



BALOCHISTAN
Governor House Quetta
Hosts Grand Easter...

Page No 5



INTERNATIONAL
Britain accuses Russia of
'covert' op in North Atlantic

Page No 3

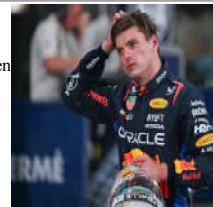


NATIONAL
Pakistan Navy rescues 18
crew members, including...

Page No 8

SPORT

Verstappen
Red Bull
future
in doubt



Page No 7

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Email address: dquettavoice@gmail.com
Website: www.quettavoice.com

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Islamabad Talks

Islamabad Negotiations 2026: US and Iran Sit Down in Pakistan's Capital for High-Stakes Peace Talks

**SYED ALI SHAH,
ZEESHAN AHMED:**

Islamabad: The streets of Pakistan's capital are quieter than usual today, but the air is thick with anticipation.

After weeks of frantic back-channel diplomacy, high-level delegations from the United States and Iran have begun arriving in Islamabad for face-to-face talks aimed at turning a fragile two-week ceasefire into a lasting peace agreement.

Pakistan, often thrust into the spotlight for challenges rather

than triumphs, has emerged as the unlikely but trusted host.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif personally extended the invitation to both sides just days after helping broker the temporary truce that paused open conflict. The goal is simple yet monumental: settle disputes, stabilise the region, and prevent further escalation that has already rattled global oil markets and raised fears across the Middle East.

US Vice President JD Vance is leading the American team, joined by senior advisers. On the Iranian side, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi are heading the delegation. Formal negotiations are expected to kick off over the weekend, building on Iran's 10-point proposal that includes sanctions relief and security guarantees.

For ordinary Pakistanis, the moment feels deeply personal. Families in Rawalpindi and Islamabad watched armoured convoys roll through cordoned streets this morning.

Shopkeepers near the Red Zone say they're hopeful a stable region could finally bring down fuel prices and open new trade doors. "We've seen enough

Wars," one resident told reporters. "If Pakistan can help bring peace, it's something our children will remember."

Security is unprecedented. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has ordered a near-total lockdown, public holiday, traffic diversions, and round-the-clock readiness at hospitals.

Visa-on-arrival facilities have been fast-tracked for delegates and journalists to keep the focus on substance, not logistics.

Challenges remain real. Fresh reports of tensions in Lebanon and mixed signals from Tehran have added uncertainty.

Yet both sides have shown willingness to talk, and Islamabad's quiet efforts—backed by China, Saudi Arabia, and others—have already delivered the first ceasefire in months. As delegations settle in behind closed doors, the world is watching.

For Pakistan, this is more than hosting talks—it's a chance to prove that diplomacy born in our capital can reshape the future of an entire region.

What do you think these negotiations mean for Pakistan and the Middle East? Share your views in the comments.

ADB Revises Pakistan GDP Growth to 3.5% Amid Rising Global Risks

WEB DESK:

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has updated Pakistan's economic outlook, projecting GDP growth at 3.5% for the ongoing fiscal year, reflecting gradual recovery and improved macroeconomic stability. However, the bank has cautioned that global uncertainty, particularly ongoing tensions in the Middle East, could create significant economic challenges. In its latest Asian Development Outlook (April 2026), ADB indicated that Pakistan's economy is on a recovery path, with growth expected to further accelerate to 4.5% in FY2027.

The upward revision is driven by a rebound in manufac-



turing activity and renewed investment trends, supported by ongoing structural reforms.

Despite these gains, the report flagged serious risks to the outlook, including inflationary pressures, fiscal constraints, and vulnerabilities in the external sector.

The earlier growth estimate for the current fiscal year stood at 3%, showing a notable upward revision.

ADB Country Director Emma Fan stated that Pakistan has made progress in stabilising its economy under challenging global conditions.

She emphasised that sustained reform implementation will be key to maintaining growth momentum and strengthening financial buffers against external shocks.

The report forecasts average inflation at 6.4% in FY2026 and 6.5% in FY2027, largely due to rising global oil prices and disruptions in supply chains caused by the Middle East crisis.

Given Pakistan's heavy reliance on energy imports, these factors are likely to intensify economic pressures. The central bank is expected to adopt a cautious approach toward monetary easing to keep inflation within its target range of 5% to 7%.

ADB also warned that prolonged instability in the Middle East could negatively impact Pakistan's economy by increasing fuel and fertiliser costs, slowing industrial and agricultural productivity, reducing remittance inflows, and widening the current account deficit.

The report underlined the importance of continuing economic reforms to ensure long-term stability and inclusive growth.

A recovery in private sector investment, a stable exchange rate, and government incentives, particularly in construction and post-flood rehabilitation, are expected to support economic expansion in the near term.

Gas Pipeline Blown Up Near Sibi Teaching Hospital, Supply Disrupted

Nashad Baloch:

Sibi, Balochistan – Unknown accused used explosives to blow up a gas pipeline close to the Sibi Teaching Hospital on Friday, damaging the line and affecting gas supply to the area.

According to police sources, the blast targeted a 4-inch diameter gas pipeline near the hospital.

The explosion damaged around two feet of the pipe and also hit the main valve that supplies gas to the surrounding neighbourhoods. Fortunately, no one was injured in the incident.

However, the blast has badly disrupted gas supply to local residents.

Police and security personnel quickly reached the site and have begun investigating the attack.

Teams are currently assessing the damage and working to repair the pipeline so that gas can be



restored as soon as possible.

This is the latest incident of its kind in Balochistan, where

attacks on gas infrastructure have been

reported several times in the past.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

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



Editorial:

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

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

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

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

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

Equally important is the ability for citizens to directly file complaints against judicial officers or court staff if they face

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

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

The Balochistan High Court deserves recognition for taking a forward-looking approach to judicial transparency. By embracing technology, the court has empowered the public, strengthened accountability, and made justice more approachable for millions. This is a good step — one that brings the judiciary closer to the people it serves.

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

By Musavir Durrani:

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Islam highly respects parents, but marriage choice is not their right. They can guide, suggest, and

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

The final decision always belongs to the person getting married.

Statements such as: "If you don't marry this one, who will marry you?" "You have no choice." "Do it for family honor."

Pressure is also pure emotional manipulation, and Islam does not allow it. Emotional or Psychological Harm. Forced marriage is not only when someone is physically pressured. Even emotional, mental, or family pressure counts as force.

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How AI Is Making Modern Production Smarter and Faster

Syed Muhammad Waseem:

AI is changing the way we create and collaborate, with 41% of brands already using it for video production. Production teams now have to create more content faster than ever. Staying on track while keeping ideas fresh is a daily challenge. AI is changing how production teams plan, shoot, and edit. It's making the process faster, smarter, and more creative.

As the need for faster content grows, AI is becoming a key tool in modern studios. It helps creators stay up to date with new trends and what audiences want. Studios are using AI to work faster and save money. According to Deloitte's 2024 report, 42% of executives say it boosts efficiency and productivity.

Let's explore how AI is changing production from planning to editing. You'll learn how it saves time, cuts costs, and boosts creativity. By the end, you'll see how it's making modern production smarter and faster.

The Evolution of AI in Media Production
AI in media production has evolved rapidly over the years. Initially, it served as a basic tool for handling repetitive tasks such as video editing, adding visual effects, and creating computer graphics. Over time, it has transformed into a powerful creative partner that now supports teams at every stage of production.

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

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

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

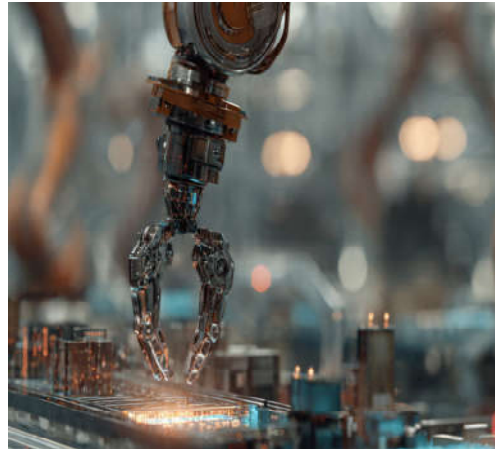
Major studios such as Netflix and Warner Bros. are now using AI-driven tools to analyze audience preferences, optimize workflows, and enhance storytelling. As a result, AI has shifted from being a simple technical assistant to becoming an essential force shaping the future of modern media production.

