



BALUCHISTAN
Governor Mandokhail Inaugurates High Voltage...
Page No 5



INTERNATIONAL
Israel issues evacuation warning for seven Lebanese towns beyond...
Page No 3



NATIONAL
Fire breaks out in cargo truck on Indus Highway...
Page No 8

SPORT
Blistering Chapman steers United to Qualifier as sloppy Sultans falter
Page No 7



First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan

Editor: Asim Khan.

Rs. 10.00 Vol. VII: No. 195

Email address: dquettavoices@gmail.com
Website: www.quettavoices.com

Tuesday 28, April, 2026

QUETTA VOICE

IG Balochistan Calls for Stronger Investigation System, IT-Based Policing to Improve Public Safety

Qaseem Shah, Ali Hamza, News Desk:

QUETTA: Inspector General (IG) of Balochistan Police has emphasized the urgent need to strengthen the investigation system to ensure modern policing and improved public service delivery, stating that accountability and individual responsibility are key to eliminating crime from society.

The IG made these remarks during a meeting with probationary Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs) from Sindh, who visited the Central Police Office as part of a study tour led by Deputy Commandant Sarfraz Ahmed Falaki of the National Police Academy, Islamabad.

Highlighting the core responsibilities of the police, the IG said protecting citizens' lives and property and resolving their issues without delay remains the department's foremost duty. He stressed that supervisory officers play a pivotal role in fulfilling these responsibilities effectively.

Senior officers, including Additional IG Operations Agha Muhammad Yousaf, DIG Finance Sohail Ahmed Sheikh, AIG Operations Naveed Alam, Course Commander Muhammad Jawad Ishaq, AIG IT Fazil Shah, AIG General Abid Khan, AIG Legal Shafiqur-Rehman Shahwani, and AIG Security Division Dr. Sami Malik, were also present at the meeting.

Focus on Modern Policing and Training
Addressing young officers,



the IG urged them to adopt professionalism, public service, and modern policing practices while strengthening ties between police and the community. He advised them to remain open to learning, noting that field experience plays a critical role in shaping future leadership. "The future of policing is IT-based," he said, urging officers to focus on acquiring new skills and adapting to emerging trends. He added that honesty, dedication, and a spirit of public service are essential for success in the police service.

Women Officers Encouraged to Lead

The IG also addressed female officers, encouraging them to serve as role models and actively address issues faced by women in society. He stressed that their role is vital in ensuring better access to justice for female citizens.

Police Reforms and Training Initiatives

The IG highlighted ongoing reforms within the Balochistan Police, including the training of former Levies personnel who were merged into A-area policing.

He said the three-month modern training program, launched on January 1, 2026, aims to enhance their professional capabilities. **Crackdown on Proclaimed Offenders**
He appreciated the performance of various police ranges in a special campaign against proclaimed offenders, announcing cash rewards for top-performing districts.

Kachhi district received Rs250,000, Hub Rs200,000, Quetta Rs150,000, and Sibi Rs100,000, while Kohlu and Ziarat were awarded Rs75,000 each for achieving 100% performance in arrests.

The IG praised the efforts of DIGs and SSPs for maintaining discipline and demonstrating professional commitment during the campaign, urging other districts to follow their example.

Strengthening Public Trust

To improve public trust, the IG said open courts (Khuli Kacheris) are being regularly held under DIGs and SSPs, allowing direct interaction with citizens and prompt resolution of complaints. He stressed that access to police officers should be easy for the common citizen.

Digital Services and Safe City Projects

The IG highlighted several initiatives aimed at modernizing policing, including mobile units for character certificates and e-licensing services to reduce public inconvenience.

He added that Safe City projects, equipped with modern surveillance cameras, are helping monitor criminal activity and improve traffic management.

The establishment of a Serious Crime Investigation Wing is also assisting in resolving complex cases more efficiently.

Accountability and Welfare Measures

Under the internal accountability system, strict action is being taken against corrupt elements, while outstanding officers are being rewarded with cash prizes and commendation certificates.

345,000 Patients Treated Under Balochistan Health Card as Free Care Expands



News Desk:

According to official figures, the program has delivered 69,000 dialysis sessions, over 44,000 chemotherapy treatments, and more than 1,200 radiotherapy sessions.

Cardiac care includes 7,784 angioplasties and 575 bypass surgeries, while 304 children with heart conditions have been treated free of cost.

The initiative has also facilitated 3,412 neurosurgeries

and 12,300 orthopedic surgeries, along with 183 burn and plastic surgery cases.

In maternal healthcare, over 55,000 cases have been managed, including 24,688 normal deliveries and 20,344 C-section procedures, benefiting thousands of women.

The chief minister stated that every citizen's national identity card now serves as a health card, enabling easier access to services.

He added that a wide network of major public and private hospitals across Pakistan

has been integrated into the program.

Bugti emphasized that the Balochistan government is committed to further strengthening the healthcare sector and expanding facilities to ensure accessible, quality treatment for all.

More than 345,000 patients have received free medical treatment under the Balochistan Health Card Program, with thousands benefiting from critical procedures. Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said.

Police Constable Martyred in Terrorist Attack on Checkpost in Pishin, Balochistan

From Our Correspondent:

Pishin, Balochistan – A police personnel was killed when terrorists opened fire on a checkpost in the Killi Harmezei (also referred to as Kalk Lamran or Hazarmezei) area of Pishin district on Monday.

According to initial reports, unidentified militants attacked the police post in the Harmezei region of Tehsil Harmezei.

The assault resulted in the martyrdom of Hawaldar Nematullah (also spelled Nemat Ullah), a dedicated police officer serving at the post.

He was rushed to a nearby hospital but succumbed to his injuries.

Local police sources confirmed that the attackers fled the scene after the firing.

Law enforcement personnel immediately cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to track down the suspects involved in the attack.

Details of the Incident
• Location: Killi Harmezei / Kalk Lamran area, Tehsil Harmezei, Pishin district, Balochistan

• Casualty: Hawaldar Nematullah (martyred)
• Nature of Attack: Direct firing by terrorists on a police checkpost

• Response: Police have sealed the area and initiated a manhunt for the assailants.

This tragic incident highlights the ongoing security challenges in parts of Balochistan, where security forces and police personnel continue to face threats from terrorist elements.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far.

The Balochistan government and senior police officials have expressed condolences to the family of the martyred officer.

Further details regarding the investigation and the search operation are awaited.



QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Fiscal Federalism and the Quest for Equity in Pakistan

AGHASANULLAH: Fiscal federalism forms the bedrock of governance in any federation, determining how financial resources are raised, shared, and spent to foster balanced development and social equity. In Pakistan, this relationship is constitutionally mediated through the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, a mechanism designed to rectify both vertical imbalances between the federal and provincial governments and horizontal disparities among the provinces themselves.

While the NFC Award represents a vital instrument for devolution and provincial autonomy, a critical examination reveals that its promise of equitable resource distribution is persistently undermined by deeper, systemic flaws in the country's fiscal governance.

The NFC Award has, over successive iterations, progressively increased the provincial share in national revenues, thereby strengthening fiscal decentralization.

This shift has the potential to improve public service delivery by bringing resources closer to the people.

However, the effectiveness of these transfers is contingent upon a healthy national fiscal environment—a condition Pakistan has rarely met.

The nation's fiscal narrative is characterized by structural weaknesses that choke the system at its source.

A chronically narrow tax base, heavy reliance on regressive indirect taxation, and inefficient revenue mobilization by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR)



mean that the total pool of resources available for distribution is perpetually insufficient.

Consequently, even a well-intentioned NFC Award framework operates within a system of scarcity, limiting its capacity to achieve genuine equity.

"Hidden Deficits" and Contingent Liabilities

Beyond revenue inadequacy, the expenditure side of the fiscal

equation presents an equally formidable challenge.

A significant portion of the federal budget is consumed by non-development expenditure, most notably debt servicing and defense. This leaves limited fiscal space for development spending, which is crucial for long-term economic growth and for addressing regional inequalities.

The paper notes

that the fiscal year 2024-25 saw a nine-year low in the consolidated budget deficit, partly due to provincial surpluses.

However, this superficial stability masks the underlying reality that the cost of servicing past debt continues to crowd out investments in the human and physical infrastructure needed to level the playing field among provinces. A major contribution of the research

is its identification of "hidden deficits" and contingent liabilities as critical yet often overlooked sources of fiscal stress. Beyond the conventional budget deficit, factors such as off-budget expenditures, subsidies to loss-making public sector enterprises, and implicit guarantees for future

Cycle of Short-Term Fixes Rather Than Long-Term Solutions

obligations create a precarious financial reality. This lack of transparency in accounting for risks—from natural calamities to the collapse of state-owned corporations—exposes the federation to unpredictable fiscal shocks.

The failure to consolidate and disclose these contingent liabilities means that the true scale of fiscal vulnerability is rarely debated in parliament or under-

stood by the public, perpetuating a cycle of short-term fixes rather than long-term solutions.

To break this cycle, the paper argues for a fundamental shift from one-dimensional, crisis-driven fiscal management to a multi-dimensional, institutionally anchored approach.

It recommends a suite of reforms that move beyond the NFC Award itself to

strengthen the entire fiscal ecosystem.

Key among these are the establishment of an independent Fiscal Council (FC) to provide unbiased analysis of fiscal policy and budget assumptions, thus reducing political discretion and enhancing evidence-based decision-making.

Furthermore, it calls for strengthening the Medium-Term Budgetary Framework by linking it to Public Service Agreements (PSAs) that tie resource allocation to measurable outcomes, ensuring that provincial transfers under the NFC Award translate into tangible improvements in education, health, and infrastructure.

In conclusion, the National Finance Commission Award is an essential but insufficient instrument for achieving fiscal equity in Pakistan. Its effectiveness is inextricably linked to the overall health of the nation's public finances.

