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# QUETTA VOICE

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## Balochistan Olive Industry: 2.6 Million Trees to Begin Production

### NEWS DESK:

#### LORALAI:

Balochistan's rapidly expanding olive industry has entered a new phase of growth, with nearly 2.6 million olive trees now reaching full production across the province. The development marks a significant breakthrough for Pakistan's agriculture sector and strengthens Balochistan's position as a rising hub for olive cultivation and olive oil production.

#### Loralai Becomes the Heart of Olive Farming in Balochistan

Agriculture experts say Loralai district has emerged as the leading center for olive farming in Balochistan. Olive crops grown in the region are producing an impressive 25 to 32 percent oil content, a level considered highly competitive under international olive oil standards.

Experts attribute the success to the region's favorable climate, fertile land, and suitable environmental conditions for large-scale olive cultivation.

In a province heavily affected by drought and climate challenges, olive farming is being recognized as a sustainable agricultural alternative. According to agricultural specialists, olive trees require comparatively less water and can continue producing fruit for nearly 40 to 50 years once fully matured.

The long productive lifespan and low water requirement make olive farming a crop for climate-resilient agriculture in Balochistan.



#### New Economic Opportunities for Farmers and Investors

The growth of the olive sector is also opening investment opportunities in olive oil extraction, processing, packaging, and value-added products. Experts believe that introducing

modern machinery and advanced marketing systems could significantly increase farmers' incomes and improve export potential. The establishment of local olive oil extraction units is already creating new employment opportunities and boosting rural economic activity in several districts.

Officials estimate that Balochistan's olive sector will

enter its complete production phase by 2028-29. Once fully operational, the province is expected to help meet Pakistan's domestic olive oil demand while also contributing to exports and foreign exchange earnings.

#### Global Demand for Olive Oil Continues to Rise

With international demand

for olive oil increasing due to growing awareness about healthy diets and organic food products, experts believe

Balochistan has the potential to become an important player in the global olive market.

Agriculture analysts say "Balochistan Olive" could soon emerge as a recognized brand associated with high-quality olive oil production.

The expansion of olive farming in Balochistan is being viewed as a major step toward agricultural modernization, climate adaptation, and rural economic development in Pakistan.

Experts believe continued government support, investment, and modern technology could transform the province into one of South Asia's leading olive-producing regions.

## CM Balochistan Urges TV Channels to Restore Bureau Offices

### WEBDESK:

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has assured full security and government support to private media organizations, while expressing serious concern over the closure of TV channel bureau offices and the dismissal of media employees in the province.

Speaking on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, the chief minister urged all private television channels to immediately reactivate their bureau offices in Balochistan, stating that the shutdown of regional media operations was affecting journalism and public access to information in the province.

#### Closure of Bureau Offices Violates PEMRA Agreements

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said the closure of bureau offices and layoffs by media houses were against agreements signed with the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority.

He stressed that media organizations must maintain an active presence in Balochistan to ensure balanced and ground-based reporting.

The chief minister assured media houses that the provincial government would provide complete security, administrative support, and all possible cooperation to journalists and bureau staff working in the province.

The Balochistan chief minister said that free, responsible, and fact-based journalism is essential for democratic stability, transparency, and national unity in Pakistan.

He added that responsible reporting strengthens institutions and promotes accountability within society.



He praised journalists in Balochistan for continuing their professional duties despite security challenges and difficult working conditions.

#### CM Bugti Pays Tribute to Fallen Journalists

Mir Sarfraz Bugti paid tribute to journalists who lost their lives while reporting truth and facts, calling them a matter of pride for the country.

He said the sacrifices made by media workers for press freedom and public awareness would never be forgotten.

The chief minister urged national media outlets to move beyond crime-focused coverage and give greater attention to Balochistan's development projects, economic opportunities, social issues, tourism potential, and positive achievements.

He said balanced coverage could help improve the province's

#### First Social Media Policy Introduced in Balochistan

Referring to Balochistan's first social media policy, the chief minister said the initiative was launched to discourage fake news, counter negative propaganda, and encourage authentic and responsible digital journalism.

