



**BALUCHISTAN**  
Complaint Redressal Committee Meeting Held...  
Page No 5

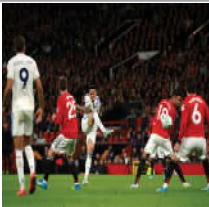


**INTERNATIONAL**  
North Korea boosting ability to make nuclear arms: UN watchdog  
Page No 3



**NATIONAL**  
Subcontinent might see subdued monsoon as 'super...'  
Page No 8

**SPORT**  
Leeds grab win over United as Martinez sees red  
Page No 7



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# QUETTA VOICE

## Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir Reaches Tehran Regarding Iran, US Talks



**NEWS DESK:**

Tehran : Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI(M), HJ, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of

Defence Forces, along with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and a high-level Pakistani delegation, arrived in Tehran on Wednesday as part of

Pakistan's ongoing mediation efforts in the region. This was stated by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). It may be mentioned here

that Pakistan has been actively engaged with both the Iranian government and the United States to help achieve a permanent peace in the Middle East.

The visit aims to convey important messages and pave the way for a second round of talks between the concerned parties.

## Supreme Court urged to uphold stay issued in 2015 against summary eviction of slums

**NEWS DESK:**

Human rights activists, political workers, lawyers and ordinary citizens meeting, convened by the Human Rights Commission in Pakistan (HRCP) on Tuesday appealed to the judges of the superior courts to uphold the 2015 Supreme Court stay order against summary evictions of katchi abadis, and thereby ensure the constitutional right to housing of the working poor in urban centres.

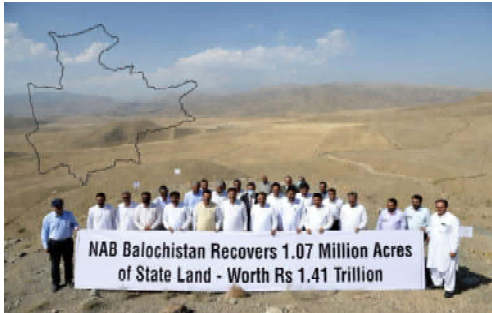
A statement issued by the HRCP said that the meeting was held in the face of an ongoing demolition drive launched by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) in contravention of the SC stay order, which had targeted Muslim and Christian katchi abadis across the federal capital, as well as historic villages like Saldpur, Malpur and Nurpur Shahan.

The HRCP, All-Pakistan Alliance for Katchi Abadis, National Commission for Justice and Peace, Awami Workers Party, Aurat March Islamabad and others noted that the CDA's brazen anti-poor attitude in fact betrayed its failure to meet the shelter needs of the working poor.

However, the CDA had launched only one low-income housing scheme since the turn of the century, in the rural locality of Alipur Farashi, which had accommodated only a few hundred households, and which paled in comparison to the approximately 500, 000 residents of katchi abadis in the capital.

The CDA's inability to provide formal low-cost housing should engender an attitude of acceptance to informal settlements that had developed through the hard work and endeavour of working class families. Instead, the CDA continued to engage in reckless demolition drives which not only render thousands homeless but exacerbate what was already an acute shortage of affordable shelter for the poor, the statement said.

## NAB Balochistan Recovers State Land Worth Rs 1.41 Trillion in Major Anti-Corruption Operation



**NEWS DESK:**

Quetta : NAB Balochistan has achieved a significant milestone in its ongoing anti-corruption operation, recovering state land worth over Rs 1.41 trillion.

According to official sources, during 2025, NAB Balochistan successfully reclaimed 1.02 million acres of government land from illegal mafia.

51,000+ acres of encroached land were recovered.

In total, 1.07 million acres of state land have been retrieved, marking what officials describe as a historic achievement in the fight against land grabbing and corruption in Pakistan.

Authorities emphasized that the ongoing anti-encroachment drive and accountability process are being carried out without discrimination, aiming at the elimination of corruption

and the promotion of transparency.

The recovery of valuable public land has resulted in a major benefit to the national exchequer, while also strengthening public trust in accountability institutions.

NAB Balochistan reaffirmed its commitment to intensifying actions for the protection of state assets and continuing strict crackdowns against the illegal land mafia in Pakistan.

## Taxpayers' Money Down the Drain: Favoured Outlets Feast While Balochistan's Real Media Starves

**Quetta Voice Investigative Report:**

Quetta: Public money meant to inform the people of Balochistan is allegedly disappearing into a "black hole" as the Directorate General Public Relations (DGPR) continues to favour a handful of "well" connected "blue-eyed" media houses in the distribution of government advertisements.

This concern was also echoed during a meeting of the Joint Media Action Committee at Quetta Press Club, which called for the fair and judicious distribution of government advertisements.

Some "blue eyed" newspapers getting lion's share. Despite tall claims of transparency and meritocracy by the provincial government, credible newspapers with actual circulation and readership are being sidelined, while outlets with little to no visibility continue to receive a lion's share of official ads.

Insiders and media observers say there is still no clear, fixed criteria for allocating advertisements. Powerful and well-connected houses allegedly enjoy preferential treatment, raising serious questions about misuse of taxpayers' money.

GM Mir Sarfraz Biggi's Personal Social Media Accounts Performing Well Than Mighty Information Ministry.

The anomaly has become more glaring as the national press

## Hidden Scandal Demands Enquiry



largely ignores Balochistan, including important statements of the Chief Minister and the Governor. Meanwhile, even the Chief Minister's personal social media accounts appear to perform better in public outreach than the entire machinery of the Information Ministry.

Journalists and concerned citizens are now demanding an independent inquiry into the distribution of government advertisements over the past two years.

They insist that those who received funds without delivering any real service or performance must be held accountable.

"The time for cosmetic promises is over," said one senior journalist on condition of anonymity. "First fix the rot in advertisement distribution, then talk about any digital media policy."

Than Speak About Digital Policy. The proposed digital policy, currently under discussion, risks losing all credibility if the foundational issue of unfair and opaque ad distribution is not addressed immediately.

Balochistan stands at a critical juncture. The common citizen expects the government to spend public funds responsibly — not to subsidise ghost outlets or reward political favourites while genuine voices struggle for survival. Transparency is not a favour; it is the basic right of the people.

Merit must replace patronage. Only then can any talk of digital reform carry weight.

The provincial government must direct chief minister inspection team, anti corruption or the national accountability bureau to conduct a thorough investigation into this scandal.

# 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

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, frightened families, 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

### 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"*

## Quetta has a better environment, rich culture, manageable population

**Amjad Rashid**  
Quetta is not a case of deprivation related to lack of resources, not a case of unemployment, not a case of climate change, and not even a case of poverty. It's a true and real case of the richness of culture, environment, climate, natural resources, and manageable human population. Unfortunately our planners, thinkers, decision-makers proved to be very selfish and greedy.

In Quetta, we had municipal water posts (I wish I can get the pictures). Quetta was a natural habitat with a small population of trees, flowers. The city had few streets with few vehicles and dynamic socio-political harmony.

We did establish universities but abandoned knowledge. Unfortunately global and regional influences badly affected the capital with less modernization and more adversity. We did establish a university, but abandoned consciousness, we did build plazas, but we did not build codes. If we look back at the pictures of Quetta of the sixties.

It was like Zurich but evolved as little Karachi or Mumbai.

Transformed from little London to huge slums (full of garbage and filth).

Bad governance, poor education, corruption, and poor planning converted Quetta into an ugly place.

We don't see green Koh-e-Mur Daar a multi-lingual culture which was its beauty and uniqueness has vanished and replaced by the practices influenced by regional inhuman and unnatural drama.

We lost our green Quetta with wild roses which was its aroma and identity. Balochistan and Quetta need our attention.

Balochistan in general and Quetta, in particular, need our attention. Every day in the morning when I look at the sleeping beauty of Quetta I feel that the mother of Quetta (sleeping beauty) has become sick and looking toward her siblings for help and cure.

Our water level reduced, our population increased, our poor justice system, and our greed for material gain will never make it a little London but will change its fate like the city full of garbage supported/tixed by bricks and cement



which after few more years will look like a dumping place of garbage.

We must listen and learn from our heroes like Rehman Baba, Atta shah, Asher Jalili and take their vision as guiding torch.

Quetta does not need more engineers but needs Thinkers, guides who should work to replace the current citizenry

struggling for self-interest with the soft power and values of Quetta, which can bring back its true beauty and culture.

Climate change poses a serious threat to the developing world.

Environment, climate change, global warming, deforestation and desertification, and many such terms were alien to humanity and especially to develop-

ing world like Pakistan. We were used to singing and telling stories to our siblings (younger generation) about the kindness of nature.

Now we from Adams to twenty-first-century experienced, slavery, the industrial revolution, conflict of ideologies, various version of world orders driving to save and benefit humanity. But all our efforts to take

humanity to its peak are bring ended up as a disaster. The temperature of the motherland is increasing. The habitat of Balochistan and our piece of Heaven (once called as "miss it's jangly Gulab, chakore, chambeli, bitakh, surkahi and places like hanna , thandi Sarak, and associated culture of art and poetry. Masses of

Balochistan facing a host of issues

First time after seventy-two years and since the establishment of Balochistan Province, its habitats are frequently faced by challenges like conservation.