As the research paper demonstrates, persistent issues such as a narrow tax base, unsustainable debt service, and opaque contingent liabilities undermine the very resources that the NFC Award is meant to distribute equitably.

Moving forward, the focus must broaden from negotiating provincial shares to implementing deep-rooted institutional reforms.

By enhancing revenue mobilization, ensuring fiscal transparency, and prudently managing debt and liabilities, Pakistan can create an environment where the NFC Award can fulfill its constitutional promise—fostering a resilient, balanced, and truly equitable federation.

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

By Musavir Durrani

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

core of marriage, while coercion makes a marriage *batil* (invalid).

The Qur'an Clearly Forbids Forced Marriages. Allah states in Surah An-Nisa:

"O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will."

(Qur'an 4:19) This verse was revealed to abolish the *jahiliyyah* practice of controlling or forcing women into marriages.

Islam replaced oppression with dignity, choice, and responsibility.

Prophetic Example: Forced Marriages Declared Invalid

A woman once came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)



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

Hadith References: Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 5138.

Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1419. These narrations all confirm that the Prophet (PBUH) allowed the woman to annul her forced marriage.

One narration even states that she chose to remain married but wanted to teach women that fa-

thers have no right to force their daughters. Parents Can Advise, But They Cannot Force.

Islam highly respects parents, but marriage choice is not their right. They can guide, suggest, and advise, but they have ab-

solutely no power to force their child into marrying someone. Even if parents think they "know what is best," they cannot override the choice of their daughter or son. The final decision always

belongs to the person getting married.

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

These are pure emotional manipulation, and Islam does

not allow it. Emotional or Psychological Pressure is Also Haram. Forced marriage is not only when someone is physically

pressured. Even emotional, mental, or family pressure counts as force. Any Nikkah done under fear, pressure, or

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

Modern Forced Marriages, A New Way of Burying Women Alive. Before Islam, Arabs used to bury baby

girls alive. Today, many scholars say: "We no longer bury women in the ground, we bury their dreams on the day of their Nikkah."

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

Forced marriage has no place in Islam. It is against the Qur'an, against the Sunnah, and against the dignity that Islam gives to every woman and man. Parents must love, support, and guide, but never control or force marriage decisions.

Allah gave women this right, and no one can take it away."

Trump was likely target of White House correspondents' dinner shooting, says US official

NEWS DESK: US President Donald Trump and officials in his administration were the likely targets of a suspect who fired on a security agent guarding the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in Washington, US Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said on Sunday.

The man fired a shotgun at a Secret Service agent at a checkpoint in the Washington Hilton hotel before being tackled and arrested. Trump and first lady Melania Trump were rushed out of the dinner.

"It does appear that he, he did, in fact, set out to target folks that work in the administration, likely including the president," Blanche told NBC News' "Meet the Press," adding that the suspect likely traveled by train from Los Angeles to Chicago and then to Washington.

The suspect will be charged in federal court on Monday with assault of a federal officer, discharging a firearm and attempting to kill a federal officer, Blanche said, adding he did not know if there was an Iran connection to the attack.

Condemnation of shooting Trump told reporters at a briefing at the White House after the attack that the Secret Service agent was saved by his bulletproof vest and was in "good shape," US Secret Service spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi con-



firming the officer had been released from the hospital.

Trump told reporters he believed that he was the target of the attack. The president has survived two previous attempts on his life since 2024, a period of "deepening political polarization in the United States."

Around the world, leaders condemned the attack, adding they were relieved that Trump and all present were safe and expressing their solidarity with the United States. NATO leader Mark Rutte called it an attack "on our free and open societies," and leaders stressed violence had no place in a democracy.

Suspect thought to be "lone wolf," Trump says

A law enforcement official identified the suspect as Cole Tomas Allen, a California resident about 31 years old. Little was immediately known about Allen's background, but social media postings suggested he was a teacher in Torrance, near Los Angeles.

Washington interim Police Chief Jeffrey Carroll said the "suspect was armed with a shotgun, a handgun and multiple knives. He was taken to a local hospital to be evaluated, but it was too soon to say what his motivation was, Carroll said.

Based on "preliminary information, he was believed to have been a guest at the hotel, Carroll added.

The chaotic events from around 8:30pm raised fresh questions about the security of top US officials, many of whom were gathered in the hotel's expansive ballroom.

A focus of the investigation is likely to be how the gunman was able to smuggle the shotgun into the hotel, which hosts the annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner, a marquee fixture of Washington's social calendar.

The black-tie event was attended by many members of Trump's cabinet and other senior administration officials amid heavy security. It was the first time Trump attended the event as president, having boycotted it in previous years.

Afterwards, Trump addressed reporters, many still in "evening

attire, in an extraordinary late-night press conference in the White House briefing room, flanked by Vice President JD Vance and other cabinet members. Trump's wife, Melania, looked on from the sidelines and murmured when he asked her whether she wanted to talk about the events of the evening.

The venue for the dinner was the scene of an attempt on the life of President Ronald Reagan, who was shot and wounded by a would-be assassin outside the hotel in 1981.

Closed-circuit TV footage released by Trump on Truth Social showed the suspect running rapidly through a security checkpoint, momentarily catching security personnel off guard before they drew their weapons.

No shots were fired at the gunman who got through two checkpoints before being brought down.

"You know, he charged from 50 yards away, so he was very far away from the room. He was moving. He was really moving," Trump said after the gala dinner was canceled.

Officials believe he is a "lone wolf," Trump said. How it unfolded

Video footage shows Trump and wife sitting at a banquet table on stage in conversation with someone when a commotion at the rear of the ballroom "caused by the noise of gunshots - triggers a ripple of gasps through the room."

People started screaming, "Get down, get down!" Many of the 2,600 attendees dressed in tuxedos and ball gowns took cover under tables as security personnel drew their weapons, with some pushing cabinet secretaries to the floor and covering them with their bodies, while others formed a protective cordon.

Security personnel in combat fatigues stormed the stage, pointing rifles into the ballroom as Trump, his wife and Vance were evacuated. Cabinet members who had been sitting at tables dotted around the vast room were escorted out "by their security details one by one."

While most guests huddled under tables, some people began chanting "USA, USA!"

Trump stayed backstage for about an hour after being hustled from the stage, a source told Reuters. He later said he had not wanted to leave the event, a remark that echoed images of him defiantly pumping his fist after narrowly escaping an assassination attempt in Butler, Pennsylvania, in 2024.

In that attempt, Trump was shot and wounded in his upper ear by a 20-year-old gunman, who "was shot dead" by security personnel.

Iran FM Araghchi says he discussed conditions for continuing US talks with 'friends in Pakistan'

NEWS DESK: Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Monday said he discussed with "friends in Pakistan" the "path and conditions" under which Tehran could continue its dialogue with Washington during his recent visit to Islamabad.

After visiting Pakistan twice in two days and making a trip to Oman in between, Araghchi arrived in Russia on Monday as part of his regional tour.

In a statement issued on his Telegram account, the Iranian FM provided an overview of his diplomatic engagements over the past few days.

Terminating his trips to Islamabad and Muscat as "bilateral", Araghchi said.

"As for Pakistan, my diplomatic engagement played an important role in mediating the negotiations between Iran and the United States, and it was necessary for us to discuss the latest developments."

"However, there have been developments in the negotiations, and the wrong approaches and excessive demands of the United States have prevented the previous round of negotiations from achieving their goals despite the progress. Therefore, it was necessary to consult and review the current situation with our friends in Pakistan," he added.

The minister recalled that the Iranian side had "good consultations with our friends in Pakistan, which, thank God, was a very successful trip."

"We reviewed what has happened and talked about the path and conditions under which the negotiations can continue," Araghchi stated.

He asserted that "40 days of heroic resistance of the Iranian people to secure the rights of the Iranian people, their independence, and the interests of the country."

About Oman, Araghchi noted it was "friendly and close country" to Iran, hailing Muscat's "very good positions" during the Middle East conflict.

It was necessary for us to have a meeting to establish broader relations with our neighbours, especially in the Persian Gulf, so that we could manage the existing problems," he emphasized.

He highlighted it was "necessary to have consultations" regarding the Strait of Hormuz as Iran and Oman were the two coastal countries on the key waterway.



India, New Zealand sign free trade deal, cutting fruit tariffs, boosting exports and visas

NEWS DESK: India and New Zealand signed a free trade deal on Monday as they seek to boost exports amid global economic uncertainty made worse by the war in the Middle East.

Negotiations over the agreement concluded in December 2025, and will see India gain greater access for a range of products, including engineering goods, machinery and textiles, while also protecting its sensitive dairy sector.

"This forward-looking agreement will also facilitate \$20 billion of investment into India," New Delhi's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said after signing the agreement alongside his New Zealand counterpart, Todd McClay.

New Delhi, in return, has offered to reduce tariff barriers in sectors such as forestry, lamb and wool, while granting quota-based access for fruits such as apples.

The two-way trade remains modest. Indian data showed merchandise trade at about \$1.3bn in 2024-25, while total goods and services trade was estimated at roughly \$2.4bn in 2024.

The deal was struck at a time when US President Donald Trump's tariff war had upended global trade, forcing countries around the world to tap new markets.

The Middle East war has since delivered a global energy shock, disrupting production across multiple sectors and reinforcing the need to bolster trade ties and shed protectionist stances.

Military expenditure in the Middle East reached an estimated \$218bn in 2025, just 0.1pc higher than in 2024. Besides Israel, most other major spenders in the region for which data is available increased their spending.

Israel's military expenditure decreased by 14pc in Europe and 49pc to \$48.3bn, reflecting a reduction in the intensity of the Gaza conflict during 2025 following the ceasefire agreement with Hamas.