Why Production Houses Are Turning to AI

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

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

How Production Houses Are Using AI



Production houses work from start to finish. It supports every stage of filmmaking, from planning and shooting to editing and final delivery. In Pre-Production, AI is making the pre-production stage faster and more creative. Writers now use tools like ChatGPT, Jasper, and Sudowrite to draft scripts or explore story ideas. In fact, 60% of film studios are exploring AI-driven scriptwriting tools to speed up brainstorming and script development. These tools help generate dialogue, plot twists, and creative concepts in minutes, saving time while keeping creativity flowing.

Storyboarding and concept visualization have also become easier. Tools like Midjourney, Runway ML, and Pika Labs turn written ideas into visuals, helping directors and producers

see how scenes might look before filming begins. This makes planning smoother and reduces the need for costly revisions later. AI is also improving casting and budgeting. Some tools analyze data to predict how well an actor will connect with audiences. AI software like Celyx and StudioBinder helps plan budgets and schedules. These tools make it easier for studios to manage costs, track spending, and stay on time in production.

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

annually by 2027. Virtual production is becoming more common. Tools like Unreal Engine and NVIDIA Omniverse allow filmmakers to create realistic digital environments before filming begins. These virtual sets save time, cut costs, and give teams more creative freedom, especially for large-scale or fantasy projects.

AI supports crews during filming. Voice recognition systems can follow script lines or adjust camera settings through simple voice commands. As a result, on-set work becomes smoother, and the crew can focus more on storytelling rather than technical details.

In Post-Production, this phase gets a big boost from AI, especially in editing and sound design. Tools like Runway ML, Adobe Premiere Pro AI, and Descript automate tasks

like cutting syncing and scene detection. Smart apps can identify key moments and streamline workflows, helping editors focus on storytelling. AI also improves color grading and sound editing. It can automatically balance colors, refine lighting, remove background noise, and sync soundtracks. Even some free tools can apply complex color grading for a consistent look. AI enhances VFX, CGI, and localization. It removes green screens, fills missing frames, and generates realistic effects quickly. Voice tools like Resemble AI and ElevenLabs speed up dubbing and translations for multiple languages.

The use of AI in video editing has reduced production time by an average of 30%,

showing how much it improves efficiency.

AI also helps with versioning and distribution. It can create multiple edits for different platforms like social media, TV, or YouTube Shorts. This allows studios to repurpose content easily and deliver it quickly. Overall, AI makes post-production faster, more precise, and more creative.

Case Studies: How AI Is Shaping Modern Production

Case Study 1: Netflix Builds a Cloud-Based VFX Studio

Netflix, one of the biggest entertainment companies in the world, began producing its own content in 2012. To make collaboration easier, the company wanted to create a visual effects (VFX) studio in the cloud. This would let artists from different countries work together without being limited by location.

Using NICE DCV and Amazon EC2 G4 instances, Netflix built a fast and secure remote rendering solution.

These cloud tools allowed artists to edit, animate, and render with high-quality visuals while keeping performance smooth. The system helped Netflix move from testing to full production in just one year.

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

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

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

The founders wanted a smarter AI-based way to grade crops.

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

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

Falkner advises businesses to focus on real problems first and then see if AI is the right solution. This would let artists from different countries work together without being limited by location.

Case Study 3: What's Next Entertainment's Use of AI in Creative Production

What's Next Entertainment is redefining how film production teams approach creativity and pre-production. To make their workflow smoother and boost creative output, the company uses AI tools like Midjourney and ChatGPT in its daily process.

During the early stages of filmmaking, the team uses Midjourney for storyboard and visual exploration. It helps them create detailed visual references, test color palettes, and shape the overall look and feel of each scene before production begins. This saves time and improves collaboration among directors, designers, and cinematographers.

Meanwhile, ChatGPT supports ideation and research. The team uses it to study accurate. Traditional testing relied on human inspection, which often caused mistakes and disagreements.

Britain accuses Russia of 'covert' op in North Atlantic

NEWS DESK: Britain said on Thursday it had tracked and deterred three Russian submarines on an alleged month-long "covert operation" in UK waters in the North Atlantic near vital undersea cables and pipelines.

Disclosing details of the joint mission with Norway and other unspecified allies, British Defence Secretary John Healey said there was no evidence the Russian vessels had damaged the subsea infrastructure. The UK minister said he was revealing the operation, which involved British warships and military aircraft, to "call out this Russian activity" and send Russian President Vladimir Putin a message. "We see your activity over our cables and our pipelines and you should know that any attempt to damage them will not be tolerated and will have serious consequences," he told a Downing Street news conference.

Healey said he had deployed Britain's armed forces "to track and to deter any malign activity by these vessels", adding Putin's purpose was "secret operations that remain undetected over our critical infrastructure". "We've exposed those covert operations. We've made clear to him and his submarines that we've watched them every step of the way."



Britain and its allies tracked an Akula-class Russian nuclear-powered attack submarine and two specialist submarines from Russia's Main Directorate of Deep Sea Research (GLUG) the UK's Ministry of Defence (MoD) said. GUGI is among Russia's most secret facilities, responsible for sub-surface ocean monitoring and atomic-powered, deep-water minispy subs, according to defence experts. Alongside details and photos of the tracking mission, the MoD published a declassified image of the GLUG vessels docked at Russia's Barents Sea naval base Olenya. The Russian attack sub was "a likely decoy to distract" from the two specialist vessels, which are "designed to survey underwater infrastructure during peacetime and sabotage it in conflict".

Healey told reporters they "spent time over critical infrastructure relevant to us and our allies in the North Atlantic," he noted, with UK warships dropping sonar buoys "to demonstrate to them that we were monitoring". "We wanted to ensure that we could warn them that their covert operation had been exposed and reduce the risk that they may attempt any action that could damage our pipelines or our cables," the defence secretary said. "I'm confident we have no evidence that there has been any damage." The mission involving around 500 British personnel saw UK aircraft fly more than 450 hours while a navy frigate covered several thousand nautical miles, Healey said.

Separately, he responded to criticism in the Daily Telegraph that London was not making good on recent threats to stop vessels from Russia's sanctions-busting "shadow fleet" from transiting through UK waters. It followed the newspaper photographing a Russian frigate escorting at least one sanctioned Russian-linked tanker through British waters this week without interference from the MoD navy.

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Saudi-Iran talks signal regional tensions ease

NEWS DESK: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan held a phone conversation with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi, the Saudi foreign ministry said Thursday, in the first official contact between the two countries since Tehran launched strikes against its Gulf neighbours in retaliation for Israeli-American attacks.

The call focused on reviewing developments in the situation and ways to restore the pace of tensions so as to help restore security and stability in the region.

Healey said he had deployed Britain's armed forces "to track and to deter any malign activity by these vessels", adding Putin's purpose was "secret operations that remain undetected over our critical infrastructure". "We've exposed those covert operations. We've made clear to him and his submarines that we've watched them every step of the way."

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China will not tolerate independence for Taiwan, Xi tells island's opposition leader

NEWS DESK: China will "absolutely not tolerate" independence for Taiwan, which is the chief culprit in undermining peace in the Taiwan Strait, President Xi Jinping told the island's opposition leader on Friday.

Cheng Li-wan, chairwoman of Taiwan's largest opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT), is in China on what she has called a peace mission to reduce tensions at a time when Beijing has stepped up military pressure against the island it claims as its territory.

Meeting in the Great Hall of the People, Xi told Cheng that today's world is not entirely at peace, and peace is precious.

"Compatriots on both sides of the strait are all Chinese - people of one family who want peace, development, exchange, and cooperation," he said, in comments carried by Taiwan television stations.

Both sides of the strait belong to "one China". Xi added, according to a separate state media readout.



"When the family is harmonious, all things will prosper," he said. "Taiwan independence is the chief culprit in undermining peace in the Taiwan Strait - we will absolutely not tolerate or condone it."

China refuses to talk to Taiwan President Lai Ching-te, saying he is a "separatist".

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Hormuz traffic plummets as Iran asserts control

NEWS DESK: Ship traffic through the Strait of Hormuz stood at well below 10 per cent of normal volumes on Thursday, despite a US-Iran ceasefire as Tehran asserted its control by warning ships to keep to its territorial waters.

Hundreds of tankers and other ships have been stuck inside the Gulf since a war with Iran began on Feb 28, cutting global oil supply by 20pc in the world's biggest-ever supply disruption.

The crisis showed little signs of abating as prices for some physical oil grades hit fresh all-time highs on Thursday.

Just seven ships had passed through the strait in the past 24 hours versus about 140 normally, ship-tracking data showed.

The vessels included one oil products tanker and six dry bulk carriers, according to data from Kpler, Lloyds List Intelligence and Signal Ocean. A chemical tanker was also set to cross, destined for India, ship-tracking data on the MarineTraffic and Pole Star Global platforms showed.

