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US-Iran Ceasefire Extension Talks: Pakistan Leads Mediation Efforts Amid Rising Tensions

NEWS DESK:

Diplomatic momentum is building around extending the fragile ceasefire between Iran and the United States, with Pakistan taking a central role in mediation to prevent renewed conflict.

According to officials, extending the truce beyond its April 22 deadline, possibly by

45 days, has become critical to sustaining US-Iran talks and avoiding escalation in the Gulf.

Tehran has expressed preference for Islamabad as the next venue, signaling trust in Pakistan's role in facilitating sensitive negotiations.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the ceasefire remains intact despite mounting pressure. He highlighted

Pakistan's intensive diplomatic engagement, including prolonged direct talks between US and Iranian officials, and ongoing efforts to resolve key sticking points.

The latest round of negotiations ended without a formal agreement, underscoring deep divisions. The United States is pushing for long-term restrictions on Iran's nuclear programme and guarantees of

secure maritime navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. Meanwhile, Iran is demanding sanctions relief, recognition of its nuclear rights, and firm guarantees before taking further steps.

Tensions have increased following reports of a potential US naval buildup in the region, which Tehran views as a violation of the ceasefire. Analysts warn that any miscalculation

in the Strait of Hormuz could quickly trigger a wider crisis.

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has reached out to global counterparts, including Wang Yi, to build international support for dialogue. These coordinated efforts aim to secure a ceasefire extension or resume technical-level talks, keeping US-Iran negotiations on track.

Imran's sisters manage to reach Adiala jail but still denied meeting with ex-premier

NEWS DESK:

In a surprising turn of events, the sisters of incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan on Tuesday managed to make their way to Adiala jail but were still denied a meeting with their brother.

The sisters were not allowed to enter the jail by the authorities, following which they returned to the checkpoint where they are typically stopped by police.

Speaking to the media, Aleema Khan said, "Usually, police do not allow us to proceed onward and the jail administration informs the court that we did not arrive because of which the meeting could not be arranged."

"This time we reached outside the gate of Adiala jail and informed them that we are here," she added.

She said they made sure that their faces were recorded in the CCTV footage so that the jail administration would not deny their presence.

Asked how the sisters managed to reach the main gate, Aleema replied that they would not reveal how, as in that case, it would become difficult to do the same again.

"We could have stayed there but police officials asked us to leave because their jobs would be in danger otherwise," she asserted.

Responding to a question, Aleema said 51 workers were arrested during a protest outside the jail last week and efforts were ongoing to secure their release.

"(Unfortunately), they have appointed judges who cannot make decisions without taking dictation," she stated.

Aleema also discussed Barrister Salman Safdar's meeting with PTI founder on court orders.

"Imran said that there was an improvement after the first injection; however, there was no improvement after that," Aleema said.

In recent weeks, the PTI has demanded that Imran be shifted to Shifa International Hospital after his eye ailment came to light earlier this year.

The Islamabad High Court has allowed Imran twice-a-week meetings — on Tuesdays and Thursdays — with his family, lawyers and other associates. Despite the order, the ex-premier has been largely restricted from meeting visitors for several months.

2 policemen injured as residents protest against anti-encroachment drive in Islamabad

NEWS DESK:

Two policemen were injured as the Capital Development Authority's (CDA) anti-encroachment operation in the capital's Noorpur Shahan area was met with strong protest from residents. As the anti-encroachment drive began, enraged individuals torched two of the CDA's vehicles in protest, with authorities resorting to tear-gas shelling to disperse the people. More police deployment was also sought to control the law and order situation. The development comes a day after a protest staged by the slum dwellers of Allama Iqbal Colony at G-7 forced the CDA to postpone its operation. When the enforcement wing started the operation, the residents resisted and created a law and order situation, forcing the team to leave after sealing two structures. Meanwhile, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) raised concerns over the CDA's encroachment drives. Recalling a meeting it had convened, the HRCP said on X that activists, lawyers and citizens had urged superior court judges to "uphold the Supreme Court's 2015 stay order against summary evictions of katchi abadis."

331 Children Test Positive for HIV in Alarming Punjab Hospital Outbreak

Monitoring Desk:

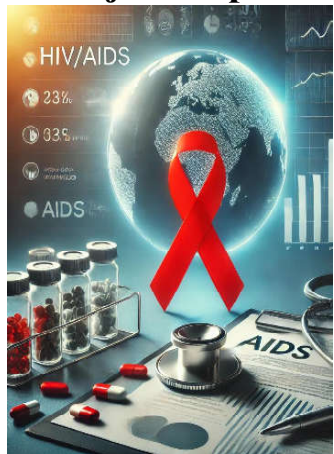
In a shocking and deeply concerning public health crisis, 331 children have tested positive for HIV in Taunsa, Punjab, between November 2024 and October 2025, according to a detailed investigation by BBC Eye.

Eight-year-old Mohammed Amin was one of the victims. His fevers were so severe that he begged to sleep in the pouring rain for relief. "It felt like he had been thrown into boiling oil," his mother Sughra recalled with heartbreak.

He passed away shortly after his diagnosis.

At his graveside, his 10-year-old sister Asma knelt quietly and said, "He used to fight with me, but he also loved me." Soon after her brother fell ill, Asma too was diagnosed with HIV.

The family believes both children contracted the virus through contaminated needles during routine treatment at the government-run THQ Taunsa



hospital in Punjab.

The outbreak first came to light after a doctor at a private clinic linked the sudden spike in cases to the hospital in late 2024. Local authorities promised a major crackdown and suspended the hospital's medical superintendent in March 2025.

However, the BBC Eye investigation revealed that unsafe injection practices continued for months afterward.

During 32 hours of undercover filming at THQ Taunsa in late 2025, BBC reporters witnessed syringes being re-used on multi-dose medicine vials on 10 separate occasions. In four of those cases, medicine

from the same vial was given to a different child. Experts warn this practice carries a clear risk of transmitting viruses like HIV.

Dr Altaf Ahmed, a leading consultant microbiologist and infectious disease expert in Pakistan, reviewed the footage and stated that even attaching a new needle does not eliminate the danger, as the

syringe body itself can carry the virus.

The investigation also documented staff, including doctors, administering injections 66 times without sterile gloves, despite safety posters displayed on the hospital walls. In one scene, a nurse was seen searching through a medical waste box with bare hands, violating basic infection control standards.

When shown the footage, the hospital's new medical superintendent,

Dr Qasim Buzdar, refused to acknowledge its authenticity. He suggested it might have been recorded earlier or could be staged, while insisting the hospital was safe for children.

This heartbreaking outbreak, uncovered by BBC Eye, serves as a stark reminder of the critical importance of safe injection practices and proper infection control in public hospitals across Pakistan. Families affected are demanding stronger accountability and immediate improvements to prevent further tragedies.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Punjab's Child HIV Tragedy Echoes in Balochistan

editorial:
In the quiet town of Taunsa, Punjab, a silent horror has claimed the innocence of hundreds of children. Between November 2024 and October 2025, 331 children tested positive for HIV — a shocking figure that lays bare the deep cracks in Pakistan's public healthcare system. Eight-year-old Mohammed Amin was one of them. His high fevers were so unbearable that he begged his mother to let him sleep in the pouring rain for relief. "It felt like he had been thrown into boiling oil," Sughra recalled, her voice breaking with grief. He passed away shortly after his diagnosis. At his graveside, his 10-year-old sister Asma knelt quietly and whispered, "He used to fight with me, but he also loved me." Tragically, soon after her brother's illness, Asma too was diagnosed with HIV.

The family firmly believes both children contracted the virus through contaminated needles during routine treatment at the government-run THQ Taunsa hospital.

The outbreak first surfaced when a private clinic doctor noticed the alarming spike in cases in late 2024. Authorities promised swift action and suspended the hospital's medical superintendent in March 2025. Yet a BBC Eye investigation revealed that unsafe practices continued. In 32 hours

Quetta Voice
GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL

Pakistan's Heartbreaking Failure - Punjab's Child HIV Tragedy Echoes in Balochistan

331 Children Tested Positive for HIV in Taunsa (Nov 2024 - Oct 2025) - BBC Eye Investigation

Balochistan's 3,303 registered cases.