Israel's spending remained 97pc higher than in 2022. Military spend-

Iran FM Araghchi says he discussed conditions for continuing US talks with 'friends in Pakistan'

NEWS DESK: Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Monday said he discussed with "friends in Pakistan" the "path and conditions" under which Tehran could continue its dialogue with Washington during his recent visit to Islamabad.

After visiting Pakistan twice in two days and making a trip to Oman in between, Araghchi arrived in Russia on Monday as part of his regional tour.

In a statement issued on his Telegram account, the Iranian FM provided an overview of his diplomatic engagements over the past few days.

Terminating his trips to Islamabad and Muscat as "bilateral", Araghchi said.

"As for Pakistan, my diplomatic engagement played an important role in mediating the negotiations between Iran and the United States, and it was necessary for us to discuss the latest developments."

"However, there have been developments in the negotiations, and the wrong approaches and excessive demands of the United States have prevented the previous round of negotiations from achieving their goals despite the progress. Therefore, it was necessary to consult and review the current situation with our friends in Pakistan," he added.

The minister recalled that the Iranian side had "good consultations with our friends in Pakistan, which, thank God, was a very successful trip."

"We reviewed what has happened and talked about the path and conditions under which the negotiations can continue," Araghchi stated.

He asserted that "40 days of heroic resistance of the Iranian people to secure the rights of the Iranian people, their independence, and the interests of the country."

About Oman, Araghchi noted it was "friendly and close country" to Iran, hailing Muscat's "very good positions" during the Middle East conflict.

It was necessary for us to have a meeting to establish broader relations with our neighbours, especially in the Persian Gulf, so that we could manage the existing problems," he emphasized.

He highlighted it was "necessary to have consultations" regarding the Strait of Hormuz as Iran and Oman were the two coastal countries on the key waterway.



Israel issues evacuation warning for seven Lebanese towns beyond 'buffer zone'

NEWS DESK: Israel's military issued new evacuation orders for southern Lebanon on Sunday, ordering residents to leave seven towns that lie beyond the "buffer zone" it occupied before a ceasefire that has failed to bring a full halt to hostilities.

A spokesperson for the Israeli military said in a statement on X that Lebanese armed group Hezbollah was violating the ceasefire and that Israel would act against it, telling people to head north and west away from the towns.

The towns are north of the Litani river and the zone in southern Lebanon occupied by Israeli troops, who have continued military operations despite the ceasefire.

"From our perspective, what obliges us is the security of Israel, the security of our soldiers, the security of our communities," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at a cabinet meeting "in Jerusalem."

"We act vigorously according to the rules we agreed upon with the United States, and also, by the way, with Lebanon."

Hezbollah said it would not cease its attacks on Israeli troops inside Lebanon and on towns in northern Israel as long as Israel continued its "ceasefire violations."

The Iran-backed group added in a statement that it would not wait for diplomacy "that has proven ineffective" or rely on Lebanese authorities that had "failed to protect the country."

The Israeli military said "it had intercepted three drones before they crossed into Israeli territory, after sirens sounded in northern Israel."

Earlier on Sunday,



Global military spending continues to rise as European and Asian expenditures surge

NEWS DESK: World military expenditure reached \$2,887 billion in 2025, an increase of 2.9 per cent in real terms over 2024, according to new data published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on Monday.

Military spending declined in the United States but rose by 14pc in Europe and 49pc in Asia and Oceania. The top three military spenders — the USA, China and Russia — spent a combined total of \$1,480bn, or 51pc of the global total.

Spending in Middle East stable despite ongoing conflicts and regional rivalries

Military expenditure in the Middle East reached an estimated \$218bn in 2025, just 0.1pc higher than in 2024. Besides Israel, most other major spenders in the region for which data is available increased their spending.

Israel's military expenditure decreased by 14pc in Europe and 49pc to \$48.3bn, reflecting a reduction in the intensity of the Gaza conflict during 2025 following the ceasefire agreement with Hamas.

Israel's spending remained 97pc higher than in 2022. Military spend-

ing by Turkey grew by 7.2pc in 2025 to \$30.0bn.

Spending by Iran declined for the second consecutive year, falling by 5.6pc to \$7.4 bn in 2025. The real-terms decrease was due to high annual inflation of 42pc; however, spending in nominal terms "Despite the recent conflicts, Iran's military spending decreased in real terms due to economic difficulties," said Zubaida Karim, a researcher with the SIPRI Military Expenditure and Arms Production Programme.

"However, official figures almost certainly underestimate the true level of Iran's spending. Iran also uses off-budget oil revenues to finance its military, including the production of missiles and drones," she said.

Rearmament and heightened insecurity fuel widespread spending increases

Global military expenditure increased to \$2,887bn in 2025, the 11th consecutive year of increases, bringing the global military burden—military expenditure as a share of GDP—to 2.5pc, its highest level since 2009.

In agriculture, India kept sensitive sectors such as dairy, coffee, sugar, spices, edible oils and rubber outside market access commitments to protect domestic producers, Goyal said.

That was a disappointment for New Zealand's dairy industry, its largest export sector.

The FTA will lower tariffs on key fruit imports such as kiwifruit and apples, expanding opportunities for Indian exports and easing visa access as the nations deepen economic ties.

Concluded in December after about nine months of talks, the pact is one of the South Asian nation's fastest trade deals, and will cut or remove tariffs on 95 per cent of New Zealand's exports to India, including seafood, iron, steel and scrap aluminium.

In agriculture, India kept sensitive sectors such as dairy, coffee, sugar, spices, edible oils and rubber outside market access commitments to protect domestic producers, Goyal said.

That was a disappointment for New Zealand's dairy industry, its largest export sector.

PFA seizes 3,744 litres of substandard juice during enforcement operation

LAHORE (INP) Punjab Food Authority (PFA) shut down a major beverages manufacturing unit in Sundar Industrial Estate and seized 3,744 litres of substandard

juice during a large-scale enforcement operation here on Sunday. According to details, the Food Safety Team conducted raids on 21 units as part of a targeted monitoring drive, imposing fines on 20 units for violations of food safety laws and standard operating procedures. The Director General (PFA) Syed Musa

Raza said the sealed unit was found using non-approved juice labels that had not been cleared by the Punjab Food Authority, raising concerns over product authenticity and consumer safety. Furthermore, it was revealed that the facility's employees lacked mandatory medical fitness certificates and required food safety training documentation, reflecting gross negligence of regulatory requirements.

The DG said that a special enforcement campaign is underway across the province to ensure strict monitoring of juice and beverage production units during the summer season, when demand rises significantly and risks of adulteration increase. He reiterated that the authority is pursuing a zero-tolerance policy against the adulteration mafia and that strict legal action will continue against all violators without exception.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding development of gemstone sector.

GDA establishes "Kids Fun Land" at Gwadar Central Park

GWADAR (INP) The Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) has established a "Kids Fun Land" with installation of profuse mechanical and electrical rides and swings at GDA Central Park.

Taking another important step to promote children's recreation and positive activities by adding a new entertainment facility in the city, GDA central park has become a mesmerizing amusement attraction for kids following the GDA Beach Model Park.

According to a Gwadar Pro's report, this modern facility offers a variety of safe and high-quality play equipment for children, where they can enjoy themselves in a pleasant and secure environment.

The project has been completed through collaboration with the private sector, serving as an excellent example of public-private partnership. It is worth noting that GDA Beach Model

Metro bus service partly restored in Islamabad and Rawalpindi

ISLAMABAD (INP) The metro bus service has been partly restored in twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi after recent suspension ahead of 'likely second round of peace talks' between the United States and Iran, officials said.

The metro bus service has been fully restored from Saddar station to Shaheed-e-Millat station, officials said. The bus service, however, will remain suspended from the Parade Ground to Pak Secretariat, they added.

The Green Bus service in Rawalpindi has also been fully restored after suspension of the bus service for seven days, officials added.

Ahead of likely peace talks between Iran and the United States, security in Islamabad was tightened and authorities suspended heavy and public transport across parts of the city until further notice. Two major hotels in Islamabad were reportedly instructed to vacate premises before evening as part of heightened security measures.

President Zardari visits SANY Heavy Industry Co, Ltd, briefed on company's advanced manufacturing systems

CHANGSHA, CHINA (INP) President Asif Ali Zardari, Sunday, visited SANY Heavy Industry Co., Ltd. in Changsha, Hunan province, China, where he was briefed by Chairman of Sany Group Tang Xiuguo, on the company's advanced manufacturing systems, production lines and ongoing investments in research and development.

Vice Mayor of Changsha Qian Lixia was also present on the occasion. The visit focused on exploring avenues for industrial cooperation, technology transfer and investment between Pakistan and China in the engineering and construction machinery sector.

President Zardari was accompanied by Senator Saaleem Mammadov, Liaqat Ali Khan, Sharjeel Inam Memon, Senior Provincial Minister, Sindh; Ali Hassan Barohi, Syed Qasim Naveed Qureshi, Assistant to the Chief Minister of Sindh for Investment and Public

Private Partnership Projects and chief secretary, Sindh; China's Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong and concrete machinery, excavators, cranes, piling equipment and road machinery.

He was also informed about the company's financial and operational performance, production and 2024 operating revenue which was \$11.27 billion, product segmentation and sustained investment in innovation and R&D capacity.

The president was accompanied by Senator Saaleem Mammadov, Liaqat Ali Khan, Sharjeel Inam Memon, Senior Provincial Minister, Sindh; Ali Hassan Barohi, Syed Qasim Naveed Qureshi, Assistant to the Chief Minister of Sindh for Investment and Public

Private Partnership Projects and chief secretary, Sindh; China's Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong and concrete machinery, excavators, cranes, piling equipment and road machinery. He noted the scale of technological integration and its relevance for countries seeking to modernise industrial production and improve efficiency. President Zardari appreciated the scale, sophistication and technological depth of SANY's manufacturing ecosystem.