In the context of the above-mentioned scenario, our beloved motherland is demanding the attention of all irrespective of our international commit-

ments.

It's a matter of our survival. We need a green economy, green industry, green employment, green politics, and above all green development.

This situation calls for a committed social, political and religious commitment to rebuild and reclaim of our title "Quetta has a better environment, rich culture, manageable population

# Rattled by Trump, US allies eye Japan's biggest arms opening since WW2

**NEWS DESK:** Japan's imminent easing of arms export rules has sparked strong interest from Warsaw to Manila, Reuters reporting, as President Donald Trump wavers on security commitments to allies and the wars in Iran and Ukraine strain US weapons supplies.

Prime Minister Sanae Takachi's ruling party approved the changes this week as she tries to invigorate the pacifist country's military industrial base. Her government will formally adopt the new rules as soon as this month, three Japanese government officials told Reuters.

Despite largely isolating itself from global arms markets since World War Two, Japan spends enough on its own military - \$60 billion this year - to sustain a sizeable defence industry capable of manufacturing advanced systems like submarines and fighter jets.

Among the potential new customers are the Polish military and the Philippine navy, which are undergoing modernisation amid regional security challenges, according to Reuters interviews with

Japanese officials and foreign diplomats in Tokyo.

Defence contractors Toshiba and Mitsubishi Electric are hiring staff and adding capacity to capitalise on demand, their executives said, providing previously unreported details.

One of the first deals Takachi's government will likely approve is exports of used frigates to the Philippines, which looked in maritime confrontation with Beijing in the South China Sea, according to two of the Japanese officials.

Reuters is the first to report the timeframe of the likely sale, which may be followed by missile defence systems, the officials said.

Warsaw and Tokyo can help plug gaps in each other's arsenals, cooperating in areas like anti-drone and electronic warfare systems, said Marusz Boguszewski, deputy chief of mission at Poland's embassy in Japan.

"There are some bottlenecks that we can overcome having Japan on board," he added, without providing details of specific deals.



Poland's WB Group, one of Europe's largest private defence contractors, last year signed a tentative drone deal with Japanese aircraft maker ShinMaywa 7224T.

Three other European diplomats said Japan's easing provided a chance to lessen their

heavy dependence on US weapons production, which is strained by conflicts.

Trump's unpredictability, such as his threats to leave the NATO security alliance and invade Greenland, has also heightened the push to diversify, according to the diplomats,

who requested anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

"Offers are coming from everywhere," said Masahiko Arai, senior vice president at Mitsubishi Electric's defence unit, which has been adding staff in London and Singapore to facilitate defence ex-

ports.

Takachi's office declined to answer specific questions for this story, instead referring Reuters to a February 20 speech where she said she was reviewing the controls to bolster Japan's defence production and

Tokyo's export overhaul has previously been encouraged by successive US administrations, including Trump's, eager for allies to contribute more to collective defence efforts.

White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly did not respond to

questions from Reuters about the changes to Japanese policy but said that the two nations were closer than ever under Trump and Takachi.

China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to questions about Japanese frigates potentially being sent to the Philippines. Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told reporters in April that Beijing was concerned about changes in Tokyo's arms export policy and that it should "act prudently in military and security areas."

The Philippines defence ministry declined to comment.

**Risky business?**

Japan's first steps to relax the rules began more than a decade ago when Takachi's mentor, the late premier Shinzo Abe, eased a near-blanket ban on exports to encourage joint arms development with allies that would help counter China's growing military might.

The push largely stalled, however, as many restrictions - including on lethal equipment - remained. Companies continued to shy away from overseas defence sales.

## Iran used Chinese spy satellite to target US bases, FT reports

**NEWS DESK:** Iran secretly acquired a Chinese spy satellite in late 2024 that enabled it to target United States military bases across the Middle East during the recent war, the Financial Times reported on Wednesday.

The TEE-01B satellite - built and launched by Chinese company Earth Eye Co - was obtained by the Aerospace Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps after being sent into orbit from China, the report said, citing leaked Iranian military documents.

Iranian commanders used the satellite to monitor major US military sites, the

FT said, citing time-stamped coordinate lists, satellite imagery and orbital analysis. The images were captured in March, before and after drone and missile strikes on those locations.

As part of the arrangement, the IRGC was granted access to commercial ground stations operated by Emosat, a Beijing-based satellite control and data services provider with a global network.

Reuters could not independently verify the report.

The White House, Central Intelligence Agency and Pentagon, as well as China's foreign and defence ministries and its embassy

in Washington, did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Earth Eye Co and Emosat also did not respond.

The FT said the White House declined to comment on Emosat's alleged links with the IRGC, but referred to remarks by US President Donald Trump, who warned at the weekend that China would face "big problems" if it supplied Iran with air defence systems.

Responding to the report, the Chinese embassy in Washington said: "We firmly oppose relevant parties spreading speculative and insinuating disinformation against China."

Read More: US vice president says Trump seeking 'grand bargain' with Iran

According to the FT, the satellite captured images of Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia on March 13, 14 and 15.

On March 14, Trump confirmed US aircraft at the base had been hit. The report added that the satellite also tracked the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan, as well as locations near the US Fifth Fleet naval base in Manama, Bahrain, and Erbil airport in Iraq around the time of IRGC-claimed attacks.

## Israeli strikes kill 9 in southern Lebanon, state media says



**NEWS DESK:** Nine people were killed, and three others were injured, on Wednesday in Israeli airstrikes targeting multiple areas in southern Lebanon, according to Lebanon's National News Agency.

Civil Defence teams and the Islamic Risala Scout Association recovered four bodies and rescued three wounded from the rubble after an airstrike hit the Al-Khodra complex in the Qadmos area, the agency said.

In the town of Ansariyeh, five people were killed in a dawn strike, the agency reported.

Another Israeli attack struck a vehicle

in the Saadiyat area in Mount Lebanon, it added.

The US, Israel and Lebanon agreed to begin direct negotiations after a trilateral meeting at the State Department in Washington, DC, on Tuesday, according to a statement released following the session.

Lebanese ambassador to the US, Nada Hamadeh, and Israeli ambassador Yechiel Leiter, represented their countries during the meeting at the State Department.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who also doubles as US President Donald Trump's national security adviser, US Ambassador to Lebanon

Michel Issa, Counselor Michael Needham and US envoy to the UN Mike Waltz represented the Trump administration.

The talks, the first direct diplomatic engagement between the two countries in more than 30 years, came as Israel continues an air and ground offensive in southern Lebanon, killing more than 2,000 people and displacing a million others.

Israel began striking Hezbollah after the group retaliated to US-Israeli attacks on Iran in early March.

Pakistan condemned Israeli attacks in Lebanon during a meeting of the Organisation of Is-

lamic Cooperation (OIC) at the United Nations, calling for an immediate ceasefire and uninterrupted humanitarian access to the affected areas.

Addressing the ambassadorial-level session held at the UN Headquarters, Deputy Permanent Representative Usman Jadoon warned that the humanitarian situation in Lebanon was rapidly deteriorating.

He stated that the ongoing Israeli bombardment, particularly in southern Lebanon and densely populated areas, was severely harming civilians and leading to widespread destruction of critical infrastructure.



## Australia books Indian national for alleged sexual assault of woman seated next to him on flight

**NEWS DESK:** An Indian national was charged with the alleged sexual assault of a woman on a Perth-bound flight, Australian media reported on Wednesday.

The 32-year-old man, according to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Western Australia Police, committed "non-consensual sexual acts" on a woman seated next to him on the flight on Monday, which was headed from Singapore to Perth, News.com.au reported.

According to the Australian Federal Police, the woman was moved to another seat after she complained to staff.

At the same time, the suspect was monitored throughout the flight, the report said, adding that the staff also alerted the police.

The suspect was escorted off the plane upon landing at the Perth Airport. The 32-year-old man was



charged with "one count of sexual intercourse without consent and three counts of an act of indecency without consent", News.com.au reported.

The suspect has been remanded in custody ahead of a court appearance on Friday, the report said, adding that the incident was being investigated jointly with the AFP and Western Australia Police. As per the report, AFP Acting Superintendent Peter Brindal said, "The federal police have zero tolerance for criminal behaviour on planes or within Australian airports."

"Every passenger has the right to feel safe when travelling, especially when confined in an aircraft close to other passengers," Brindal was quoted as saying.

"Anyone subjected to unwanted contact is encouraged to alert the authorities, be it airline staff, the AFP or airport security, as soon as it is safely possible to do so. No act of indecency on an aircraft or at an airport is appropriate, and any travellers who break the law will be dealt with swiftly," the police officer asserted.

In October 2025, an Indian national was arrested and charged with an assault on a flight travelling from Chicago to Germany, for grabbing two teenagers with a metal fork.

## North Korea boosting ability to make nuclear arms: UN watchdog

**NEWS DESK:** North Korea is showing a "very serious increase" in its ability to produce atomic weapons, the head of the UN nuclear watchdog said on Wednesday on a visit to Seoul.

