



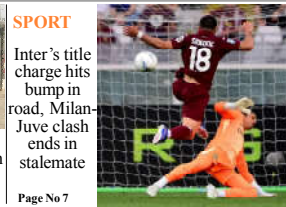
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QUETTA VOICE

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Mobile Book Vans and Science Labs Bring Education to Remote Villages in Balochistan

Syed Ali Shah,
Education Desk:

QUETTA: In a creative effort to bridge the education gap in far-flung areas, Balochistan's education authorities have rolled out innovative mobile initiatives that are literally taking books and science experiments directly to children's doorsteps.

Working in partnership with UNICEF, the provincial education department has introduced Book Vans and Science Rides across 14 districts.

These mobile units, which started as basic mobile schools, have now transformed into vibrant moving libraries, interactive learning centers, and fully equipped science labs on wheels.

The projects are currently active in Zhob, Qila Saifullah, Loralai, Pishin, Chaman, Quetta, Lasbela, Hub, Gwadar, Jaffarabad, Kachi, Kech, Jhal Magsi, and Nushki. While the Book Van operates province-wide, the specialized Science Ride is successfully running in Jaffarabad district.

Special appreciation goes to Nageeb Khilji, Program Manager of the UNICEF-funded Education Sector Plan (ESP), whose dedication, visionary leadership, and tireless efforts played a pivotal role in successfully launching and scaling this impactful program.

Officials say these mobile units have sparked fresh enthusiasm among children in areas where traditional schools are scarce or distant.

By promoting reading habits and hands-on scientific ex-



ploration, the initiative is helping nurture curiosity and a love for learning among young students who previously had limited access to quality edu-

ca-tional resources. Local students have warmly welcomed the project. "We get to explore so many interesting books right in our

village. I bought several books on different subjects," shared Zainab Shambay, a young student. Many children and parents

are now hoping the program expands to more districts across Balochistan. This UNICEF-supported effort is being hailed as a prac-

tical and effective step toward making education more accessible and engaging in some of the province's most underde-

Pakistan-Sri Lanka Launch Joint Counter-Terrorism Exercise 'Shake Hands-II' in Tarbela



RAWALPINDI:

Pakistan and Sri Lanka have commenced a two-week joint counter-terrorism exercise, "Shake Hands-II," aimed at enhancing operational coordination and military cooperation between the two countries.

The exercise began on April 27 in Tarbela, bringing together elite troops from the

Pakistan Army's Special Services Group (SSG) and Special Forces of the Sri Lankan Army. It focuses on strengthening professional skills through joint training in counter-terrorism operations.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the exercise is designed to promote the exchange of operational expertise and experiences between

the participating forces. It is expected to improve interoperability and deepen mutual understanding in tackling evolving security challenges. "Shake Hands-II" also underscores the longstanding defence ties between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, reinforcing military-to-military relations through structured collaboration and joint preparedness initiatives.

Four Dead, Including Two Children, as Heavy Rains and Lightning Strike Balochistan

Qaseem Shah, Ali Hamza:

QUETTA: Severe weather across parts of Balochistan has claimed four lives, including two children, in a series of tragic incidents linked to heavy rainfall, lightning, and strong winds.

According to officials, the fatalities were reported from the districts of Musakhel, Nasirabad, and Jafarabad. In Musakhel,

one man was killed after being struck by lightning. In

Nasirabad, two children lost their lives in a similar incident, highlighting the dangers of sudden thunderstorms in open areas.

Another fatality occurred in Jafarabad, where powerful winds caused a wall to collapse. A man was trapped under the rubble and died at the scene.

Authorities say that while rescue and response efforts are underway, teams are also assessing the broader impact of the rains, including damage to homes, crops, and local in-

frast-structure. The full scale of financial losses is still being determined.

Residents have been advised to remain cautious, avoid unnecessary travel, and take safety precautions during unstable weather, as further rain and thunderstorms are expected in the coming days.

The recent incidents underline the vulnerability of communities during extreme weather, especially in rural and underdeveloped areas where protective infrastructure is limited.



QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Balochistan Cracks Down on Official Vehicle Misuse with Strict Austerity Measures

Asim Khan: QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan has taken a decisive step toward transparency and fiscal responsibility by introducing strict reforms to end the misuse of official vehicles. Led by Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, the initiative reflects a broader push for austerity, accountability, and efficient use of public resources.

For years, the unauthorized use of government vehicles has been a visible symbol of administrative excess. The newly enforced ban on after-hours use, without prior approval, aims to dismantle this longstanding practice. By extending the directive to former governors, ex-chief ministers, retired officials, and other non-entitled individuals, the government has signaled a zero-tolerance approach.

GPS Tracking Systems in All Official Vehicles

A key component of the reform is a comprehensive audit of the entire government vehicle fleet.

Authorities will now ensure that fuel is issued only to verified and registered vehicles, closing gaps that previously enabled misuse. Additionally, outdated vehicles manufactured before 2005 will be phased out through auctions, helping reduce maintenance costs and streamline the fleet.

The introduction of GPS tracking systems in all official vehicles marks a major shift to-



ward digital governance. Combined with Safe City surveillance cameras, these measures are designed to monitor vehicle movement, prevent unauthorized usage, and strengthen oversight across urban areas.

The strict ban on

taking official vehicles outside the province without prior approval further reinforces accountability.

Austerity Measures are Both Timely and Necessary

From an economic standpoint, these austere-

ty measures are both timely and necessary. With limited public resources and growing financial pressures, ensuring responsible government spending has become critical.

The crackdown on vehicle misuse not only ad-

dresses financial leakages but also sends a strong message about reforming governance practices in Balochistan.

However, the success of this policy will depend entirely on its implementation. Past reforms have often

struggled due to selective enforcement and lack of continuity. To build public trust, authorities must ensure

across-the-board accountability, without exceptions or political considerations.

If enforced effectively, this initiative

could serve as a model for wider public sector reforms. More importantly, it has the potential to shift institutional

culture, moving away from privilege-driven practices toward a system rooted in responsi-

bility and transparency. The policy sets the right tone. Its long-term impact will depend on whether the government

maintains the same level of commitment in enforcing these rules as it has shown in announcing them.

How AI Is Making Modern Production Smarter and Faster

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

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

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

The Evolution of AI in Media Production

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

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

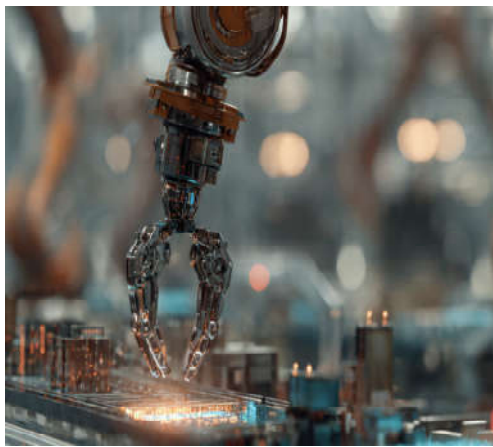
During pre-production, it assists with scriptwriting, budgeting, and storyboarding. In production, it enhances camera tracking, lighting adjustments, and virtual set design. Finally, in post-production, it streamlines editing, color correction, sound design, and even creates advanced visual effects.

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

Why Production Houses Are Turning to AI

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

The demand for quick content is also increasing. Streaming platforms compete to release new shows faster, putting pressure on production teams. At the same time, advertising agencies are already using AI tools for content creation, showing how quickly the industry is adapting to new technology. There is also a shortage of skilled post-production professionals. AI tools step in to



handle repetitive work like cutting scenes or syncing dialogue. This gives creative teams more time to focus on storytelling and innovation while keeping projects on schedule and within budget.

How Production Houses Are Using AI

AI is changing how production houses work from start to finish. It supports every stage of filmmaking, from planning and shooting to editing and final delivery.

AI is making the pre-production stage faster and more creative. Writers now use tools like ChatGPT, Jasper, and Sudowrite to draft scripts or explore story ideas. In fact, 60% of film studios are exploring AI-driven scriptwriting tools to speed up brainstorming and script development.

These tools help generate dialogue, plot twists, and creative concepts in minutes, saving time while keeping creativity flowing.

Storyboarding and concept visualization have also become easier. Tools like Midjourney, Runway ML, and Pika Labs turn written ideas into visuals, helping directors and producers see how scenes might look before filming begins. This makes planning smoother and reduces the need for costly revisions later.

AI is also improving casting and budgeting. Some tools analyze data to predict how well an actor will connect with audiences. AI software like Celtx and StudioBinder helps plan budgets and schedules. These tools make it easier for studios to manage costs, track

spending, and stay on time. Production AI is transforming the way films are shot on set.

For example, AI-powered cameras can automatically track actors, adjust framing, and optimize lighting in real time. This helps directors capture perfect shots faster and reduces the need for repeated takes. According to MarketsandMarkets, the use of AI cameras in film production is expected to grow by 22% annually by 2027.

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

projects. AI supports crews during filming. Voice recognition systems can follow script lines or adjust camera settings through simple voice commands.