"From Balochistan, We Report to the World"

of undercover filming in late 2025, reporters documented syringes being reused on multiple medicine vials on 10 separate occasions. In four of those cases, the same vial was used for different children. Dr Altaf Ahmed, a respected consultant microbiologist and infectious disease expert, reviewed the footage and warned: "Even attaching a new needle does not eliminate the dan-

ger. The syringe body itself can carry the virus." This tragedy is not confined to Punjab. Pakistan as a whole is grappling with a growing HIV crisis, with over 84,000 registered cases nationwide and estimates suggesting the true figure could be much higher. Here in Balochistan, the situation remains deeply concerning. As of December 2025, the province has recorded

3,303 registered AIDS cases — a sharp rise from 2,851 the previous year. Hundreds more may be living with HIV undiagnosed due to limited screening and unsafe medical practices in government facilities and unregulated clinics. Even in the usually stable neighbouring country of Bhutan, HIV cases have risen to 1,020 by the end of 2024.

These numbers are not mere statistics. They represent shattered childhoods, grieving mothers, and a complete failure of basic infection control — the bare minimum we expect from any healthcare system in Pakistan.

Quetta Voice, reporting from the soil of Balochistan, has always believed in fearless journalism that reaches the world. We cannot stay silent

when children across Pakistan are paying with their lives for official negligence and systemic carelessness. We demand immediate and decisive action:

- An independent, transparent audit of injection safety across all government hospitals in Pakistan, with priority given to high-risk districts in Punjab and Balochistan.
- Strict enforcement of single-use sy-

ringe policies and mandatory training for all healthcare staff.

- Massive expansion of free HIV screening, antiretroviral treatment, and community awareness programs — especially in rural areas.
- Full accountability. Families deserve justice, not empty promises.

The children of Taunsa — and the vulnerable families across Balochistan and the rest of Pakistan — did not deserve this suffering. It is time for Pakistan to treat healthcare as a fundamental right, not a privilege. Unsafe injections must end. Negligence must be punished. Our children's lives must come first.

From Balochistan, we report to the world: Enough is enough.

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 *batil* (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 References: Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 5138. Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1419. These narrations all confirm that the Prophet (PBUH) allowed the woman to annul her forced marriage.

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

Parents Can Advise, But They Cannot Force. Islam highly respects parents, but marriage choice is not their right. They can guide, suggest, and advise, but they have absolutely no power to force their child into marrying someone. Even if parents think they "know what is best," they cannot override the choice of their daughter or son. The final decision always belongs to the person getting married.

Statements such as: "If you don't marry this one, who will marry you?" "You have no choice." "Do it for family honor." "You must obey your parents." These are pure emotional manipulation, and Islam does

not allow it. Emotional or Psychological Pressure is Also Haram. Forced marriage is not only when someone is physically pressured. Even emotional, mental, or family pressure counts as force. Any Nikkah done under fear, pressure, or

threats is invalid (*Batil*) in Islam. This ruling is based on multiple hadith in which the Prophet (PBUH) annulled marriages done without consent.

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

When a girl is forced into a marriage, pressured emotionally, or told she has no other choice, we destroy her life while she is still alive. This is the new form of burying women alive, and Islam came to end this injustice completely.

Forced marriage has no place in Islam. It is against the Qur'an, against the Sunnah, and against the dignity that Islam gives to every woman and man. Parents must love, support, and guide, but never control or force marriage decisions. "Allah gave women this right, and no one can take it away."

US, Iranian teams could return to Islamabad for 2nd round of peace talks this week: sources

NEWS DESK: Negotiating teams from the US and Iran could return to Islamabad later this week, five sources said on Tuesday, days after the highest-level talks between the two countries in decades ended without a breakthrough.

Pakistan hosted direct Iran-US talks in Islamabad over the weekend, marking the highest engagement between the two sides since 1979. Both delegations departed the capital on Sunday after the talks ended without an agreement, but also without a breakdown.

According to Reuters, a source involved in the talks said a date was not yet decided, but both countries could return to Islamabad as early as this week. They said that a proposal has been shared with both Islamabad and Iran to resend their delegates to resume the talks.

"No firm date has been set, with the delegations keeping Friday through Sunday open," a senior Iranian source said.

Two Pakistani

sources with knowledge of the talks said Islamabad was communicating with the two sides about the timing of the next round and the meeting would likely take place on the weekend.

"We have reached out to Iran and we got a positive response that they will be open to a second round of talks," a senior Pakistani government official was quoted as saying by Reuters.

Similarly, a Pakistani source told AFP that Islamabad was working to bring Iran and the US back together for a second round of talks and to secure an extended ceasefire to allow for diplomacy.

"Efforts are underway to bring both parties back to the table, of course we want them back in Islamabad but the venue is not final yet," said the source, who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitivity of the subject matter.

"The meeting could take place soon, though a date has not yet been confirmed," the source was quoted as saying.



The source added: "We are also working to get the ceasefire extended beyond the current deadline to allow for additional time."

On Monday, officials familiar with the back channel exchanges told Dawn that intermediaries were working to bring Tehran and Washington back

to the negotiating table, with Pakistan at the center of the efforts, backed by Turks and Egyptians.

The immediate priority, they said, was to extend the ceasefire.

On Monday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told a meeting of the federal cabinet that "all efforts" were ongoing to resolve the conflict.

Noting that the truce was still holding, he said, "As far as talking to you, matters that are not resolved, full efforts are underway to resolve them."

The ceasefire between the US and Iran, brokered on April 8 after weeks of conflict, is set to expire on April 12. While technically intact, it is increasingly precarious.

The US has moved toward enforcing a naval blockade of Iranian ports, prompting a warning from Tehran that such a move would be a violation of the ceasefire. US says ball in Iran's court.

Meanwhile, US Vice President JD Vance said "the ball is in the Iranian court" on ending the

Mideast war.

Vance had left talks hosted by Pakistan on Sunday, saying he had handed Tehran the "final and best offer."

"I really think the ball is in the Iranian court, because we put a lot on the table. We actually made very clear what our red lines were," Vance said in an inter-

view with Fox News on Monday.

Washington has "no flexibility" on US control of Iran's enriched uranium, and a verification mechanism to ensure it does not develop a nuclear weapon in the future. "It's one thing for the Iranians to say that they're not going to have a nuclear weapon. It's another thing for us to put in place the mechanism to ensure that's not going to happen," Vance said.

US President Donald Trump insisted Iranian representatives had called Washington since a US delegation returned empty-handed from negotiations in Islamabad.

"I can tell you that we've been called by the other side. They'd like to make a deal. Very badly, very badly," Trump told reporters outside the Oval Office on Monday. Iran has blamed Washington for making maximalist demands, but its leaders have, in the last hours, not dismissed efforts by world leaders to get both sides back to the negotiating table.

US begins Iran port blockade, oil prices ease on hopes for dialogue

NEWS DESK: The US military began a blockade of Iran's ports, angering Tehran and adding uncertainty around the crucial waterway, although hopes for dialogue to end the war provided some relief to oil markets, where benchmark prices fell below \$100 on Tuesday.

After a breakdown of weekend talks in Islamabad between the two adversaries, a US official said there was continued engagement and "forward motion on trying to get to an agreement. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also said efforts were still underway to resolve the conflict.

US President Donald Trump said Iran had been in touch on Monday and wanted to make a deal but that he would not sanction any agreement allowing Tehran to have a nuclear weapon.

Since the United States and Israel began the war on February 28, Iran effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz to all vessels except its own, saying passage would be permitted only under Iranian control and subject to a fee. The fallout has been widespread, since nearly a fifth of the world's oil and gas supplies flowed through the narrow "waterway" before the start of the conflict.

Trump has said Washington would block Iranian vessels and any ships that paid such tolls and that any Iranian "fast-attack" ships that went near the blockade, stressing in a "Gulf neighbours" report.

Shipping data on LSEG showed Chinese-owned oil-and-chemicals tanker Rich Starry passed through the strait on Tuesday - the first since the US blockade began at 10am EDT (1400 GMT) on Monday.

The vessel, which departed Sharjah anchorage off the coast of Dubai on Monday heading for China, had "earlier turned back minutes after approaching the strait."

The US's blockade has further clouded the outlook for global energy security and the supply of a vast array of goods that rely on petroleum, and has little, if any, international backing.

NATO allies, including Britain and France, said they would not be drawn into the conflict by taking part in the blockade, stressing instead the need to reopen the waterway.

Despite the breakdown of talks between the US and Iran on Sun-

day, Vice President JD Vance, who led the US delegation, told Fox News on Monday the US "made a lot of progress" by communicating to Tehran where the US "could make some accommodation" and where it would remain inflexible.

He said Trump was adamant "that any enriched nuclear material must be removed from Iran and a mechanism must be established to verify that Iran is not developing nuclear weapons."

The war between the United States and Iran, which started on April 28, marked a sharp escalation in regional tensions, with Washington, alongside Israel, launching an intense military campaign targeting thousands of Iranian sites from land, sea and air.