Section 144 extended in Punjab

LAHORE (INP) The enforcement of Section 144 has been extended across Punjab, with a continued ban on flying drones in open areas.

According to a statement issued by the Punjab Home Department, the prohibition on outdoor drone usage has been extended for another 30 days under Section 144.

The provincial government imposed the restriction due to security concerns, and the ban on flying drones will remain in effect across Punjab until May 25. However, the notification clarified that limited use of small drones is permitted during indoor events held in halls and marquees. Event organisers will be responsible for ensuring the safe use of drones in such settings.

BJP must answer to Kashmiri people over IIOJK statehood delay: Deputy CM

JAMMU (KMS) Deputy Chief Minister of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir Surinder Choudhary has criticized the Bharatiya Janata Party for delay in full restoration of the territory. According to Kashmir Media Service, Surinder Choudhary said "In a recent statement, Sunil Sharma made high-voltage remarks against the Abdullah family which should be avoided. We must not make such remarks," Choudhary added.

The Deputy CM said the demand for restoration of statehood is not only by the National Conference. He asserted that the demand reflects the aspirations of the people. The Deputy CM said that both he and Sunil Sharma come from a remote area and it is a blessing of the Almighty that both are in key positions in Jammu and Kashmir. "This opportunity should be used for the welfare of people," he said. "In a recent statement, Sunil Sharma made high-voltage remarks against the Abdullah family which should be avoided. We must not make such remarks," Choudhary added. The Deputy CM said the demand for restoration of statehood is not only by the National Conference.

Modi used Pahalgam incident to crack down on minorities: Ramesh Singh Arora

LAHORE, April 26 (INP) Punjab Minority Affairs Minister Ramesh Singh Arora has said that Modi used the Pahalgam incident to crack down on minorities and to target their religious places of worship.

Addressing a press conference regarding the Pahalgam False Flag and the atrocities on the minority community in India, Ramesh Singh Arora said Pakistan is a peace-loving country, while India attempted aggression against Pakistan under the guise of the Pahalgam incident.

He further said that violence against minorities in India is not a new phenomenon, adding that the Pahalgam incident has also brought Pakistan honor on the global stage, while India is facing diplomatic isolation. He also claimed that India's so-called secular image has been exposed internationally.

Arora further said that Pakistan set a wonderful example by opening the Kartarpur Corridor, but the Christian community in India, Ramesh Singh Arora said Pakistan is a peace-loving country, while India attempted aggression against Pakistan under the guise of the Pahalgam incident.

enjoy religious freedom, equal rights, and complete state protection without discrimination," he added. During the press conference, Minister of State for Religious Affairs Khalid Das Kohistani said that no religion permits terrorism and that India falsely linked the Pahalgam incident with Pakistan.

He said that in Pakistan, people of all religions celebrate their festivals together. "Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir has been turned into a torture chamber, the Modi government is using the government machinery against minorities, and no minority is safe in India," he

enjoy religious freedom, equal rights, and complete state protection without discrimination," he added. During the press conference, Minister of State for Religious Affairs Khalid Das Kohistani said that no religion permits terrorism and that India falsely linked the Pahalgam incident with Pakistan.

He said that in Pakistan, people of all religions celebrate their festivals together. "Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir has been turned into a torture chamber, the Modi government is using the government machinery against minorities, and no minority is safe in India," he



CHANGSHA, CHINA: President Asif Ali Zardari witnesses the signing of a MoU between the Local Government, Government of Sindh and Long Ping Hi-tech Information company in cooperation in agricultural technology.

Islamabad reopens to public and goods transport as new business hours enforced

ISLAMABAD (INP) Public and goods transport has been allowed to enter Islamabad, as the federal capital's administration eases earlier restrictions and restores movement across the city.

According to an official announcement, all bus terminals across the city have been reopened, with the exception of the Faizabad Bus Terminal, which will remain closed until further notice.

The decision signals a partial return to routine transport operations, while certain key hubs remain under restrictions. The move comes alongside a broader set of administrative measures focused on austerity and energy conservation, prompting the district administration to revise operating hours for various business sectors.

Food-related businesses have been given slightly extended hours. Restaurants, traditional tandoors, grocery stores and other food outlets will be permitted to operate until 10pm. Authorities have clarified that takeaway and delivery services will continue without any restrictions, allowing businesses to maintain operations beyond physical closing hours.

The revised schedule also applies to event and recreational sectors. Markets and shopping malls will now close by 8pm. However, essential services have been exempted from this restriction, including pharmacies, hospitals, petrol pumps, CNG stations and dairy outlets, ensuring uninterrupted access to critical services for residents.

Officials have urged both citizens and the business community to ensure full compliance with the updated timings. The administration has emphasised that adherence to the new schedule is essential for maintaining order and supporting the city's ongoing efficiency measures.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chairing a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet at the Finance Division today.

Governor Mandokhail Inaugurates High Voltage Engineering Lab at BUIITEMS, Highlights Reforms in Higher Education

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail announced significant progress in reviving the higher education sector, stating that public sector universities in the province have been successfully steered from crisis toward stability and growth.

He shared that, through strong vision and teamwork, meaningful reforms have been introduced across all public universities.

The overall budget for public sector universities has been increased from Rs2.5 billion to Rs8 billion, enabling institutional development and modernization.

These reforms, he noted, have improved university rankings and scoring, laying a solid foundation for quality education.

The governor expressed these views while inaugurating a High Voltage Engineering Laboratory and a Center for Strengthening Facilities at Balochistan University of Information Technology Engineering and Management Sciences.

The ceremony was attended by Vice Chancellor Dr. Khalid Hafeez, Pro Vice Chancellor Dr. Merwas Kasi, Principal Secretary to the



neering Laboratory and a Center for Strengthening Facilities at Balochistan University of Information Technology Engineering and Management Sciences.

The ceremony was attended by Vice Chancellor Dr. Khalid Hafeez, Pro Vice Chancellor Dr. Merwas Kasi, Principal Secretary to the

Governor Abdul Nasir Dautani, and Director P&D Dr. Saedullah Jan Mandokhail, along with heads of various departments.

The governor was briefed in detail about both projects. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Mandokhail emphasized that ensuring access to essential facilities in universities has created an enabling

environment where learning and innovation can truly thrive.

He added that timely salary payments have boosted faculty morale, allowing them to focus on guiding students toward modern knowledge and academic excellence.

He further highlighted initiatives such as the installation of solar systems in uni-

versities and the utilization of additional land for cultivation, which have strengthened institutional infrastructure.

The governor concluded that the higher education sector in Balochistan is now emerging with renewed energy and purpose, steadily moving toward a brighter and more promising future.

Revenue Meeting in Jaffarabad Reviews Agricultural Dues Recovery, DC Orders Strict Action Against Defaulters

JAFFARABAD: A key revenue meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Jaffarabad Khalid Khan to review the recovery of agricultural dues.

The meeting was attended by revenue department officials and field staff.

During the session, a detailed review of the ongoing recovery process was conducted, and progress toward achieving set targets was discussed.

Officials briefed the Deputy Commissioner that field operations have been intensified to ensure timely recovery of dues, while legal action is also being taken against defaulters.

Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Khalid Khan directed that the recovery of agricultural dues must be ensured under

all circumstances, warning that no negligence or laxity would be tolerated in this regard.

He emphasized that timely recovery of government dues is essential for improving the revenue system and increasing public resources.

He instructed all concerned officers to perform their duties diligently and effectively.

The Deputy Commissioner further stressed that field staff must improve their performance and take impartial action against de-

faulters to achieve the assigned targets.

It was also decided in the meeting that the recovery process would be continuously monitored and performance regularly reviewed to make the system more efficient and transparent.

Key words: Jaffarabad news, revenue meeting Balochistan, agricultural dues recovery, DC Khalid Khan, defaulters action Pakistan, revenue system improvement, government recovery drive

Musakhel: N-70 to N-55 Road Project Reviewed, Authorities Stress Quality and Timely Completion

MUSAKHEL: Under the development vision of the Government of Balochistan, Project Director Faqr Muhammad Kakar conducted a surprise inspection of Portion 5 of the N-70 (Loralai-Shabozai) to N-55 (Taunsa Sharif) road project in Musakhel.

During the visit, Deputy Project Director Ahmad Saeed Jaffar provided a detailed briefing on the progress of construction work.

The inspection included a review of small and large bridges under construction, as well as cutting and leveling activities along the route.

Speaking on the occasion, Project Director Faqr Muhammad Kakar emphasized the importance of maintaining high construction stan-

dards and ensuring timely completion of the project.

He stated that a strong communication and road network is essential for the development and prosperity of any region.

He added that the Government of Balochistan is committed to expanding road infrastructure across the province to provide better facilities to the public and bring the region in line with other developed provinces.

Issuing clear directives, he warned that compromise would be made on the quality of work.

Any negligence or shortcomings would result in strict legal action against contractors and project staff.

BSDI Development Projects Accelerate, Focus on Education, Health, and Infrastructure

HUB: Development projects under the Balochistan Special Development Initiative (BSDI) are progressing rapidly in Hub, amidst a boost in socio-economic growth across the district.

The comprehensive program is being implemented by multiple government departments, including

forums (Khuli Kachehri), ensuring that projects effectively address local needs.

Launched in 2025, Phase I of BSDI in Hub primarily focused on the health and education sectors.

Major achievements include the renovation and modernization of 30 primary and 20 middle schools, rehabilitation

further schemes are underway, including construction and renovation of schools, development of protection walls, rehabilitation of health centers,

construction of a road leading to Bhawani graveyard, beautification of Municipal Park, and renovation of a public library.