As a result, on-set work becomes smoother, and the crew can focus more on storytelling rather than technical details.

In Post-Production

This phase gets a big boost from AI, especially in editing and sound design. Tools like Runway ML, Adobe Premiere Pro AI, and Descript automate tasks like cutting syncing, and scene detection. Smart apps can identify key moments and streamline workflows, helping editors focus on storytelling.

AI also improves color grading and sound editing. It can automati-

cally balance colors, refine lighting, remove background noise, and sync soundtracks. Even some free tools can apply complex color grading for a consistent look. These features save time and make the final product polished and professional.

In addition, AI enhances VFX, CGI, and localization. It removes green screens, fills missing frames, and generates realistic effects quickly. Voice tools like Resemble.ai and ElevenLabs speed up dubbing and translations for multiple languages.

The use of AI in video editing has reduced production time by an average of 30%, showing how much it improves efficiency.

AI also helps with versioning and distribution. It can create multiple edits for different platforms like social media, TV, or YouTube Shorts. This allows studios to repurpose content easily and deliver it quickly.

Overall, AI makes post-production faster, more precise, and more creative.

Case Studies: How AI Is Shaping Modern Production

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

Netflix, one of the biggest entertainment companies in the world, began producing its own content in 2012. To make collaboration easier, the company wanted to create a visual effects (VFX) studio in the clouds. This would let artists work from anywhere, making it easier to collaborate and streamline workflows, helping editors focus on storytelling.

Using NICE DCV and Amazon EC2 G4 instances, Netflix built fast and secure remote workstations. These cloud tools allowed artists to edit, animate, and

render with high-quality visuals while keeping performance smooth. The system helped Netflix move from testing to full production in just one year.

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

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

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

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

Working with the Australian Institute for Machine Learning (AIML), they built AI software that could analyze grain samples in seconds.

Their system reduced testing time from 24 minutes to just 90 seconds and achieved 98% accuracy. This made the grain supply chain faster and more reliable.

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

Falkner advises businesses to focus on real problems first and then see if AI is the right solution.

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

Britain's King Charles meets Trump in bid to salvage ties

NEWS DESK: Britain's King Charles III met Donald Trump at the White House early Tuesday, kicking off a high-stakes state visit shadowed by transatlantic tensions and a new alleged attempt to assassinate the US president.

Behind the warm welcome for Charles and Queen Camilla in front of the cameras lay a deepening rift in the so-called "special relationship" between Washington and London over Trump's war in Iran.

With such tensions simmering, Charles will address a joint meeting of Congress on Tuesday, when he will tell US lawmakers that the long history between the two countries is one of "reconciliation and renewal," according to a released excerpt from the king's speech.

In mild Washington sunshine, Charles and Trump exchanged handshakes and apparently friendly remarks, which reporters were unable to hear, outside the White House South Portico. First Lady Melania Trump, wearing a primrose yellow suit, gave Charles and Camilla kisses on both cheeks. Camilla was wearing a Cartier brooch with the British and US flags in platinum set with rubies, emeralds and diamonds. Trump — whose fascination with



the British royal family is a point of leverage for UK diplomats and his wife hosted the royal couple for tea and later gave them a tour of the beehive on the White House's carefully manicured South Lawn.

Afterward, the royals made their way to a garden party with hundreds of guests at the US President Donald Trump, First Lady Melania Trump, Britain's King Charles

III and Britain's Queen Camilla pose by a model of Trump's proposed ballroom as they tour the White House beehive on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC, on April 27, 2026. —AFP/No Churchill

The four-day visit had been meant to celebrate the historic ties between the two close allies for the 250th anniversary of US independence from the British monarch's ancestor, George III.

The US President Donald Trump, First Lady Melania Trump, Britain's King Charles

III and Britain's Queen Camilla pose by a model of Trump's proposed ballroom as they tour the White House beehive on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC, on April 27, 2026. —AFP/No Churchill

Secretary Karoline Leavitt said Monday the visit would "honor the long-standing and special relationship." But it has ended up with Charles, 77, having to

wage a diplomatic charm offensive after 79-year-old Trump bitterly criticised London's refusal to help Washington with the Iran conflict.

The royal trip is also going ahead despite a shooting Saturday at the glitzy White House Correspondents' Association dinner attended by Trump. A suspect charged with trying to assassinate the president was arraigned in

court on Monday.

As a result, an already meticulously choreographed visit with limited media engagements to avoid unscripted moments is now being held under even tighter security than before.

First Lady Melania Trump laughs with Britain's King Charles III as they tour the White House Beehive on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC, on

April 27, 2026. —AFP

The royals arrived earlier at Joint Base Andrews near Washington, where they were greeted on the red carpet by children carrying bouquets.

On Tuesday, the Trumps will meet Charles and Camilla in the Oval Office and hold a state dinner. Charles will also become the first British monarch to address Congress since his mother, the late queen Elizabeth II, in 1991.

The royals will visit New York on Wednesday, touring the 9/11 memorial, before departing Thursday for Bermuda for Charles's first visit to a British overseas territory as monarch.

But as Trump's war with Iran drives a rare wedge between London and Washington, the visit has generated considerable controversy.

He has repeatedly lambasted British Prime Minister Keir Starmer over his war opposition, alongside his government's immigration and energy policies. The US president has branded Starmer "no Churchill" — referring to wartime premier Winston Churchill, who coined the "special relationship" phrase.

Starmer has publicly criticised the US, but defended the state visit. An early April YouGov poll found 48

percent of Britons support cancelling it.

"Elephant in the room" Trump has said the king's visit could help repair transatlantic relations.

"He represents his nation like nobody else can do it," Trump told Fox News on Sunday.

The US visit also represents a personal test for Charles, who has been battling cancer in recent years.

US President Donald Trump and Britain's King Charles walk on the day they meet for tea at the White House in Washington, DC, US, April 27, 2026. —AFP

But the king showcased his diplomatic skills during Trump's state visit to Britain last September, with Royal Holloway University of London monarchy expert Craig Prescott noting he is "generally very good" at navigating such occasions.

Prescott added that Charles would likely address the war — the "very big elephant in the room" — in a coded way in his speech to Congress.

Meanwhile, the scandal around late US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein threatens to encroach on the highly choreographed tour.

Charles has faced a major crisis over the friendship his brother, the former prince Andrew, had with the billionaire, who died in prison in 2019.

Bahrain revokes citizenship of 69 people for 'glorifying or sympathising with' Iranian attacks

NEWS DESK: Bahrain has revoked the citizenship of 69 people over what it described as sympathy with Iran's hostile acts "and collaboration with foreign entities, the kingdom's interior ministry said in a statement.

The ministry said that the 69 people included accused individuals and their family members, and that they were all of non-Bahraini origin.

"The Bahraini nationality has been revoked from those individuals for glorifying or sympathising with the 'hostile Iranian acts, or engaging in contacts with external parties," the ministry said.

It said the revocations had been carried out "in accordance with royal directives from King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and were based on Article 10/3 of the

Bahraini Nationality Law.

The article provides for the revocation of citizenship in cases of "causing harm to the interests of the kingdom or acting in a manner that contradicts the duty of loyalty to it".

The interior ministry said the competent authorities were "continuing to study and review" who deserves Bahraini citizenship.

Sayed Ahmed Alwadei, advocacy director at the Bahrain-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), condemned the move, calling it "the beginning of a dangerous era of repression" and saying the decisions were "imposed without legal safeguards or any 'right of appeal'".

BIRD said it was "the first such revocation of citizenship in Bahrain since 2019. Between 2012 and 2019, Bahrain revoked the citizenship of at least 990 nationals, the group said.

Iran fired 'at targets' in Bahrain and other Gulf Arab states where the United States has military bases after the US and Israel launched a war against Iran on February 28.

Bahrain's "Global Communication Office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the case and on the institute's statement.

had been completed, adding that it had "been a delicate process to rescue trapped passengers from the mangled carriages."

"We need to involve 'personnel with certain skills to perform a measured extraction," he said, adding there were no more passengers to find, although "rescuers will take action if they find body parts as they continue to comb through the wreckage."

A women-only carriage bore the "brunt of the crash. Syarif said all of the victims were women and most of them had been pinned by crushed metal.

Before disengaging the trains, rescuers were seen using angle grinders to cut through the metal of the compartments and reach the survivors.

Bobby told an earlier press conference that the commuter train first collided with a taxi on the tracks and was then hit by the "long-distance train."

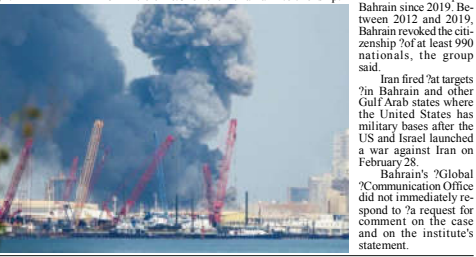
Taxi operator Green SM Indonesia said on Instagram that the taxi involved in the accident was part of its fleet. It said it "had sent information to authorities to assist in the investigation."

orders investigation Prabowo Subianto said he had agreed to build a flyover near the train tracks to help resolve heavy traffic congestion, adding "that authorities would investigate the collision." He said large parts of the train network are not well-maintained.

Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Committee (KNKT) is investigating the crash.

On Tuesday, rescuers and police descended upon the train station, some looking for their relatives.

Heryati, a passenger, said she initially intended to use the women's-only carriage but opted for the one behind it.



Pakistan rejects 'frivolous and fake' reports of strikes, deaths in Afghanistan's Kunar province

NEWS DESK: The information ministry on Monday rejected Afghan media reports alleging that the Pakistan Army carried out missile or air strikes in Afghanistan's Kunar province, calling the claims "false" and "frivolous".

In a statement posted on X, the ministry's fact-checking account shared a picture from Afghan news outlet TOLOnews claiming that "Pakistani military conducted missile/jet attacks on Kunar province on April 27, targeting Sayyed Jamaluddin Afghan University and residential areas, killing three people and injuring 45 (mostly women and children), as per Najibullah Hanif".

The ministry dismissed the allegations, saying the claim "is a blatant lie and an attempt to gain sympathy, to cover up support by the Afghan Taliban to Fina al Khawari".

Fina al Khawari is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to



the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). "Pakistan's targeting is precise and intelligence-based. No strike has been carried out at Sayyed Jamaluddin Afghan University," the ministry said.

"It indicates that the Afghan Taliban regime, having nothing to offer to its citizens in terms of service, welfare and governance, relies only on misinformation and hate," the statement

amplified by Indian media. In another post on X, the ministry criticised what it called "continuous propaganda" surrounding fake strikes in Kunar, accusing Afghan media and officials of being "backed by 'Indian propagandists'".

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Indonesia train crash toll rises to 14 as rescuers complete evacuation

NEWS DESK: The death toll from a train collision near the Indonesian capital Jakarta has risen to 14 with another 84 injured, the train operator said on Tuesday.

"We need to involve 'personnel with certain skills to perform a measured extraction," he said, adding there were no more passengers to find, although "rescuers will take action if they find body parts as they continue to comb through the wreckage."

A women-only carriage bore the "brunt of the crash. Syarif said all of the victims were women and most of them had been pinned by crushed metal.

Before disengaging the trains, rescuers were seen using angle grinders to cut through the metal of the compartments and reach the survivors.

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Congress claims India's stance triggered rift in Brics moot

NEWS DESK: SENIOR Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Monday criticised the Union government over the outcome of the BRICS+ meeting held in New Delhi, alleging that India's position on the Israel-Palestine issue contributed to the failure to issue a joint statement.

In a statement, Ramesh said the April 23-24 meeting of Deputy Foreign Ministers and Special Envoys from BRICS+ nations concluded without a joint communique, pointing

to differences among member states, including Iran and the United Arab Emirates, over the ongoing conflict in West Asia. He, however, claimed that a major sticking point was India's push to soften the language on Israel and Palestine.

"While divergent positions between the UAE and the UAE are understandable, what is shocking and shameful is that India pushed for diluting the language on Israel and Palestine, which was unacceptable to other members including Russia, China, Bra-

zil, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, the UAE, and Iran," Ramesh said. The Congress leader further accused the government of deviating from India's longstanding diplomatic stance on the Palestinian issue, alleging that New Delhi has shown "steadfast solidarity" with Israel despite the ongoing conflict in Gaza, strikes in southern Lebanon, and tensions in the West Bank. His remarks reflect the opposition party's broader criticism of what it views as a shift in India's West Asia policy.

Ramesh sharpened his criticism by targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging close alignment with Israeli leadership. "The Prime Minister of India and the Prime Minister of Israel are clearly soulmates," he said.

The absence of a joint statement at the BRICS+ meeting underscores the complexities within the expanded grouping, where differing geopolitical priorities and regional conflicts continue to challenge consensus-building. —The Statesman (India)/ANN.

Diamer Bhasha Dam Project announces 79 job opportunities for local residents

GILGIT (INP): The Diamer Bhasha Dam Project (DBDP) has announced a total of 79 job and internship opportunities for local residents of District Diamer and Tehsil Harban Basha in Upper Kohistan, as the

mega hydropower project continues to generate employment in surrounding areas. Gwadar Pro quoting official details stated, 69 vacant positions have been announced for District Diamer across technical, administrative and support categories. These include roles such as junior engineers, surveyors, overseers, clerical staff and office assistants, along with technical support positions including electrical, mechanical and drivers. Additional vacancies are also available under the Land Acquisition and Resettlement (L&AR) section, which handles compensation and community-related matters.

In a separate initiative, 10 support and placement positions have been allocated for residents of Tehsil Harban Basha in Upper Kohistan. These roles focus on entry-level technical and administrative work, including office assistance, site support and junior technical tasks, aimed at providing hands-on experience to local youth.

The recruitment drive is part of ongoing efforts by Pakistan's Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) to ensure local participation in the project while supporting economic activity in project-affected areas. The positions are spread across different Basic Pay Scale (BPS) grades, with eligibility criteria varying by role. Educational requirements range from matriculation to intermediate and relevant technical diplomas.



ISLAMABAD: A business delegation of the European Union meets Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Pakistan to launch electric cart service at major airports

ISLAMABAD, April 27 (INP): The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) has decided to introduce an electric cart service at major airports to facilitate passenger movement between key areas within terminal premises. According to PAA, the service will be launched in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and Multan airports in the first stage. A tender has already been issued for the procurement of electric cart service, it said. The facility will enable passengers to travel from parking areas to concourse halls and return to the parking areas from the terminal building. PAA Director Commercial Rabia Salmi said that passengers will be able to book electric carts through an app, adding that the initiative would significantly ease travel, particularly for

Pakistani runners deliver depth, discipline, tactical brilliance at London Marathon 2020

KARACHI (INP): The 46th edition of the London Marathon turned into a statement event for Pakistani runners, as more than 30 participants from Pakistan and the global diaspora combined endurance with tactical maturity to produce a series of impressive performances. From front-running pace control to disciplined race execution, the performances reflected not just participation, but a growing understanding of elite marathon racing. At the heart of Pakistan's success story was UK-based Abdullah Muhammad Athar, whose 2:38:53 finish made him the fastest Pakistani in the race, but it was the manner of his run that stood out. Athar executed a near-perfect race strategy, maintaining remarkable consistency through the early and middle phases. He covered the first 10km in 37:07, holding a steady

3:43/km pace, and reached halfway in 1:18:23, firmly on course for a sub-2:40 finish. Even as fatigue set in during the latter stages, a common challenge in marathon running, Athar managed the slowdown smartly. His pace gradually shifted from 3:41-3:49/km between 20K-30K to around 4:00/km in the final stretch, ensuring a strong finish without a dramatic drop-off. Reflecting on his journey, Athar emphasised the deeper value of the sport. "Most people in Pakistan think running takes too much time and commitment, but for me it does the opposite, it focuses the mind and gives structure to a busy life," he said. "About a year ago, my 10K PB was around 37 minutes. Today, I ran that pace back to back four times, finishing the London Marathon in 2:39 as the fastest Pakistani."

Funeral across Line of Control lays bare pain of divided families

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): The death of a member of a divided Kashmir family in Indian Jammu and Kashmir and the agonising scenes of his relatives in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) watching his funeral from across the Line of Control (LoC) have once again underscored the human cost of the territory's protracted division, stirring an outpouring of grief on social media. Raja Liaquat Khan, 50, a native of Keran in Kupwara district, passed away at a Srinagar hospital on Saturday after suffering a heart attack earlier in the week. His death, however, turned into a poignant spectacle of separation, as his brothers and close relatives — settled in AJK for decades — could only witness his final rites from across the divide. Liaquat's father, Raja Iqbal Khan, had migrated to AJK in 1990 along with one of his two

wives and eleven children, like hundreds of other families who fled repression by Indian troops in border areas at the time. Liaquat and his mother remained on the other side of the divide, where he was raised by his uncle, Raja Sharafat Khan, a retired additional deputy commissioner. 50-year-old man's death underscores human cost of territory's protracted division, stirring an outpouring of grief on social media. After completing his education, Liaquat worked as a revenue department and was serving as a deputy collector at the time of his death. Given that all his siblings — including three brothers and two sisters from his mother, as well as six brothers from his father's second marriage — live in AJK, the family chose to bury him in his ancestral village of Keran instead of Srinagar or Kupwara. The village is divided from its namesake by the icy Neelum River, which also serves as the LoC in many parts of the Neelum Valley. On Saturday afternoon, mourners gathered on both banks of the river, separated by hundreds of yards but unable to bridge the divide. Video clips circulating on social media showed hundreds of people accompanying the funeral procession along the riverbank on the Indian-held side. At one point, they halted and uncovered the deceased's face from the coffin, allowing relatives across the river a final glimpse. The scenes triggered intense grief on the AJK side, where cries and wails of family members echoed along the river. Keran has long symbolised both separation and fleeting connection. Following the 2003 ceasefire between Pakistan and India, divided families would gather along the riverbanks here to exchange news, waving to each other, shouting across the waters, and even tossing letters and small parcels tied to stones. But those informal contacts have largely disappeared after India's August 2019 unilateral move, which stripped the territory of its special status and reorganised it into two union territories. On Saturday, while mourners on the AJK side waved and called out in grief, those on the opposite bank largely refrained from responding. "You cannot imagine the level of fear that prevails there now. People avoid even waving hands, fearing they may later be questioned by Indian agencies," said Raja Anif, one of the cousins of the deceased. Funeral prayers were offered around 6pm PST in a field near the river on the Indian occupied side, visible from across the divide, after which Liaquat was laid to rest in the village graveyard.