The diplomatically isolated north is believed to operate multiple facilities for enriching uranium, a key step in making nuclear warheads, South Korea's spy agency has said.

They include one at the Yongbyon nuclear site, which Pyongyang purportedly decommissioned after talks but later reactivated in 2021.

"In our periodic assessments, we have been able to confirm that there's a rapid increase in the operations" of the Yongbyon reactor. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi told reporters in Seoul.

The agency also observed a rise in opera-

tions at Yongbyon's reprocessing unit and light-water reactor, as well as the activation of other facilities, Grossi said.

"All that points to a very serious increase in the capabilities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the area of nuclear weapons production, which is estimated at a few dozen warheads," he said, using North Korea's official name.

North Korea, which conducted its first nuclear test in 2006, is under a raft of UN sanctions for its banned weapons programmes.

It has declared that it will never surrender its nuclear weapons, and cut off access to IAEA inspectors in 2009. The agency has noted the construction of a "new facility similar to the enrichment facility in Yongbyon", Grossi said it was "not easy to

calculate" any production increases without visiting the site.

However, "we consider, looking at external features of the facility, that there will be significant increase in the enrichment capacity of the DPRK", he said.

Asked whether Russia was assisting North Korea's nuclear development, Grossi said the IAEA had not seen "anything in particular in that regard".



## CTD arrests 16 terrorists during intelligence-based operations across Punjab

LAHORE (INP): The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) has arrested 16 terrorists, including a suicide bomber, during a series of intelligence-based operations across Punjab.

According to a CTD spokesperson, a total of 113 intelligence-based operations (IBOs) were conducted in multiple cities, including Khushab, Mianwali, Rawalpindi, Jhang, Bhakkar, Lahore,

Faisalabad, Chakwal, Toba Tek Singh, Hafizabad, and Gujranwala. During an operation in Jhang, a suicide bomber identified as Ghazi Marjan, linked to Fina al Khawari, was

arrested along with a suicide jacket and explosive materials. In a separate operation in Sardogda, another suspect, Maley Khan, allegedly involved in attacks on sensitive installations,

was also taken into custody. CTD officials stated that the arrested suspect, Ghazi Marjan, was targeted for police check posts, but timely action by authorities successfully foiled their plans.

Authorities recovered explosive materials, suicide vests, 14 detonators, 25 feet of safety wire, hand grenades, extremist literature, and cash from the suspects. The arrested individuals have been identified as Ghazi Marjan, Moeen Khan, Aseel Din, Nasir Shah, Naseeb Khan, Abwar, Yousef Maley Khan, Osama, and others.

In addition, CTD carried out 2,830 combat operations during the week, questioning 95,755 individuals and detaining 190 suspects. Officials reaffirmed that operations against terrorism will continue across Punjab without interruption.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairing a review meeting regarding Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

### Mehran University students depart for China for Final-Year studies

KARACHI (INP): A seven-member group of students from Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET), Jamshoro, departed for China to complete their final year of studies at the Yunnan Vocational Institute of Engineering Technology.

The students are enrolled in a dual Degree-plus-Diploma program in Mining Engineering under TANG International Education, Gwadar Pro reported.

As part of the initiative, they will undertake their final year in China, where they will receive advanced technical training along with international academic exposure.

According to Tang Pakistan Technical Education, the program represents a significant step in strengthening educational collaboration between Pakistan and China, particularly in developing skilled

professionals for the mining and resources sector. The initiative combines academic coursework with industry-oriented vocational training aimed at improving employment prospects for Pakistani students.

At Karachi airport, the departing students were seen holding banners highlighting the details of the program and their journey.

One banner read that the students were leaving for China for "a successful future in China, where they will receive advanced technical training along with international academic exposure."

Also mentioned that the project was initiated by Tang Education Group Pakistan and sponsored by Yunnan Energy Group, China, offering fully sponsored, job-oriented training.

### Development work on Green Enclave-1 will commence soon: Minister

ISLAMABAD (INP): A delegation of allottees of the Green Enclave-1 housing project of the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA), led by Chaudhry Amjad Ali, met Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada on Tuesday to apprise him of the prolonged delay in the project's development.

During the meeting, the delegation highlighted what they described as unnecessary delays and presented a detailed account of issues surrounding the project, which has remained pending for over 17 years.

The allottees pointed out that despite making full payments, they are still awaiting possession of their plots. The minister assured the delegation that development work on Green Enclave-1

would commence soon and expressed regret over the delay.

He also thanked the Secretary Housing, Capt. (Rtd.) Muhammad Mahmood, who is personally overseeing the project and is keen to initiate development activities at the earliest.

Chaudhry Amjad Ali, representing the allottees, reiterated concerns regarding administrative issues within FGEHA and urged the minister to ensure the completion of the long-delayed scheme.

Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada further stated that he would personally visit the project site in the coming days to review progress and assess the situation. The allottees urged the authorities to ensure transparent planning and timely execution so that families waiting for more than 17 years can finally begin construction of their homes.

## Ceasefire holds despite Strait of Hormuz blockade: Masood Khan

ISLAMABAD Former ambassador to the United States, China and the United Nations, and former president of Jammu and Kashmir, Masood Khan said on Tuesday that Pakistan's diplomatic efforts are helping sustain fragile peace, as a temporary US-Iran ceasefire holds despite rising tensions after a naval blockade was announced in the Strait of Hormuz.

The development marks a critical juncture in ongoing efforts to avert a wider regional conflict and restore stability, he said while talking with media.

He underscored that while the blockade introduces serious risks, the continuation of the ceasefire signals that diplomatic channels remain open. He noted that negotiations, though

temporarily paused, have not collapsed and may resume, potentially again in Islamabad, reflecting confidence in Pakistan's role as a credible mediator.

Khan highlighted that recent talks were conducted in a constructive atmosphere, with both sides demonstrating flexibility on key issues, particularly regarding nuclear arrangements.

However, critical sticking points persist, including access to enriched uranium stockpiles and broader regional concerns linked to maritime security and Lebanon. Despite these

hurdles, both Washington and Tehran issued positive statements, indicating proximity to a potential understanding. The blockade of the

Strait of Hormuz has introduced new geopolitical complexities. As one of the world's most vital transit routes, any disruption carries global economic implications.

Masood Khan warned that enforcement measures, including interception or diversion of vessels, could escalate tensions, particularly with China, which relies heavily on Iranian oil supplies.

The risk of direct confrontation between major powers, he cautioned, must be avoided. Pakistan, meanwhile, continues intensive diplomatic outreach, engaging regional stakeholders including Saudi Arabia,

Turkey and Egypt, alongside global actors, to sustain dialogue and prevent miscalculation. Officials emphasize that even amid heightened military posturing, communication channels remain active.

Khan stressed that any exchange of fire could immediately collapse the ceasefire, underscoring the delicacy of the current moment. He also pointed to legal complexities surrounding maritime passage under international law, noting that unilateral restrictions could face global resistance.

Describing the situation as a "war of calculations," he observed that both sides believe they are negotiating from positions of strength. Yet, he emphasized that prolonged conflict risks triggering a broader crisis reminiscent of historic global confrontations.



ISLAMABAD: Governor Sindh Nihal Hashmi met with Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi to discuss ongoing railway development projects in Sindh. Pakistan's recent diplomatic role was also appreciated during the meeting.

## Govt decides to enforce around 2.15 hours of daily electricity loadshedding

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has decided to enforce around 2.15 hours of daily electricity loadshedding across Pakistan as part of a "peak relief strategy" aimed at preventing a potential increase of up to Rs6 per unit in power tariffs.

In an official statement, the Power Division said that despite challenging global conditions, electricity generation in the country remains stable and sufficient to meet overall demand.

It said, however, the main challenge arises during peak hours—from 5pm to 1am—when electricity demand surges significantly.

The situation is further exacerbated by reduced generation

from hydropower plants during the summer season.

The statement noted that meeting this increased demand through expensive fuel sources, such as furnace oil, could lead to a substantial rise in electricity prices.

To address this, the government has decided to suspend power supply for approximately 2.15 hours daily during peak hours.

The measure aims to minimize reliance on costly fuel and contain any potential increase in electricity tariffs.

The Power Division said the move is being closely monitored under the direct supervision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who has directed authorities to

ensure that electricity prices do not rise excessively.

Officials added that while efforts are being made to limit the use of furnace oil, consumers may still face an increase of around Rs1.5 per unit. Without these measures, the hike could have reached Rs5 to Rs6 per unit.

Distribution companies (DISCOs) have been instructed to share loadshedding schedules with consumers in advance and ensure adherence to the announced times.

The government emphasized that the measure is part of a "peak relief strategy" rather than routine loadshedding, aimed specifically at reducing the financial burden on consumers. Authorities also highlighted that better planning, system reforms, and prioritization of low-cost energy sources have helped reduce electricity prices by an average of 71 paise per unit between July and February, despite rising global fuel costs providing a total relief of Rs46 billion.