Iran must open the strait without conditions, the CEO of UAE state oil giant ADNOC said on Thursday.

The directive for the new route came directly from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The IRGC has told vessels to sail through Iranian waters around Larak Island to avoid the risk of naval mines in the

usual lanes through the strait, Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency reported on Thursday.

Vessels are to enter the strait north of Larak Island and exit just south of it until further notice in coordination with the IRGC's navy, Tasnim quoted the IRGC as saying.

Even with these new instructions, maritime security experts warned of lingering dangers. Risks persist for ships not authorised by Iran, particularly those affiliated with Israel and the US, British maritime security company Ambrey said in an advisory. "Even shipping with apparent approval has been turned

back in recent weeks mid-transit," it said.

The gridlock has created a massive backlog of vessels, and a quick resolution seems unlikely.

"Most shipping lines are likely to remain cautious, and two weeks will not be enough to clear the backlog even if there is a marked increase in traffic," said Torbjorn Solvsted at risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft.

Traffic in the past week was "90pc below normal levels and it was almost entirely being driven by Iranian trade", said Bridget Diakun, a Lloyd's List Intelligence analyst.

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Fact check: Viral video does not show new US troop deployment to Middle East

NEWS DESK: Multiple people on social media platform X have been sharing a clip of military aircraft since Wednesday, claiming that it showed the deployment of United States troops in the Middle East amid the current tensions.

However, the clip, shot from June 2023 and shows a deployment homecoming ceremony in California.

Backchannel diplomatic efforts by Pakistan paid off, as the United States and Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire on Wednesday, after weeks of escalating hostilities triggered by US-Israeli strikes on February 28, which quickly spiralled into a wider regional conflict.

Pakistan emerged as a central diplomatic actor in securing the ceasefire between the US and Iran, actively facilitating communication

between the two sides at a critical stage of the conflict. The effort resulted in a two-week ceasefire. Pakistan will now host talks between the two sides on Friday, with delegations from Iran and the US arriving in Islamabad.

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The post garnered 491,000 views.

Pakistan played important role in Iran-Israel-US ceasefire, says Mehbooba

SRINAGAR, (INP): In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) President Mehbooba Mufti has said that Pakistan played an important role in the Iran-Israel-US ceasefire, helping bring the conflict to a halt in a short time.

Mehbooba Mufti speaking at a party convention in Kulgam said the ceasefire remains fragile.

"The ceasefire is like ice, it can break at any moment. It is difficult for many of us to even mention Pakistan, but it played a crucial role in securing a ceasefire between Iran and the US, helping pre-

vent large-scale devastation. However, I am uncertain how long this ceasefire will hold, as Israel may take actions that could disrupt peace," she said.

She said that the world had forced the US to start dialogue with Iran as the crisis had choked the world economy, drawing a parallel with the alleged costs Kashmir had to pay after it was cut off from its traditional routes in 1947.

"It is difficult to take Pakistan's name here. People feel scared (to do it). But what can you do? Pakistan has played a key role.

The world was on the brink of war, and that was stopped by them, at least for now," she said.

"Pray to God this ceasefire holds, and Iran gets the victory. Iran's victory is the victory of the Muslim Ummah.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's sacrifice united Shias and Sunnis. Does anybody say today he is Shia and I am Sunni? We are all Muslims today," she said.



ISLAMABAD: A VIEW OF US CONVOY CAME OUT NUR KHAN AIR BASE AFTER REACHED IN PAKISTAN, AHEAD OF THE UNITED STATES AND IRAN POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS IN PAKISTANI CAPITAL, IN ISLAMABAD.

HIOJK court declares custodial disappeared Kashmiri dead after 28 years

SRINAGAR, (INP): A court in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (HIOJK) has declared a man, who went missing in Indian army's custody, as legally dead nearly three decades after his disappearance.

According to Kashmir Media Services, a Srinagar court declared Abdul Rashid Wani legally dead almost 28 years after he went missing following his detention by Indian Army personnel in 1997, bringing a measure of legal closure to a long-pending custodial disappearance case.

Wani, a resident of Madina Colony, Bemina, Srinagar, was arrested by personnel of the 28 Gorkha Rifles on July 7, 1997, from Rawalpore, Srinagar, along with another individual, Farooq Ahmad Butt, who was later released.

Wani, however, never returned home, and his whereabouts remained unknown despite repeated efforts by his family.

In a 13-page judg-

Mamata calls BJP 'factory of outsiders', says BJP govt targets Bengalis as Infiltrators

KOLKATA, (INP): I say they (BJP) are a factory of outsiders. In Bengal, there is no place for outsiders," the Chief Minister said.

She also criticised the Indian Home Minister Amit Shah for allegedly using central probe agencies to target the Trinamool Congress.

"O Motabhai (referring to Amit Shah), with the help of ED, CBI, you are threatening everybody. His only job is to scold people and intimidate them. Some bow their heads before him. They (BJP) tried hard to trump me but failed. They (BJP) will never succeed.

The more they try to break me the more I will get stronger," the Chief Minister said.

Earlier, Chief Minister Banerjee once again said the BJP-led New Delhi government is deleting names of more than 90 lakh people from the voter lists of the state to grab power in West Bengal.

Indian occupation has broken all records of rights violations in HIOJK: APHC

SRINAGAR, (INP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has said that the Indian occupation establishment have broken all records of human rights violations in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to Kashmir Media Service, APHC spokesman Adv Abdul Rashid Minhas in a statement issued in Srinagar said those who speak on Kashmir resolution, peace, and against BJP govt's brutal policies are implicated in different false and frivolous criminal cases by the Indian BJP regime which has badly ham-

pered freedom of speech and expression in the disputed territory.

APHC said that India under the barrel of a gun colonized Jammu and Kashmir against the aspirations of the people and was hell-bent to colonize the hearts and minds of the people by using all brutal and violent policies.

The silence of the international community on atrocities on Kashmir has left the occupation authorities scot-free to disempower Kashmiris and settle non-Kashmiris in the internationally disputed territory which is going to compromise people's right to self-determination if allowed unhampered, he pointed out.

APHC spokesman Adv Abdul Rashid Minhas said due to such violent anti Kashmiri actions by Indian BJP regime, an atmosphere of fear and terror has been increased in the entire territory.

APHC said thousands of Kashmiris continue to remain in detentions without trial for years in unhygienic conditions which has deteriorated the health of the detainees.

The APHC said in recent days, the known fake encounter in Ganderbal of a Kashmiri youth has added more fear and state terrorism in HIOJK.

APHC said the Indian rulers hiding its state terrorism and military occupation on the basis of Hindutva agenda prejudice are using the worst and shameful tactics to connect the peaceful demand of Azadi based on the right to Kashmiris with terrorism.

APHC statement appealed to the United Nations and other human rights organizations to take cognizance of these violations and send a fact-finding mission to the territory to ascertain the situation.

Rawalpindi Police placed on high alert, step up security for foreign delegates

RAWALPINDI, (INP): The Rawalpindi Police had been placed on high alert across the Rawalpindi city on the directives of City Police Officer, (CPO) Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani, with extraordinary security arrangements put in place in view of the movement of foreign delegations.

A police spokesman said more than 5,000 officers and personnel had been deployed to ensure foolproof security, while over 350 special pickets had been established and strict monitoring of all entry and exit points was under way.

Additional force had also been deployed on key arteries.

He said senior officers, including District Police Officer (DPO) Chakwal, DPO Murree, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations, SSP Investigation, Chief Traffic Officer, divisional superintendents of police and sub-divisional police officers, were present in the field supervising personnel deployed.

A high-level meeting, chaired by the CPO at Police Lines Headquarters, reviewed the security arrangements and directed that comprehensive and foolproof measures be ensured at all costs.

The spokesman said Elite Force, Dolphin Force, police station mobiles and other quick response units

had been put on high alert patrol.

He added that, as part of security measures, entry and exit routes, major roads, markets, shops and hotels were being closely monitored, while strict security had been put in place at all important locations.

All bus terminals entering the city had been temporarily closed and a stringent checking mechanism had been enforced, with security further enhanced at entry points, he said.

The spokesman said search, sweep, combing and intelligence-based operations had been intensified across the district, with strict checking and surveillance of suspicious individuals continuing.

Security around sensitive installations, key public and private sites, and places of stay had been further tightened, while continuous monitoring was being carried out through Safe City cameras and modern technology, he added.

The spokesman said a special traffic plan had been devised to maintain smooth flow of traffic, with alternative routes provided for the convenience of citizens.