Jl hits out at govt for incomplete uplift project in Karachi

KARACHI, April 27 (INP): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi emr Munim Zafar has said incomplete Red Line Project on University Road is creating inconveniences for the citizens. In a statement issued here on Sunday, Munim Zafar said millions of dollars have been spent on the feasibility of the project which began in 2016, but it is still incomplete. "The project was supposed to be completed in 2023. New deadline for the completion of the project is set as 2026, but it is also doubtful. Karachi's roads and institutions have become victims of mismanagement. Educational and commercial activities on University Road have been severely affected. Four workers have lost their lives so far due to the Red Line project," the JI leader said, urging the government to immediately restore University Road to its original condition. The augmentation of the K-4 project along with the BRT has not been completed. An attention is being made to ensnare the people through feudal system. This style of governance will no longer continue in Karachi. Jamaat-e-Islami will continue to raise its voice for the rights of the people, he added.

KP Govt announces direct wheat purchase from farmers market

PESHAWAR (INP): The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has announced to directly purchase 225 000 tons of wheat from local farmers during the current season. According to officials on Monday, the Primary objective of this policy is to guarantee fair compensation for farmers while stabilizing wheat and flour prices in the market. By eliminating middlemen, the government aims to strengthen farmers' earnings and improve the overall supply chain of wheat. To make the procurement process transparent and farmer-friendly, special measures have been introduced. Authorities stated that payments to farmers will be made within 24 hours of wheat purchase and will be provided in cash to ensure immediate financial support. This step is expected to help farmers better prepare for upcoming crops. In addition, the provincial government has developed a strategy to fully stock all government warehouses with sufficient wheat reserves. The goal is to maintain uninterrupted availability of wheat throughout the year, prevent artificial shortages and keep prices within reach for the general public.

Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) finalizes three development projects

GWADAR (INP): The Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) has formally finalized three development projects, including the expansion of the breakwater, carrying out dredging, and the construction of flooring for parking small boats, according to a Gwadar PIO's report. The development took place as Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) Gwadar, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, and Director General Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), Mo'in-ur-Rehman Khan, visited Sarbandar Fishing Jetty, Pishukan Fishing Jetty, Pishukan Boys High School, and other key development projects. On this occasion, Chief Engineer (GDA) Hajj Syed Muhammad, Project Director Sarbandar Jetty Muhammad Hanif Hussain, Executive Engineer Qasim Baloch, Executive Engineer Akbar Baloch, contractor Haji Sharif Zema, and LC Chairman Sarbandar Naseeb Nosherrwani were also present. A GDA official said that the PC-I of these three projects has already been prepared and will be included in the upcoming financial program. He added that it was also finalized that GDA will have the authority to set appropriate charges for commercial activities at the jetty. "The aim is to make the jetty revenue-generating and financially self-sustainable, ensuring continuous maintenance and dredging through generated income," he said. Later, the delegation reviewed the under-con-

struction 500-meter-long causeway at Marine Drive Pallari Kor Hor, where work is progressing rapidly. They expressed satisfaction with the quality and pace of work and indicated that the project would be completed within the next two months. According to Executive Engineer Qasim Baloch, the work had been affected by rains but has now been accelerated, with efforts underway to complete it before the potential impact of strong summer sea waves. DG GDA Mo'in-ur-Rehman Khan stated that GDA has constructed two modern fishing jetties in Sarbandar and Pishukan, which have significantly facilitated fishermen. In particular, fish unloading, safe berthing of boats, and business activities have improved, benefiting the fisheries sector and the local economy. During the visit to Sarbandar Fishing Jetty, a large number of fishermen and their representatives were also present, urging the immediate inauguration of the jetty fully operational. MPA Gwadar and DG GDA also reviewed progress on the rehabilitation of Pishukan Fishing Jetty. Executive Engineer Akbar Baloch briefed that a comprehensive plan for the jetty's full rehabilitation has been prepared, its PC-I completed, and the construction of an access road to the jetty is also part of the project.



LAHORE: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani in a meeting with Chancellor of various Universities.



SHAOSHAN, HUNAN PROVINCE: President Asif Ali Zardari in a meeting with Mr. Li Jiyang, Chairman of the Xiangtan People's Congress and Ms Zhang Xihui, Director of the Shaoshan Administration Bureau of Hunan, during his visit to Mao Zedong Memorial Museum.

APHC-AJK discusses HOJK's current political situation, future strategy

ISLAMABAD (INP): An important meeting of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter was held in Islamabad today under the chairmanship of Convener Ghulam Muhammad Safi. The meeting discussed the current political situation in the territory, the sensitive nature of the Kashmir cause and various aspects of the future strategy. The participants of the meeting reaffirmed their resolve that the Hurriyat Conference will continue to follow its previous principled policy regarding the electoral process in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan. It was clarified in the meeting

that the Hurriyat Conference will not be part of the election campaign in favour of or against any political or religious party, group or individual. This position is based on the principle that Kashmir is a national, ideological and international issue of self-determination, which is against its basic spirit and dignity to subordinate it to temporary political interests or electoral affiliations. It was also decided in the meeting that uniting the political and religious leadership of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the masses, for the Kashmir cause is the most important need of the hour. In this context, the impar-

tial, principled and balanced role of the Hurriyat Conference was declared to be of key importance, so that it can maintain its credibility, trust and effectiveness as a common national voice. The participants said the Hurriyat Conference is the heir of the martyrs of Kashmir and the trustee of their great mission and in this capacity, it has the fundamental responsibility to make its struggle more effective, organized and all-round to bring the unfinished mission of the martyrs' achievement of the right to self-determination to its logical conclusion. It was declared as the permanent strategy of the Hurriyat Confer-

ence to continue this struggle in a principled, peaceful and in accordance with international laws and diplomatic values. There was complete consensus in the meeting that the representative teams of the Hurriyat Conference will establish formal and effective contacts with all major political and religious parties of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The main objective of these contacts will be to persuade the relevant parties to include the basic, key and principled points of the Kashmir dispute in their election manifestos, so that the Kashmir cause can be highlighted in a comprehensive manner at the state, political and public levels.

Governor Balochistan Hosts Sindh Police Officers at Governor House Quetta, Stresses Professional Training and Public Service

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffer Khan Mandokhail welcomed trainee officers of the Sindh Police at the Governor House Quetta, stating that they are not only protectors of Sindh but of the entire Pakistan.

He emphasized that professional training is essential to enhance officers' capabilities and improve law and order across the country. He added that the training course would provide valuable guidance and practical support in performing their duties effectively.

Addressing the interaction session, the Governor said that after completing their training, officers carry a greater responsibility to utilize their knowledge and experience for the welfare of the public. He stressed that police officers must perform their duties without succumbing to any pressure.

The event was attended by DIG and Deputy Commandant National Police Academy Islamabad



Sarfaraz Ahmed Falaki, Principal Secretary to the Governor Abdul Nasser Dottari, and Muhammad Zaman from the National Police Academy Islamabad.

During the session, trainee officers from Sindh asked questions regarding security, higher education, girls' education, public participation in development, and government initiatives, which were answered in detail by the Governor.

Governor Mandokhail highlighted that Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan in terms of area, rich in valuable mineral resources, a long coastline, and a strategically important geographic location, making it a key contributor to Pakistan's bright future.

He expressed pride in hosting trainee DSPs from Sindh, including nine talented female officers, and said their presence reflects their commitment to professional growth and public service.

He added that the purpose of the study tour is not only training but also to sharpen leadership skills, professional abilities, and vision for a safer future.

The Governor concluded by praying that the officers' stay in Quetta remains productive, memorable, and pleasant.

Keywords: Quetta news, Governor Balochistan, Sindh police training, National Police Academy Islamabad, public service Pakistan, law enforcement training, police officers, interaction, Balochistan governance, professional development police

C&W Secretary Babar Khan Directs Timely Completion of Strategic Infrastructure Projects in Balochistan

QUETTA: Secretary Communications and Works (C&W) Balochistan, Babar Khan, has emphasized that the department plays a crucial role in the province's development and prosperity, stating that sustainable growth and infrastructure improvement depend on its effective performance.

He expressed these views while chairing a review meeting on the progress of ongoing strategic projects across the province.

The meeting was attended by Zoom by Chief Engineers, Superintending Engineers,



and Executive Engineers from all six zones.

During the session, engineers from various districts provided detailed briefings on the status of development projects and highlighted financial and technical challenges affecting progress.