## Gilani felicitates Hindu, Sikh communities in Pakistan, around world on Baisakhi.

ISLAMABAD (INP): Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Tuesday extended his heartfelt felicitations to the Hindu and Sikh communities in Pakistan and around the world on the joyous occasion of Baisakhi. In his message, the Chairman of the Senate said that

Baisakhi is a vibrant celebration symbolising happiness, hope, and brotherhood. He emphasised that such occasions inspire the values of mutual respect, tolerance, and harmony among diverse communities. He further remarked that Pakistan is a pluralistic and multicultural society where individuals belonging to all the free-

doms are guaranteed the right to practice their faiths in accordance with their beliefs. He highlighted that the long-term health and prosperity of the country.

He highlighted that the Parliament of Pakistan has enacted effective legislation aimed at safeguarding the rights of minorities, promoting religious freedom, protecting places of worship, and eliminating all forms of discrimination against minority communities. The Chairman re-emphasised that the Parliament and state institutions remain fully committed to ensuring the protection, dignity, and equal rights of minorities across the country. He reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to further strengthen interfaith harmony and foster unity and cohesion among all citizens.

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani also prayed that the blessings of peace, stability, and prosperity to the country.

## Sindh reports sharp rise in HIV cases during 2020

KARACHI (INP): Sindh is reporting a sharp rise in HIV cases during 2020. As per details, the total number of reported cases of HIV in Sindh has reached 894. Officials stated that 329 children were diagnosed with HIV during the current year alone, including 188 boys and 141 girls. Health experts linked a significant number of infections to unsafe medical practices, calling for stricter enforcement of preventive measures and improved healthcare standards across the province.

They also cautioned that the long-term impact of the 2019 Kato Dero HIV outbreak continues to be felt, with cases still emerging in affected areas. In addition, a growing number of infections among adults and stressed the urgent need for strengthened

prevention strategies, wider awareness campaigns, and routine screening. Authorities urged that early diagnosis and timely treatment remain key to controlling the spread of the virus, while the Health Department confirmed that screening and public awareness efforts are ongoing across Sindh.

A staggering 84,421 HIV/AIDS patients were registered across the country, the National Assembly was informed during a question hour session on March 30.

Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal, presented the written details regarding HIV/AIDS patients during the NA session. In his formal written reply, the Minister stated that 84,421 individuals living with the disease have been registered under the National AIDS Control Program.



WASHINGTON D.C.: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, addressed the Roshan Digital Account (RDA) and Remittance Roadshow - Pakistan Diaspora Leaders' Evening, held at the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, D.C., with the support of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and the Pakistan Banks' Association (PBA).

## Pakistan's role in bringing US, Iran to negotiating table major diplomatic achievement: Sherry Rehman

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Sherry Rehman has said that Pakistan's role in facilitating a fragile ceasefire and bringing the concerned parties to the negotiating table is a major diplomatic achievement.

In an interview with an Arab channel, she stated that the talks represent an important step toward peace in the region, where dialogue has been identified as the only viable path forward.

She added that the ceasefire provided

both sides with time to reassess their positions and prepare strategies for future negotiations, emphasizing that peace processes are time-consuming and cannot deliver lasting solutions in a single session.

Sherry Rehman said that Pakistan's leadership, including Field Marshal Asim Munir, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, and President Asif Ali Zardari, made extensive behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts.

She noted that coordination between

state institutions and political leadership played a key role in enabling the talks and demonstrating national unity. The senator further said that the parties attempted to listen and understand each other, which is a fundamental step in any successful negotiation process. She cautioned that expectations of an immediate peace are unrealistic due to past tensions and media narratives.

She highlighted that Pakistan strengthened its global diplomatic credibility by providing a neutral

platform for dialogue, especially at a time when direct trust between the parties was lacking, making Islamabad's role particularly significant.

Despite initial delays and some violations, she described the process as a positive start, stressing the need for continued dialogue and flexible approaches to sustain peace efforts. Sherry Rehman also said that in the context of global challenges such as climate change, long-term engagement and dialogue are essential instead of confrontation.

Police Constable Martyred in Terror Attack on Polio Team in Dera Murad Jamali

Ayub Bhutto: DERA MURAD JAMALI (BALUCHISTAN): A police constable was shot dead in a brazen terror attack while guarding a female polio vaccination team in the T&T Colony area of Dera Murad Jamali.

According to police, the incident occurred when a polio team entered a house to administer polio drops to children.

Constable Farman Bashir Behran, who was providing security outside, came under fire from armed motorcyclists. He was killed on the spot.

The attackers fled immediately after the shooting. Police reached the scene and shifted the body to Civil Hospital Dera Murad Jamali, and launched a search operation by sealing off the area.

Deputy Commissioner Nasirabad Zulfikar Ali Karar and SSP Nasirabad Asad Nisar visited the hospital shortly after the incident.



This tragic incident once again highlights the dangers faced by health workers and security personnel involved in Pakistan's national polio eradication campaign.

District Education Review Meeting Held in Kech to Address School Infrastructure and Enrollment Challenges

TURBAT: A key meeting of the District Education Group was held in Kech under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Yasir Iqbal Dashti to review the overall education system and address pressing challenges in the district.

The meeting was attended by District Education Officer Muhammad Amjad Shehzad, Deputy DEO Dasht Sher Jan Dashti, Deputy DEO Turbat Naeem Jan, Deputy DEO Female Tump Shari Baloch, along with Madam Mah Parf, Jannat Aziz, Mumtaz Baloch, deputy DEOs from various tahsils, RISM Coordinator Haleem Baloch, Flight representative Nazeer Gajizai, UNICEF representative Faiz ur Rehman, and other circle heads.

Officials conducted a detailed review of the district's education system. It was revealed that out of 718 schools in Kech, 85 shelter-less schools are currently operational, while a total of 116 schools lack proper buildings.

Bank accounts for 44 shelter-less schools have been opened, and Parent-Teacher School Management Committees (PTSMC) have been established in 58 schools. Funds have been disbursed to 11 schools, while an additional 14 have been approved.

The meeting decided to actively involve local communities in making shelter-less schools functional and ensuring student enrollment. Concerns were raised over the lack of progress in 41 incomplete schools under the BSDP program.

In some areas of Dasht, schools showed no development despite allocated funds, prompting the Deputy Commissioner to express strong displeasure and order immediate commencement of work. Authorities were also directed to ensure timely completion of all ongoing development projects.

Regarding textbooks, officials reported that 650,000 books have been received, while the requirement stands at 700,000. Three cluster schools that have not yet collected textbooks were issued show-cause notices.

On enrollment efforts, it was highlighted that Kech district ranks at the top in Balochistan, with records being maintained through a dedicated app. The Deputy Commissioner emphasized strict measures to prevent fake enrollments, including mandatory cross-checking and coordination with local elders and councilors.

The meeting also discussed UNICEF education projects Pakistan strength and performance. It was noted that Kech has 4,600 teachers and 2,000 non-teaching staff. Regular monitoring and attendance checks are conducted daily, and officials were instructed to increase school visits to address absenteeism effectively.

At the conclusion of the meeting, UNICEF representative was directed to submit a comprehensive report on all ongoing projects with complete records at the earliest. Authorities also stressed the importance of strategic planning for the upcoming month.

Kech education news, Turbat district meeting, shelter-less schools Pakistan, education system Balochistan, school infrastructure issues, student enrollment campaign, UNICEF education projects Pakistan.

Quetta Administration Orders Daily Crackdown on Encroachments and Price Violations

QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Meharullah Badmi chaired a meeting of administrative officers in Quetta to review key governance matters and assign responsibilities for improving public service delivery.



During the meeting, it was decided that strict daily monitoring will be ensured for price control, anti-encroachment operations, health units, and school monitoring across the district.

Addressing the duties at examination session, the Deputy Commissioner directed officials to intensify operations against encroachments on major roads including Liaquat Bazaar, Kandahari Bazaar, Jinnah Road, Joint Road, and Airport Road.

Table with 3 columns: District, Tehsil, and various identification numbers. Includes a header 'اطلاع عام بابت پبلک شدہ قومی شناختی کارڈ'.

Complaint Redressal Committee Meeting Held in Qila Saifullah to Ensure Transparency in Recruitment Process

QILASAIFULLAH: An important and detailed meeting of the Complaint Redressal Committee (CRC) was held in Qila Saifullah under the chairmanship of Zhoob Division Commissioner Asif Ali Farakh.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Qila Saifullah Sagar Kumar, District Education Officer Syed Hussain Shah Tirmizi, along with other concerned officials.

The primary objective of the session was to review complaints and objections submitted by various candidates regarding recruitment and related matters.

During the meeting, multiple candidates presented their applications and openly expressed their concerns and reservations.

Commissioner Asif Ali Farakh ensured that all participants were given a fair opportunity to present their issues without hesitation.

He carefully listened to each complaint and also reviewed the relevant records in detail. Special emphasis was placed on maintaining transparency and merit throughout the recruitment process.

The Commissioner reiterated that no injustice against any candidate would be tolerated and assured that all decisions would be made with complete transparency.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a strong commitment was expressed to continue such initiatives to ensure timely resolution of public complaints and to strengthen trust in the administrative system.