CPO Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani said the Rawalpindi Police were utilising all available resources to ensure foolproof security and protect the lives and property of citizens.

Pakistan brokered talks between US-Iran, "what the rest couldn't do": Omar Abdullah

SRINAGAR, (INP): In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has said the US must "control" Israel to ensure the success of two-week ceasefire with Iran in West Asia, which has been on the boil for the past 39 days.

Omar Abdullah, talking to reporters in Srinagar, said Pakistan brokered talks between the US and Iran, "what the rest couldn't do."

Asked about US President Donald Trump's latest statement on Iran, he said Trump "himself doesn't know what he's doing."

"He (Trump) gives different statements throughout the day," he said Omar also criticised the US President for his language used on social media.

"He should remember that he is President of the US. If you and I use that kind of language on social media, we will be blocked. We will be expelled from Facebook and X," Omar said.

He added that Iran did not start the war. "The war was imposed on Tehran.

Though the US claimed that the Strait of Hormuz was open the reality is that Iran has been able to block it and charge tolls on shipping traffic," he said.

'Petrol, diesel prices not yet decreased'

ISLAMABAD, (INP): The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has issued an important clarification regarding petrol prices and diesel rates, stating that no official notification has been released for any change.

According to the ministry, a notification circulating on social media about revisions in petrol rates and diesel prices is fake and misleading.

Authorities urged the public to rely only on official sources and verified announcements to avoid confusion.

The ministry further stated that a decision regarding changes in fuel prices is expected to be made tomorrow, indicating that no final announcement has been issued so far.

Sources suggest that, following a decline in global oil prices, petrol rates in Pakistan could see a significant reduction.

Diesel rates may drop by as much as Rs90 to Rs100 per litre, while petrol rates could decrease by Rs50 to Rs60 per litre.

However, the final decision on petrol prices and diesel rates will be announced only after approval from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

It is worth noting that after recent record increases in petroleum prices, both federal and provincial governments had already announced relief packages for various sectors, including motorcycle, rickshaw drivers, goods transport operators, public transport, and farmers.



HYDERABAD: Activists of Sunny Rabta Council hold a protest in favour of their demands outside HPC.

Posters in HIOJK praise Pakistan after US-Iran ceasefire

SRINAGAR, (INP): Posters have surfaced across several areas in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (HIOJK), praising Pakistan for its efforts toward a ceasefire between Iran and the United States.

Posters displayed by various pro-freedom organizations on walls, poles, and pillars in Srinagar and other areas commend Field Marshal Asim Munir for his role in promoting ceasefire efforts.

The posters state these efforts have brought hope and a sense of peace to the region, potentially saving thousands of lives.

They further add the ceasefire and ongoing dialogue between the United States and Iran have brought relief and optimism to people around the world, particularly those directly affected by tensions.

Two women died, two girls injured as house roof collapses in Kohat

KOHAT, (INP): At least two women lost their lives while two young girls sustained serious injuries after the roof of a house collapsed in the Shikardara area of here on Friday.

According to a spokesperson for Rescue 1122 Kohat, the incident occurred in Garba Khel village, where the roof of a house owned by a deceased person, identified as Khalid, suddenly caved in. Rescue teams promptly reached the scene after receiving the alert and launched immediate relief operations.

The bodies and injured were taken to Civil Hospital Shikardara. The deceased women were identified as the wife of Khalid, aged around 50 years, and the wife of Faeemullah, aged about 20 years.

The injured included a 16-month-old girl, Momina Bibi, daughter of Faeemullah, and another 12-year-old girl. Both were reported to be in critical condition.

Rescue officials confirmed that timely response efforts helped evacuate the victims from the debris and ensured their swift transfer to the hospital for further medical treatment.

QUETTA: A VIEW OF CLOUDS HOVERING OVER SKY IN PROVINCIAL CAPITAL.

Governor House Quetta Hosts Grand Easter Celebration, Emphasizing Interfaith Harmony

Quetta: A grand ceremony was at Governor House Quetta in connection with the Easter festival.

The event was attended by the Governor of Balochistan, Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, who joined members of the Christian community in celebrating the occasion.

As a gesture of solidarity with the Christian community, a cake-cutting ceremony was held during the event.

The celebration witnessed a large turnout of men and women from the Christian community across the province, adding to the festive spirit.

Prominent attendees included Provincial Minister Mir Asim Kund Gello, Senator Saeedul Hassan Mandokhail, and Tariq Khetran.

Addressing the participants, Governor Mandokhail highlighted that all citizens of Pakistan—whether belong-



ing to the majority or minority communities—play an equal role in the country's and province's development and prosperity.

He reaffirmed that the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights, protection, and

religious freedom to all minorities. The Governor also appreciated the valuable contributions of the Christian community, particularly in the fields of education and healthcare in Balochistan.

He emphasized the importance of promoting interfaith harmony, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence.

The ceremony concluded with special prayers for Pakistan's prosperity, development, and security.

Easter celebration Quetta, Governor House Quetta event.

Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, interfaith harmony Pakistan, Christian community Balochistan, Easter 2026 Pakistan, minority rights Pakistan

Deputy Commissioner Ziarat Chairs Revenue Collection Meeting, Warns of Strict Action Over Low Recovery



Ziarat: A meeting of the Revenue Collection Committee was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Abdul Qadoos Achakzai in Ziarat to review the district's revenue performance.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Sanjavi Sher Shah Ghazali, Tehsildar Ziarat Noor Ahmed, Tehsildar Sanjavi Abdul Wakeel,

along with patwaris from Ziarat and Sanjavi.

During the session, a detailed review of revenue collection performance for the fiscal year 2025-26 was conducted. The Deputy Commissioner expressed serious concern over the extremely low rate of revenue recovery and issued strict warnings to the concerned revenue staff. He directed

officials to ensure that assigned targets are achieved at all costs, emphasizing the need for improved performance and active field engagement.

He also instructed authorities to initiate legal action against defaulters and submit daily progress reports on revenue collection.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner stated that it is also the re-

sponsibility of citizens to act as responsible members of society by paying their due taxes on time. He noted that timely payment of revenue is not only a legal obligation but also plays a vital role in regional development, provision of basic facilities, and completion of government projects.

He further added that paying taxes on time helps citizens

avoid legal complications and contributes significantly to the overall development of the district.

Ziarat revenue meeting, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Qadoos Achakzai, revenue collection, Balochistan, tax recovery Pakistan, Ziarat district news, fiscal year 2025-26 revenue, government tax compliance Pakistan.

Commissioner Naseerabad Chairs Key Task Force Meeting to Strengthen Polio Eradication Campaign

Naseerabad: An important meeting of the Divisional Task Force was held under the chairmanship of Commissioner Salahuddin Noorzai in Naseerabad to review preparations for the upcoming anti-polio campaign.

The meeting was attended by District Health Officer Naseerabad Dr Ayaz Jamali, World Health Organization representative Yasir Baloch, along with Dr Yaseen Dajli, Saddam Hussain, and Sanavullah Chahkhrta, among other concerned officers.

Deputy Commissioners and District Health Officers from other districts also joined the session via video link.

During the meeting, a detailed briefing was given to the Commissioner regarding preparations for the upcoming polio eradication drive.



along with a comprehensive review of readiness. Addressing the participants, Commissioner Noorzai expressed concern over areas where LQAS (Lot Quality Assurance Sampling) results had failed, stating that this reflected negligence on the part of field staff and required immediate corrective measures.

He directed authorities to increase the number of female teams in such areas to ensure better coverage and effectiveness.

He further instructed the World Health Organization to share all relevant data with Deputy Commissioners to enable stricter monitoring and improved implementation of the campaign.

The Commissioner emphasized the need to hold pre-campaign meetings to review all arrangements in detail and ensure timely and proactive measures, keeping in view the sensitivity of polio eradication efforts.

He noted that high-level meetings are also being held with neighboring provinces, while recent polio cases in adjoining areas remain a matter of serious concern.

He stressed that there is no room for negligence and called for a well-organized strategy to achieve success. Special focus was placed on micro-planning, which will be closely monitored by Deputy Commissioners and District Health Officers, as effective micro-planning is essential for achieving desired results.

Additionally, the Commissioner directed that the divisional portal established under the EPI (Expanded Program on Immunization) be activated, and each Deputy Commissioner should nominate a focal person to receive proper training on dashboard usage.

Reaffirming his commitment, Commissioner Noorzai stated that practical and effective measures must be taken to build a healthy society and ensure the complete eradication of polio.

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Deputy Commissioner Loralai Reviews Development Projects, Emphasizes Quality and Timely Completion

Loralai: Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Muhammad Haseeb Shuja conducted a detailed visit to various ongoing development projects under BSDI in Loralai.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Muhammad Ismail Mengal accompanied him during the visit.

