of 128

runs while cruising towards the target. Batting in an aggressive mode, the duo helped their side reach 100 off 11.4 overs. Sameer completed the fifty in just 32 balls while Shadab reached his off just 29.

Sameer faced just 48 balls striking eight fours and three sixes while Shadab plundered five fours and four sixes during his 39-ball blast.

The pair then raced to 150 off 15.4 overs making the target look much easier and completed their 100-run stand off mere 57 balls.

For Gladiators, Afridi was took two wickets for 29 runs while the rest struggled.

Earlier after electing to bat first, Gladiators posted 183-5 off the stipulated 20 overs

thanks to Hasan Nawaz's belligerent 66 not out. However, the total did not prove enough in the end.

After skipper Saud Shakeel (42 off 26) and Shamiyul Hussain (21 off 15) got their team to a flying start of 50 in just 4.2 overs, the team dipped in the middle losing five wickets for the addition of 43 runs in around seven overs.

Gladiators had raced to 60-1 in powerplay after having lost Sha-myl who was dismissed by pacer Salman Irshad in the fifth over.

Saud's crucial scalp was claimed by Shadab in the ninth over as the batter failed to play a slog sweep and was caught by Haider Ali at backward point. Sand hit three fours and as many

sixes. The scoreboard read 71-2. The skipper was followed by Khawaja Nayif (18 off 14) dismissed by slow left-arm orthodox spinner Imad Wasim in the 11th over which made it 88-3 before Ben McDermott (three) and Bevon Jacobs (nought) were sent back to the bus on successive balls to Shadab in the next over.

Gladiators were now 93-5 and a collapse was on the cards but it was not to be as Hasan and Tom Curran (29 not out off 22 balls) got together to stretch a 90-run unbeaten stand. After posting 100 in 13.1 overs they changed gears to touch 150 in 18 overs.

Hasan faced 36 balls and struck six fours and three sixes while Curran hit a couple of fours and a maximum.

## Italy's football chief resigns after World Cup disaster

**NEWS DESK:** The head of Italy's football federation (FIGC) resigned on Thursday, falling on his sword after the men's national team failed to qualify for the World Cup for a third consecutive time.

Gabriele Gravina revealed he would step down as the country's top football official following a meeting held at the FIGC's headquarters in Rome on Thursday.

His announcement came a day after Sport Minister Andrea Abodi called on him to resign.

Four-time World Cup winners Italy fell at the play-offs again on Tuesday, this time after a penalty shoot-out against Bosnia and Herzegovina, and will miss this summer's finals in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The shock waves of the latest humiliation for one of the world's most successful football nations forced Gravina, 72, to go back on his initial plans to wait until a FIGC board meeting next week to announce a decision on his future.



The former Italian Olympic Committee who was president of the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics organisation committee, is reportedly one of the names in the hat.

Before then, head coach Gennaro Gattuso is expected to also step down, while general manager Gianluigi Buffon, the former Italy goalkeeper, announced his resignation on Thursday.

Italy's failure to reach the first ever 48-team World Cup - which will feature the likes of Cape Verde and Curaçao - led Abodi to release a statement saying: "It's

clear that Italian football needs to be rebuilt from the ground up and that starts with changes at the top of the FIGC."

That came a day after Gravina had hit out at politicians "who have only pushed for resignations", while also admitting Italian football "is in a profound crisis".

UEFA threat Gravina was elected FIGC president in October 2018, becoming the permanent replacement for Carlo Tavecchio, who stepped down following Italy's first World Cup play-off defeat to Sweden the previous year.

The highlight of his reign was Italy's thrilling triumph at Euro 2020, when the Azzurri team stars with changes at the top of the FIGC.

That came a day after Gravina had hit out at politicians "who have only pushed for resignations", while also admitting Italian football "is in a profound crisis".

But two World Cup qualification failures and a dismal defence of the European title left Gravina with little choice but to resign as Italy's football boss deepened. And those do not just relate to diminishing performances by the national team and Serie A clubs - none of whom have won the Champions League since 2010.

# Sindh announces Rs2,000 for bikers as part of fuel subsidy; Punjab makes public transportation free

**NEWSDESK:** The Sindh and Punjab governments announced relief measures on Friday, a day after the Centre announced an unprecedented increase of 43 per cent and 55pc in the prices of petrol and high-speed diesel (HSD), respectively, to cushion the impact of global oil price shocks amid the US-Israel war on Iran.

The Sindh government also announced support for small-scale farmers, while the Punjab government said it was introducing a targeted monthly subsidy for transporters.

At the same time, public transport in the federal capital was also made free for the next 30 days, starting from Saturday.

Sindh announces fuel subsidy for motorcyclists.

In a press conference in Karachi, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah announced the Sindh government will provide motorcyclists Rs2,000 as part of a fuel subsidy under a scheme unveiled by the federal government a day earlier.