The C&W Secretary directed that no de-

lays would be tolerated in the completion of key projects.

He stressed that with limited time and increasing challenges, engineers must ensure timely delivery of all development schemes as a top priority.

He further instructed that all technical issues must be resolved immediately, and

no compromise should be made on the quality of development work.

Babar Khan also directed Chief Engineers and Superintending Engineers to conduct regular field visits and submit progress reports every two weeks.

These reports must include identification of technical problems to ensure uninterrupted

progress and timely completion of projects.

Keywords: Quetta news, Balochistan infrastructure, C&W department, development projects Balochistan,

Babar Khan secretary, public works progress, strategic projects Pakistan, construction and development updates

Modern Ambulances Provided to Chaman Health Department to Improve Emergency Services

CHAMAN: Speaker Balochistan Assembly, Captain (R) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai, handed over two new state-of-the-art ambulances to the Health Department Chaman, aiming to enhance emergency medical services in the area.

The ambulances were formally presented to District Health Officer (DHO) Chaman Dr. Naveed Badini and Medical Superintendent (MS) Dr. Owais.

The ceremony was attended by Deputy Commissioner Chaman Habib Ahmed Bangalazi, senior officials, and media representatives.

Officials, including the Deputy Commissioner and DHO, termed the provision of ambulances a commendable step and expressed gratitude to the Speaker, calling it a significant contribution to improving healthcare services in



Chaman, particularly at the New DHQ Hospital.

Speaking on the occasion, Captain (R) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai stated that the ambulances would be used for both new and old DHQ hospitals as well as the wider health department to provide timely medical assistance to the public.

He added that, in

line with the vision of Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti, efforts are underway to modernize the health sector in Chaman and across the province, ensuring better facilities and relief for citizens.

The Speaker emphasized that these ambulances would be provided free of cost, especially benefiting un-

deprived communities.

He further highlighted that the ambulances are equipped with modern facilities, including oxygen supply and essential emergency equipment, enabling doctors to provide immediate care and ensure timely transportation of patients to hospitals.

Keywords: Chaman

Naseerabad DC Chairs Key Meetings on Polio Eradication, Calls for 100% Campaign Success

NASEERABAD: Deputy Commissioner Naseerabad, Captain (R) Zulfikar Ali Khattar, chaired separate important meetings regarding the DPAC program and the post-polio campaign to review ongoing anti-polio efforts across the district.

The meetings focused on evaluating the performance of previous polio campaigns, identifying challenges and gaps, and finalizing a comprehensive strategy for upcoming phases.

N-Stop Officer Dr. Ghulam Yaseen Dajli provided a detailed briefing on the DPAC program, highlighting targets, progress, and key challenges faced during implementation.

He also shared in-



sights into achievements and shortcomings observed during earlier campaigns.

The sessions were attended by District Health Officer Dr. Ayaz Jamali, MS Dr. Habib Pandrani, Dr. Zaher Ahmed Umrani, DSM PPHI Tariq Shahbaz Kattuhar, Deputy Commissioner's PS Manzoor Shirazi, police officials, representatives

of the World Health Organization (WHO), and other relevant stakeholders.

Addressing the participants, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized that coordinated, effective, and result-oriented efforts are essential to eradicate polio completely.

He stated that making the polio campaign

100% successful is a national, social, and moral responsibility to protect children from lifelong disability.

He warned that any negligence or carelessness in this regard would not be tolerated and directed officials to strengthen micro-planning, closely monitor team performance, and pay special attention to sensitive and remote areas to ensure that no child is left unvaccinated.

The DC further stressed the need for strong coordination among the health department, district administration, police, and international partners to ensure the success of the post-polio campaign.

New Deputy Commissioner Office Inaugurated in Sherani to Improve Public Service Delivery

SHERANI: A newly constructed Deputy Commissioner Office was formally inaugurated in the Mani Khwa area of Sherani district during a dignified ceremony, marking a significant step toward improved administrative services in the region.

The inauguration was jointly performed by Asif Ali Farakh, Hazrat Wali Kakar, and Muhammad Azhar Khan, who cut the rib-

bons to officially open the facility.

The ceremony was attended by tribal elders, local notables, youth, and a large number of officials from various government departments, reflecting strong public interest in the project.

Speakers at the event emphasized that the establishment of the new office will significantly improve administrative efficiency and

ensure faster delivery of government services to the public.

Commissioner Zhub Division Asif Ali Farakh stated that the government is committed to providing facilities at the doorstep, and the new office in Sherani is part of this broader effort.

He added that improved infrastructure will enhance the performance of government institutions.



Deputy Commissioner Sherani Hazrat Wali Kakar assured that the district administration will utilize all available resources to resolve public issues promptly and ensure transparent governance.

Officials also announced that several development projects are underway in the district, including road improvement, upgrade of education, sports, and

social institutions, and enhancement of healthcare facilities.

Additionally, clean drinking water schemes for Mani Khwa and surrounding areas will soon be initiated to provide basic amenities to residents.

At the end of the ceremony, guests toured different sections of the new office and appreciated the arrangements. Public circles welcomed the initiative,

expressing hope that it will usher in a new era of development and prosperity in the region.

Keywords: Sherani news, Deputy Commissioner office inauguration, Zhub Division development, Balochistan infrastructure, public service delivery Pakistan, government offices Sherani, development projects Balochistan, clean water schemes

Anti-Drug Awareness Session Held at University of Loralai Under "Project Pakistan" Initiative

LORALAI: A joint awareness session on drug prevention was organized by the District Administration Loralai in collaboration with the University of Loralai under the "Project Pakistan" initiative, aiming to educate students about the dangers of narcotics.

The event was attended by Vice Chancellor University of Loralai Dr. Ehsanullah Kakar, Deputy Commissioner Loralai Captain (R) Muhammad Haseeb

Shuja, Additional Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ismail Mengal, and Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) officer Javed Aslam.

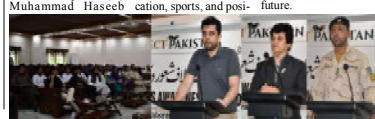
A large number of students, teachers, and civil society members participated in the session.


Speakers highlighted that drugs are a silent menace destroying the future of the younger generation.

They urged students to focus on education, sports, and positive activities to stay away from substance abuse.

They also stressed that eliminating drugs requires collective efforts from government institutions, parents, teachers, and society as a whole.

The Deputy Commissioner stated that the district administration is taking indiscriminate action against drug traffickers and will continue to implement stricter measures in the future.





UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND

NOTICE FOR INVITING BIDS

for USF Next Generation Optical Fiber Network & Services Projects FY25-26
Tender ID: USF/SP/OpticFiber/2025-26/03

- In accordance with the Pakistan Telecommunication (Re-organization) Act 1996 and Universal Service Fund Rules 2006, as amended, USF will conduct auction for Optical Fiber Network & Services Projects with the following details:

S#	Project ID	District	Deadline for Registration	Bid Submission Date & Time	Bid Opening Date & Time	Information Package Availability
1	DFC-UC-PB-LOT39V	Gujranwala	14/May/26	21/May/26 (11:00 Hrs)	21/May/26 (11:30 Hrs)	Along with Advertisement
2	DFC-SMALL-LOT-KP2	Swabi	2/June/26	8/June/26 (11:00 Hrs)	8/June/26 (11:30 Hrs)	14/May/26
3	DFC-UC-PB-LOT14V	Attock	11/June/26	18/June/26 (11:00 Hrs)	18/June/26 (11:30 Hrs)	14/May/26

- USF will conduct a reverse auction bidding process, for the award of subsidy to be paid to the successful bidder to assist in meeting the costs of providing Optical Fiber Network and Services in identified areas for a contractual period of 10 years. Bidding will be conducted in accordance with the open competitive bidding procedures given in the information package.
- Only USF Contributors are eligible to participate in the bidding process under the Universal Service Fund Rules 2006, as amended. The bidder must be an Active Taxpayer (verifiable through ATL) and have a valid NTN and Sales Tax registration. NTN and Sales Tax registration certificates are mandatory and must be provided within the technical proposal.
- Information regarding the lot, auction process, services to be provided, eligibility to participate in auction, registration instructions, mode of auction, event schedule and other necessary information is available in the respective "Information Package" on USF website.
- Detailed description of the services to be offered and service areas (RFA/SSA/Information Package) will be provided to the bidder upon registration and payment of PKR 1,000, for each lot, non-refundable, in the shape of Demand Draft or Pay Order in favor of "Universal Service Fund". Please refer to the schedule above for registration deadline.
- Registered bidders must submit their bids, along with a bid bond of Pak Rs. Two (2) million for each lot in the manner and mode prescribed in the RFA, to the undersigned address mentioned below. The bid will be opened in accordance with the schedule mentioned above. Any bid received after specified date and time shall be returned unopened. This advertisement is available on USF and PPPRA websites.
- USF may reject all bids or proposals any time prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposal.