Within days, over 5,000 targets were struck, focusing on military infrastructure, missile capabilities and na-

val assets, in an apparent bid to neutralise Iran's perceived threat to Israel. Despite the scale of the offensive, the campaign revealed little in terms of a broader political or strategic roadmap, raising concerns among analysts about its long-term consequences and the risk of wider instability across the Middle East, including the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the death of Iran's top leadership.

Xi further urged adherence to the principle of national sovereignty, stressing the need to build a "common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable" security architecture for the Middle East and the Gulf region.

The incident took place at Umm-al-Khair, a small village in the southern West Bank region of Masafar Yatta.

Schoolchildren there had been due back in class on Monday for the first time in more than 40 days, after lessons were suspended following the outbreak of the Middle East war on February 28.

A group of school-

China's Xi puts forward 4-point proposal on promoting Middle East peace, stability

NEWS DESK: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday put forward a four-point proposal to promote peace and stability in the Middle East during a meeting with UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Beijing.

Xi called for adherence to the principle of peaceful coexistence, stressing the need to build a "common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable" security architecture for the Middle East and the Gulf region.

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A group of school-

children and Palestinian residents had gathered near a barbed wire fence erected by Israeli settlers, which blocked access to the school, a journalist after settlers blocked nearby to their school.

Schoolchildren and some local adults were holding an open-air class for a sit-in to demand access when troops fired the tear gas, witnesses said.

"We were sitting and they threw a grenade (tear gas canister) at us. I got scared and started screaming and crying," said a 12-year-old girl who stayed with me. We were very scared."

Bassam Jabr, director of education for the Masafar Yatta area, confirmed the children were displaced a sit-in at the time of the incident. A footage showed canisters being fired, with children

screaming and fleeing. "Last night we were excited for school today. The Israelis came and closed the road with barbed wire... we want to be back in school," said 11-year-old Rashid al-Hathaleen.

The Masafar Yatta region is a known hotspot for settler violence and Palestinian home demolitions.

It was in Umm al-Khair village that Palestinian activist Awadh Hathaleen was killed by a settler in August 2025.

Settler violence has also spread across the West Bank since the outbreak of the Iran war. Excluding east Jerusalem, more than 500,000 Israelis now live in the dispersed and no municipalities were reported, it said, without specifying whether tear gas had been fired. A footage showed canisters being fired, with children



Around 90 detained in New York City protest over US arms sales to Israel

NEWS DESK: Dozens of protesters were detained by police in New York City on Monday during demonstrations calling for the blocking of arms sales to Israel and an end to US military support for its ally. Demonstrators included the anti-war group Jewish Voice for Peace, which said around 90 people were detained.

Among those detained was whistleblower Chelsea Manning, a former US Army soldier and WikiLeaks source.

The New York City Police Department said there were "multiple" arrests but did not provide a number.

Clips from the protests showed a crowd gathering near the offices of US Senator Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and his Democratic colleague, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand.

Protesters chanted slogans like "stop the

bombs," "end the killings," and "free Palestine," while expressing opposition to the US-Israeli strikes and Israeli attacks in Lebanon, which have killed thousands and displaced millions.

US President Donald Trump's administration has cracked down on protests by attempting to deport foreign students, threatening the screening of immigrants' online comments. The crackdown

has faced judicial obstacles.

New York City was at the heart of pro-Palestinian protests in 2024. US military support for Israel has faced particular scrutiny from rights groups during Israel's war on Gaza that killed tens of thousands, caused starvation, internally displaced Gaza's entire population and led to the screening of immigrants from scholars and a United Nations inquiry.

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Schoolchildren and some local adults were holding an open-air class for a sit-in to demand access when troops fired the tear gas, witnesses said.

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Israeli troops fire tear gas at schoolchildren in West Bank

NEWS DESK: Israeli forces fired tear gas at Palestinian schoolchildren staging a sit-in on Monday in the occupied West Bank, footage showed after settlers blocked nearby to their school.

Schoolchildren and some local adults were holding an open-air class for a sit-in to demand access when troops fired the tear gas, witnesses said.

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Spirited Pakistan suffer narrow 1-0 loss to Mauritania

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan delivered a spirited performance but fell to a narrow 1-0 defeat against Mauritania in their FIFA Series clash at the Alassane Ouattara Stadium, Abidjan. Coming off a historic 8-0 win over Turks and Caicos Islands, Pakistan entered the match with confidence and created several scoring opportunities throughout the game. The decisive moment came in the 20th minute when Ramata

Gengui struck a superb long-range volley to give Mauritania the lead, as they defeated back strongly from their heavy defeat against Côte d'Ivoire. Pakistan responded positively, with Nadia Khan fresh from becoming the country's all-time top scorer testing the goalkeeper early on. Mariam Mahmood and Kayla Siddiqi also came close before halftime but failed to convert. After the break, tactical substitu-

tions injected fresh energy into Pakistan's attack. Aqsa Mushtaq led the charge with multiple attempts, forcing impressive saves. From Mauritania, goalkeeper Aissata Fall. At the other end, goalkeeper

Zeynana Jivraj made a crucial save to deny Mauritania a second goal, keeping Pakistan in contention. Pakistan pushed hard for an equaliser in the closing stages, with late chances falling to Mariam, Isra Khan, and Aqsa Mushtaq. Despite sustained pressure, including eight minutes of added time, the equaliser remained elusive. Head coach Aqsa Rizki admitted his side started slowly and were second best in the early stages. "We started slowly. We weren't strong in the beginning. We slowly tried to come into the game but the Mauritania players showed more desire and hunger to win the ball," he said.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visits Minister of State Abdul Rehman Kanju to offer condolences over the demise of his mother.

Pakistan launches second anti-polio drive of 2026

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has launched second nationwide anti-polio campaign of 2026. In February, National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) said that the first national anti-polio drive of 2026 was successfully completed. The NEOC in a statement said that over 4,43,00,000 children were administered polio vaccine in the campaign. As per details, the anti-polio campaign will continue until 19 April. The initiative is being carried out across 169 districts in Pakistan and 382 districts in Afghanistan at the same time. The campaign aims to vaccinate more than 45.3 million children, with over 400,000 workers deployed. In Punjab, the target is 23.4 million children, while Sindh aims to vaccinate 10.5 million children. In Khayber Pakhtunkhwa, 7.3 mil-

School student gets SHC permission to appear in exams amid June-July fee dispute

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Monday granted conditional permission for a ninth-grade student to appear in forthcoming examinations amid June-July school fee dispute. As per details, family of the student moved court against the administration of private school in Karachi concerning the dispute of early demand for June and July fees. According to the petitioner's counsel, the school administration in Karachi issued fee challans for June and July in advance, contrary to established procedures. The lawyer argued that, as per the Education Department's circular, fees for June and July are meant to be collected during April and May. Despite complaints being lodged with the relevant authorities regarding the premature fee demand, no action was taken, the counsel

Pakistan steps up Iran-US mediation; Shehbaz may visit Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan is ramping up its diplomatic role in the Middle East as tensions between Iran and the United States persist, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif planning key consultations and a possible visit to Saudi Arabia. Pakistan's role as a mediator has gained renewed importance following the fragile ceasefire between Iran and the United States. Diplomatic activity has intensified once again, with Islamabad maintaining active en-

agement to keep communication channels open between the two sides. Sources stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is likely to visit Saudi Arabia at the invitation of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. If confirmed, this will mark his second visit in less than a month, highlighting the urgency of regional developments. The government has not yet released official details of the visit. During the visit, the prime minister is expected to meet Crown Prince Mohammed bin

Pakistan arrests, sentences 3 Indian RAW-linked spies

LAHORE (INP): Pakistani security agencies have arrested and secured convictions against three individuals accused of espionage linked to India's intelligence network, in what officials describe as a major counterintelligence success. According to sources, the three individuals involved in espionage activities for India's intelligence agency remained in constant contact with these individuals, which eventually led to their recruitment for espionage activities. During the investigation, the accused confessed to sharing sensitive information with RAW. According to sources, they provided this information in exchange for money and interactions with women on specific social media platforms. Security officials said the accused received funds through multiple channels, including Easypaisa accounts, cryptocurrency wallets and bank transfers. These transactions were used to facilitate and sustain the espionage activities. Sources confirmed that the three individuals had been in Narowal, Bahawalpur, and Neelum district in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Their arrests followed detailed surveillance and intelligence operations. The suspects re-

Karachi records alarming rise in street crimes during March 2026

KARACHI (INP): Karachi has recorded an alarming surge in the street crimes during March 2026, according to a report released by the Citizens Police Liaison Committee, Sindh (CPLC). According to CPLC report, a total of 3,027 motorcycles were stolen during the month of March, while a further 440 were snatched. The data shows that citizens were deprived of 1,265 mobile phones. In addition, 140 cars were reported stolen, while 17 were taken through snatching incidents. A total of 44 murder cases were recorded in March, alongside six incidents of extortion and one case of kidnapping for ransom. However, no incidents of bank robbery were reported in the city during the month, according to the Citizens Police Liaison Committee report. Separately, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Friday approved Phase-II of the Karachi Safe City Project, a major step towards strengthening urban security, surveillance and law enforcement capacity in the metropolis, with the installation of over 2,300 smart cameras and advanced monitoring infrastructure. Presiding over a meeting of the Sindh Safe Cities Authority (SSCA) at the CM House, the chief minister underscored that ensuring public safety through modern technology remains a top priority of his government. The meeting was informed that Phase-II of the project envisages the installation of 2,314 smart surveillance cameras, including 870 for general surveillance, 1,300 equipped with Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and facial recognition, 80 for traffic enforcement, 56 mobile surveillance units, and 8 dedicated to traffic signal monitoring.