Qila Saifullah news, CRC meeting Pakistan, Zhoob Division Commissioner, complaint redressal committee, recruitment transparency, government jobs Pakistan, public complaints resolution.

Quetta Commissioner Reviews Progress of N-25 Highway Project, Orders Removal of Hurdles

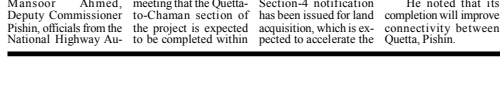
QUETTA: A high-level meeting was held under the chairmanship of Commissioner Shahzeb Khan Kakar in Quetta to review progress on the N-25 National Highway project and address obstacles affecting its implementation.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Meharullah Badmi, Director Development Zahoor Ahmed, Deputy Commissioner Chaman Mansoor Ahmed, Deputy Commissioner of Pishin, officials from the National Highway Authority, and other engineers.

During the session, officials reviewed ongoing construction work on the highway. Representatives from NHA briefed the meeting that the Quetta-Chaman section of the project is expected to be completed within two years, with required funds already released.

The briefing also highlighted land settlement issues in Pishin, which need urgent resolution to avoid delays. Meanwhile, in Quetta, a Section-4 notification has been issued for land acquisition, which is expected to accelerate the construction process.

Addressing the meeting, Commissioner Shahzeb Khan Kakar described the N-25 Highway as a project of significant importance for the province. He noted that its completion will improve connectivity between Quetta, Pishin,



## Cotton harvest target set at 9.6m bales

**NEWS DESK:** The government has set cotton production target of 9.64 million bales from plantations over an area of 2.16 million hectares during the upcoming Kharif sowing season 2025-26.

Pakistan is currently facing a cotton crisis as the government is largely focusing on industries and has ignored farmers.

The country produced only 5.607 million bales in 2025-26, which was significantly lower than 2014-15, when cotton output hit the highest at 15 million bales.

A meeting of the Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA), mandated to oversee strategic measures to ensure food security, was held on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain.

The committee deliberated on production targets for essential Kharif crops and decided to fix the target at 9.17 million tons for rice over an area of 3.39 million hectares and 9.77 million tons for maize over 1.5 million hectares. It set the sugarcane harvest target at 80.3 million tons from an area of 1.14



million hectares while cotton output was fixed at 9.64 million bales over 2.16 million hectares. Targets for other crops such as moong, mash and chillies were also identified.

Reviewing the performance of Rabi season

crops in 2025-26, the FCA was informed that wheat production was estimated at 29.31 million tonnes from cultivation over an area of 9.38 million hectares.

Onion production was estimated at 2.70 million tonnes from an

area of 163,000 hectares, reflecting a slight decrease in production and area compared to the previous year.

Potato production was calculated at 555,000 tons from an area of 42,000 hectares, showing a drop of 11.9%

due to a 12.1% decrease in plantation area over last year.

Potato harvest was estimated at 12.17 million tons from an area of 46,000 hectares, higher by 23.2% over last year. Gram output was assessed at 262,000 tons

from an area of 782,000 hectares, up 52.4% compared to the previous year.

Meanwhile, a senior official told Dawn that the government would provide a subsidy of Rs1,500 per acre to farmers owning less than 12 acres of land.

The amount, he said, will be transferred directly into farmers' bank accounts or through mobile wallets such as JazzCash and Easypaisa.

On April 3, the federal government announced targeted relief

would remain at 67.45 million acre feet (MAF) during the season.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department informed meeting participants that above-average precipitation during March till the first 10 days of April improved the situation to some extent in most parts of the country.

It was noted that rains in April and May, along with rising temperatures in northern areas, may improve water availability in major reservoirs.

The committee emphasised the need for judicious use of available water, especially in lower regions of the country.

Addressing the meeting, the federal minister stated that achieving food security requires a clear focus on improving agricultural productivity, particularly by increasing per-acre yields.

While noting that food availability was generally adequate, he observed that affordability remained a key challenge, especially for low-income groups.

He highlighted that the interim National Wheat Policy 2025-26,

approved by the cabinet on November 19, 2025, was being implemented across the country to support farmers and encourage private-sector investment in the wheat value chain.

He added that the food ministry, in collaboration with provincial governments and the Green Pakistan Initiative, had developed an agricultural roadmap to focus on mechanisation, seed system reforms, cotton crop revival, value addition, greater access to finance and export growth.

Also, the establishment of the National Agri-Trade and Food Safety Authority will play a crucial role in harmonising food safety standards.

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## Saudi Arabia pledges \$3bn fresh deposit, extends \$5bn facility through 2028

**NEWS DESK:** Saudi Arabia has pledged an additional \$3 billion in deposits for Pakistan and has extended its existing \$5bn facility for a further three years, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb announced in Washington.

Pakistan will reportedly return a \$3.5bn loan under the UAE this month, putting pressure on its reserves and risking breaches of its International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme targets.

He added that the

existing \$5bn Saudi deposit would no longer be subject to the previous annual rollover arrangement and would instead be extended for a longer term.

The finance minister made the announcement while speaking to media representatives in Washington, DC, on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings 2026, where he shared key details on Saudi financial support for Pakistan and the government's external financing strategy.

According to the fi-

nance czar, the support from the kingdom comes at a "critical time" for Pakistan's external financing needs and would help "reinforce foreign exchange reserves and strengthen the country's external account."

Aurangzeb reiterated the government's commitment to maintaining reserves in line with its market obligations and targets under the IMF-supported programme, including the goal of building reserves to around \$18bn — equivalent to roughly

3.3 months of import cover — by the end of the fiscal year.

The finance minister noted that Pakistan had successfully repaid \$1.4bn in debts last week, including a Eurobond, terming it a "non-event", and reaffirmed the government's commitment to meeting all upcoming external obligations and maturities on time.

He said the country's external financing plan was clearly laid out and was being implemented in a responsible and disciplined manner.

Aurangzeb recalled his "detailed meeting" with his Saudi counterpart Mohammed bin Abdullah al Jadaan last week in Islamabad, adding that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) governor and Pakistan's envoy to Washington were also in attendance.

He noted that the government had "deliberately refrained from commenting publicly in the absence of formal communication, despite media reports and speculation, as such matters required clarity and joint understanding before being shared."



## Govt apologises for excessive loadshedding, blames it on reduced hydropower availability

**NEWS DESK:** The government on Wednesday apologised to power consumers for higher than promised "load management" arising out of lower water availability for power generation.

In a statement, the Power Division said it was "apologising for the additional load management necessitated by reduced hydropower availability".

A spokesman for the Power Division also urged consumers to conserve electricity, particularly during night-time hours, and to adopt energy-saving practices.

The statement followed complaints from various parts of the country about excessive loadshedding on Tuesday, instead of only 2.25 hours promised a day earlier in an effort to avoid an increase in electricity prices.

The power ministry reported a temporary increase in load management and attributed it to a sharp decline in hydropower generation during peak hours last night, which it said strained the electricity supply and widened the demand-supply gap.

"Hydropower pro-



duction dropped by 1,991 megawatts during the night, contributing to a total shortfall of around 4,500MW at peak demand," the spokesman said, adding that the overall electricity demand during peak hours was recorded at 18,000MW.

The spokesman said that the reduction in hydropower generation was due to decreased water releases from the country's dams.

Water discharge to provinces is currently being carried out by Indus River System Authority (Irsa) based on demand, which is considered lower compared to last year.

Reduced water requirements, owing to recent rainfall and the harvesting season, have led to lower outflows from reservoirs.

As a result, electricity distribution companies implemented slightly higher load management than previously scheduled.

However, the Power Division clarified that load management was currently limited to nighttime hours, and there was no shortfall during the day.

However, many distribution companies, particularly Islamabad Electric Supply Company (Irsa), have officially announced three hours of loadshedding in the morning.

The closure of Qatar's liquefied natural gas plants, currently under force majeure due to the Middle East war,

spokesperson expressed optimism that the situation would improve in the coming days as the water released from dams was expected to increase, boosting hydropower generation.

Improved availability of regasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG) is also expected to ease the power supply situation.

The spokesman said, without elaborating on the sources of RLNG in view of tight supplies in the spot market at unaffordable rates and

the closure of Qatar's liquefied natural gas plants, currently under force majeure due to the Middle East war,

## Farmers owning under 12 acres eligible for new federal subsidy scheme

**NEWS DESK:** The federal government on Wednesday announced a special subsidy programme for farmers to mitigate the adverse impact of the global energy crisis.

According to an official announcement, farmers owning less than 12 acres of land will be eligible for the subsidy.

Eligible farmers can register for three easy subsidy packages through the Pakistan Aasaan Khidmat application. Farmers can enrol in the programme by uploading their per-

sonal and other relevant information, along with documentary evidence, on the application.

Meanwhile, a senior official told Dawn that the government would provide a subsidy of Rs1,500 per acre to farmers owning less than 12 acres of land.

The amount, he said, will be transferred directly into farmers' bank accounts or through mobile wallets such as JazzCash and Easypaisa.

On April 3, the federal government announced targeted relief

measures for motorcyclists, small farmers and transporters.