Chief Technical Officer
Universal Service Fund
3rd Floor, Evacuee Trust Complex, Agha Khan Road, F-5/1, Islamabad
Tel: 051-9212308-09, Fax: 051-9214261
Email: projects.tenders@usf.org.pk Website: www.usf.org.pk

Wheat harvesting — changing dynamics and fallout

NEWS DESK: The wheat harvest season is currently in full swing in Punjab, while in Sindh, it is drawing to a close. Over time, wheat harvesting practices have steadily evolved in response to technological advancement and a range of emerging challenges, including climate change, a shrinking harvest window, and growing labour constraints.

In this changing environment, four distinct wheat harvesting methods are now widely practised. However, farmers' preferences vary across regions, shaped by factors such as farm sizes, the need for wheat chaff (toori), the risk of erratic rainfall, access to harvesting machinery, and relative cost considerations.

For the past several decades, farmers across most districts have relied on the traditional method, manually cutting the crop with sickles, tying it into bundles, leaving them in the field for a few days to reduce moisture, and then threshing with tractor-driven threshers. This method remains particularly attractive for smallholders, as it produces high-quality chaff (toori), highly valued as livestock feed.



3,000 units in 2026. At the same time, threshers now cost 0.8 to one million rupees — and the declining purchasing power of farmers are key factors behind the drop in sales.

The rapid shift towards capital-intensive harvesting is transferring income from small farmers and labourers to machinery service providers, further widening the rich-poor gap.

Once a popular among farmers, the use of threshers and reapers is now declining rapidly in Pakistan, as farmers increasingly shift towards combine harvesters.

According to Usman Mughal, Managing Director of Greenland Engineers, Daska (District Sialkot), machines used alone used to produce over 15,000 reapers annually a decade ago; this figure has now dropped to barely 3,000 units in 2026. At the same time, threshers now cost 0.8 to one million rupees — and the declining purchasing power of farmers are key factors behind the drop in sales.

Even so, threshers and reapers continue to retain their relevance in some regions, such as Pothohar, where farm fields are small, irregular, and uneven, making the movement of combine harvesters difficult. Likewise, threshers remain widely used among smallholders who rely on family labour for crop cutting or require fine

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main available in rural areas of most districts due to sluggish industrial and commercial activities in the country, the compression of the harvest season creates sharp, short-term spikes in demand. During the peak harvest period, the recurring cost of spare parts place additional pressure on foreign exchange reserves.

Given the high cost of new machines, models from the 1970s and 1980s remain in operation, resulting in higher harvesting losses.

On the other hand, hundreds of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) engaged in manufacturing threshers and reapers — are facing severe business declines. This downturn has also adversely affected the business of thresher and reaper vendors and significantly reduced employment opportunities. Similarly, increased use of combine harvesters is displacing rural labour that once relied on seasonal harvesting work, thereby exacerbating rural poverty.

Previously, many farmers disliked combine harvesters, as they left wheat straw and residue scattered in the field. However, over the past two years, locally modified combine harvesters — equipped with choppers and D-shaped tanks for chaff collection — have been gaining traction. These modifications enable farmers to harvest both grain and wheat straw in a single operation.

As a result, farmers are no longer compelled to burn crop residue to clear their fields — thereby reducing air pollution — or to rely on tractor-driven straw choppers to make chaff

Industry leaders warn interest rate hike to hit exports, economic growth

NEWS DESK: Trade and industry leaders on Monday criticised the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) for raising the interest rate by 100 basis points to 11.5 per cent, calling the move ill-timed and unfortunate.

They argued that it came at a delicate stage when the country was recovering from inflation — stabilising amid the Middle East conflict.

They noted that even when inflation is on the lower side, the policy rate remained elevated at 10.5pc.

The industry had repeatedly urged the central bank to bring it down to single digits, in line with regional benchmarks, but these appeals were ignored.

Offering a different view, Secretary General of the Overseas Investors Chambers of Commerce and Industry (OICCI), M. Abdul Aleem, told Dawn that the 100-bps hike was largely expected and necessary for the overall sustainability of the economy.

OICCI backs move, cites sustainability over manufacturing strain

While the OICCI is concerned about the increased financial pressure on the manufacturing and other key sectors,

Pakistan no longer needs contractionary, regressive monetary or fiscal policies.

A high-interest-rate environment fundamentally contradicts the government's stated goal of economic revitalisation, export growth and job creation — rendering Pakistani products uncompetitive on regional and international markets, he said.

Industries simply cannot survive, let alone expand, under such an exorbitant cost of borrowing while competing with regional economies with much lower interest rates. He said the rate hike would only escalate the cost of doing business, choke private-sector credit even further, and potentiate the pressures of de-

industrialisation.

FPCC's Senior Vice President Saqib Fayyaz Magoon said the decision would effectively shut the door on affordable access to financing for SMEs. With exorbitant energy tariffs and heavy compliance costs, this monetary tightening will push many manufacturers toward default or complete closures, making the Federal Board of Revenue's ambitious revenue targets unachievable.

Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) President Muhammad Rehan Hanif said prior to the Middle East war, inflationary pressures were relatively subdued and well within a manageable range.

Overall, challenging times lie ahead, Mr Aleem said.

Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) President Atif Ikram Sheikh said the continued tightening of monetary policy would deal a crippling blow to the struggling industrial and export sectors, as

“we prioritise overall macroeconomic stability as the only sustainable path for the growth of the economy and for foreign investment.”

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Economy to 'grow by 4pc' in FY26, says finance minister

NEWS DESK: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said the country has been consolidating gains in key macroeconomic indicators, highlighting that the current account posted a surplus of slightly over \$1 billion in March.

On April 16, the State Bank of Pakistan announced that Pakistan recorded a surplus of \$1.07 billion in March compared to a surplus of \$2.3 billion in February.

He expressed satisfaction over the performance of IT exports, marking a key step in strengthening bilateral economic ties.

The forum brought together around 1,000 senior policymakers, European and Pakistani business leaders, investors and financial institutions.

With the EU being the largest single market in the world, a leading exporter of outward Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) globally and Pakistan's number one export destination, the forum represents a significant opportunity to further the EU-Pakistan economic partnership.

The minister gave a detailed presentation at the forum on the government's economic performance and progress achieved so far, noting that the improvement was significant compared to the previous fiscal year.

Earlier this month, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) upgraded Pakistan's economic growth rate to 3.5pc for the current fiscal year.

According to data released by the National Accounts Committee (NAC) on April 2, Pakistan's economy grew by 3.89pc in the October-December quarter of 2025-26, showing an increase from 2.18pc recorded in the same period last year.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan also addressed the forum and underscored that the EU remains Pakistan's largest export destination, particularly with the GSP+ framework. However, he stressed that the future of this partnership lies beyond trade, focusing on investment, technological collaboration, and integration into global value chains.

Khan stressed that the future of the EU-Pakistan partnership lay “beyond trade, focusing on investment, technological collaboration, and integration into global value chains.”

The European Union Ambassador to Pakistan, Raimundas Karobolis, at the inauguration, said the EU enjoys strong economic relations with Pakistan.

“It is a source of pride for me to say that the EU is the top export destination for Pakistan. The purpose of the forum is not just to celebrate our trade relations, but to deepen, diversify, ‘green’, and transform them into long-lasting investments.



UAE leaves Opec and Opec+ in huge blow to global oil producers' group

NEWS DESK: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) said on Tuesday it quit Opec and Opec+, dealing a heavy blow to the oil exporting groups and their de facto leader, Saudi Arabia, at a time when the war on Iran has caused a historic energy shock and unsettled the global economy.

The stunning loss of the UAE, a longstanding Opec member, could create disarray and weaken the group, which has usually sought to show a united front despite internal disagreements over a range of issues from geopolitics to production quotas.

UAE Energy Minister Suhail Mohamed Al-Mazrouei told Reuters the decision was taken after a careful look at the regional power's energy strategies.

Asked whether the UAE consulted with Saudi Arabia, he said the UAE did not raise the issue with any other country.

“This is a policy decision, it has been done after a careful look at current and future policies related to level of

production,” said the energy minister.

Opec Gulf producers have already been struggling to ship exports through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow chokepoint between Iran and Oman through which a fifth of the world's crude oil and liquefied natural gas normally passes, because of Iranian threats and attacks against vessels.

Mazrouei said the move would not have a huge impact on the market because of the situation in the Strait.

But the UAE's exit from Opec represents a big win for US President Donald Trump, who has accused the Arab and Gulf response to the Iranian attacks in a session at the Gulf Influencers Forum on Monday.

“The Gulf Cooperation Council countries supported each other logistically, but politically and militarily, I think their position has been the weakest historically,” Gargash said.

“I expect this weak stance from the Arab League and I am not surprised by it, but I haven't expected it from the (Gulf) Cooperation Council and I am surprised by it,” he said.

Govt plans gemstone export hubs

NEWS DESK: Emphasising the importance of increasing exports of locally sourced precious gemstones, the government has decided to establish three centres of excellence to improve the production of these natural resources.

Chaired by a review meeting to align Pakistan's gemstone mining and processing sector with international standards and enhance exports, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also directed policy measures to boost gemstone exports by utilising domestic resources.