At the outset of the press conference, the chief minister, referring to the recent fuel hike, maintained that the government had to take "difficult decisions".

"For three weeks, the prime minister did not increase the cost of fuel; however, the policy had both advantages and disadvantages," CM Murad said, noting that the blanket subsidy was benefiting the "rich and poor alike".

He recalled that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also highlighted the need for "targeted subsidies". He said the federal government, along with the provincial governments, held consultations and developed a "one-month regimen, which has four components".

Under one of the components, he said it was decided that motorcyclists should be shielded from the hike, resulting in the Rs100 subsidy, which was announced a day earlier.

In that regard, the chief minister said that the provincial government will be providing registered motorcycle owners Rs2,000 per month as part of the fuel subsidy.

"The excise department has prepared an application," he said, adding that once registered, the owners will receive the funds "between April 15-20" as targeted support for bikers.

He urged bike owners to get their vehicle registered "under their own name" so they may be able to avail the services.

"Go to the excise department's website and check if your vehicle is registered by entering your CNIC number," he said. CM Murad added that the application will be available in three days.

The chief minister also announced support for small-scale farmers, stating that farmers with land less than 25 acres will be given Rs1,500 per acre. He expressed faith that the subsidy will be able to "compensate for the cost of diesel".

"We can begin the transfers from tomorrow," he added. Detailing the third component of the targeted subsidy, CM

As for public transport in the province, the chief minister said that authorities have been directed to keep the charges unchanged, "whether inter-city or intra-city".

However, he added that the directive did not extend to ride-hailing applications and taxis. The chief minister vowed that the government "will ensure that public transport fares remain the same despite the fuel hike".

He also announced that railway fares will remain unchanged across the country, with the cost to be borne by the federal government.

Punjab, Islamabad announced free public transport. Meanwhile, the Punjab government announced that free public transport would be provided to the people on intra-city routes across the province.

"Citizens will not have to purchase tickets while travelling on public transport — Orange Line Train, Metro Bus Service, Speedo Bus and Green Electric Bus," Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said in a statement.

She said it was a major relief package for the people of Punjab in view of the ongoing global crisis. She added that it was also part of the implementation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's national savings and austerity programme across the province. The Punjab CM said the government had also decided to provide cash support for the protection of agriculture, food, and farmers.

"A subsidy of Rs100 per litre of diesel per acre will be provided to farmers. It has also been decided to provide a subsidy to motorcyclists — every registered bike owner will receive a subsidy of Rs100 on 20 litres," she said.

The CM praised the prime minister for maintaining the supply and prices of petroleum products in Pakistan for one month despite the global crisis.

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months, most notably after his eye ailment came to light earlier this year. The 54-year-old Bushra was described as a "parda-nasheen" lady with no history of holding public office, asserting that she has been implicated solely due to her marital relationship.

In a separate move, Bushra also filed an application seeking a decision on the merits regarding her plea for the suspension of her sentence in the Al-Qadir Trust case.

The application noted that her plea under Section 426 CPC had been pending for over ten months, with notices originally issued on May 15, 2025. The petition alleged

that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has employed "procedural dilatory tactics" to frustrate the proceedings.

It further stated that despite the court's orders to fix the application, the matter has been repeatedly adjourned on various pretexts, including the non-availability of prosecutors or requests for more time to prepare.

The plea maintained that Bushra has already served over a year of her seven-year sentence and, as a female accused, is entitled to statutory leniency.

Both Imran and Bushra also raised serious concerns regarding their inability to meet with their legal counsel in Adiala Jail.

Seeking directions for the jail superintendent to facilitate "immediate and unhindered" meetings, Imran's petition argues for the denial of visitation rights is a violation of Articles 9 (no person shall be deprived of life or liberty save in accordance with law).

"IBA (right to fair trial) and 14 (the dignity of man and the privacy of the home shall be inviolable) of the Constitution."

Meanwhile, in a separate application, lead counsel Barrister Salman Safdar stated that he has been denied access to his clients for approximately three months, making it impossible to obtain "fresh instructions" to proceed with the man appeals.

Last year, the IHC had allowed Imran twice-a-week meetings — on Tuesdays and Thursdays — with his family, lawyers and other associates. Despite the order, the ex-premier has not seen largely restricted from meeting visitors for several weeks.

The petition, filed through a legal team including Safdar, Salman Akram Raja, and Barrister Ali Zafar, also emphasised that justice should not only be done but also seen to be done," urging the IHC to ensure the expeditious disposal of these matters to prevent "irreparable loss".

## Govt withdraws increase in toll taxes on national highways

**NEWSDESK:** The government on Thursday withdrew the increase in toll taxes, freezing all adjustments for the current fiscal year.

The decision was taken in a high-level review meeting of the National Highway Authority (NHA), chaired by Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan, to align national infrastructure goals with immediate public relief.