During the inspection, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed development work at the Government Garden, including key projects such as a women's library, futsal ground, and gymnasium.

He met with contractors and engineering department officials to assess the quality, pace, and transparency of the

work. Issuing directives, Captain (R) Haseeb Shuja stressed that all projects must be completed within the stipulated timeframe while maintaining high standards.

He reaffirmed the district administration's commitment to ensuring transparency and quality through effective monitoring, aiming to provide better facilities to the public.

He further instructed concerned officials to keep public needs at the forefront while executing development projects, warning that negligence or delays would not be tolerated.

He emphasized that

public welfare remains the government's top priority and that all available resources will be utilized to ensure the district's progress. Meanwhile,

the district administration is also actively planning additional development initiatives for the upcoming fiscal year.

These include improvements in educational institutions, expansion of healthcare facilities, and rehabilitation of urban infrastructure.

A comprehensive development package is expected to be introduced soon, which is likely to usher in a new phase of progress and development in Loralai.



Duki Hosts Polio Awareness Seminar Ahead of NID April 2026 Campaign

Duki: A comprehensive polio awareness program was organized under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naem Khan in Duki in connection with the upcoming NID (National Immunization Days) April 2026 campaign.

The seminar witnessed participation from representatives of various public and private departments, students, teachers, social workers, activists, and a large number of citizens.

The seminar with the aim of raising awareness about the dangers of polio and to mobilize public support for the ongoing national eradication campaign.

During the session, health experts and speakers highlighted the causes, transmission, and severe impacts of the poliovirus, along with preventive measures.

They emphasized that children under the age of five must receive polio drops repeatedly during each campaign to ensure complete protection against the disease.

Speakers stressed the importance of collective efforts in eliminating polio and called for active community involvement.

Addressing the participants, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naem Khan stated that eradicating polio remains a top priority for the

government, and all available resources are being utilized to achieve this goal.

He urged parents to ensure their children are vaccinated during every campaign and to fully cooperate with polio teams.

He also directed relevant departments to perform their duties with dedication and integrity, ensuring that no child is left unvaccinated.

At the conclusion of the seminar, participants—including religious scholars, teachers, media representatives, and civil society members—were urged to play an active role in this national mission to make Pakistan a polio-free country.



GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NARCOTICS CONTROL
NATIONAL DATABASE AND REGISTRATION AUTHORITY (NADRA)
 (Regional head office, Quetta)

Public Auction
 Tender No: RHO/Qta/Auction/2025-26-008

Regional Head Office NADRA Balochistan is conducting an auction of old equipment (Inefficient Generator) on April 29, 2026, at NADRA Regional Head Office Zarghoun Road Quetta at 11:30 AM. Interested parties can participate in the auction under the following conditions:

- All bidders will be required to deposit 5% of the total bid amount as earnest money (refundable).
- The successful bidder will have to deposit 25% of the total auction amount on the same day after receiving the acceptance letter and the remaining amount will have to be deposited within 24 working hours. A formal receipt will be issued for this.
- All items will be auctioned on an "as is and where is" basis.
- The successful bidder shall be bound to collect all the goods from NADRA Regional Head Office, Zarghoun Road, Quetta, within 48 hours after 100% payment, at his own expense.
- All applicable taxes will be payable by the successful bidder.
- Under Rule No. 33 of PPRA, NADRA has the right to reject all offers (bids).
- The auction items can be inspected from 13th April 2026 to 28th April 2026 from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Regional Head Office, Zarghoun Road.
- Other details along with the terms and conditions are mentioned in the bidding documents. Interested parties can obtain the bidding documents from the Regional Head Office, NADRA, Zarghoun Road, Quetta, against a non-refundable fee of Rs. 1000/- from 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM (excluding holidays). Bidding documents can be submitted up to 11:00 AM on April 29, 2026. Bidding documents will not be submitted after the given time.
- This advertisement along with the bidding documents is also available on the PPRA website: www.ppra.org.pk.

Deputy Director
 RHO New Zarghoun Road Quetta
 Phone number 081-9211622 PPD/823025

Polio Vaccination Campaign Launched in Jafarabad, Deputy Commissioner Urges Full Public Cooperation

Jafarabad: Deputy Commissioner Khalid Khan officially inaugurated the district-wide anti-polio campaign by administering polio drops to children in Jafarabad.

On the occasion, he also reviewed the campaign's arrangements and strategy in detail.

According to officials, all necessary preparations for the polio drive have been completed across the district.

The Deputy Commissioner directed polio teams to carry out their responsibilities with utmost dedication and seriousness, emphasizing



visits to ensure that children under the age of five receive polio vaccination drops.

He also stressed the importance of effective and rapid monitoring throughout the campaign to ensure strict oversight at every stage and to promptly address any shortcomings.

that no child should be left unvaccinated.

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Khalid Khan highlighted that polio is a dangerous and potentially life-threatening disease, and its eradication requires collective efforts.

He stated that along with the district administration, all line

departments and the local community must play an active role in making this national campaign a success.

He also appealed to the public to fully cooperate with polio teams and ensure their children receive the vaccine to stay protected from the disease.

Reaffirming his commitment, the Deputy Commissioner stated that with coordinated strategy, strict monitoring, and joint efforts, all possible steps will be taken to make Jafarabad a polio-free district.

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) fleet expansion on the cards

NEWS DESK: Arif Habib, chairman of the Arif Habib Consortium, which owns Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), has said that the national flag carrier currently has 30 aircraft, of which 18 are operational, and five to six require repair and maintenance.

Speaking to industrialists at the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI) on Thursday, he said the airline is working to make these aircraft operational, and adding them back to the fleet will bring the total to 26. The long-term target is to expand the fleet to 60 aircraft.

Pakistan, he said, had become more economically stable, and that this fiscal year's figures showed the government had increased revenue, met all expenditure and paid interest on debt. However, he stressed the need to reduce production costs to boost economic growth.

He said electricity tariffs remained high because of capacity charges and low consumption. If the available transmission system, with a capacity of



more than 22,000 megawatts, were fully utilised, the per-unit cost could be reduced by Rs10 to Rs12. He said this could only happen if electricity consumption increased, with a capacity of

Arif Habib says high electricity tariffs hurting industry. Mr Habib said that if the business community remains united, the government will pay attention to their demands.

He added that information technology, agriculture and mining were key sectors that could quickly help Pakistan overcome its problems and move towards growth.

Association of Builders and Developers (ABAD) Chairman Hasan Bakhshi urged the business community to unite and form a consortium to acquire and operate loss-making

government institutions, including the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and the Sindh Building Control Authority. The business com-

munity can run these institutions profitably and more efficiently, he added. Kati President Muhammad Ikram Rajput said that in the past decisions were

made in Washington, but now they are being made in Islamabad, as Pakistan has emerged as an important stakeholder in global politics, which was hard for its adversaries to digest.

Kati Deputy Patron-in-Chief Zabair Chahya, while expressing concern over the state of the economy and the investment climate, said that both foreign and local investment in the country was almost negligible, mainly due to bureaucratic hurdles and policy inconsistency. He said that whenever a good policy was introduced, it did not last long, which hurt investor confidence.

Korangi Industrial Trading Estate Ltd Chairman Zahid Saeed said that despite government claims of industrial development, practical steps were almost non-existent, leaving Karachi's industrial issues unresolved.

Despite an announcement by the Sindh chief minister in December 2025 to develop industrial infrastructure, no formal budget had yet been released for the purpose.

Chinese tyre firm to invest \$120m

NEWS DESK: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a meeting with Jin Yongsheng, chairman of Service Long March Tyres (Private) Limited, and his delegation to discuss investment expansion, export growth and tariff policy support for Pakistan's tyre industry, according to an official statement issued on Thursday.

During the discussion, the company announced an additional investment of \$120 million in Pakistan, reaffirming its confidence in the country's industrial and economic potential.

The delegation shared that the company is on track to achieve exports of \$70 million by

June 2026 and is aiming to cross \$100 million in exports in the following financial year. This milestone would place it among Pakistan's leading non-textile exporters within a short span of operations.

The meeting was informed that Pakistan has made significant progress in global tyre markets, with exports to the United States and Brazil increasing rapidly.

Pakistan has emerged as the fifth-largest exporter of tyres to the United States and the seventh-largest to Brazil, marking a notable shift from virtually no presence in these markets just a few years ago. This growth has

largely been attributed to the transfer of technology and expertise through collaboration with Chinese partners, which has enabled local manufacturing to meet international standards and compete globally.