Pakistan steps up Iran-US mediation; Shehbaz may visit Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD, April 13 (INP): Pakistan is ramping up its diplomatic role in the Middle East as tensions between Iran and the United States persist, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif planning key consultations and a possible visit to Saudi Arabia. Pakistan's role as a mediator has gained renewed importance following the fragile ceasefire between Iran and the United States. Diplomatic activity has intensified once again, with Islamabad maintaining active en-

agement to keep communication channels open between the two sides. Sources stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is likely to visit Saudi Arabia at the invitation of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. If confirmed, this will mark his second visit in less than a month, highlighting the urgency of regional developments. The government has not yet released official details of the visit. During the visit, the prime minister is expected to meet Crown Prince Mohammed bin



WASHINGTON, D.C.: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Anwaragh, held a meeting with Mr. Sultan bin Abdulrahman Al Harshah, Chief Executive Officer of the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings.

Punjab CM inaugurates govt-run deceased (body) transfer service

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Monday inaugurated a government-run deceased (body) transfer service, marking the first such initiative by any province in Pakistan. An official hand-out said that the service will initially be launched in Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi, where bodies will be transported free of charge from government hospitals to the homes of the deceased. The facility is expected to be expanded to all tehsils across the province by June. Under the "Deceased Care Service,"

dedicated ambulances will be deployed in each tehsil to ensure timely and dignified transportation. During the inauguration ceremony, the chief minister handed over the keys of the ambulances for the three cities, inspected the fleet, and interacted with rescue personnel. Speaking on the occasion, Maryam Nawaz directed staff to perform their duties with compassion and professionalism, emphasizing that supporting bereaved families is both a humanitarian obligation and a public service. She also instructed teams to provide emotional support and basic counselling to families dealing with loss. Highlighting challenges faced by citizens, the chief minister noted that private transporters often charge excessive fees in such situations. She strictly directed rescue staff not to accept any payment, even if offered voluntarily. Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique termed the initiative a major relief measure, stating that it aims to support citizens during times of grief. He said the service will initially operate within city limits, with plans to expand its scope in the next phase, including potential collaboration with private ambulance services. Director General Rescue Services Dr Rizwan Naseer said the service can be accessed through the emergency helpline 1122. He added that trained drivers will remain on duty round the clock at government hospitals, where dedicated facilitation desks will also be established. He further said the service will also assist in transporting bodies to morgues if required, while operations will be monitored through a digital dispatch system to ensure efficiency and transparency.

AN ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT OF THE ILLICIT CIGARETTE MARKET IN PAKISTAN

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Railways & Finance and Revenue Bilal Azhar Kayani is addressing at the Launching ceremony of Report - How Illicit Trade undermines formal markets, weakens governance and create space for criminal activities.

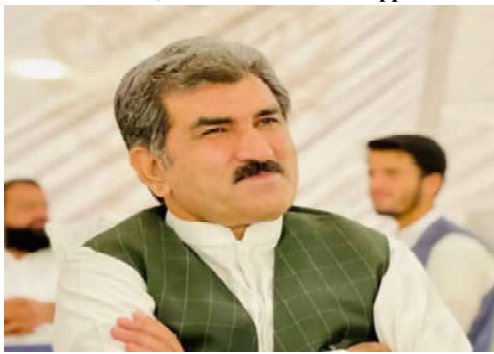
Balochistan High Court Reinstates Naseebullah Tareen As Chairman Services Tribunal, Voids Hadi Tareen's Appointment

Qasem Shah: Quetta: A division bench of the Balochistan High Court on Tuesday set aside the provincial government's notification appointing Hadi Tareen Advocate as Chairman of the Balochistan Services Tribunal and ordered the reinstatement of Naseebullah Tareen Advocate.

The bench, headed by Chief Justice Muhammad Kamran Malakhalai and comprising Justice Najmuddin Mengal, issued the ruling while hearing a constitutional petition challenging the legality of the appointment.

In its order, the court declared the government's notification void, observing that the appointment did not align with the relevant legal procedures and requirements.

The bench directed



authorities to immediately restore Naseebullah Tareen Advocate as chairman, thereby reinstating the previous administrative setup of the tribunal. Legal experts say the judgment reinforces the principle of merit and due process in public sector appointments. The provincial government has yet to respond officially to the decision.

DC Nasirabad Visits Girls College, Orders Immediate Steps to Improve Facilities

NASIRABAD: Deputy Commissioner Zulfiqar Ali Kakar visited the Government Girls College in Nasirabad to review facilities and assess the overall academic environment.

During the visit, he inspected various sections of the college, including classrooms and the auditorium hall. College Principal Sadia Khan briefed him on key issues faced by the institution, including lack of facilities and areas needing improvement.

The Deputy Commissioner listened to the concerns and assured immediate.

He directed Sub-Division Officer Abid Ali Panhwar to prepare a comprehensive report on the college's issues so they can be included in the Balochistan Sustainable Development Initiative for practical



solutions. During the visit, the DC also interacted with students, asked questions about their studies, and delivered a short lecture. His Personal Secretary Manzoor Shirazi was also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, he emphasized that resolving issues in educational institutions is essential for overall development, adding that special focus on girls' education is the need of the hour.

He reiterated that the district administration is committed to addressing these challenges on an emergency basis in line with the directives of Chief Minister Mir Sarfarz Bugti.

He further stated that all available resources will be utilized to promote education and ensure students are provided with a safe and quality learning environment.

At the end of the visit, the Deputy Commissioner also participated in a tree plantation activity at the college.

Nasirabad girls college visit, DC Zulfiqar Kakar education reforms, Balochistan education development, BSDI projects Pakistan, girls education Balochistan, school facilities improvement, Mir Sarfarz Bugti policies

Sibi Reviews Day-One Polio Campaign Performance, Emphasizes 100% Child Vaccination

SIBI: Deputy Commissioner Ilyas Kabzai chaired an evening review meeting in Sibi to assess the performance of the first day of the ongoing anti-polio campaign.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Mansoor Ali Shah, District Health Officer Dr Qadir Haroon, ISD Coordinator Mir Was Khan, NSTOP representative Dr Shehzada Kamran, District Polio Officer Salahuddin Marri, along with UCMOs, area-in-charges, monitors, and polio teams.



During the session, UCMOs provided detailed briefings on campaign progress in their respective union councils, including data on missed children (NA cases), zero-dose vaccination, and overall vaccination coverage.

Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Ilyas Kabzai directed all teams to carry out the campaign with utmost seriousness and responsibility, ensuring that no child is left without polio drops.

He emphasized the need to engage with thorough effective awareness so their children can also be vaccinated. He further instructed officials to strengthen field monitoring mechanisms to achieve the target of 100% coverage across the district.

The administration reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating Polio by ensuring complete outreach and effective implementation of the campaign.

Sibi polio review meeting, Balochistan vaccination campaign, Ilyas Kabzai directives, polio eradication Pakistan, missed children vaccination, public health Sibi, anti-polio drive Balochistan.

Balochistan Reviews Progress of New Trauma Center in Quetta to Enhance Emergency Healthcare

QUETTA: A progress review meeting regarding the New Trauma Center in Quetta was held under the chairmanship of Provincial Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar.

The meeting focused on evaluating the functionality, administrative affairs, availability of modern medical equipment, and overall service delivery system of the facility.

Key participants included Secretary Health Mujeeb Rehman, former Secretary Health Punjab Ali Jan, Director General Health Amin Mamookhalai, Assistant Secretary Health Saqib Kakar, CEO Trauma Center



Arbab Kamran, and Provincial Coordinator of Balochistan Health Management and Information Systems Ababgar Baloch, along with other senior doctors and officials.