The Premier said Pakistan had been blessed with abundant natural resources, including precious stones, and stressed that the sector has untapped potential to increase exports by leveraging local resources.

The meeting was being established to provide international-standard training in cutting, polishing and preparing gemstones for use in jewellery. Three excellence centres to boost processing standards

Islamabad. The meeting was further informed that Pakistan would host its first international gemstone exhibition in July. Additionally, initiatives were underway in collaboration with Sri Lanka and China to train skilled manpower in specialised gemstone processing.

The officials also briefed the prime minister on measures taken by the ministry of petroleum to promote mining practices that minimise wastage.

Jammu and Kashmir, while work was under way to identify a site in



Three-time champions United, hungry Zalmi set to fight for PSL final spot

NEWS DESK: If Islamabad United are HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) royalty, Peshawar Zalmi are the dream team of the ongoing season. The sides, respective champions of the first two editions of the competition, lock horns at the National Bank Stadium in the Qualifier here on Tuesday.

The winner shall make it to the final. The loser, though, will have a second bite at the cherry in the Eliminator.

In the decade-long history of the tournament, United repeated their title-winning feat twice since their run for the maiden title.

Zalmi, meanwhile, have not even featured in a final for the last five years.

This season, however, the "Yellow Storm" has taken over with brute force, winning eight of their 10 matches in the league stage to finish top of the table ahead of the playoffs — their last fixture, against Lahore Qalandars, their only loss.

One match ended without a result for the Babar Azam-led side, with rain washing out their clash against United only in the early stages of the season.

Scheduled to play only once against each other in the league stage, this time, the two teams finally have the chance to fight for not only a



place in the decider, but the tag of the strongest team of this season as well.

While Zalmi have dominated nearly throughout, United have had hiccups, but have shown their ability to fight back after each setback.

Captained by Shadab Khan, their four-wicket win over Multan Sultans on Sunday to

book the Qualifier spot along with their eight-wicket drubbing of Hyderabad Kingsmen earlier were statement victories.

But if it is about making a statement, no opportunity to do so can get bigger than the Qualifier against Zalmi, who have managed to build a near-flawless team combination.

Babar is in the midst of it all, sandwiched between the explosive Mohammad Harris and the impeccable Kusal Mendis, the leading run-scorer of the tournament with 500 to his name, just 15 more than Babar.

Getting rid of that heavily-loaded top-order brings forth Michael Bracewell's power, Aaron Hardie's ruthlessness and the belligerence of Abdul Samad

and Fikhar Ahmed, who has been impressive with the ball as well.

He links the batting line with a bowling attack featuring the fiery Ali Raza — the pacer becoming the youngest Pakistani player to take a T20 hat-trick against Karachi Kings recently.

Mohammad Basit and especially left-arm wrist spinner Suftyan

Muqem, the highest wicket-taker this season with 19 to his name.

What brought Zalmi to the Qualifier, however, won't mean anything if it is not emulated in the match, according to the team's bowling coach Azhar Mahmood.

"It is true that we have been playing good cricket, but we still need to continue that if we are to win the tournament,"

said the former Pakistan all-rounder, who was a part of the United coaching staff last season.

"I've worked with United and I know the players' inside-out, worked with a few in the Pakistan team (as Test coach), so there is definitely an advantage and a slight edge," Azhar admitted, adding that the Zalmi players would still need to execute the

plans based on the available insights.

United, who preferred golf over training unlike Zalmi on the eve of the Qualifier, however, would place their bets on batters Sameer Minhas — the Pakistan U-19 sensation — and the dangerous Mohsin Riaz up top along with the reliable New Zealander Devon Conway.

Then there would be the likes of Mark Chapman and Shadab Khan — who did well against the Sultans on Sunday — for Zalmi to deal with ahead of their season's attack featuring Inad Wasim, Salman Ishaq and spinner Chris Green.

"It's shaping up to be a really exciting match, and I'm looking forward to the challenge, especially bowling against a strong batting line-up," Green told reporters on Sunday about playing against Zalmi.

"They have a lot of quality players, and we'll be aiming to restrict them to a low total while taking wickets along the way."

The National Bank Stadium has been home to two nearly opposite kinds of pitches this season; one of them a batting paradise, the other a sluggish, bowling friendly surface. The former is likely to favour Zalmi, but if the latter is to host the Qualifier, it may deliver a thrilling encounter.

Inter's title charge hits bump in road, Milan-Juve clash ends in stalemate

NEWS DESK: Inter Milan's charge to the Serie A title was held up on Sunday after they threw away a two-goal lead to only draw 2-2 at Torino, while a goalless draw between AC Milan and Juventus left the Champions League side open. Leading just after the hour mark through two headed goals from Marcus Thuram and Yann Bisseck, Inter looked set to stroll to victory in Turin.

But Giovanni Simone got Torino back into the match out of nowhere in the 70th minute when he dinked a finish over Yann Sommer, and Nikola Vlasic earned the hosts a point from the penalty spot nine minutes later.

"You think everything is easy and that you have everything under control when you're two goals ahead. Then you concede to make it 2-1 because of a mistake while playing out from the back and you get nervous," Inter coach Cristian Chivu said.

"To be honest it

could have been worse." Sunday's draw should only be a bump in the road for Inter who will secure a 21st league crown if they beat Parma at the San Siro next weekend. With four games left in the season, Inter are 10 points ahead of their nearest challengers Napoli, who won the Scudetto last year.

Chivu's side will be heavy favourites to seal the deal next weekend in front of their home support as Parma are a team with nothing left to play for this season. Inter are also on for a domestic

double after coming back from two goals down to win a thrilling Italian Cup semi-final with Como on Tuesday. Luciano Spalletti said that the battle for a top-four spot "will go down to the wire" following a drab match at the San Siro which left Milan and his Juventus team looking over their shoulders. Juve sit fourth and are three points ahead of both Como, 2-0 winners at Genoa earlier on Sunday, and sixth-placed Roma. Milan are

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.

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," said Wembanyama, named

the 2026 NBA Defensive Player of the Year and the running for Most Valuable Player. "Excitement, frustration, so I let it all out tonight," he said.

The 22-year-old Frenchman praised the doctors who oversaw his path through the NBA concussion protocol, but voiced dissatisfaction with the process that requires a gradual return to physical activity under medical supervision.

The way the situation was handled was very disappointing," Wembanyama said, declining to elaborate.

PM Shehbaz signs off on letting fans attend PSL playoffs

NEWS DESK: Interior Minister and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi announced on Monday that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had signed off on letting fans attend all three Pakistan Super League (PSL) playoff matches.

In a social media post on X, Naqvi said, "Just had a meeting with PM Shehbaz, and I am pleased to share that we have secured his approval for public attendance in all three PSL playoff matches as well."

However, this comes with an important condition from his side that fans are strongly encouraged to use public transport or minimise fuel consumption while attending the matches, in line with the ongoing national austerity efforts," Naqvi added.

He said that PM Shehbaz had also conveyed his best wishes to all four teams competing in the playoffs. "Looking forward

to some exciting and entertaining cricket ahead," Naqvi said.

Three playoff matches are scheduled to be held this week, before the final on Sunday. On Tuesday, Islamabad United will face Peshawar Zalmi in Karachi, while Hyderabad Kingsmen and Multan Sultans will meet in Lahore on Wednesday.

The loser of the first match will then face off against the

winner of the second in Lahore on Friday.

The decision comes two days after Naqvi announced that PM Shehbaz had allowed spectators in the stadiums during the PSL final following his request. The final match is scheduled for May 3 at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore.

Matches for this year's tournament were initially scheduled to be held across six venues — Lahore,

Karachi, Rawalpindi, Multan, Peshawar, and Faisalabad.

However, prior to the commencement of the tournament, it was announced that it would go ahead sans spectators while matches would be held only in Karachi and Lahore in line with the government's austerity drive, which was launched in the wake of the global fuel crisis triggered by the US-Israel's war on Iran.

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 put the Spurs on the brink of advancing.

Amen 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 even if they host game five on Wednesday.

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



yielding 30 Houston points.

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The way the situation was handled was very disappointing," Wembanyama said, declining to elaborate.

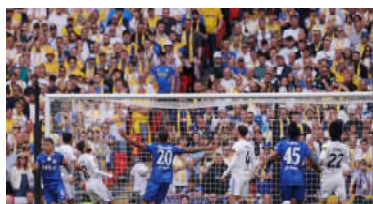
Chelsea reach FA Cup final with narrow win over Leeds

NEWS DESK: Crisis-hit Chelsea beat Leeds 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 on Wednesday.

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

Chelsea, who sacked coach Liam Rosenior on Wednesday after five Premier League defeats and a relegation battle, became one of the most unlikely FA Cup winners after stepping up from his role with the club's Under-21 squad to assist Rosenior. It was a post from close-range, 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 missed the anxiety around Chelsea 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



showpiece. If Chelsea can beat City at Wembley, the inexperienced McFarlane would become one of the most unlikely FA Cup winners after stepping up from his role with the club's Under-21 squad to assist Rosenior. It was a post from close-range, 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 missed the anxiety around Chelsea 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 missed the anxiety around Chelsea 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

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 Rosenior debacle.