Punjab reported that more than 2 million farmers now hold Kissan Cards, and that total wheat sowing has exceeded 16 million acres.

It has also been stated that farmers and goods transporters have been provided digital bank accounts or through mobile wallets such as JazzCash and Easypaisa.

Earlier this week, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah announced a Rs5 billion

relief package for 366,000 small farmers to help offset rising diesel costs during the wheat harvesting season.

"Our small growers are the backbone of the rural economy. We are committed to supporting them so they can continue their work without additional financial stress," he said. He added, "Whether it is transporters, farmers, or daily commuters, our focus is to ensure that relief reaches those who need it most, without compromising fiscal discipline."



## IMF sees Middle East conflict fuelling global inflation

**NEWS DESK:** The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Tuesday forecast Pakistan's current account deficit to widen alongside a 3.6 per cent growth rate for the current year, as the US-Israeli misadventure in the Middle East darkens global growth prospects and fuels higher inflation.

In its unusually uncertain global economic outlook released during the ongoing spring meetings of the World Bank and IMF, the World Economic Outlook (WEO)—the IMF's flagship publication—estimated the current account deficit to rise to 0.4pc of GDP during the current fiscal year and further expand to 0.9pc, compared to a current account surplus of 0.5pc of GDP.

The IMF projected Pakistan's inflation rate, measured by the Consumer Price Index, at 7.2pc for the current year, rising to 8.4pc in 2027, against 4.5pc in FY25.

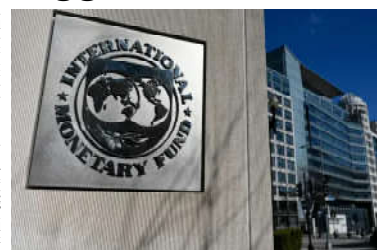
It estimated economic growth at 3.6pc for the current year and slightly lower at 3.5pc for FY27.

On the other hand, the IMF projected the unemployment rate in Pakistan to decline from 7.1pc in 2025 to 6.9pc in FY26 and 6.5pc in FY27.

The IMF said the Middle East conflict had halted the economic growth momentum that had revived after the US trade policy shock and had darkened the global economic outlook.

"Once again, the global economy is threatened with being thrown off course — this time by the outbreak of war in the Middle East at the end of February 2026.

Over the past year,



headwinds from higher trade barriers and elevated uncertainty have been offset by tailwinds from technology-related investment, accommodative financial conditions, including a weaker US dollar, and fiscal and monetary policy support," it said.

The IMF added that the Middle East conflict presented a significant counterforce to these tailwinds through its impact on commodity markets, inflation expectations, and financial conditions.

Given the difficulty of underpinning a con-

sistent set of assumptions for projections in real time, the WEO presented a "reference forecast" — in lieu of the traditional baseline — based on the assumption that the war will have limited duration, intensity, and scope, with disruptions fading by mid-2026, consistent with commodity futures prices as of March 10. It also included alternative scenarios in which the conflict lasts longer or expands, with the likelihood of such scenarios increasing as hostilities intensify.

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sistent set of assumptions for projections in real time, the WEO presented a "reference forecast" — in lieu of the traditional baseline — based on the assumption that the war will have limited duration, intensity, and scope, with disruptions fading by mid-2026, consistent with commodity futures prices as of March 10. It also included alternative scenarios in which the conflict lasts longer or expands, with the likelihood of such scenarios increasing as hostilities intensify.

# Sufiyan Muqem scripts redemption arc amid Zalmi dominance

**NEWS DESK:** When Sufiyan Muqem marks his run-up at the bowling crease, the fall of opposition wickets appears almost inevitable. Such has been the pattern of the left-arm wrist spinner he established this HBL Pakistan Super League season for Peshawar Zalmi.

Largely introduced into the attack by captain Babar Azam during the crucial middle overs, Sufiyan has made it a habit of striking regularly.

In doing so, the 23-year-old has collected 13 wickets in five PSL outings so far — averaging just under 10 and conceding a miserly 6.45 per over — to sit atop the bowling charts.

Sufiyan's latest masterclass came on Monday night at the National Bank Stadium, where his spell of 3-30 proved decisive in Peshawar Zalmi's 24-run victory over Multan Sultans.

Chasing 197, the Sultans looked comfortable at stages, but Sufiyan's variations and control turned the tide.

He removed key players including Joshi Philippe and Ashton Turner, applying the brakes as the asking rate



soared. The southpaw's resurgence in the PSL has been nothing short of a redemption arc after he was dropped from the Pakistan side despite a

promising start to his international career two years ago — four ODIs yielding eight wickets at 22.75 and 19 T20s producing 27 scalps at 14.74.

However, selectors moved on, leaving the young spinner to reassess and rebuild. That setback might have dented confidence. Instead,

it triggered a professional response. Back with Zalmi, Sufiyan has displayed the composure and hunger that first caught the selectors' attention.

"Whenever I give him the ball as a captain, I have confidence that he'll pick up a wicket for me somewhere," Babar said after the Multan match.

"When he goes for the kill, he's not a bowler who gets hit easily. In my opinion, he's a big asset for Pakistan, and going forward, he'll serve Pakistan a lot with the way he's bowling."

Babar added that Sufiyan still needed improvement but was progressing steadily.

"He talks to the coaches. After every match, he asks, 'Where can I do better?'" the Pakistan stalwart noted.

That attitude — humble, inquisitive and relentless — has been evident in Sufiyan's ability to deliver under pressure.

mixing flight, dip and sharp turn on unresponsive surfaces.

Zalmi's fielding coach Azhar Ali echoed the skipper's views, highlighting the rarity of left-arm wrist spin and the control Sufiyan has shown.

"Left-arm wrist spin is quite rare and it's hard to bowl accurately.

The way he has bowled with control and temperament is impressive because in T20 cricket the best batters come after you and you have to be brave, and he has been brave," Azhar said.

Sufiyan's journey mirrors many Pakistani cricketers — from tangleball roots in AJK to structured cricket in Rawalpindi, followed by domestic performances that earned him a national call-up.

Early success in T20s promised much, yet the competitive nature of selection meant even brief lapses could cost a place.

For Zalmi, his role goes beyond numbers. In an attack featuring the pace of Nadeem Khan and Shorful Islam, Sufiyan offers control and variety.

Peshawar remain unbeaten so far in the PSL, carrying momentum into the business end of the tournament.

At 23, Muqem's story is still unfolding. The national door that closed may yet reopen if he sustains his form.

For now, his focus remains clear: executing plans, learning constantly and answering critics one spell at a time.

As Babar observed, persistence brings rewards.

In Sufiyan's case, quiet determination is rapidly translating into match-winning performances on the biggest domestic stage.

## ILT20 Season 5 to kick off on Nov 22

**NEWS DESK:** Fifth edition of the second-most watched T20 league in the world scheduled to commence on Sunday, 22 November. Final to be played at the Dubai International Stadium on Sunday, 20 December 2026.

"We are pleased to confirm the DP World International League T20 Season 5 window. The biggest cricketing spectacle in the Gulf region will be played from 22 November to 20 December 2026. We are delighted with Season 4's success. The broadcast numbers, spectators' interest and participation in the biggest T20 stars made the tournament a massive success as the quality of the league grew further," says CEO DP World ILT20 David White. Dubai, 13 April 2026. Season 5 of the biggest cricket league in the Gulf region — the second-most watched T20 league in the world — DP World International

in the Gulf region will be played from Sunday, 22 November to Sunday, 20 December 2026. We are delighted with Season 4's success. The broadcast numbers, spectators' interest and the participation of the biggest T20 stars made the tournament a remarkable success as the quality of the league grew further.

The league moved to a December window in Season 4; the first three seasons were played in the January-February window. Season 4 was a big success with enhanced broadcast numbers, and spectator attendance. The tournament's final (4 January 2026) was played in front of a packed Dubai International Stadium as the players' madmen trophy with a 46-run win over the MI Emirates. CEO DP World ILT20 David White: "We are pleased to confirm the DP World International League T20 Season 5 window. The biggest cricketing spectacle

and initiatives that will be revealed in the coming days." DP World ILT20's Season 4 featured some of the biggest T20 stars including Sam Curran (Desert Vipers) — Player of the Tournament and winner of the Best Batter award (Red and Green Belts); Waqar Salankheil (MI Emirates) — Best Bowler and White Belt winner; and Muhammad Waseem — Best UAE Player and Blue Belt winner. The star-studded squads also featured the likes of Andre Russell, Azmatullah Omarzai, Dinesh Kartik, Pathum Nissanka, Fakhar Zaman, Jason Holder, Jason Roy, Kieron Pollard, Mohammad Ali Mohammad Nabi, Naseem Shah, Nicholas Pooran, Phil Salt, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Romario Shephard, Shakib Al Hasan, Sikandar Raza, Sunil Narine, Tim David, and Tim Southee.

The event is being supported by several sponsors, including Bank Alfalah, Serena Hotel Islamabad, Mri Energies, Arif Habib Group of Companies, and Subh-e-Nai, all of whom continue to play a key role in promoting tennis development in Pakistan.