Director Operations Dr Sher Aghan Rehsani provided a comprehensive briefing on ongoing efforts to make the trauma center fully operational. Aspects of service initiation were discussed in detail. Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar directed authorities to finalize all administrative and medical arrangements at the earliest so that the trauma center can be made fully functional for public use without delay. He emphasized

that the Government of Balochistan is committed to providing quality and timely healthcare services, and activating the New Trauma Center on modern lines is a key part of this vision.

The meeting concluded with a renewed commitment to operationalize the trauma center as soon as possible to ensure better emergency medical care for the public. Quetta trauma center update, Balochistan health services, Bakht Muhammad Kakar meeting, emergency healthcare Pakistan, new trauma center Quetta, hospital development Balochistan, public health initiatives Balochistan.

Usta Muhammad Reviews Day-One Performance of Polio Campaign, Orders 100% Coverage of Missed Children

U S T A MUHAMMAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ramzan Palal chaired an important evening meeting in Usta Muhammad to review the first day performance and operational challenges was conducted.

Special focus was placed on missed children and refusal cases, with instructions issued to immediately identify and vaccinate such cases

prove access in remote and difficult.

He emphasized that reaching every child is essential for eliminating Polio and stated that no negligence or lapse will be tolerated in achieving

The meeting concluded with a renewed commitment from the district administration, health department, and partner organizations to work collectively to ensure complete eradication of polio by reaching every child.

Usta Muhammad polio campaign 2026, NSTOP Pakistan April campaign, polio eradication Balochistan, Muhammad Ramzan Palal meeting, WHO UNICEF Pakistan polio, missed children vaccination, public health Pakistan

Usta Muhammad reviewed the day-one performance of the National Immunization Days (NID) April 2026 campaign.

The meeting was attended by officials from the District Health Department, World Health Organization, UNICEF, District Polio Officer, NSTOP

EPI teams, COMNet representatives, as well as Union Council Medical Officers (UCMOs) and field supervisors.

During the session, a detailed review of team attendance, vaccination coverage,

on a priority basis. Monitoring teams from WHO and UNICEF presented field reports highlighting issues such as staff absenteeism,

access challenges in certain areas, and the need to strengthen monitoring systems to address these concerns. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ramzan Palal issued clear directives to ensure 100% coverage of missed children, enforce strict monitoring of field teams, and adopt effective strategies to im-

plementation of the National Immunization Days (NID) April 2026 campaign. The meeting was attended by officials from the District Health Department, World Health Organization, UNICEF, District Polio Officer, NSTOP

operation in eliminating narcotics from the area. It is worth noting that Loralai police have intensified anti-drug operations in recent days, a move widely appreciated by local residents.

LORALAI: Police in Loralai achieved a major success in their ongoing crackdown against drugs, recovering 5 kilograms of hashish and arresting two suspects during a spot check. According to police officials, the operation

into custody, and further legal proceedings have been initiated against the suspects. SHO Humayun stated that operations against drug dealers will continue without interruption, adding that no one will be al-

operation in eliminating narcotics from the area. It is worth noting that Loralai police have intensified anti-drug operations in recent days, a move widely appreciated by local residents.



was led by SHO Humayun, who, along with his team, conducted a targeted raid resulting in the seizure of narcotics and on-the-spot arrests of the accused. The recovered drugs have been taken

Loralai police hashish seizure Pakistan, anti-narcotics crackdown Balochistan, SHO Humayun actions, drug dealers arrest Pakistan, youth protection drugs, law enforcement Loralai

Balochistan Food Authority Intensifies Crackdown on Unsafe and Substandard Food Units

QUETTA: The crackdown against unhygienic and substandard food continues across Balochistan as the Balochistan Food Authority carried out inspections in multiple districts including Quetta, Qilla Saifullah, Khuzdar, Gwadar, and Kuchlak.

According to a spokesperson, during the recent operations, two production units were sealed, 27 establishments were fined, and 36 units were issued improvement notices for minor violations.

Large quantities of expired and prohibited food items were confiscated and destroyed during inspections.

A major ice manufacturing and ice pop production unit located on the CPEC Road in Quetta was sealed due to serious violations.

TENDER NOTICE

THE-2526/04/17413 Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, it is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, BUILDING, ZENDA BUGTI, invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2026 based on Composite schedule rates 2023 on Percentage Polio Tender Fee 100% PKR and Bid Security 2%.

S.No.	Name of Works	Est/Co
1	CONSTRUCTION OF MULTIPURPOSE HALL, 7,360,100	
	HILL WAZIRIA WASHIR KHAN PHELAWA GH DERABUGTI.	

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required. The bidder must have completed 2 Assignment of similar nature of work Turnover of at least 5,572,130 PKR Amount in 3 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) C-6 and above upto 25 million. Relevant Category and Specialized Code is EE1114 (General Electrical Works Only). Bid Security 2% of the Estimated Cost Tender Document Fee PKR 2000 in account of COTD. The Bidder must not have any pending litigation or court cases related to contractual disputes, fraud, corruption, or other serious offenses. The Bidder must not have been involved in any contract breach or termination. Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit of Cash or as specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed. 1500 PKR issuance of tender Documents. From the date of publication of NIT to 29 April, 2026 during office hours on working days. Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted by 29 April, 2026 at 10:00AM. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 12:00 PM Address: Man Road, Dera Bugti. Phone no: 0824-1416294 fax no: 0824-141552 Email: Aijazhussainereadidag@gmail.com

Executive Engineer-Building
UPPRA District
 District Dera Bugti

PRO No. 4586/13-04-2026

Govt allows cottonseed imports with conditions

NEWS DESK: Pakistan's long-awaited decision to allow cottonseed imports after decades has been overshadowed by an inordinate delay in issuing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). As the sowing season nears its end, there are concerns that the move may have no impact this year.

Under the newly released SOPs, importers are permitted to bring in hybrid cottonseed only on a trial basis.

The seed must undergo two years of successful cultivation in different cotton zones and receive certification from relevant authorities before commercial imports can begin.

However, industry stakeholders argue that the delayed issuance of these SOPs has rendered the policy redundant for the ongoing crop cycle, as farmers have already completed or are about to complete cotton sowing.

The approval for imports came after persistent demands from certain quarters, citing declining per-acre yields of locally developed seed. Yet, the late rollout of procedures has deprived farmers of any immediate benefit.



According to the SOPs, imported hybrid seed will be tested across multiple regions under strict supervision. Authorities will evaluate key parameters such as fibre length, strength, and overall quality, along with resistance to

cotton leaf curl virus, extreme temperatures, water stress, and other diseases. Only seeds meeting these standards after two years of trials will qualify for commercial import.

Cotton Ginners Forum Chairman Ihsanul

only registered seed companies and cotton research stations are authorised for both production and import, barring individuals and unauthorised entities from participation.

Haq emphasised that the fundamental challenge facing Pakistan's cotton sector lies beyond seed quality. The unchecked expansion of sugarcane cultivation in traditional cotton zones has significantly altered the micro-

climate, increasing humidity and creating conditions conducive to viral diseases that damage cotton crops. In contrast, areas such as parts of Balochistan, Sindh, and Cholistan — where sugarcane cultivation is

strict enforcement of crop zoning laws, including a ban on sugarcane cultivation and sugar mill expansion in designated cotton zones, to sustainably revive the sector.

He cited Rahim Yar Khan, once the country's largest cotton-producing district, as a stark example of policy failure.

The proliferation of sugar mills in the district along the Sindh-Punjab border has led to a drastic decline in cotton acreage, falling from around 800,000 acres to nearly a quarter of that figure.

Questioning the effectiveness of the import policy under current conditions, he noted that hybrid cotton has yet to achieve consistent success globally.

"With the sowing window closing, the delay in SOPs has cost the sector another critical season,"

he said, urging the government to prioritise timely policymaking alongside structural reforms.

He added that with proper implementation of crop zoning and supportive policies, Pakistan could restore its cotton production to 15 million bales.

War strengthens Iranian rial

NEWS DESK: It may seem strange, but it is true that the Iranian rial gained strength during the war and that demand is still rising, said currency dealers.

Before the war, which started on Feb 28, the Iranian rial was hardly considered a tradable currency, and 10 million rials were available for just \$2,500.

Experts said the war influenced the Iranian rial, leading to some positive changes in the psyche of people involved in buying currency. However, some currency dealers said that

trading with Iran has increased during the war, thereby boosting demand for the currency. A two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran, brokered by Pakistan, is in effect and will end on April 21.

Trade of food, diesel rises amid ongoing conflict.

They said that media reports indicated Tehran had succeeded in selling 30 per cent more oil, signalling that the Iranian rial will gain strength once the war ends permanently.