"Acting on the special directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the minister used the session to officially rescind the 25 per cent quarterly increase in toll taxes, freezing all adjustments for the 2025-26 fiscal year," it said.

According to state-run APP, the minister directed the NHA to withdraw its notification issued on April 1 and halt the increase that was scheduled to take effect from April 5. A notification

lined the government's long-term vision, declaring the Karachi Port-Hyderabad Motorway as the "economic lifeline" of the

country. The minister emphasised that the M-10 will be an expansive 8-lane project, essential for strengthening port connectivity and decongesting urban heavy traffic.

On March 24, APP had reported that the NHA had announced an increase in toll tax on national highways and motorways, which were to take effect from April 1. According to the official notification, under the new toll structure, charges for cars on national highways were to be Rs 70, while vans would be charged Rs 150 and buses Rs 250. Two- and three-axle trucks would face a toll of Rs 300, and larger trucks would be charged Rs 550.

During the briefing on Friday, the communications minister also outlined the government's long-term vision, declaring the Karachi Port-Hyderabad Motorway as the "economic lifeline" of the

country. The minister emphasised that the M-10 will be an expansive 8-lane project, essential for strengthening port connectivity and decongesting urban heavy traffic.

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## Imran, Bushra move IHC to fix appeals in Toshakhana-I, £190m cases

**NEWSDESK:** Former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, on Friday approached the Islamabad High Court (IHC) seeking the urgent

fixation of their appeals to set aside the conviction in the Toshakhana I case and to suspend the sentence in the £190 million corruption case, citing "inordinate delays" and "dilatory tactics" by the prosecution.

On March 31, the IHC adjourned the hearing of the suspension of sentence applications filed by Imran and Bushra in the £190 million Al-Qadir Trust case after the defence counsel sought time to obtain fresh instructions from his clients.

In a series of petitions filed under Section 561-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CPC), the couple has also requested that the court direct the jail authorities to facilitate unhindered meetings with their legal team for necessary consultations.

The petitioners, in their appeal filed today, sought the early fixation of appeals of the couple against conviction for final adjudication.

These appeals challenged the judgment delivered on January 31, 2024, by the Accountability Court No. 1, Islamabad, which convicted the couple in the Toshakhana I case and sentenced them to 14 years in Adiala Jail.

However, in April, 2024, the IHC suspended the sentences handed out to the former prime minister and his spouse.

The petitions submitted today argued that the trial court's judgment was passed without the "proper application of judicial mind" and suffers from a "serious misreading and non-reading of material evidence".

The petitions also highlighted Imran's medical condition, specifically "right central retinal vein occlusion," noting that the necessary treatment is unavailable within the premises of Adiala Jail.

It should be mentioned that the former premier's health has garnered attention in recent

months, most notably after his eye ailment came to light earlier this year. The 54-year-old Bushra was described as a "parda-nasheen" lady with no history of holding public office, asserting that she has been implicated solely due to her marital relationship.

## NA surrenders over Rs470m into national exchequer to support govt's austerity drive

**NEWSDESK:** The National Assembly has "surrendered" Rs472.1 million to the treasury as part of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's austerity measures, said a statement on Friday.

The statement said that austerity measures in the lower house were being carried out under the directives of NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq.

"In compliance with austerity directives and in support of prudent governance, the secretariat has effected a Rs21 million reduction in the salaries of Members of the National Assembly, which has been deposited into the Prime Minister's Austerity Fund 2026 to further contribute to national financial resources," added the statement.

The development came after PM Shehbaz announced a host of austerity measures to conserve fuel in view of the global fuel crisis triggered by the US-Israel war on Iran.

As part of the contingency plan, the government introduced wide-ranging steps to reduce fuel consumption, including a four-day working week for government offices, a 30 per cent reduction in fuel allocation for official vehicles, and work-from-home arrangements for half of the staff in public and private offices, excluding essential services.

The NA Secretariat added that a plan has been mapped out to achieve overall savings of up to Rs2 billion through rationalised expenditure and enhanced resource management over the remainder of the fiscal year.

Following the speaker's directive, 75pc of official vehicles have been grounded to save fuel and energy," it added.

It further stated that the "National Assembly Secretariat is meeting its electricity needs through the Green Parliament Solar System".

To further reduce expenses, 200 employees of the secretariat are on duty at the NA, added the statement.

"Further contributions to the National Treasury are expected as these cost-saving initiatives continue to be implemented and expanded."

Earlier in March, Senate Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani approved the surrender of the Rs265 million to the national exchequer in efforts to support the government's austerity drive.

**QUETTA**

**BREAKING NEWS**

**Pakistan Treek-e-Insaf Balochistan announces protest demonstrations against fuel prices**

PTI Balochistan says people have not taken to the streets yet but party is planning strong demonstrations as petrol hits Rs 458 per litre and HSD Rs 520 per litre amid Iranian fuel supply disruptions

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