## Pak juniors shine in ITF tennis

**NEWS DESK:** The Subh-e-Nai ITF Pakistan Junior International Tennis Championship (Leg-1) continued at the PTF Tennis Complex in Islamabad, featuring competitive matches from rising tennis talent across the world.

The tournament, organized under the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF), has attracted a strong international field with 22 boys and 19 girls representing 15 countries.

Participants include players from Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Singapore, Japan, China, Australia, Russia, Poland, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, and Thailand, highlighting the growing global presence of junior tennis in the region.

In the boys' singles category, Pakistani players delivered an impressive performance, with five athletes securing places in the quarterfinals.

Mikael Ali Baig, Hamza Roman, and Abubakar Talha, Amir Mazari and Ahtesham Humayun advanced after strong displays in their respective matches.

Among notable results, Mikael Ali Baig defeated fellow Pakistani Abdaar Ali 6-0, 6-0 in a dominant performance.

Hamza Roman also impressed with a straight-sets win over Jamie Chen of Hong Kong, 6-3, 6-3.

A h t e s h a m Humayun overcame Turkey's Sarp Akan Ercan in a three-set battle, 6-2, 4-6, 6-2, showing resilience under pressure.

Abubakar Talha progressed after Raoyu Hua of China retired during their match, while

Amir Mazari advanced via walkover after Agarwal of India was unable to compete.

Other international results included wins for players from China, Japan, Sri Lanka, and Hong Kong, reflecting the high level of competition throughout the draw.

In the girls' singles second round, several international players moved into the next stage with strong performances.

China's Yitong Lu advanced via walkover, while Russia's Varvara Rubtsova defeated Japan's Kiko Okuyama in a three-set match, 6-2, 2-6, 6-1.

Kazakhstan's Safiya Urzaliina beat Pakistan's Romaisa

Malik 6-0, 6-1, while China's Ai Teng delivered a commanding 6-0, 6-0 win over Poland's Nulia Artuhina. Zhuyi Zhou and Yijia Wang from China also secured convincing victories against their respective opponents.

Japan, Thailand, and Kazakhstan also featured in tightly contested matches, with Yelizaveta Stepenko edging past Pakistan's Zamshaba Noor 6-3, 6-4.

The championship continues to provide a valuable platform for junior players to gain international exposure and competitive experience, while also strengthening Pakistan's position as a host for global tennis events.

Prosecutors argued in the initial trial that medical professionals broke treatment protocols and that the home where Maradona was recovering from surgery amounted to a "theatre of horror," where necessary care was not provided.

The defence countered that his death was inevitable given his longstanding health problems.

## Leeds grab win over United as Martinez sees red

**NEWS DESK:** Leeds United's Noah Okafor scored twice as his side grabbed a morale-boosting 2-1 Premier League away win over bitter rivals Manchester United, who had Lisandro Martinez sent off in the 56th minute for pulling the hair of Dominic Calvert-Lewin.

Manchester United remain third in the table on 55 points, ahead of Aston Villa on goal difference, while 15th-placed Leeds put some more daylight between them and the teams battling relegation by moving up to 36 points, six ahead of Tottenham Hotspur in 18th.

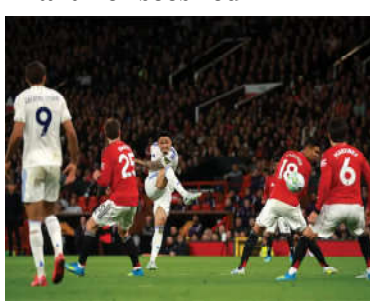
As well as battling for survival, Leeds are through to the FA Cup semi-finals, where they face Chelsea at Wembley on April 26.

The Yorkshire club were able to celebrate their first top-flight win against United since 2002 and their first league victory at Old Trafford in 45 years.

"Proud of the boys. Fantastic performance. We are in the crunch time of the season and it's important to keep your nerves and stick to your plan," Leeds boss Daniel Farke said.

"I think the first half was fantastic, we should have been higher up than 2-0, we missed many chances.

"We were a bit sleepy at one set-piece. United is a side packed with top class players, which can bring quality



from the bench later in the game." It's difficult to bring it over the line as a newly-promoted side. Big compliment to the whole group." While Manchester City and Liverpool are United's main rivals, their fans' enmity with Leeds supporters goes back decades, featuring numerous clashes between hooligan gangs.

That made the defeat a bitter pill to swallow for United fans, who booed Michael Carrick's side at full-time.

The home side were returning to action after a long period of inactivity due to the recent international break, but instead of looking fresh and rested, they looked rusty as Leeds pressed them hard, repeatedly winning the ball high up the pitch en route to a well-deserved win.

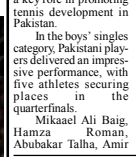
Leeds' striker Calvert-Lewin had an early chance only to see his close-range first-time shot hit the home side's keeper Senne Lammens, and Manchester United failed to clear that warning as the visitors took the lead shortly afterwards, Okafor side-footing home from a cross.

Okafor added a second in the 29th minute as United spurned a number of chances to clear the ball before the midfielder An Tanka thumped a shot from just outside the box that deflected off Levy Yoro and into the net.

Martinez prevented the home side from going into the break three goals down as Leeds midfielder An Tanka snapped up yet another loose pass and bore down on goal, but the Argentine defender swooped in to prevent the ball from crossing the line.

Martinez was then shown a straight red card early in the second half after he was adjudged to have pulled Calvert-Lewin's hair in a VAR review.

Carrick was evidently unhappy with the decision and blasted referee Paul Tierney for sending off Martinez. "I thought the boys, the way they went about it, they stayed positive and fought to get something out of it after another shocking decision to send off Lisandro," Carrick said.



## New trial over football legend Maradona's death begins in Argentina

**NEWS DESK:** A new trial over the death of Argentine football legend Diego Maradona will begin on Tuesday, with seven members of his medical team charged with negligent homicide nearly a year after a previous case collapsed in a mistrial.

An enduring presence in Argentine football, Maradona died on November 25, 2020, at 60, after a heart attack while he was recuperating from brain surgery to remove a blood clot.

A court in San Isidro, near Buenos Aires, will hear testimony from just under 100 witnesses as it tries Maradona's medical team over alleged negligence in the death of the 1986 World Cup champion.

His medical team had denied wrongdoing. The defendants are psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov, neurosurgeon Leopoldo Luque, psychologist Carlos An-



gel Diaz, physician Nancy Edith Forlini, nurse Ricardo Almiron, head nurse Mariano Ariel Perrotti, and physician Pedro Pablo Di Spagna.

An eighth defendant, nurse Dhaniana Madrid, will be tried in a separate jury trial, with no date yet set. Two months into the first trial, which started last March, a mistrial was declared when one of three judges, Julieta Makintach, resigned after a video surfaced

showing her being interviewed by a camera crew in the corridors of the courthouse and in her office as part of a documentary, in breach of judicial rules.

The retrial will require both prosecutors and defence lawyers to reassess their strategies after the first trial aired photographs, videos, audio recordings and forensic evidence. Many witnesses, including Maradona's children and his former wife,

Claudia Villafane, have already testified. Prosecutors argued in the initial trial that medical professionals broke treatment protocols and that the home where Maradona was recovering from surgery amounted to a "theatre of horror," where necessary care was not provided.

The defence countered that his death was inevitable given his longstanding health problems.

# PM Shehbaz departs on official visits to Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Qatar

**NEWS DESK:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif departed from Islamabad for Jeddah on Wednesday, kicking off a series of official visits to Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Qatar, according to the Foreign Office (FO).

The prime minister, accompanied by a high-level delegation, is undertaking official visits to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkiye from April 15 to 18, the FO said in a press release on Wednesday.

According to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), PM Shehbaz will hold a meeting with top Saudi leadership, including Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman.

In its statement, the FO said the visits to Saudi Arabia and Qatar are "in the bilateral context".

It added that the premier will meet the leadership in the forum reflects its continued commitment to constructive diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, and meaningful engagement with the international community on issues of global importance," the FO statement said.

On the sidelines of the forum, PM Shehbaz was "expected to hold bilateral meetings with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other key world leaders".

The premier is accompanied by Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Iqbal Fatemi, as well as other senior officials.



On March 9, PM Shehbaz held a "restricted meeting" with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, according to a statement by the PM's spokesperson.

During the meeting, the prime minister expressed Pakistan's "full solidarity and support for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in these challenging times", and both leaders agreed to work together for regional peace and stability.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have long shared a multifaceted relationship rooted in strategic military cooperation, mutual economic interests, and shared Islamic heritage.

These ties have en-

gulf countries — including Saudi Arabia — were facing Iranian attacks, which Tehran says were aimed at US and Israeli sites in response to the latter's deadly large-scale strikes.

Pakistan intensified efforts to act as a mediator between the United States and Iran to end the war that had engulfed the Middle East, leading to a fragile temporary ceasefire and a first round of talks in Islamabad.

Last month, PM Shehbaz hailed Saudi Arabia for showing "remarkable restraint" during the ongoing hostilities and stressed the need for urgent de-escalation.

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compassed economic assistance and energy supplies, with Riyadh being a significant source of financial aid and oil for Islamabad.