There are two types of currency buy-

ers. Traders are purchasing in the local market. The importers are buying rial to import from Iran. The two currencies have been trading for years, but the volume of trade is never mentioned in the official documents. The current trading between the two countries was around \$3bn, while Iran is willing to raise the food and essential goods from \$1.3bn to \$3bn.

In a post on Sept 17, 2025, Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired an inter-ministerial meeting on Pakistan-Iran relations and reiterated Pakistan's commitment to expanding bilateral engagement with Iran across priority sectors. Both countries are willing to increase trade to \$10bn by 2028.

Iran exported around \$2.423bn worth of goods to Pakistan during March 2024-March 2025, while imports from Pakistan stood at \$706 million. However, some experts said the situation has changed since the war, which is still looming over the region. They said that unless the war is over, trading with Iran and the future of the Iranian rial are uncertain.



Tax rationalisation to cut auto prices

NEWS DESK: The government is mulling over a proposal to amend the duties and taxes regime in the new auto policy in order to bring vehicles within the reach of the middle class.

"Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is keen on making vehicles cost effective for the middle class," the CEO of the Engineering Development Board (EDB), Hamad Ali Mansoor, told a media briefing on Monday.

Three small electric vehicles in completely built-up form are due in Karachi during the third quarter of this year. This will be followed by work on building mega assembly plants in Karachi and Lahore, he added.

Initially these vehicles will be priced at less than one million rupees, Ali Mansoor said. The auto policy, which is likely to be announced on July 1, has been forwarded to the ministry for presentation to the prime minister.

"No assembler has sought any extension in the current policy," he said. The CEO did not disclose other salient features of auto policy, but said the prime minister's focus is on making small cars affordable for the middle class.



Mr Ali said that the massive increase in petrol and diesel prices had pushed a number of buyers towards electric vehicles. "Sales of electric vehicles saw a three-fold increase in March," he added.

He expressed the hope that the landscape of electric vehicles will change in coming months as two to three lithium battery makers are due to start operation this year.

Another sector expert, Mashood Ali Khan, informed the EDB CEO that auto parts manufacturers were on the decline despite an increase in the number of vehicle assemblers.

An auto sector expert, Mashood Ali Khan, informed the EDB CEO that auto parts manufacturers were on the decline despite an increase in the number of vehicle assemblers.

He emphasised that the new auto policy must prioritise SME auto parts, the backbone of the economy, which have developed. Govt must ensure actual manufacturing, not just assembly, in Pakistan.

Mixed trend. Amid the US-Israel war against Iran, buyers showed a mixed trend in purchasing new cars, vans, pickups and SUVs. Pak Suzuki sales during March plunged by 23pc to 6,250 units versus 8,160 in February 2026 while 9MFY26 sales

welled by 32pc to 65,706 units year on year (YoY). Hyundai Nishat sales fell by nine per cent to 928 units in March from 1,021 units in February while its sales recorded a 33pc rise in 9MFY26 to 9,682 units YoY.

Indus Motor Company (IMC) sales partly grew by one per cent to 3,873 units in March from 3,817 in February while total sales in 9MFY26 surged by 54pc to 33,313 units YoY.

Honda Atlas Cars Limited (HACL) and Sazgar Engineering sales rose by 10pc and three per cent to 2,324 and 1,734 units in March as compared to 2,114 and 1,682 in February.

Senator questions delay in satellite internet

NEWS DESK: Prolonged delay in issuing licences for satellite-based internet services will be debated in the Senate as a senator has submitted a call attention notice seeking explanation from the federal minister for information technology.

"I would like to draw the attention of the federal IT minister to the prolonged delay in issuing licences required for launching satellite-based internet services," Senator Sarmad Ali said in his call attention notice, adding that

the delay was affecting companies interested in entering the Pakistani market.

According to him, at least five companies are awaiting final regulatory clearance and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has almost completed the requirements for the internet service.

However, registration with the Pakistan Space Activities Regulatory Board remains pending.

"Would the federal minister explain the rea-

sons behind these delays and inform the house as to when the licences will be issued," he asked.

Industry experts have warned that the ambition for next-generation connectivity is being undermined by policy inconsistency, weak long-term planning and inconsistent regulation.

While Pakistan continues to project itself as a fast-emerging digital economy, insiders argue the gap between narrative and execution is growing wider and crit-

ical decisions on licensing and modern connectivity models are being delayed.

"When it comes to real decision-making, licensing clarity and investment certainty, Pakistan's system moves too slowly," a senior telecom executive remarked.

Experts are of the view that the real issue is quality of service rather than coverage claims. Even in key urban areas, users continue to experience unstable broadband performance, congested mobile networks and inconsistent throughput.

Pakistan's broadband market remains fragmented, with many households and small businesses still dependent on copper-based infrastructure, while fibre-to-the-home expansion remains uneven and concentrated in select neighbourhoods.

Experts stress the challenge is not simply "more users come online," but whether the underlying backbone and access networks are being modernised fast enough to handle the exponential data growth.



Oil relief shattered by Hormuz threat

NEWS DESK: A renewed surge in global oil prices following the end of Islamabad-mediated talks between Washington and Tehran has wiped out a brief sense of relief, exposing Pakistan and other import-dependent economies to another round of inflationary pressure.

Crude prices climbed back above \$100 per barrel on Monday, after US President Donald Trump signalled plans to block the Strait of Hormuz, a move widely seen as a pressure tactic after negotiations failed to produce a breakthrough.

The spike comes

just days after markets had begun stabilising on hopes of de-escalation. Analysts say the latest jump is being amplified not merely by geopolitical risk, but by the sudden reversal of expectations.

"The problem this time around is not just supply fears, it's the collapse of market confidence after a short-lived diplomatic window," said a high official working in Pakistan's private-sector oil industry. "That blowcast effect is making the price spike sharper than usual."

The Strait of Hormuz, a narrow but critical shipping lane,

handles nearly 20% of global oil trade. Any disruption, or even the threat of it, tends to send immediate shockwaves through energy markets.

Following over 20 hours of inconclusive talks in Islamabad, US signals of a potential naval blockade targeting Iranian shipments triggered fresh concerns about supply constraints. Brent crude responded with a sharp rally, with some forecasts warning prices could climb further if tensions persist.

For Pakistan, the development could not have come at a more

crucious time, as the country had been counting on relatively stable oil prices to maintain its fragile inflation trajectory and manage its external account.

The government on Friday cut diesel prices by Rs135 and petrol by Rs12 per litre to ease the pressure. A sustained increase in crude prices is once again expected to inflate the import bill, weaken the rupee and complicate ongoing fiscal adjustments.

"Every \$10 increase in oil prices adds significant pressure on Pakistan's current account and directly feeds into domestic inflation," said the official.

"If this situation prolongs, it will force tough decisions on fuel pricing and subsidies."

Petroleum products remain among Pakistan's largest import categories, and the economy highly sensitive to global price movements.

A renewed oil rally could translate into higher transport costs, electricity tariffs, and food prices in the coming weeks.



Flawless Zalmi tame Sultans to stay perfect in PSL

NEWS DESK: In the top-of-the-table clash of the HBL Pakistan Super League, Multan Sultans kept searching for a weak link here at the National Bank Stadium on a breezy Monday night. Seemingly, Peshawar Zalmi had none.

Whenever Sultans believed that they had weathered Shoriful Islam's incisive new-ball spell, Iftikhar Ahmed's skiddy off-breaks would undo their progress, notably removing in-form Sahibzada Farhan.

When Sultans looked settled against Michael Bracewell's accuracy, Sufyan Mugeem's left-arm wrist spin prised out their middle order, including the Australian trio of Steve Smith, Josh Philippe and Ashton Turner.

And just when Sultans pinned their hopes on Shan Masood's class to orchestrate a recovery, Iftikhar returned to dismiss the Pakistan Test captain at a crucial juncture.

Sufyan (3-30) and Iftikhar (2-32) shared five wickets between them, conceding under eight an over, as Zalmi sealed a 24-run victory — their sixth win in five completed matches,



with one fixture washed out.