Khan acknowledged the concerns raised by the industry and reiterated the government's commitment to supporting sectors that demonstrate strong performance and export potential.

He emphasised the importance of maintaining a balanced tariff policy that encourages local production while ensuring competitiveness. The minister noted that the government is working towards diversifying Pakistan's industrial base by promoting emerging industries with high growth potential.

The delegation also highlighted the importance of the Pakistan-China industrial partnership, describing it as a key driver behind the rapid growth of the tyre sector.

The company's manufacturing facility in Nooriabad was cited as a modern and efficient industrial unit employing about 2,000 workers and incorporating renewable energy solutions, making it one of the more sustainable production facilities in the region.

Both sides agreed on the need to strengthen collaboration between the government and industry to support export-oriented growth and industrial expansion.

The minister underscored that Pakistan must focus on diversification and leverage international partnerships to enhance its manufacturing capabilities and global competitiveness.

The investors expressed confidence in Pakistan's economic outlook despite current global challenges and appreciated the government's continued engagement with the business community.



Manufacturers asked to boost fertiliser supply

NEWS DESK: Expressing satisfaction with the availability of fertilisers for the coming kharif season, the federal government said on Thursday that a buffer stock of about 500,000 tonnes has been maintained.

The Fertiliser Review Committee met on Thursday for a comprehensive review of the supply-and-demand situation for urea and other key fertilisers, with a focus on kharif projections and preparedness for rabi 2026-27.

The meeting was attended by senior federal and provincial officials, along with representatives of leading fertiliser companies, including Fauji Fertiliser, Engro Fertiliser, Fatima Fertiliser, and Agritech.

The meeting noted that urea demand may trend upward during kharif due to improved farm economics compared to last year. However, serious concerns were raised about potential smuggling along the western border due to a significant price differential between domestic and international markets, with local prices at



around Rs4,500 per 50kg bag compared to approximately Rs14,000 internationally.

Govt reviews demand for kharif amid smuggling concerns. The meeting, chaired by Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain, was informed that the urea situation during the rabi season remained largely stable and well-managed.

The opening inventory stood at approximately 1.15 million tonnes, while domestic production reached

around 3.23m tonnes, bringing total availability to 4.38m tonnes.

Offtake remained steady at 3.50m tonnes, with no signs of panic buying, reflecting market stability and effective supply chain management.

The closing stock is estimated at around 8 lac tonnes, which will serve as the opening inventory for the upcoming kharif season.

However, concerns were raised about its adequacy during peak-demand months, particularly December and January.

It was also noted that Agritech faced gas supply constraints, which impacted optimal production levels.

The situation of DAP fertiliser was also discussed in detail. For kharif, no imports have been planned due to global uncertainties and logistical challenges in securing vessels.

The minister informed participants that the Ministry of Maritime Affairs has been engaged and has agreed to facilitate vessel availability through the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation.

World Bank cuts GDP forecast to 3%

NEWS DESK: The World Bank on Thursday cut Pakistan's economic growth forecast to 3% for this fiscal year due to adverse implications of the Middle East war, which is significantly lower than the estimates that Islamabad has shared with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In its first detailed report on the implications of the war, the World Bank also said that Pakistan's current account deficit (CAD) would widen to 1.2% of the size of the economy, equal to \$4.9 billion. The projected deficit is nearly \$3 billion higher than the \$2 billion estimates that the govern-

ment gave to the IMF last month.

The Washington-based lender released an economic update for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan (MENAAP) region, which is mired in conflict, causing human suffering in the region and economic repercussions around the globe.

The lender shaved off 0.4% from its growth projection and predicted that due to the war, Pakistan's economy would grow by 3% in this fiscal year, which is almost at last year's level. The World Bank has recently clubbed Pakistan with the Middle East region after taking it out of South Asia. The

change took place under the new World Bank president who wanted to have the regional office in India, which was not possible in the presence of Pakistan in the group.

The report's findings are based on a one-month assessment of the war, which began on February 28 when the United States and Israel attacked Iran without securing the umbrella of the United Nations Security Council.

Early last month, the federal government informed the IMF that GDP growth was expected in the range of 4% to 4.5% in fiscal year 2025-26, reflecting continued momentum in the auto, con-

struction and garment industries. Pakistan reflected any adverse impacts of the war from the next fiscal year and apprised the IMF that economic growth was projected to remain at a similar level in fiscal year 2026-27, as higher fuel prices and weaker external demand weigh on the ongoing recovery.

The report stated that Pakistan's GDP per capita income would grow by 1.4% in this fiscal year, which is near last year's level. It showed inflation including 7.4% in this fiscal year, which is still within the target range set by the federal government and the State Bank of Pakistan.

The World Bank said that if oil, natural gas and related energy prices remain elevated for a sustained period, the inflationary consequences will ripple outward through multiple transmission channels. The pressure is already more pronounced in Europe and Asia than in the United States.

Higher fertiliser prices may compromise future crop yields and eventually lead to higher food prices, it added.

Inflationary pressures might compel central banks to keep interest rates higher for longer than markets previously expected, said the World Bank.



Pakistan, Ethiopia envisage trilateral maritime alliance

NEWS DESK: Pakistan and Ethiopia have agreed to explore the establishment of a trilateral maritime alliance, potentially involving Djibouti, aimed at enhancing trade connectivity between Asia and Africa.

The understanding was reached during a meeting between Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry and Ethiopian Ambassador

Dr Oumer Hussein, who called on the minister for the first time after assuming his diplomatic assignment. The two sides reviewed proposals and measures to expand bilateral trade and economic engagement.

Junaid Anwar underscored Pakistan's growing focus on expanding maritime links with African nations and proposed the formation of a three-country alliance comprising Pakistan,

Djibouti and Ethiopia. He noted that the framework could be expanded to include more countries based on mutual consultations.

The minister highlighted that despite being a landlocked country, Ethiopia could significantly enhance its trade capacity by utilising the Port of Djibouti under a structured maritime arrangement. He added that a formal agreement could be signed

following the completion of necessary groundwork.

Ambassador Oumer Hussein welcomed the proposal and emphasised the need for technical consultations between experts from both sides, which designated focal persons to deliberate on operational modalities and develop a practical framework for the proposed alliance.

The envoy appreciated Pakistan's outreach under its "Look Africa" and "Engage Africa" policies, describing them as reflective of a strong commitment to building enduring partnerships with African nations. He noted that Ethiopia imports pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, garments, fertilisers, rice and food products and expressed optimism about further expanding bilateral and regional cooperation under the proposed maritime framework.



Kusal Mendis ton, Babar's 87 power Zalmi to record rout of Kings

NEWS DESK: Kusal Mendis struck a blistering century while Babar Azam smashed an unbeaten 87 as Peshawar Zalmi handed Karachi Kings a crushing 159-run defeat here at the National Bank Stadium on Thursday night.

The top-order pair's brilliance, followed by Abdul Samad's late onslaught, propelled Zalmi to a mammoth 246-3 before their bowlers skittled the Kings for a paltry 87, with Nahid Rana, Sufiyan Muegem and Ifrikhar Ahmed claiming three wickets each to seal the heaviest victory in PSL history.

The victory lifted Zalmi to second in the PSL standings with three wins out of four matches—one of which was washed out—as Karachi dropped to fourth.

Mendis smashed 109 off 52 balls, hitting 14 fours and four sixes while sharing a record 191-run partnership—the highest in PSL history—with Babar, who scored his 51-ball knock including 10 boundaries and two sixes.

Samad then capped the innings with a belting 40 off just 12 balls, hammering three fours



and four sixes after arriving at the crease at the start of the 18th over. Zalmi raced to 65-1 in powerplay, both Babar and Mendis displaying flair and aggression after Mohammad Haris fell on the second ball of the innings to spinner Khushdil Shah.

Mendis then took apart Abbas Afridi for three successive fours before both batters capped the powerplay with a boundary each.

The Sri Lankan brought up his half-century off 26 balls in the ninth over, having earlier swept Adam Zampa for six. He continued to dominate, pulling and driving Hamza Sohal for boundaries as Zalmi reached 102-1 at the halfway mark.

Babar reached his fifty off 32 balls, elegantly driving Moeen Ali inside out before striking him through the covers for consecutive boundaries.

Zalmi surged past 150 in the next over as Babar and Mendis took further toll on Zampa, with the latter reaching his century off just 48 balls. Zampa endured a tough outing as both

batters continued to attack but the partnership was eventually broken when Mendis miscued an attempted big hit against Abbas to substitute Haroon Arshad in the covers.

Hamza for three fours and a six in the final over to lift Zalmi to an imposing total.