Additionally, 15 computer sets are be-



Communications and Works (C&W), Irrigation, Public Health Engineering (PHE), Local Government, and Municipal Committees.

Oversight of the projects is being carried out by the Deputy Commissioner Hub and Frontier Corps (FC) officials to ensure transparency and timely completion.

A key feature of BSDI is public participation, where development schemes are designed based on input from local communities and relevant stakeholders. These suggestions are collected through open

forums (Khuli Kachehri), ensuring that projects effectively address local needs.

Launched in 2025, Phase I of BSDI in Hub primarily focused on the health and education sectors.

Major achievements include the renovation and modernization of 30 primary and 20 middle schools, rehabilitation

further schemes are underway, including construction and renovation of schools, development of protection walls, rehabilitation of health centers,

construction of a road leading to Bhawani graveyard, beautification of Municipal Park, and renovation of a public library.

Additionally, 15 computer sets are be-

ing provided for the IT lab at the Boys Degree College Hub, while repair work on three anesthesia machines at Jam Ghulam Qadir Civil Hospital Hub is also nearing completion.

Sources indicate that Phase III of BSDI is expected to launch soon, bringing more development projects to the district.

Local residents have welcomed these initiatives and expressed gratitude to the Government of Balochistan, hoping that these projects will significantly improve the standard of living in Hub.

Kalat Marks 75 Years of Pakistan-China Friendship with Rally and Celebrations

KALAT: The district administration in Kalat organized a vibrant rally and celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of Pakistan-China friendship, highlighting the enduring ties between the two nations.

The rally was led by Additional Deputy Commissioner Shah Nawaz

routes including Shahi Darbar Road and Harob Road, chanting slogans in support of the long-standing friendship between Pakistan and China.

Security arrangements were effectively managed by the police to ensure a peaceful event.

Addressing the rally participants, Shah Nawaz stated that Pakistan-China relations are a shining example of mutual trust and everlasting friendship.

He emphasized that both countries have stood by each other during difficult times, and their bond continues to grow stronger with time.

He further noted that the relationship extends beyond diplomatic ties and is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people of both nations.



Anti-Encroachment Operation Launched on Double Road Quetta, Six Arrested

QUETTA: On the directives of Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti and Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehruallah Badini, a joint anti-encroachment operation was carried out by the district administration and the Metropolitan Corporation on Double Road, Quetta.

The operation was supervised by Assistant Commissioner (City) Muhammad Amir Hamza,

Special Magistrate Jiaz Hussain Khosa, and Encroachment Officer Muhammad Qasim.

During the action, illegal encroachments



were removed to clear public space and restore traffic flow.

Authorities also arrested six individuals for resistance, interference in official duties, and violation of regulations.

The arrested persons were shifted to

quetta, district administration action

operation, traffic restoration, Quetta, district administration action

Quetta news, anti-encroachment drive, Double Road Quetta, Balochistan government.

erations across Quetta will continue without discrimination to ensure law, order, and public convenience.

Quetta news, anti-encroachment drive, Double Road Quetta, Balochistan government.

erations across Quetta will continue without discrimination to ensure law, order, and public convenience.

erations across Quetta will continue without discrimination to ensure law, order, and public convenience.

Irrigation Works Accelerated to Ensure Fair Water Supply for Farmers

NASEERABAD: Commissioner Salahuddin Noorzi reviewed ongoing development and maintenance work in the Main Pat Feeder Canal and its subsidiary channels during the annual closure of irrigation water, as part of government efforts to support farmers.

The inspection took place in Naseerabad, where Executive Engineer Faresd Ahmed Pishani briefed the commissioner at the Beddar site.

He informed that, under directives from Mir Sarfraz Bugti, Chief Secretary Shakel



and its distributaries, including Balan, Qeedi, Magasi, and Umrani branches.

Commissioner Salahuddin Noorzi directed officials to ensure effective implementation of all development measures and strictly maintain quality

standards.

He stressed that these efforts are crucial to guarantee timely and equitable water distribution to farmers during the upcoming Kharif season.

He further stated that agriculture is the backbone of the national economy, and addressing farmers' issues remains a top priority of the government.

He added that all available resources are being utilized to improve the irrigation system, increase agricultural productivity, and ensure prosperity for farmers in the region.

Baloch and witnessed participation from heads of various government departments, trader associations, tribal elders, and members of the general public.

Participants marched from the DC Complex through key

TENDER NOTICE: The SPT ADMIN. CPPO-QUETTA invites bids from eligible bidders for supply of following items: 1. Structures and Building and Construction and Manufacturing Components and Supplies (Total Items Count: 7)...

rally participants, Shah Nawaz stated that Pakistan-China relations are a shining example of mutual trust and everlasting friendship.

Participants marched from the DC Complex through key

TENDER NOTICE: 1. SOLARIZATION OF BALUCHISTAN HIGH COURT COMPLEX QUETTA. 200,000,000...

War driven costs and opportunities

NEWS DESK: The US-Iran war and the consequential blocking of the Strait of Hormuz by both Iran and the US have provoked interest in economists and policymakers alike, as the dynamics involving geopolitics and economics in the region are likely to be reshaped. Pakistan has once again found itself in a situation where numerous challenges and opportunities have arisen as it takes centre stage in its efforts to defuse the crisis engulfing the Middle East.

A prolonged blockade of the Strait of Hormuz will lead to fuel and electricity shortages in the country, as significant sources of energy that power the economy pass through the strait. However, a continued blockade can increase maritime traffic into Pakistani ports if favourable terms, given Pakistan's importance as a mediating partner of both the US and Iran, are negotiated for transit for Pakistani vessels in the Strait of Hormuz.

First, the increasing oil prices in the global market have affected fuel prices in Pakistan. As the risk premium on transiting through the Strait of Hormuz increased and benchmark crude prices skyrocketed,

the ex-refinery price of fuel products also increased. Pakistan Petrol, diesel and kerosene registered their highest single price hikes in history, as the government was forced to manage the costs of rising crude oil prices and the risk premium. A prolonged oil shock will likely result in a higher import bill, which is likely to drain foreign exchange reserves and depreciate the Pakistani rupee, increasing the import bill further in rupee terms.

Before the price hike, the government had reported a surge in domestic demand for fuel products, which made the price increase even more important in order to curtail consumption and reduce pressure on the balance of payments. The initial decision to absorb the price shock has resulted in limited fiscal space for the government to give concessions. However, the government may continue to support the most vulnerable segments of the population, such as motorbike owners, the trucking industry and farmers, by providing them with cash subsidies.

Second, the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has shown sig-

nificant volatility in the last month, as it shows high levels of sensitivity to the geopolitical barometer in the region. For instance, the market surged more than 14,000 points on April 8 due to optimism about the ceasefire and possible talks, only to shed more than 6,000 points as talks broke down and the risks of war increased. The heightened tension in the region favours short-term survival tactics of investors rather than long-term productive investments in capital expenditures and expansion plans.

Further, as volatility increases, so does the risk premium. Investors require higher returns due to increased uncertainty, driving up the costs of acquiring new equity. Hence, this can lock out the equity market as a source for further investments. In addition, the cost of doing

business also increases with uncertainty as the blockade in the Strait of Hormuz continues. As essential raw materials and intermediate goods used in the production of several fuel-intensive products are sourced from the Persian Gulf, firms begin to pile up inventory instead of relying on cost-saving "just-in-time" methods. Therefore, the cost of working capital increases, impacting the

effect, risking an economic meltdown. A prolonged war in the region may thus amplify the negative impact on the economy. Considering the positives from the conflict, maritime traffic into Pakistan has increased as transshipment has surged. Transshipment is the shipment of containers to an intermediate destination, where larger shipments are broken into smaller ship-

ments, to avoid customs and duties checks as well as ensure more efficient transportation of goods. Port authorities in Pakistan have provided several incentives to shipping companies in the form of lower port charges and fees, handling of bulk cargoes, and provision of bonded facilities in northern Karachi to encourage transshipment, especially as uncertainty rages in the Persian Gulf. Karachi Port received more transshipment in the first 24 days of March 2026 than in the entire year of 2025, while transshipment activity in Port Qasim increased by more than 2,300%. This opportunity is set to place Pakistan as a major regional hub if maritime connectivity is improved along with the performance of the logistics sector.

Finally, the regional conflict has renewed discussion on the importance of investments in renewable energy, particularly solar power, and consequently the reduction in demand for imported fuel products. The latter can be achieved by replacing fuel-powered vehicles with electric vehicles. Increasing electricity tariffs coupled with volume-based pricing.

ments, to avoid customs and duties checks as well as ensure more efficient transportation of goods. Port authorities in Pakistan have provided several incentives to shipping companies in the form of lower port charges and fees, handling of bulk cargoes, and provision of bonded facilities in northern Karachi to encourage transshipment, especially as uncertainty rages in the Persian Gulf. Karachi Port received more transshipment in the first 24 days of March 2026 than in the entire year of 2025, while transshipment activity in Port Qasim increased by more than 2,300%. This opportunity is set to place Pakistan as a major regional hub if maritime connectivity is improved along with the performance of the logistics sector.

Finally, the regional conflict has renewed discussion on the importance of investments in renewable energy, particularly solar power, and consequently the reduction in demand for imported fuel products. The latter can be achieved by replacing fuel-powered vehicles with electric vehicles. Increasing electricity tariffs coupled with volume-based pricing.

Oil up almost 3% as US-Iran peace talks stall

NEWS DESK: Oil prices jumped almost 3% on Monday as peace talks between the United States and Iran stalled and shipments through the Strait of Hormuz remained limited, keeping global oil supplies tight.