The result consolidated Zalmi's position at the summit of the standings while underlining the gap between the two sides. Sultans, despite losing half-century pro-

most of the contest, never quite managed to seize control. Opting to bowl first, Sultans were put under pressure by a commanding batting display from Kusal Mendis, whose fluent half-century pro-

pelled Zalmi to a formidable 196. Mendis, coming off a century and a fifty in his previous outings, maintained his rich vein of form with a 40-ball 68, striking three sixes and six fours. While wickets fell

intermittently at the other end, the Sri Lankan remained composed, maintaining a brisk scoring rate and anchoring the innings. He found an able partner in Pakistan U-19 captain Farhan Yousaf, with the pair

adding 68 off 39 deliveries for the third wicket. Their stand revived Zalmi after early setbacks, including the dismissal of captain Babar Azeem (18) and opener Mohammad Harris, who had earlier provided im-

petus with a brisk 38 off 17 balls, featuring three sixes and four boundaries. Farhan and Mendis came together in the ninth over with Zalmi at 75-2 and finally adopted caution against Arafat Minhass's spin-

However, they soon shifted gears, with Farhan launching Faisal Akram for a six over mid-wicket.

Mendis then asserted himself, pulling Mohammad Wasim for six behind square before displaying exquisite footwork against Arafat, striking consecutive sixes over long-off and straight down the ground.

Farhan's enterprising knock ended when he miscued an attempted big hit off Wasim, but Mendis pressed on. A fielding lapse at deep third man allowed him two boundaries before he added another off the same bowler to take Zalmi past 150 by the 16th over.

Bracewell chipped in with a six off Peter Siddle, but both he and Mendis fell in quick succession to young pacer Mohammad Ismail. Late hitting from Iftikhar, including a six and a four, ensured Zalmi finish strongly. In reply, Sultans began briskly as Smith and Philippe powered them to 61-1 in powerplay despite the early loss of Sahibzada. Philippe was particularly fluent, twice finding the boundary off Bracewell with crisp footwork.

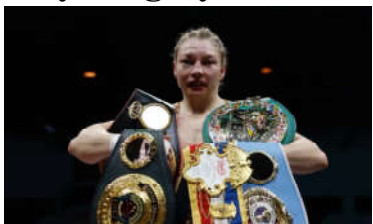
Price eyes legacy bout

NEWS DESK: Welterweight world champion Lauren Price believes there is no reason to delay a high-profile fight with American Claressa Shields, declaring that she is in her prime and ready to chase boxing immortality.

After defeating Stephanie Pineiro to retain her WBC, WBA and IBF titles in Cardiff this month, Briton Price went face to face with undisputed heavy-weight champion Shields in the ring, sparking talk of a potential clash between them.

Price said taking on the biggest names has been on her mind since she became an Olympic champion at the Tokyo Games in 2021. "I want to be involved in the biggest fights, to create a legacy. I'm in my prime. She's got two.

We're at a similar age. So why should we wait? Why should I wait



until towards the 'end of my career?' the 31-year-old told Reuters.

"I'm here now and feeling good. I'm like, 'yeah, let's make the fight.' I'll fight anyone. I think it's a great fight. Our accolades speak for themselves. "I've got an Olympic gold medal. She's got two.

She's a great, great fighter and I would love to share the ring with her.

It's the biggest fight out there."

WEIGHT 'NOT AN ISSUE' With Shields weighing in at 174 pounds for her win over Franchon Crews-Dezarm in February, and Price tipping the scales at just over 146 pounds for her victory over Pineiro, any meeting between the two would require the Welshwoman to move up a couple of weight classes.

Price said she planned to fight at 154 pounds, before going on to face Shields at 160. "That's not an issue. I've boxed big girls before in the past. I'm in this game 'to become' a multi-weight world champion," she added.

Promoter Ben Shalom told ESPN last week the boxers could sign a two-fight deal, with one bout in the United Kingdom and the other in the U.S.

Inter extend Serie A lead

NEWS DESK: Inter Milan put one hand on the Serie A title on Sunday after coming back from two goals down to win 4-3 in a thrilling match at Como and move nine points clear of Napoli, who could only draw 1-1 at Parma.

Trailing by two in the dying moments of the first half due to goals from Alex Valle and youthful virtuoso Nico Paz, Inter looked set to give champions Napoli hope their Scudetto defence might still be alive.

But Marcus Thuram brilliantly poked home Nico Barella's cross in stoppage time at the end of the opening half before the France forward powered in a mix-up between Como goalkeeper Jean Butez and defender Marc-Oliver Kempf to loop home the leveller moments after the break.

Denzel Dumfries bulletted home Hakan Calhanoglu's perfectly delivered free-kick in the 58th minute and then completed the turnaround at the Stadio Giuseppe Sinigaglia by coolly guiding home Manuel Akanji's knock-down 14 minutes later.

With six matches remaining in the season Inter now have a near-unassailable lead at the top of the table, while Como's first defeat in two months left them outside the Champions League positions.

Pressed by DAZN into declaring that the

title was already sewn up, Inter midfielder Barella simply said "lets wait a little while", and Dumfries was equally evasive.

Juventus have taken Como's place in the top four of Italy's top flight, a disappointment after a superb first half in which Paz was the star of the show with a brilliant 11th goal of the season and the saved shot which led to Valle's opener.

Como have never played European football and were in Italy's third tier when acquired by tobacco giant Djarm seven years ago.

Napoli slip Scott McTominay's drilled finish on the hour mark gave Napoli a draw with desire and courage," said Como coach Cesc Fabregas. "Yes we

made mistakes. We're a young team, and when you do, these things happen. That's the way it is."

Inter's victory over AC Milan had reopened the prospect of retaining the title but Sunday's results mean Inter would have to completely collapse to allow Napoli a sniff of the title.

league crown in four seasons.

Antonio Conte's team were on the back foot within 36 seconds, which was how long it took for Gabriel Strefezza to race on to Nesta Elphege's knock-on and beautifully curl home Parma's opener.

Napoli struggled to break down the hosts who were content to sit deep and soak up the pressure and deny the away team a sixth straight league win even after McTominay's equaliser.

Last weekend's win over AC Milan had reopened the prospect of retaining the title but Sunday's results mean Inter would have to completely collapse to allow Napoli a sniff of the title.



Zimbabwe pacer Blessing Muzarabani banned for 2 PSL editions over 'failure to honour commitments'



NEWS DESK: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday barred Zimbabwe pacer Blessing Muzarabani from participating in the next two editions of the Pakistan Super League (PSL).

In a statement, the cricket board said that after a thorough disciplinary review, Muzarabani was declared ineligible to participate in the next two editions of the tournament, effective immediately.

"This decision stems from a fundamental failure to honour agreed-upon commitments, an action that undermines the professional framework of the league," it said.

Although the press release did not make specific mention of the agreement, ESPNcricinfo reported last month that Muzarabani, who was slated to play for Islamabad United, would not be doing so after securing a deal in the Indian Premier League with the Kolkata Knight Riders.

"The PCB maintains that professional cricket operates on the bedrock of trust and the certainty of agreements. "In this instance, despite a clear offer and an unequivocal acceptance of essential terms, the player chose to disregard those obligations in favour of a conflicting

arrangement," the cricket board said. It went on to say that "once essential terms — including remuneration and structure — are agreed upon through written correspondence, a binding obligation is formed".

It maintained that an attempt to "move away from such commitments without valid cause is a violation of contractual obligations and principles of good faith that govern global professional sports." The PCB said that the PSL's integrity was dependent on the "consistent and ethical behaviour of all participants".

The statement noted that the two-year ban was "a nec-

essary measure to safeguard the professional environment of the PSL. "The PSL remains dedicated to ensuring that the league remains a platform where contractual certainty is respected and where the actions of all players and agents reflect the prestige of the tournament," the statement read.

The cricket board further stated that while it took into account the "complexities of modern cricket schedules, it will not compromise on the ethical framework that ensures fairness to the franchisees and the integrity of the league's recruitment processes".

Sinner sinks Alcaraz to win Monte Carlo

NEWS DESK: Jannik Sinner beat Carlos Alcaraz in straight sets to win the Monte Carlo Masters for the first time on Sunday and reclaim the world number one ranking from his Spanish rival.

Sinner downed Alcaraz 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 to capture his third ATP 1000 title of the year after completing "Sunshine Double" last month with victories in Indian Wells and Miami. The 24-year-old Sinner joins Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal as only the third player to win four successive ATP 1000 titles. He also triumphed in Paris at the end of last season.

"We came here trying to get as many matches as possible, getting good feedback before the tournaments coming up. Today was a high level from both of us," Sinner said. "It was a bit windy, a bit breezy. Different conditions from what the tournaments was brought. The result is amazing. "Getting back to



No.1 means a lot for me. I am very happy to win a big title on this surface, I haven't done it before."

It was the first meeting between Sinner and Alcaraz since the Italian prevailed at the ATP Finals in November. Sinner, who is now 7-10 in his career against Alcaraz, will return to the top of the rankings on Monday.

He has won his last 17 matches and becomes the first man since Djokovic in 2015 to win

the first three ATP 1000 titles of the season. "It is impressive what you are achieving right now," Alcaraz said to Sinner during the trophy ceremony. "Just one man had won the Sunshine Double and Monte Carlo and you are the second."