Kings' chase began disastrously with Mohammad Wasem holing out to Ifrikhar on the third ball. Farhan Yousuf's diving catch then removed captain David Warner, while Ifrikhar trapped Salman Ali Agha low to deepen the crisis as they fell to 8-3 in the third over.

Azam Khan (25 off 27) briefly resisted with a six, but the Kings only managed to limp to 27-3 in powerplay. Nahid Rana's sharp bouncer accounted for Saad Baig, and Moeen Ali soon followed, falling to Sufiyan Muegem.

Any hopes of recovery ended when Azam was bowled by Sufiyan, leaving Karachi at 6-4.

Play was halted for nearly 30 minutes due to a technical fault with the spider cam, which remained suspended above the pitch.

After the resumption, wickets continued to tumble. Khushdil topped a Nahid delivery to the wicket-keeper, while Nahid then bowled Zampa to complete his three-wicket haul.

Verstappen Red Bull future in doubt

NEWS DESK: Four-time world champion Max Verstappen's future in Formula One was again cast in doubt on Thursday after it was confirmed that his long-time race engineer will leave Red Bull for McLaren.

After details of Gianpiero Lambiase's switch emerged earlier on Thursday, Red Bull and McLaren both confirmed the news in separate statements.

Red Bull said Lambiase will leave in 2028, when his current contract expires," with McLaren confirming he will take on the role of chief racing officer with their team when he starts "no later than 2028".

The British-Italian engineer, known as GP, has worked with Verstappen since the Dutchman joined Red Bull a decade ago.

"The team look forward to welcoming Gianpiero Lambiase to his existing contract ends, no later than



2028," McLaren said in a statement. "The role of the chief racing officer already exists within the team's structure with overall leadership of the race team." These duties are currently managed by Andrea Stella in addition to his role as team principal.

"Lambiase is the latest hire designed to strengthen the talent pool that exists at McLaren Mastercard, while also reaffirming the team's long-term commitment to confirming its position as a Championship-winning team."

uses in his roles as Head of Racing and as Race Engineer to Max Verstappen. The team and he are fully committed to add more success to our strong track record together."

Lambiase's exit will mark the departure of yet another senior figure from Red Bull, with Christian Horner sacked as team principal last year.

Design guru Adrian Newey and sporting director Jonathan Wheatley both left their posts before Horner's exit.

It also raises more questions about Verstappen, who last won the world title in 2024, and hinted during last month's race in Japan he is ready to quit Formula One.

Verstappen, whose current Red Bull deal runs until 2028, is a valued member of the team, which he joined in 2015. "Until his planned departure, GP continues

in his roles as Head of Racing and as Race Engineer to Max Verstappen. The team and he are fully committed to add more success to our strong track record together."

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Lin targets Asian Games

NEWS DESK: Gender-row boxer Lin Yuting's coach said the Taiwanese Olympic champion would target Asian Games gold after stepping up in weight and winning bronze in her first event since the Paris Olympics.

Lin, who won gold at 57kg at the 2024 Games, was cleared last month by World Boxing to resume competition at the Asian Elite Championships in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, after passing a gender test.

Lin reached the semi-final of the 60kg class but lost to North Korea's Won Un Gyong.

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Chris Green, Devon Conway give United facile win over Qalandars on sluggish surface

NEWS DESK: Islamabad United-end spinners exploited a sluggish pitch to perfection before Devon Conway and Mohammad Faiz guided their side to a comfortable nine-wicket victory over Lahore Qalandars in their HBL Pakistan Super League clash in a hot afternoon here at the National Bank Stadium on Thursday.

On a sticky surface that demanded patience rather than power, United adapted far better than their opponents, restricting Lahore to a scanty 100—the lowest total recorded at the venue in the PSL history—before completing the chase with clinical ease.

Australian off-spinner Chris Green led the effort with a disciplined spell of 3-19, supported

effectively by Imad Wasim and captain Shadab Khan as Lahore's batting repeatedly faltered against spin on a surface offering grip and variable pace.

"I thought it was a great wicket for a day game," Green said afterwards. "The square was quite dry and, to be honest, it was a complete bowling performance."

Lahore never recovered after a cautious start. The slow track blunted their batters' attacking strokes forcing them to commit mistakes as they crawled to 34-2 in powerplay.

Imad in the opening over removed Mohammad Naeem (nought) before the left-arm spinner sent Abdullah Shafique (10) back as the batter picked out a diving Shadab at

mid-off in the fifth over. Green bowled Haseebullah Khan (19 off 22 balls) in the eighth over with a delivery that held its line, while Rubin Hermann (four) holed out off Shadab in the ninth as Qalandars slipped to 50-4 at the halfway mark.

Asif Ali briefly threatened to launch a counterattack, striking Faheem Ashraf for a six in the 12th over, but fell soon after attempting another big hit, handing Shadab his second wicket.

Green then produced a standout moment in the field, diving sharply to end the innings in complete a return catch and dismiss debutant Ryan Burl (two) in the 14th.

Sikandar Raza attempted to rebuild with a measured knock, striking

boundaries through placement rather than power, but scoring remained laborious.

The Zimbabwean all-rounder eventually departed for 25 off 19 balls in the 16th over, sweeping Green straight to short fine leg as the Qalandars' hopes, who were now 91-7, of a late recovery faded.

Richard Gleeson cleaned up the tail efficiently, bowling Harris Rauf with a slower fall toss before uprooting Ubaid Shah's stumps with a pinpoint Yorker. Faheem Ashraf dismissed captain Shah-eeen Shah Afridi (nine) to end the innings in the penultimate over.

"Battling on this wicket wasn't as difficult as the scoreboard reflected," Raza said after the match. "Nowadays 120 cricket is becoming more about slogging than the demonstration of batsmanship."

"I told the boys in the dressing room that we need to focus on batsmanship rather than slogging if we want to be successful in Karachi."

Islamabad, in contrast, approached the chase with clarity and composure.

Although Sameer Minhas fell early to Shabane, United maintained control through Conway and Faiz, whose partnership blended calculated aggression with intelligent strike rotation.

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Robertson to leave Liverpool

NEWS DESK: Andy Robertson will bring down the curtain on his nine-year career at Liverpool at the end of the season, the faltering Premier League champions announced on Thursday.

The 32-year-old has made 373 appearances for the club, winning two Premier League titles and the Champions League as a key member of the side that restored the Reds to the top of the English and European game.

However, he has dropped down the pecking order since the arrival of Miros Kerkov and his contract, which expires at the end of the campaign, will not be renewed.

The Scotland captain is the second highest profile departure from Liverpool in the coming months after Mohamed Salah announced he will

also depart at the end of the season. "I'll always look back on amazing memories at this football club. I've put my heart and soul into the club for nine years and I've not got many regrets," said Robertson.

A close friend of Robertson's, forward Diogo Jota died in a car accident in July.

On the field, Arne Slot has struggled to

also depart at the end of the season. "I'll always look back on amazing memories at this football club. I've put my heart and soul into the club for nine years and I've not got many regrets," said Robertson.

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On the field, Arne Slot has struggled to

find the right balance from an expensively assembled squad that sits fifth in the Premier League.

Liverpool were also dumped out of the FA Cup 4-0 by Manchester City last weekend and lost 2-0 in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final against Bayern Munich on Wednesday.



Residents trapped indoors as area sealed under tight security

NEWS DESK: Extraordinary security measures were in place in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad ahead of crucial talks between the United States and Iran in Islamabad.

The local administration and police closed Old Airport Road and roads leading to Nur Khan Airbase on Thursday by placing containers and barbed wire.

The security measures taken by law enforcement agencies turned the area into a prison for local residents, as their movement was restricted to their houses.

Areas that have been blocked include Shah Khalid Colony, Gulzar-e-Quaid, Airport Housing, Sector 7, Mangal Town, Faisal Colony and others.

Traffic diversions and the blocking of roads with shipping containers caused inconvenience to the public, already facing difficulties moving within the city and cantonment areas due to the closure of Old Airport Road from Rahimabad to Koral Chowk.

Strangely, the service road from Koral



Chowk to Airport Road, along with link roads and streets, was also closed, forcing residents to remain confined to their homes.

Police and security personnel were placed on high alert across the Rawalpindi district. Commuters using electric green buses were also witnessed on Murree Road, Committee Chowk, Marris Chowk, Saddar and Faawara Chowk due to road blockades. Local

residents and traders in surrounding areas also suffered due to the closures.

Mohammad Zafar, a resident of Shah Khalid Colony, said the administration closed streets and roads without in-

forming people to make arrangements, and they were not given time to store edibles.