The Brent crude benchmark rose \$3, or about 2.9%, to \$108.36 a barrel by 0828 GMT, its highest in three weeks. US West Texas Intermediate was up \$2.45, or 2.6%, at \$96.85. Brent and WTI gained nearly 17% and 13% respectively last week for their biggest weekly gains since the start of the war.

Hopes of reviving peace efforts receded over the weekend when US President Donald Trump said Iran could telephone if it wants to negotiate an end to their two-month war.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi

shuttled to and from mediators Pakistan and Oman before flying to Russia, with the US and Iran still seemingly far apart on issues including Iran's nuclear ambitions and passage through the Strait of Hormuz.

"The diplomatic stand-off means that every day 10-13 million barrels of oil fail to get to the international market, worsening an already tight oil balance. Therefore, there is only one direc-

tion for oil prices to go," said PVM Oil Associates analyst Tamas Varga.

Tehran has largely closed the Strait of Hormuz while Washington has imposed a blockade of Iran's ports. Traffic through the waterway remained limited, with only one oil products tanker entering the Gulf on Sunday, Kpler shipping data showed.

Goldman Sachs raised its oil price forecasts for the fourth

quarter to \$90 a barrel for Brent crude and \$83 for WTI, citing reduced output from the Middle East.

"The economic risks are larger than our crude base case alone suggests because of the net upside risks to oil prices, unusually high refined product prices, products shortages risks and the unprecedented scale of the shock," GS analysts led by Daan Struyven said in a note on Sunday.

PVARA says any deals, pilots involving virtual assets require prior authorisation

NEWS DESK: The Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA) said on Monday that any agreement or pilot announced involving virtual assets required prior authorisation.

Earlier this month, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) had announced a significant policy change, legalising and encouraging the use of virtual assets through the enactment of the Virtual Assets Act 2026. Under the Act, PVARA is the statutory authority responsible for the licensing, regulation, supervision and oversight

of virtual asset activities in Pakistan.

In an advisory published on Monday, the authority said it had noted recent public announcements by financial institutions regarding

understanding, pilots and partnerships involving virtual assets, including the use of stablecoins for remittances and cross-border payments.

"Under the Virtual Assets Act, 2026, the provision of virtual asset services to users in Pakistan, including the issuance, transfer, custody, exchange, or arrangement of virtual

assets, stablecoins, and allied blockchain-based solutions, falls within the regulatory ambit of PVARA," the authority said.

"Any agreement or announced pilot that results in, or directly enables, the provision of such services requires prior authorisation from PVARA," it added.

It further emphasised that public announcements of such initiatives without prior engagement with the authority might give rise to regulatory, reputational and Financial Action Task Force (FATF) compliance

risks", including the possibility that the proposed activity might "not lawfully proceed".

It said that it was committed to enabling "responsible innova-

"Any person (whether natural or legal) contemplating virtual asset pilots, stablecoin use cases, blockchain-based solutions, or tokenisation structures should engage early with PVARA through the regulatory sandbox, no-action relief letters, or the no-objection certificate process, and to seek prior authorisation," it said.

Central bank increases policy rate by 100 bps to 11.5pc

NEWS DESK: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Monday raised its key policy rate to 11.5 per cent.

In its meeting today, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided to raise the policy rate by 100 basis points to 11.50pc with effect from Tuesday, the SBP said in a statement.

It added that a detailed monetary policy statement will be released later.

The decision was in line with market expectations that the interest rate was bound to see a rise in Monday's announcement, albeit with differing opinions on the size of the hike.

A higher interest rate will yield more money for exporters and remitters but create serious problems for importers.

It will also increase the debt burden of the government, which borrows heavily from banks and corporates to accumulate liquidity needed to run the government. Treasuries, a re-

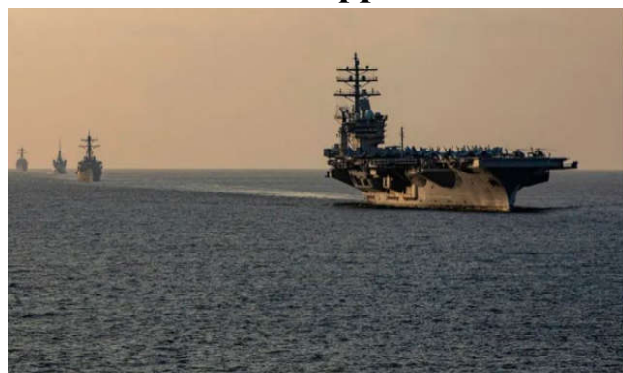
search-based currency tracker, had correctly predicted a 100bps hike. It said that this would not be because data compelled it, but as a pre-emptive move to protect hot money flows, counter inflation, and stay aligned with rising global bond yields.

"This is no longer just an oil story. Market relationships are breaking down. Oil, bonds, foreign exchange, and equities are all moving simultaneously often in conflicting directions, with no clear anchor," said Faissal Mansa, chief executive officer of Tresmark, a re-

The SBP has cut rates by a cumulative 1,150bps since June 2024, from a record high of 22pc.

Pakistan's consumer price inflation quickened to 7.3pc in March compared to the same period last year, breaching the SBP's 5pc to 7pc target range, with some analysts warning it could approach 10pc in April.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has previously cautioned Pakistan against premature easing and urged the bank to maintain a positive real interest rate.



Huge storage charge waivers at Karachi Port Trust terminals announced

NEWS DESK: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Sunday announced storage charge waivers ranging from 25 to 50 per cent at Karachi Port Trust (KPT) terminals to facilitate exporters.

In a statement, Chaudhry said the move marks a positive step to support the export sector, ensure trade continuity, and ease logistical bottlenecks.

Relief aimed at ex-

porters affected by disruptions in Gulf-bound shipments.

"Maritime institutions are being encouraged to adopt a more facilitative and trade-friendly approach so that operational delays do not result in avoidable costs for stakeholders," he said.

The minister emphasised the need for improved coordination among ports and terminal operators to ensure smoother logistics and better service delivery.

He described such relief measures as part of a broader strategy to make the maritime sector more responsive and competitive, and better aligned with national trade priorities. He added that efficient port operations are vital for economic stability, export growth, and investor confidence.

The effort secured waivers of 50 per cent at KGTI from March 1 to 20, 2026; 50 per cent at KCT from March 1 to 10, 2026; and 25 per cent at SAPT from March 11 to 31, 2026.

The minister said these measures apply to export containers stranded at terminal yards that could not be loaded due to opera-

tion issues. "The waivers aim to reduce financial pressure on importers and exporters, clear pending consignments, and improve cargo clearance efficiency," he added.

The effort secured waivers of 50 per cent at KGTI from March 1 to 20, 2026; 50 per cent at KCT from March 1 to 10, 2026; and 25 per cent at SAPT from March 11 to 31, 2026.

The minister said these measures apply to export containers stranded at terminal yards that could not be loaded due to opera-

tion issues. "The waivers aim to reduce financial pressure on importers and exporters, clear pending consignments, and improve cargo clearance efficiency," he added.



Kingsmen make playoffs with Rawalpindiz rout in regal show

NEWS DESK: Initiating his run-up from the Pavilion End, Hunain Shah steamed in, firing on all cylinders. Once the pacer started running, he never stopped. Delivering a searing yorker to castle Ben Sears, he sealed a play-off spot for Hyderabad Kingsmen in their debut HBL Pakistan Super League season with a commanding 108-run win over Rawalpindiz here at the National Bank Stadium on Sunday.

Hunain's run extended beyond the pitch, as he and team-mates converged near the University Road End — some sprinting in from the dugout, others from their fielding positions — mirroring Kingsmen's own tournament journey: four straight defeats, followed by four consecutive wins, another stumble, and finally a clinical finish when it mattered the most.

Set a daunting target of 245, Rawalpindiz never quite found the momentum required, folding for 136 with nearly three overs to spare despite lone resistance from Usman Khawaja.

The huge defeat not only ended Raw-a-lpindiz's campaign on a familiar disappointing note but also confirmed Kingsmen's remarkable entry into the playoffs as they ousted Lahore Qalandars on



net run-rate in the process.

Earlier, Kingsmen's innings was a tale of calculated aggression and relentless intent. Having been put into bat by Mohammad Rizwan, Kingsmen wasted little time in setting the tone.

Maaz Sadaqat launched the proceedings with a boundary off the very first ball and despite losing captain Marnus Labuschagne early to Sears,

Kingsmen's approach remained unchanged.

Maaz's brisk 28 off 11 balls, peppered with five fours and a six, ensured powerplay belonged firmly to Kingsmen.

Usman Khan then took charge, displaying controlled belligerence in a blistering 54 from 26 deliveries.

His innings, laced with four fours and as many sixes, provided the backbone of

Kingsmen's charge, even as wickets fell at the other end.

After Saib Ayub (12) disappointed again it was the middle-overs partnership between Kusal Perera and Glenn Maxwell that truly defined the innings.

With Kingsmen needing not just a win but a big one to overhaul their net run-rate deficit, the duo combined precision with power.

Perera played the anchor's role to perfection, finishing unbeaten on 50 off 30 balls, while Maxwell unleashed a breathtaking assault.

The Australian all-rounder's 70 not out off just 37 — featuring eight fours and three sixes — came at a crucial juncture when Kingsmen seemed losing momentum after a brief wobble.

Their 108-run partnership between Perera and Maxwell dismantled

Rawalpindiz's bowling attack, with pacer Mohammad Amir enduring a particularly forgettable outing, conceding 37 runs in his four overs without a wicket.

The late flourish from Hassan Khan, who smashed 16 off just four balls, propelled Kingsmen to an imposing 244-6 — a total that, as Labuschagne later noted, "really kept us in the game," adding that the side had felt confi-

dent "if we could do what we did in the first innings."