Alcaraz had won his past 17 matches on clay, dating back to last season when he lifted titles in Rome and at Roland Garros. He admitted Sinner performed better

when it mattered most on Sunday. "I would say that the important moments, the important points, I didn't play well. I think I had so much opportunities in the match that I didn't take," said Alcaraz.

Alcaraz jumped out to a 2-0 lead when Sinner pushed a forehand long in blustery conditions, but the Italian broke back in the following game as he gradually found his rhythm.

Gun Attack on Quetta's Sariab Road Leaves Three Dead, Two Wounded

Staff Reporter:
QUETTA: A fresh wave of violence struck Quetta on Tuesday evening when unidentified gunmen opened fire on Sariab Road, killing three young men and injuring two others, police officials confirmed.

According to initial reports, the victims who lost their lives were identified as Haroon, Ghafoor and Naseebullah. Two injured individuals, Abdul Hafeez and Jameel, were rushed to Civil Hospital Quetta, where doctors are providing emergency care.

Witnesses described scenes of chaos and fear as gunfire erupted in the busy locality, forcing residents and passersby to flee for safety.

Panic quickly spread across the area in the aftermath of the attack, highlighting the vulnerability felt by ordinary citizens in the



Law enforcement personnel arrived shortly after the incident, secured the area, and began gathering forensic evidence. A case has been registered against unidentified suspects, while efforts are underway to trace and apprehend those responsible.

Authorities said the motive behind the attack remains unclear at this stage.

The incident comes amid growing concerns over public safety in Quetta, as it follows closely on the heels of another deadly shooting just two days earlier in the Hazar Ganji area, where three individuals from the Hazara community were killed.

The back-to-back incidents have deepened anxiety among residents and renewed calls for stronger security measures.

Local residents and community representatives have urged authorities to act swiftly, stressing the need for effective policing and intelligence efforts.

The latest attack serves as a grim reminder of the persistent security challenges facing the provincial capital.

Naqvi calls on businessmen to bring back '20-30pc' of wealth to Pakistan

NEWS DESK: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday called on the business community to bring back "20-30 per cent" of their wealth to Pakistan ahead of the upcoming budget.

Speaking at a ceremony at the Federation House in Karachi, he said that the government would facilitate the business community but "at least give this one gesture over the next three months, before the budget and then see what happens".

"It is not tedious. You have to go online and use an app," he said, adding that Pakistan offered strong returns on investment.

He said that if the business community took this one step, it would compel the government to take more measures in their interests.

"So, before the budget, bring back \$10 billion... This is easily possible," he said.

In his address, he also said that a proposal for a separate passport for businessmen would be shared with Prime

Minister Shehbaz Sharif soon.

"We have almost prepared a proposal... which will be taken to the prime minister soon," he said. He said that "genuine businessmen" face visa issues, highlighting China, the United States, Europe and the United Kingdom as their priority destinations.

He said that everyone inadvertently suffered the benefits of such a passport, he said the embassies would know that the passport holders were genuine businessmen.

"We thought a lot about what to do about this... Let's see what the cabinet approves and what feedback the prime minister gives. But we are taking this proposal for which we have taken all these countries on



board for issuing a separate visa for businessmen," he said. "The passport will be [used] for a limited extent with the authorities having knowledge of tax return, the extent of business [and] related information," he said, adding that it may have between 100 to 150 requirements as well as a fee.

Explaining the benefits of such a passport, he said the embassies would know that the passport holders were genuine businessmen. He also said that separate counters would be established for the passport holders at airports.

In his speech, he recalled the four-day conflict with India in May 2025 — Marka-i-Haq — and stressed that Pakistan stood "ever ready, vigilant, and capable to deter any aggression and give a befitting response".

Kuwait praises Pakistan's role in US-Iran peace efforts: FO

NEWS DESK: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jabr Al-Sabah has praised Pakistan's role in facilitating US-Iran peace efforts in a telephone call with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to continue sustained efforts, emphasising dialogue and diplomacy as the only viable path to resolving issues.

Both sides reaffirmed the strong Pakistan-Kuwait ties and agreed to remain in close contact.

Earlier, European Union Foreign Policy Chief Kaja Kallas and Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand praised Pakistan's role during separate telephone calls with Ishaq Dar, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During his call with the EU foreign policy chief, Dar "appreciated the regular and close contact between Pakistan and the EU during the ongoing regional situation" and briefed her on developments from the recently held Islamabad Talks.

According to the statement, Kaja "commended Pakistan's constructive role for facilitating US-Iran direct negotiations in Pakistan."

Both sides "emphasised the need for continued dialogue & diplomacy for resolution of the conflict."

The two leaders also "positively assessed the growing co-operation between Pakistan and EU, and agreed to maintain close contact on all issues of mutual interest."

In a separate call with the Canadian foreign minister, Dar "exchanged views on recent developments, including the US-Iran negotiations held during the Islamabad Talks."



Naval chief says Pakistan stands ready to deter any aggression, vows 'befitting response'

NEWS DESK: The Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf on Tuesday said that Pakistan's armed forces stood ready to "deter any aggression" vowing to deliver a "befitting response" to any such act.

He made the assertion while addressing the passing out ceremony of cadets of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) in Risalpur.

The naval chief, in his address congratulated the graduating cadets, expressing hope that they will "uphold PAF's vision" with "commitment and dedication".

In his speech, he recalled the four-day conflict with India in May 2025 — Marka-i-Haq — and stressed that Pakistan stood "ever ready, vigilant, and capable to deter any aggression and give a befitting response". The Pakistan Army had named the period of conflict with India, from the Pahalgam attack to the conclusion of Operation Buraynum Marsoos, as Marka-i-Haq in May, 2025.

He further stated that the armed forces, including the navy, stood ready to "enhance our capabilities and keep up with the evolving geopolitical developments".

"Pakistan's outstanding performance in Marka-i-Haq, Bunyanum Marsoos, was the outcome of exemplary professionalism, remarkable foresight, and relentless hard work on the part of the Pakistan Air Force leadership," the naval chief said. He added in the years preceding the conflict, the air force pursued a "comprehensive strategy of organisation".

"PAF has embraced technological developments and harnessed cutting-edge technologies," he told the cadets, stressing that the PAF's previous successes placed "greater responsibility" on the cadets. The naval

chief said that the Pakistan Navy was also "making significant headway".

Detailing the advancement efforts, the navy chief said that Pakistan Navy was modernising its fleet and "indigenously developing long-range weapons".

He added that the navy's combat capabilities had "undergone a remarkable enhancement across all operational domains, including surface, sub-surface, and aviation".

Admiral Ashraf recalled that the navy, during the May 2025 conflict, "successfully deterred the Indian navy from any hostilities at sea and it remained at bay throughout the

conflict". The naval chief maintained that it was the Pakistan Navy's capacity to "strike vital Indian infrastructure along the coast and its essential sea lines of communication with precision and speed" that played a vital role in forcing the Indian navy to withdraw.

He also noted the global impact due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz amid the US-Israel war on Iran, which broke out on February 28.

In this context, he expressed the navy's readiness to exercise "continuous vigilance" and enhance its ability to "proactively respond in any eventuality". "We stand ready to deter



Global federation lauds 'professionalism' of Pakistan's air traffic controllers amid airspace disruptions

NEWS DESK: The International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations (IFATCA) has expressed its appreciation for the professionalism of Pakistan's air traffic controllers.

The remarks came in a letter by IFATCA Asia-Pacific Region Executive Vice President Cheryl Chen, which was shared by the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) on Tuesday.

According to IFATCA's website, the apolitical federation provides guidance, representation, training, and other services to advance the status and professionalism of air traffic control. It has member associations in

more than 130 countries from all corners of the globe. "I wish to express our sincere appreciation for the dedication and professionalism demonstrated by our air traffic controllers of Pakistan

in recent weeks," Chen said in the letter, a copy of which is available with Dawn.

"Amid evolving geopolitical developments impacting regional airspace, Pakistan's strategic position as a key corridor between Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Europe has resulted in a significant increase in air traffic, including the diversion of flights from neighbouring airspace," she said.

It said that under these circumstances, air traffic control officers had managed "substantial volumes" of non-scheduled traffic while also maintaining "the highest standards of safety and efficiency".

She acknowledged that the operations were conducted under sustained pressure, "possibly with extended duties and limited leave". She said that this reflected a "strong commitment to operational continuity and global aviation safety".

Terming Pakistan's efforts "exceptional", Chen also acknowledged the "vital contribution" of the air traffic control workforce.

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