"I booked a water tanker in the morning, but the owner refused to come due to the closure of roads and streets. We

are without water and had to arrange a small tanker, which charged double and reached my house via narrow streets," said Malik Riaz, another resident.

Many students who appeared in the matric examination returned home on foot as roads were closed in the afternoon.

"My son arrived on foot from Gracy Lane as no vehicle was allowed to run on the main road," said Qamar Adil.

People complained of a shortage of edibles, and supplies were limited in local markets, with shopkeepers cashing in on the situation. Residents demanded that alternative access be provided to their houses and to city areas or hospitals.

"We had to purchase medicines as it appeared the roads would likely remain closed till the end of negotiations between US and Iranian teams in Islamabad."

The administration should at least deploy mobile health vans in the area for patients," said Mohammad Rizwan, a resident of Gulzar-i-Quaid.

On the other hand, while bazaars on Murree Road, Raja Bazaar and others would remain open. He said city bazaars would remain open on Friday and Saturday.

Meanwhile, the Metro Bus Service between Rawalpindi and Islamabad will be restricted from Saddar to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences on Friday.

The electric bus route from Raja Bazaar to Old Airport was suspended for three days from Thursday to Saturday.

"The route will be opened once the district administration gives clearance," said an official of the Regional Transport Authority.

the district administration and local police directed traders of Saddar, Old Airport Road and adjoining areas to keep their outlets closed for two days — Friday and Saturday.

Anjum Tajraan Rawalpindi President Shahid Ghaffoor Paracha said the district administration requested shopkeepers to close shops in and around Nur Khan Airport and Saddar.

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Pakistan Navy rescues 18 crew members, including foreign nationals, of merchant vessel in Arabian Sea operation

NEWS DESK: The Pakistan Navy carried out an operation in the Arabian Sea and rescued 18 crew members, including foreign nationals, of a merchant vessel following a distress call, a statement issued by the PN said on Friday.

"In a swift humanitarian operation, Pakistan Navy successfully rescued and evacuated 18 crew members, including nationals of China, Bangladesh,

Myanmar, Vietnam and Indonesia, following a distress call from merchant vessel (MV) Gold Autumn, operating in North Arabian Sea at 200 nautical miles (approximately 370 km) off Pakistan's coast,"

It added that upon receiving the emergency alert, Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) activated its Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) and promptly initiated response protocols.

"Accordingly, Pakistan Navy Ship (PNS) Hunan, patrolling in the assigned area, was immediately tasked to provide assistance to MV Gold Autumn," it added.

The statement said that PNS Hunan "actively undertook the search and rescue operation, demonstrating professionalism and operational expertise".

"Pakistan Navy Ship's team, comprising medical assistance, supported in firefighting, conducted damage assessment of the vessel, and later rescued crew members.

"The evacuated crew members have been safely transported to Karachi for further medical care and subsequent repatriation to their respective countries," it said.

The statement further said, "Humanitarian assistance rendered by Pakistan Navy Ship at extended ranges off Pakistan's coast reflects the Pakistan Navy's commitment to always be the first responder in maritime crisis situations in its respective area of responsibility."



Lahore-bound Shalimar Express derailed near Sheikhpura; rail traffic suspended

NEWS DESK: The Lahore-bound Shalimar Express derailed near Sheikhpura on Friday, leaving rail traffic on the Faisalabad-Lahore section suspended.

According to official sources, one of the passenger coaches of the train derailed while it was heading towards Lahore. No injuries or casualties were reported.

Rail traffic on the route has been suspended. "The relief train dispatched from Lahore is currently at the site working to put

the derailed coach back on track, enabling the train to proceed to Lahore," said a railway official while talking to Dawn. Shalimar express derailed near Sheikhpura on Friday.

—Photo provided by author

On Wednesday, when seven coaches of a train derailed near Adam Wahan Railway Station in Punjab's Lodhran district.

The incident came around 10 days after the Lahore-bound Shalimar Express collided with a goods train at Lakha Road Railway Station in Sindh's Naushahro Feroze district, resulting in the death of one person and leaving a dozen wounded.

The number of derailments and accidents has been rising rapidly in recent months due to various issues, including defective coaches and wagons, as well as ageing track sections across Pakistan Railways' network.



FO clarifies visa-on-arrival facility for 'Islamabad Talks' limited to US, Iran delegates, journalists

NEWS DESK: Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi clarified on Friday that the visa-on-arrival facility provided by Pakistan for the 'Islamabad Talks' applies only to delegates and journalists from participating nations, namely Iran and the United States.

"This facility, extended for the duration of the talks, does not cover third-country nationals," he added.

Earlier, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said that delegates and journalists from participating nations coming to Islamabad will be issued a visa on arrival.

In a post on X today, FM Dar said, "Pakistan welcomes all delegates, including journalists from participating nations, travelling in relation to Islamabad Talks 2026."

To this end, all airlines are requested to permit boarding to all such individuals without a visa. Immigration authorities in Pakistan will issue them a visa on arrival."

Pakistan is set to host what could prove to be one of the most consequential diplomatic engagements in recent history, as senior leaders from the US and Iran arrive in Islamabad for high-stakes negotiations following a devastating six-week war that has left thousands dead

and pushed the global economy to the brink of recession.

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi reviewed security arrangements and directed that foolproof security measures be implemented for foreign dignitaries.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Interior on X, Naqvi chaired a high-level security meeting where arrangements and operational plans were reviewed, focusing on security, protocol, and facilitation measures for the visiting delegations.

Directing authorities to ensure smooth arrangements for the foreign delegations, he said.

"The holding of the US-Iran talks in Islamabad after the ceasefire is an honour

for Pakistan."

The meeting also discussed the complete sealing of the Red Zone, with only authorised personnel being granted entry.

"A control room has been set up by the Ministry of Interior to manage security and coordination of the event," Naqvi added.

Islamabad Police also issued a traffic advisory in view of the movement of foreign delegations in the capital.

According to a statement issued by the Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) of Islamabad, Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, diversions would be placed on Srinagar and Express Highways.

It stated that entry into the Red Zone was strictly prohibited, except for official govern-

ment vehicles, and the public has been urged not to travel towards the area.

"Security in the city remains on high alert, with strict checks underway at all entry and exit points.

Citizens have been advised to avoid unnecessary travel except in emergencies and to use alternative routes during the diversions," it added.

The statement further requested citizens to cooperate with law enforcement agencies, for traffic updates, the public had been advised to follow the Islamabad Traffic Police's WhatsApp channel, social media pages, and FM 92.4 for real-time information.

Just three days after a fragile and hard-won ceasefire, the talks

are set to begin in Islamabad after the ceasefire is an honour for Pakistan."

The presence of such high-level figures underscores both the urgency and the gravity of the situation.

Islamabad has effectively been placed under an unprecedented security lockdown ahead of the talks.

Key routes have been sealed, security personnel heavily deployed, and surveillance heightened to ensure the safety of visiting dignitaries. Officials say the negotiations will take place at a secure, undisclosed location, away from the media spotlight.

Dar, French FM discuss Lebanon violations, reaffirm bilateral cooperation

NEWS DESK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Friday received a phone call from French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot, during which the two leaders discussed regional developments and bilateral ties.

The French foreign minister congratulated Pakistan on its role in securing an initial ceasefire agreement and expressed support for Islamabad's continued efforts towards a diplomatic pathway for lasting peace and stability in the region.

Both sides voiced concern over serious ceasefire violations in Lebanon and underscored the importance of full implementation and respect for the agreement.

They also reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and enhancing economic and trade cooperation, agreeing to remain in close contact.

As Pakistan brokered ceasefire between Iran and US, after Washington announced a two-week truce with Iran following weeks of escalating conflict across the region, with peace talks scheduled in Islamabad aimed at securing a longer-term settlement.

Despite the ceasefire, Israel has intensified strikes across Lebanon, carrying out some of its deadliest attacks since the conflict with Hezbollah escalated last month.

Lebanese authorities say hundreds have been killed and over a thousand injured, fueling fears that continued hostilities could derail fragile diplomatic efforts

and potentially lead to a wider regional escalation.

Pakistan, which played a key role in brokering the US-Iran truce, has stressed that the ceasefire should extend to Lebanon.

Officials in Islamabad and elsewhere have expressed concern that Israeli operations risk undermining the agreement, while reiterating their commitment to facilitating dialogue and advancing peace efforts through upcoming negotiations.

The diverging positions of Washington and Tehran over whether Lebanon is covered by the ceasefire have added to uncertainty.

While the US maintains that Israel's actions fall outside the truce, Iran insists that continued strikes violate the agreement, warning they could render talks "meaningless" and jeopardise prospects for a durable peace in the region.