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 Rosenior debacle. On Saturday, City kept their bid for domestic treble alive as they downed Southampton 2-1, becoming the first side to ever claim four consecutive FA Cup finals.

Forces destroy several Afghan Taliban posts in Chaman sector: security sources

NEWS DESK: Security forces destroyed multiple Afghan Taliban posts in Balochistan's Chaman sector on Tuesday, said security sources.

The sources said that the operation was carried out in response to "unprovoked aggression" by Afghan Taliban forces and terrorists on the border, under the ongoing Operation Ghazab lil-Haq.

Security sources said the Pakistan Army effectively targeted and destroyed several Afghan Taliban posts in Chaman. The Sarshan, Al-Marjan and Edhi posts, as well as vehicles and other installations, were successfully hit, they added.

They further added that security forces' determination to defend the homeland was unwavering and that the "intentions of terrorists and their



patrons will be crushed". The operation "will continue until all the set targets are achieved", the sources elaborated. Islamabad has repeatedly urged the Afghan Taliban to dismantle terrorist sanctuaries on its soil, particularly those linked to the banned TTP. Officials say those ap-

peals have gone unheeded. Pakistan, meanwhile, is carrying out Operation Ghazab lil-Haq against the Af-

ghan Taliban and terrorists operating from its soil. It was launched on the night of Feb 26, following

quest of "brotherly Islamic countries." Pakistan had announced the operation's resumption on March 26, saying it would continue "until its objectives are achieved".

On Sunday, security forces destroyed the gun positions of Afghan Taliban involved in unprovoked firing at civilians in South Waziristan.

Security sources said that the posts were destroyed after the Afghan Taliban fired at civilians and left three people, including two women, injured. Earlier this month, Information Minister Attullah Tarar said security forces had foiled an attempt by the Afghan Taliban and terrorists to attack a border post in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa's Ghulam Khan Sector, in which 37 of the attackers were killed and more than 80 were injured.

Efforts on to secure release of Pakistani crew members of hijacked oil tanker: Sindh governor

NEWS DESK: Sindh Governor Syed Muhammad Nihal Hashmi on Monday met with family members of 11 Pakistani crew members kidnapped by pirates who hijacked an oil tanker near Somalia last week.

He assured the families that the federal government would not leave them alone under any circumstances.

Last week, armed pirates had hijacked the oil tanker near the Somali coast and took 11 Pakistani crew members and the Indonesian captain of the vessel hostage.

The governor, along with families of the kidnapped individu-

als, told a press conference that the federal government was taking all-out measures to secure the safe release of the Pakistani crew members.

Meets affected families, assures them of full cooperation. He said that both the federal and Sindh governments stand with the affected families in this difficult time.

He added that immediate contact was established with the families and their concerns were heard and full cooperation was assured.

The governor noted that communication with the hostages remained intact

and efforts for their safe recovery were ongoing at all levels. He said that discussions were also underway with the European Union regarding the recovery of the hostages.

The incident occurred outside Pakistan's maritime boundaries, which has led to certain complexities, he added.

On the occasion, the families of the kidnapped individuals expressed gratitude to the governor for promptly taking up the matter with the federal government.

They said the government action provided hope that their loved ones will return safely soon.



Pakistan successfully conducts training launch of Fateh-II missile system: ISPR

NEWS DESK: The Army Rocket Force Command conducted the successful training launch of the indigenously developed Fateh-II missile system, the military's media wing said on Tuesday.

In a statement, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that the missile system was "equipped with advanced avionics and state-of-the-art navigation aids".

It said that the training launch was aimed at training

troops, validating various technical parameters and evaluating the performance of different sub-systems incorporated for improved accuracy and enhanced survivability".

ISPR added that the launch was witnessed by senior officers from the Strategic Plans Division (SPD), Army Rocket Force Command, and the Pakistan Army, as well as scientists and engineers from "strategic organisations".

"The forum commended [the] successful training fire of [the] indigenously developed Missile of Fateh Series," the statement added.

According to ISPR, President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir, as well as services chiefs, lauded the "technical prowess and commitment" of the team.

Imran brought to Pims for follow-up treatment, undergoes fourth eye procedure

NEWS DESK: PTI founder and former prime minister Imran Khan received a fourth intravitreal anti-VEGF injection at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) and was discharged on Tuesday morning, according to the hospital spokesperson.

Imran last underwent the anti-VEGF intravitreal injection on March 23. His eye ailment — right central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO) — came to light in late January. His first medical procedure was carried out on January 24, and he was administered the second dose on Feb 24.

According to the Pims spokesperson, Imran, 74, was brought to the hospital on April 28 for follow-up eye treatment, during which he received a fourth intravitreal injection.

Prior to the procedure, he was examined by the ophthalmologists and was found to be clinically stable," the statement said, adding that Imran's "optical coherence tomography was performed, which showed clinical improvement".

"After obtaining informed consent and under standard monitoring, adopting all standard precautionary measures and proto-

cols in the operating theatre, he was injected with a fourth dose of intravitreal injection under the guidance of microscopy by the surgeons," the spokesperson added.

"The procedure was performed as a day care surgery. During the course of his stay, he remained vitally stable before, during and after the procedure and was discharged along with instructions for further care and follow-up advice and documents," the hospital spokesperson said.

Following the last procedure, a senior doctor at Pims, who was familiar with the matter, said: "Usually, three injections are administered in such

cases; it is unlikely that a fourth injection will be given.

"Whatever the treatment, our concern remains unanswered," Gohar said, referring to PTI's call for Imran and his spouse Bushra Bibi to be moved to a hospital for "treatment under the supervision of personal doctors accompanied by family members".

"This is their fundamental right," he said, adding that the PTI had been demanding its implementation for a long time.

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Constitution of Pakistan," TTAP Spokesperson Hussain Ahmed Yousafzai said in a statement.

He said that depriving any citizen, especially a former prime minister, of his physical and family was a "question mark on the rule of law".

He demanded that Imran be immediately allowed to meet his personal physicians and family members without any hindrance to ensure the protection of his health and legal rights.

After the past few months, the government and the opposition have been engaged in a blame game, with the latter accusing the former of a lack of transparency on the matter.

of not ensuring appropriate treatment for Imran, and of not allowing his personal physicians access to him. The government denies these allegations.

The opposition has also demanded that the former premier be shifted to Shifa International Hospital.

On April 17, Imran's spouse, Bushra, also underwent eye surgery at a Rawalpindi hospital, according to jail authorities. The couple remains incarcerated at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail.



Police in Peshawar allegedly open fire during protest by Khyber residents

NEWS DESK: Police in the provincial capital allegedly resorted to firing and tear gas early on Tuesday to disperse a protest by tribesmen from Khyber district against a suspected quadcopter strike that killed a minor girl and injured six others.

The protesters had gathered at the Hayatabad toll plaza to protest the death of a teenage girl in a suspected quadcopter strike in Bara's Akkakhel area. Six other family members, including women and children, were injured in the attack.

The site of the incident is located close to the Bara Bazaar. Hashim Afridi, one of the participants, told Dawn that about 150 tribesmen from Bara and other adjacent areas had gathered at the Hayatabad toll plaza to protest the quadcopter strike. He claimed that the police opened fire, apparently over some scuffle near a roadblock.

However, he said there were no casualties, and no arrests were made. He added that

Khyber MNA Iqbal Afridi joined the protest later.

MNA Afridi, speaking to Dawn, said the firing began when some protesters broke the windows of a car.

However, he maintained that the protest was peaceful and that the protesters were only seeking to raise their voice against civilians becoming collateral damage.

Afridi added that the people of Khyber were asked to leave Tirah earlier this year, and now

"they are being killed in other areas as well".

The parliamentarian further stressed that tribesmen were powerless in the face of militancy in the region and claimed that the individuals were targeted on the pretext of providing food to militants, questioning how an ordinary person could refuse such a demand.

Afridi also called on the government to fulfil its responsibilities and provide security to the people who were in the crosshairs of militants.

Meanwhile, KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, who also hails from Khyber district, ordered an inquiry into reports of the police opening fire at the protest, according to an official statement.

He also directed authorities to take strict action against those responsible for the act.

Peshawar City police did not offer a comment on the incident. Last week, security forces killed five militants in a major counterterrorism operation in the Akkakhel area of Bara in Khyber district.

Security officials said that the operation was launched in Tandori village of Akkakhel, bordering Khazankhel village on the outskirts of the provincial capital, Peshawar. They said that terrorists who had descended from the restive Tirah Valley over the past few weeks had gathered in significant numbers in Tandori village and Khazankhel.

On March 30, security forces killed 10 militants after they seized a government school in the Akkakhel area and hoisted their flag on the school premises.

Earlier in the same month, five children were injured in a quadcopter attack — believed to have been carried out by terrorists — in the Takhikhel area of KP's Lakki Marwat district.

Last year in May, four children were killed, and five others, including a woman, were injured in a suspected quadcopter attack in Mir Ali tehsil of North Waziristan district.