He also praised how "Glenn had a quiet tournament and then to find that innings" alongside key contributions from Perera, Usman and Hassan.

Rawalpindiz's reply began on a cautious note, with pacer Mohammad Ali maintaining tight lines.

However, Rizwan and Khawaja attempted

to counterattack, stitching together a 43-run stand. Rizwan looked fluent during his 26 off 16 balls before falling to Hunain, the player-of-the-match, whose introduction into the attack proved decisive.

Hunain's double strike in his first over — removing Rizwan and Kamran Ghulam — denied Rawalpindiz's chase irreparably. From there, Kingsmen's bowlers operated with discipline and clarity, aware that wickets were the key to securing the required margin of victory.

"Everyone was working really hard and had the conviction to win," Hunain said afterwards, explaining that the plan was simple: "hit the top of off-stump... we wouldn't go for wickets, they would come on their own."

Akif Javed complemented Hunain brilliantly, picking up three wickets, including that of the dangerous Sam Billings, who had been threatened with a quick 23.

All chipped in with wickets as well, while Maxwell capped off an all-round performance by dismissing Amir.

Khawaja stood firm amidst the collapse, crafting an unbeaten 66 off 43 balls, but lacked support from the other end as wickets continued to tumble at regular intervals.

Steep mountainside offers respite for daring Afghans

NEWS DESK: Backflipping down a steep and sandy mountainside, Afghan teenager Inari Saeedi wows the crowds of men who gather each springtime to unwind beside breathtaking views.

Hundreds of visitors travel each weekend to Reg-e-Rawan — a "movingsands" in Dari — to practice parkour or roll down the honey-coloured sand in Kapisa province.

"I feel afraid when I'm going for a flip or a jump, and of course I can get injured," said 16-year-old Saeedi, who nonetheless loves the thrill.

"When the week starts, I'm just waiting for the weekend so I can come to Reg-e-Rawan to have fun again," said the high school student.

Men and boys clapped in admiration as he ran down the hill and flipped forwards, then backwards, while his friends filmed on their phones.

Less daring onlookers sat atop rocks sur-

rounding the mountain, picnicking together and enjoying the scenery.

Reg-e-Rawan is off limits to women and girls, who are banned by the Taliban authorities from recreational spots such as parks.

Families with women were turned away when AFP journalists visited, while officials under the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice patrolled the area.

Humans need nature' Mirwais Kamran, a 48-year-old businessman, had driven three hours north from the capital Kabul with some of his 12 children.

"I feel joy when I come here with my children and friends," said Kamran, who climbed up the slope but stopped short of rolling down.

Nusratullah Nusrat, the provincial head of tourism at the Kapisa Department of Information and Culture, said the

site dates back thousands of years.

The unique feature of this place is that the sand never decreases despite people climbing up and sliding down," he told AFP.

Some people believe rolling in the sand also helps treat rheumatism, added Nusrat.

For visitors such as Nohzattullah Ahmadzai, who travelled from Kabul with a group of friends, Reg-e-Rawan lifts his mood.



Chelsea reach FA Cup final with narrow win over Leeds

NEWS DESK: Crisis-hit Chelsea beat Leeds United 1-0 at Wembley on Sunday to reach the FA Cup final, a first-half goal from Argentine midfielder Enzo Fernandez earning them a clash with Manchester City in the showpiece match next month.

Fernandez slipped between defenders to nod home a cross from Portugal winger Pedro Neto in the 23rd minute of the semi-final.

Eight-times winners Chelsea, who sacked coach Liam Rosenior on Wednesday after five Premier League defeats in a row, dominated the first half but had to rely on Robert Sanchez to keep Leeds at bay. He pulled off fine saves in each half from Brendan Aaronson and Anton Stach.

Chelsea coach Cesc Fàbregas, who took charge of Sunday's game, will lead the Blues in the Cup final on May 16. Eight-time FA Cup winners Chelsea are into the final for the 17th time in their history and the first since losing to Liverpool in the 2022 showpiece.



If Chelsea can beat City at Wembley, the inexperienced McFarlane would become one of the most unlikely FA Cup-winning managers after stepping up from his role with the club's Under-21 squad to assist Rosenior.

It was a missed opportunity for Leeds, who were playing in their first FA Cup semi-final since 1987 and haven't made the final for 53 years. Brendan Aaronson wasted a golden opportunity to put Leeds ahead in the 15th minute, racing clean through on

goal after Trevoh Chalobah's slip but failing to produce the accuracy to beat Robert Sanchez.

Chelsea responded to that scare by missing a good chance of their own, Joao Pedro drilling a low strike against the near post from close-range. But Fernandez eased the anxiety around Chelsea with his 23rd-minute opener. It was Chelsea's first goal for nearly 300 minutes since they netted against third tier Port Vale in the FA Cup quarter-final. Daniel Farkle's side improved

after their tepid first half but Sanchez kept the Blues in the lead as he denied Anton Stach and Dominic Calvert-Lewin.

Tempers were flaring but it was Chelsea kept their cool to close out a win that restored a modicum of pride after the Rosheim debacle.

GUARDIOLA HAILS 'EXTRAORDINARY CITY' On Saturday, City kept their bid for domestic treble alive as they downed Southampton 2-1, becoming the first side to ever reach four consecutive FA Cup finals.

Houston Rockets thrash LA Lakers

NEWS DESK: The Houston Rockets routed the Los Angeles Lakers 115-96 on Sunday to stay alive in the NBA playoffs as San Antonio's Victor Wembanyama made a triumphant return to the Spurs on the brink of advancing.

Amén Thompson scored 23 points to fuel the Rockets, who bounced back from a crushing overtime loss on Friday to cut the deficit in their best-of-seven Western Conference series to 3-1.

The Spurs and the Boston Celtics took commanding 3-1 leads in their series, San Antonio rallying from 19 points down to beat the Trail Blazers 114-93 in Portland and Boston thrashing the 76ers 128-96 in Philadelphia.

In Toronto, the Raptors edged the Cleveland Cavaliers 93-89 to level their series at two games apiece.

Denied a sweep in Houston, the Lakers can still finish off the Rockets when they host game five on Wednesday.

The Rockets, still without star Kevin Durant, harried the Lakers into 24 turnovers

yielding 30 Houston points.

Four-time NBA champion LeBron James made just two of nine attempts from the floor on the way to 10 points. He handed out nine assists but made eight turnovers.

With Los Angeles still missing their top scorers in injured Luka Dončić and Austin Reaves, center Deandre Ayton led the Lakers with 19 points and 10 rebounds.

Los Angeles were already down by 19 when he was ejected in the third quarter after catching Rockets center

Alperen Sengun in the head with his forearm.

Tari Eason added 20 points and Sengun scored 19 for Houston, who are trying to become the first NBA team to rally from an 0-3 deficit to win a playoff series.

In Portland, Wembanyama returned after missing one game because of a concussion and scored 27 points with 11 rebounds, three assists, four steals and a whopping seven blocked shots.

"I had lots of emotions in me before the game, obviously," Wembanyama said, declining to elaborate.



Blistering Chapman steers United to Qualifier as sloppy Sultans falter

NEWS DESK: A blistering, high-quality contest at the National Bank Stadium on Sunday night culminated in a statement chase from Islamabad United, powered by a scintillating knock from Mark Chapman, as they sealed second place in the HBL Pakistan Super League standings with a four-wicket win over Multan Sultans.

The result means United will now feature in Tuesday's Qualifier at the same venue against table toppers Peshawar Zalmi, carrying with them not just momentum but the cushion of a second chance at reaching the final.

Chasing a daunting 193, United were bowled off just 33 balls — an innings that blended power, placement and composure, while also being aided by a string of costly fielding lapses by Sultans.

Earlier, Sultans' innings had ebbed and flowed after a blazing start. Steven Smith and Sahibzada Farhan raced

to 60 without loss inside six overs, treating anything loose with disdain.

Smith was particularly elegant, threading boundaries through cover and even scooping audaciously over the wicket-keeper, while Sahibzada punished width and length alike.

However, the innings shifted dramatically when both the openers fell in successive deliveries — Smith deceived by a slower ball from Salman Mirza and Sahibzada perishing to Shadab Khan immediately after.

From there, United bowlers applied the brakes through the middle overs. Shan Masood attempted to anchor the innings, mixing elegant drives with a slog-sweep six, but his stay was not without fortune — notably dropped by Shadab early in the southpaw's innings.

Despite that reprieve, Shan's 44 lacked the required acceleration, and regular wickets — including a sharp caught-and-bowled effort by Chris Green — kept Sultans in check.

The late surge, though, was emphatic. Arafat Minhās launched

three towering sixes in a lively cameo, before Mohammad Wasim exploded in the final over, smashing two sixes and two fours to lift Sultans to a competitive 192-7.

That flourish — 67 runs off the last five overs — appeared decisive at the break.

United's chase began briskly but unevenly, with early wickets preventing them from fully capitalising on a good start. Devon Conway and Mohsin Riaz struck boundaries freely, but both fell attempting to maintain the tempo.

Fire breaks out in cargo truck on Indus Highway in Dera Ismail Khan

NEWS DESK: A container truck carrying clothing caught fire on the Indus Highway on Monday near the village of Dhora Solahn Adda, in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan, destroying goods worth millions of rupees, police said.

According to police, the cause of the fire has yet to be determined. The blaze engulfed the vehicle, reducing the cargo to ashes. Thick smoke spread across the area, completely closing the road to traffic.

Traffic on the Indus Highway, the main road from Peshawar to Karachi, was temporarily suspended, and the road was closed for 1.5 to 2 hours as emergency services rushed to the scene to bring the fire under control.

After the fire was extinguished, the truck's remains were



removed from the highway, and the road was reopened. Authorities said no casualties have been reported so far, while an investigation is underway to determine the cause of the fire.