Earlier today, the finance ministry announced that Saudi Arabia has pledged an additional \$3 billion in deposits for Pakistan and has extended its existing \$5bn facility for a further three years.

The ministry further stated that the existing \$5bn Saudi deposit would no longer be subject to the previous annual rollover arrangement and would instead be extended for a longer term.

On April 11, the Saudi defence ministry confirmed that Pakistan has sent a military force and fighter jets to Saudi Arabia to boost security under a joint defence cooperation agreement between the two countries.

In September of last year, PM Shehbaz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman signed a "Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement" in Riyadh, pledging that any attack on either nation would be treated as an act of aggression against both.

## President urges proactive US-Iran engagement

**NEWS DESK:** President Asif Ali Zardari has tasked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar to remain proactively engaged with the United States and Iran to ensure the sustainability of the ongoing peace process between them.

Pakistan took centre stage when it brokered a 14-day ceasefire between the US and Iran on April 8, followed by high-stakes talks in Islamabad attended by senior delegations from the two countries.

Although the talks did not yield the desired results, the ceasefire remains intact, and there are reports that the warring countries may meet again in Islamabad before the end of the ceasefire.

A statement issued by the PPP on Tuesday said the president met the prime minister at Aiwan-e-Sadr, with PM Ishaq Dar in attendance as well.

"President Zardari said the prime minister and the deputy prime minister should remain proactively engaged with the US and Iran, as well as major regional and global powers, to ensure the sustainability of the peace process and regional harmony," the statement said.

It added that President Zardari appreciated the "untiring efforts" by Pakistan's leadership in hosting the dialogue between the US and Iran.

The president discussed the prevailing security and diplomatic situation in the region, noting that the situation has a far-reaching impact not only on the region but also on global security, economy and politics at large.

PM Shehbaz briefed the president on all aspects of the dialogue, providing a detailed briefing on its various stages and the progress achieved through Pakistan's mediation.

He also apprised the president of his upcoming visit to Saudi Arabia and Turkiye for further engagement to promote the peace efforts.

"President Zardari praised the prime minister, the deputy prime minister, foreign minister, the chief of defence forces (General Syed Asim Munir) and all state institutions for their untiring efforts in making this diplomatic initiative a great success.

He noted that the seamless coordination between all stakeholders was instrumental in facilitating this high-level engagement.

get for sugarcane has been set at 80.3 million tonnes over an area of 1.14 million hectares.

Sugarcane provides raw material to the country's second-largest agro-based industry, generating employment for millions in rural farming and non-farming communities. It is also a major source of livestock fodder during the winter season.

Sugar production for 2025-26 is projected at 6.15 million tonnes, a 6pc decline from the previous year due to flood damage, lower yields, and reduced sucrose recovery.

The FCA set a cotton production target of 9.64 million bales over an area of 2.16 million hectares for the upcoming season. Cotton production during 2025-26 reached 7.054 million bales against a target of 10.18 million bales, achieving only about 69 per cent, indicating a significant shortfall.

In Punjab, the area under cotton cultivation is declining as farmers shift towards more profitable alternative crops. A severe heatwave in June caused significant stress to cotton plants, adversely affecting pollination and increasing fruit shedding.

Floods in Punjab destroyed approximately 5.2 per cent of the cultivated cotton area, further constraining production.

In Balochistan, although cotton cultivation has slightly increased over the years, the area remains well below the target.

Discussing agricultural inputs for Kharif crops, the committee was informed that water availability at canal heads is expected to remain at 67.451 million acre-feet (MAF) during the season. The Met Office reported that above-average rainfall from March to early April has somewhat improved the situation across most parts of the country.

It was further noted that expected rains in April and May, along with rising temperatures in northern areas, may improve water availability in major reservoirs.

However, isolated heavy showers, hailstorms, and windstorms may disrupt Kharif crop harvesting, particularly in upper and central regions. Targets for other crops such as mung, mash, and chilies were also set.

The production target for mung beans is 156.4 thousand tonnes over 170.6 thousand hectares, while mash is targeted at 8.9 thousand tonnes over 10 thousand hectares. Chili production is set at 154.4 thousand tonnes over 58.4 thousand hectares.

The Secretary National Food Security and Research Saif Anjum informed the meeting that record potato production this year is a positive development but has also created challenges, particularly overproduction and declining market prices, affecting farmers' profitability.

This situation highlights the need for better planning and coordination in crop sowing. The targets on average decisions finalised by the FCA must be effectively implemented by provinces to ensure balanced production aligned with market demand. The government is making progress in exploring new international markets for exporting potatoes and other agricultural commodities.

This will help manage surplus production, enhance export potential, and strengthen the rural economy, he said.

Total availability of urea during Kharif 2026 is estimated at 4,348 thousand tonnes, while DAP availability is estimated at 757 thousand tonnes. The committee was also informed that rice and maize seed availability will remain sufficient.

A State Bank representative stated that institutional agricultural credit is expected to reach Rs3.062 billion in fiscal year 2026.

## Govt sets Kharif targets amid water stress, cotton shortfall

**NEWS DESK:** As the Rabi crop season nears completion, with wheat as the strategic crop ensuring the country's food security, the federal government on Tuesday announced production targets for the upcoming Kharif crop season.

Sol moisture, especially in major agricultural plains, remains under stress due to drier conditions in previous months. The Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA), a high-powered body chaired by Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain, fixed a production target of 9.17 million tonnes for rice, an important Kharif cash crop, to be cultivated over 3.39 million hectares. For the upcoming Kharif sowing season, paddy seed availability stands at 60,190.69 metric tonnes, including 3,660.04 metric tonnes of imported seed, which is 110 per cent of the total national requirement of 54,916 metric tonnes.

The availability of quality paddy seed in Punjab is 45,323.80 metric tonnes (126 per cent), Sindh 8,832 metric tonnes (56 per cent), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 1,116.07 metric tonnes (114 per cent), and Balochistan 1,258.78 metric tonnes (58 per cent) of their respective provincial requirements.

During 2025-26, total paddy seed availability was 44,613 metric tonnes.

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## Subcontinent might see subdued monsoon as 'super El Niño' expected this year: weather expert

**NEWS DESK:** The subcontinent might witness a subdued monsoon this summer as the warming El Niño weather phenomenon is expected to form later this year, according to a weather expert.

"We are expecting El Niño in the coming summer and it is expected to become 'super El Niño' by the end of August to September," Pakistan Meteorological Department's (PMD) spokesperson Anjum Nazir Zaigham told Dawn.

He noted that El Niño suppresses the summer monsoon in the subcontinent. "If super El Niño forms, then 2027 might be the warmest year in records,"

Zaigham added. El Niño and its cooler sister La Niña are climate patterns in the Pacific Ocean that can affect weather worldwide. El Niño and La Niña events occur every two to seven years, on average, but they do not occur on a regular schedule, according to the United States' National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

In a report published yesterday, The Guardian noted, "A strong El Niño would put 2027 in the running to break global heat records, and could produce a series of devastating effects, ranging from supercharged rainstorms to drought, de-

pending on the region of the world".

Last month, NOAA noted there was a 50-to 60-per cent chance of El Niño developing during the July-September period and beyond.

El Niño's impact would be higher in 2027 than in 2026 if it develops in the second half of this year, according to Tido Semmler, a climate scientist at Ireland's National Meteorological Service. "It takes time for the global atmosphere to react to the El Niño," he said earlier.

Meanwhile, in a weather forecast issued on Wednesday, the PMD said "hot and dry weather was likely to develop over most parts" of Sindh.

Headed by Chief Justice Aalia Neelum, a full bench was hearing a civil miscellaneous application by the chief minister, seeking the refund of Rs70 million deposited as a bail guarantee in the sugar mills case.

Justice Muhammad Jawad Zafar and Justice Abber Gul Khan were the other members of the bench.

During the hearing, the chief justice noted that the NAB had assailed the LHC Feb 4 order before the FCC.

A NAB prosecutor stated that the application might have been withdrawn from the FCC.

However, the chief justice directed the prosecutor to come up with a clear response about the status of the bureau's plea before the FCC.

The bench adjourned the hearing till April 23.

Through Advocate Javed Arshad, the chief minister filed the application afresh after an accountability court on March 16 allowed a NAB plea for the closure of the sugar mills investigation against her.

The accountability court declared that Ms Nawaz may withdraw her surety bond worth Rs70m, furnished against the post-arrest bail granted to her in the case.

The NAB had filed the application following a Feb 4 direction of the LHC full bench to place a termination report before the accountability court for the closure of the investigation as required under the law.

## Sugar mills case: LHC seeks clarity on NAB plea filed before FCC

**NEWS DESK:** The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday sought clarity from the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) about the status of its plea in the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC), challenging an LHC direction for placing a termination report before a trial court for the closure of Chaudhry Sugar Mills investigation against Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

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The NAB had filed the application following a Feb 4 direction of the LHC full bench to place a termination report before the accountability court for the closure of the investigation as required under the law.

The order was passed on a previous application by Ms Nawaz, seeking the refund of Rs70 million deposited as a bail guarantee in the sugar mills case.

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