On April 25, at least 11 people were injured in a traffic accident on the Karakoram Highway in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's Shangla district.

Rescue 1122 told The Express Tribune that the incident occurred near the Maira area within the jurisdiction of Shangla after nightfall, reportedly due to poor visibility on the main highway.

Pakistan records tens of thousands of road accidents annually. The World Health Organisation estimates that more than 27,000 people die each year on our roads, while hundreds of thousands are injured.

Global Fund team may come to inspect 'HIV mishandling'

NEWS DESK: Following reports of a possible visit by a team from the Global Fund (GF) to examine the rising number of HIV cases in Pakistan, the health ministry has tasked the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (Drap) and the Common Management Unit (CMU) with devising a mechanism to prevent HIV transmission, particularly through the reuse of syringes.

Experts say the Global Fund will likely prioritise placing technical professionals, rather than bureaucrats, in charge of disease control programmes.

More than 300 HIV cases among children were reported in Taunsa, reportedly due to the reuse of syringes. Additionally, Islamabad recorded at least 618 new HIV cases between January 2025 and March 2026.

A senior health ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that authorities had been informed that a GF team is expected to visit Pakistan soon to review the situation.

It is noteworthy that the Global Fund has invested over \$1 billion in Pakistan over the past two decades to combat HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria.

"Although we have not received official confirmation of the team's arrival, we have been told to expect it in the first half of May, as travel schedules have become unpredictable due to tensions in the

region," he added. "While the under-construction Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Red Line is an Asian Development Bank-funded scheme, the reconstruction of the University Road will be undertaken as a separate project funded through the provincial government's own resources."

The move came days after the chief minister had himself expressed "embarrassment" over the inconvenience caused to road users due to delays in the completion of the BRT Red Line along University Road.

Talking to Dawn, Karachi, Masood Murtaza Wahab, who accompanied the CM during his visit to the Red Line project on Sunday, said that the

Middle East, "the official said, adding that such teams usually arrive from Geneva."

Another health ministry official alleged that about a decade ago, HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria programmes were handled separately by technical experts. "Since the Global Fund is the main donor for all three programmes, they were merged under the CMU. After that, bureaucrats took control, and many focused more on perks and privileges than on disease control," he claimed.

Regarding funding, the official said that the GF provides grants in three-year cycles, with

approximately \$250 million allocated for the three diseases. "For HIV, funding is split equally between the government and the private sector," he added.

In June last year, the Global Fund said an audit by its Inspector General found slow progress and setbacks in tackling HIV and other infectious diseases in Pakistan.

The audit cited weak governance, limited strategic direction, insufficient domestic financing, and frequent leadership changes within the Ministry of Health as key challenges.

Syringes replaced When contacted,

has taken notice of the issue and sought a detailed briefing on HIV cases.

A senior health ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that authorities had been informed that a GF team is expected to visit Pakistan soon to review the situation.

It is noteworthy that the Global Fund has invested over \$1 billion in Pakistan over the past two decades to combat HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria.

"Although we have not received official confirmation of the team's arrival, we have been told to expect it in the first half of May, as travel schedules have become unpredictable due to tensions in the

region," he added. "While the under-construction Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Red Line is an Asian Development Bank-funded scheme, the reconstruction of the University Road will be undertaken as a separate project funded through the provincial government's own resources."

The move came days after the chief minister had himself expressed "embarrassment" over the inconvenience caused to road users due to delays in the completion of the BRT Red Line along University Road.

Talking to Dawn, Karachi, Masood Murtaza Wahab, who accompanied the CM during his visit to the Red Line project on Sunday, said that the

the health ministry spokesperson, Sajid Shah, said that HIV case numbers in Islamabad were misreported by some media, adding that the ministry was taking steps to control the disease.

He stated that 2cc and 5cc syringes had already been banned and replaced with auto-disposable syringes. However, 10cc syringes, still available in the market, can be reused. "The ministry has directed Drap and the CMU to investigate whether 10cc syringes are contributing to the spread of HIV. Measures will also be taken to ban them if necessary," he said.

Syringes replaced When contacted,

Parachinar Airport becomes operational after long hiatus 'Apologetic' CM Murad announces reconstruction of Karachi's University Road in 90 days

NEWS DESK: In view of growing criticism and widespread inconvenience to hundreds of thousands of commuters on a daily basis, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, while "apologising" to the people of Karachi, has announced that the deteriorated University Road will be reconstructed within 90 days.

"While the under-construction Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Red Line is an Asian Development Bank-funded scheme, the reconstruction of the University Road will be undertaken as a separate project funded through the provincial government's own resources."

The move came days after the chief minister had himself expressed "embarrassment" over the inconvenience caused to road users due to delays in the completion of the BRT Red Line along University Road.

Talking to Dawn, Karachi, Masood Murtaza Wahab, who accompanied the CM during his visit to the Red Line project on Sunday, said that the

the health ministry spokesperson, Sajid Shah, said that HIV case numbers in Islamabad were misreported by some media, adding that the ministry was taking steps to control the disease.

He stated that 2cc and 5cc syringes had already been banned and replaced with auto-disposable syringes. However, 10cc syringes, still available in the market, can be reused. "The ministry has directed Drap and the CMU to investigate whether 10cc syringes are contributing to the spread of HIV. Measures will also be taken to ban them if necessary," he said.

Syringes replaced When contacted,

Syringes replaced When contacted,

chief minister had taken the decision to reconstruct the University Road in response to public complaints and hardships, with the aim of providing relief to Karachi's residents.

"And it should be made clear that this is not a BRT Red Line-linked initiative, as the Sindh government has decided to undertake it independently using its own funds, solely to provide relief to the public," he said.

"The plan is to reconstruct University Road, which is used for regular traffic, from Safoora

Chowringi to Numais, so that while work on the BRT Red Line continues, commuters do not face hardship and the road remains usable," he said, adding,

"The project will cover all aspects, from road construction to the installation of a proper drainage system, to ensure smooth traffic flow."

CM visits Red Line site The chief minister reviewed city development projects and also visited the site of the BRT Red Line.

Speaking to the media, he apologised

to citizens for the delay in construction work on University Road. He assured them that the mixed-traffic lanes would be restored within three months.

He acknowledged the hardships faced by Karachi residents and said the government was committed to addressing their concerns and completing the project at the earliest.

He announced that the tender for the main corridor of Red Line's Lot 2 would be reissued, adding that discussions had already been held with

the FWO, whose officials had assured that construction activities would resume at the site within two to three days.

The chief minister said the mixed traffic corridor extends over approximately 12 kilometres and expressed hope that work on restoring the lanes would be completed within three months.

"The people have high expectations from the Sindh government, and I am adding that although the

Lot Two contract had been awarded four years ago, the quality of work had not been satisfactory.

Taking responsibility, the chief minister assured the timely completion of the project and said construction work would continue even during the upcoming Eid holidays to accelerate progress.

It may be noted that the Sindh government had recently cancelled the contract of a firm constructing the Red Line corridor from Mosamiyat to Numaish due to the slow pace of work and unsatisfactory performance.



Mild heatwave conditions likely in southern parts of Pakistan from April 29 to May 3: PMD

NEWS DESK: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Monday predicted that mild heatwave conditions were likely to develop in the southern parts of the country from April 29 to May 3.

In a weather update, it said that the upper parts of the country were likely to be affected by the westerly wave from the night of April 27 to April 29 and from May 3-5, due to which temperatures were likely to drop 2-4 degrees Celsius.

The department said that El-Niño conditions were likely to emerge during May-July.

El Niño is a naturally occurring climate phenomenon that warms surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. It brings changes in winds, pressure and rainfall patterns. The last El Niño contrib-

uted to making 2023 the second-hottest year on record and 2024 the all-time high.

"The observed climate suggests that May and June are the hottest months during the year, while south Punjab, upper Sindh,

southern/eastern Balochistan are heat-prone areas of the country, with temperatures sometimes

shooting up to 52°C due to heatwave conditions," the PMD said.

It added that the temperature ranges in these areas were between 43 to 45°C in May and June. But, according to observational data, temperatures in these areas were currently 2 to 4°C above the normal range.

The PMD further said it was continuously monitoring the situation.

"If any heatwave is likely to develop, an update will be issued accordingly," it said.

Last week, the United Nations said that the El Niño weather phenomenon was expected to return in mid-2026. Its weather and climate

agency said El Niño conditions could well develop as early as May to July.

Last week, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), through its National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC), also issued a nationwide alert warning of an intense heatwave in several regions until May 5.

Last week, the United Nations said that the El Niño weather phenomenon was expected to return in mid-2026. Its weather and climate

Tremors jolt Islamabad, parts of K-P after 5.7-magnitude earthquake in region: PMD

NEWS DESK: Tremors were felt in parts of Islamabad and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa on Monday after a 5.7-magnitude earthquake struck the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border region, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). In a statement, the PMD said the earthquake occurred at 11:46am with its epicentre located near the Afghanistan border with Tajikistan at

a depth of around 170 kilometres. The impact of the tremors was felt in Islamabad as well as several districts of K-P, including Swat, Shangla and Buner. No immediate reports of damage or casualties were received. On April 3, a 5.8-magnitude earthquake struck the Hindu Kush region in Afghanistan. Tremors were felt in Islamabad, Chitral, Peshawar, Swat, Shangla and other ar-

ea. Last month, a moderate earthquake measuring 4.5 on the Richter scale jolted Balochistan's Khuzdar district and surrounding areas, though no casualties or damage were reported. In February, an earthquake measuring 5.6 on the Richter scale struck the Hindu Kush region in Afghanistan, with tremors felt in Islamabad, Swat, Peshawar, Chitral, and other cities across Pakistan.