He emphasized that in the modern digital era, verification of information and fact-checking have become critical responsibilities for journalists and media platforms.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to press freedom, responsible journalism, and accurate reporting, stating that truthful information and a strong media sector are vital for Pakistan's stability, development, and democratic future.

## Journalists Protest in Quetta on World Press Freedom Day, Demand Repeal of PECA Act

### Qaseem Shah:

QUETTA: Journalists, media workers, and civil society members staged a protest outside the Quetta Press Club on World Press Freedom Day under the banner of the Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ), demanding protection of press freedom and repeal of what they termed "black laws" restricting freedom of expression.

A large number of journalists and civil society representatives participated in the demonstration, raising slogans in support of freedom of the press and against the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) and other laws alleged

ly curbing free speech in Pakistan.

The protesters carried banners highlighting the importance of independent journalism and protection of media rights. Speakers at the protest strongly criticized restrictions on media freedom and called on authorities to withdraw the PECA Act.

Addressing the gathering, BUJ President Manzoor Ahmed, Quetta Press Club President Irfan Saeed, PFUJ Senior Vice President Noor Elahi Bugti, BUJ General Secretary Shah Hussain Tareen,

and other media leaders warned that continued layoffs and financial instability were severely affecting the media industry in the province.

The protest concluded with participants reaffirming their commitment to defending press freedom and democratic values in Pakistan.



# QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

## Fiscal Federalism and the Quest for Equity in Pakistan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

**"Hidden Deficits" and Contingent Liabilities**

Beyond revenue inadequacy, the expenditure side of the fiscal

equation presents an equally formidable challenge.

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

The paper notes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

strengthen the entire fiscal ecosystem.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By Musavir Durrani

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

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

The Qur'an Clearly Forbids Forced Marriages.

Allah states in Surah An-Nisa: "O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will."

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

Islam replaced oppression with dignity, choice, and responsibility.

Prophetic Example: Forced Marriages Declared Invalid

A woman once came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)



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

Hadith References: Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 5138.

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

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

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

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

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

belongs to the person getting married.

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

These are pure emotional manipulation, and Islam does

not allow it. Emotional or Psychological Pressure is Also Haram. Forced marriage is not only when someone is physically pressured. Even emotional, mental, or family pressure

counts as force. Any woman in this situation, no one can take it away".

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

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

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

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

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

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

Trump must choose 'impossible' war or 'bad deal' with Iran, says IRGC

NEWS DESK: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) said on Sunday that US President Donald Trump must choose between an "impossible" war or a "bad deal" with Iran.

In a post on the US social media company X, the intelligence department of the IRGC said Tehran sent the US military a deadline to end its blockade of Iranian ports. It added that Europe, China and Russia are adopting a more critical tone toward Washington.

"There is only one way to read this: Trump must choose between an impossible military operation or a bad deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran."

"The room for US decision-making has narrowed," it said.

The US and Israel launched strikes against Iran on Feb 28, triggering retaliation from Tehran against Israel, as well as US allies in the Gulf, along with the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Since April 13, the US has enforced a naval blockade targeting Iranian maritime traffic in the strategic waterway.

A two-week ceasefire was announced on April 8 through Pakistani mediation, followed by direct talks in Islamabad on April 11, but no agreement was reached on a lasting truce.

Trump later extended the ceasefire without setting a new deadline, following a request from Pakistan.



Trump says US could restart Iran strikes if they misbehave

US President Donald Trump said on Saturday he had been told about the concept of a deal with Iran, but was "waiting for the exact wording, while warning there was still the possibility of restarting strikes on the country if Tehran misbehaves."

Meanwhile, a senior Iranian official said that an Iranian proposal so far rejected by Trump

would open shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and end the US blockade of Iran while leaving talks on Iran's nuclear program for later.

When asked about Iran's proposal before boarding a flight to Miami at West Palm Beach, Florida, Trump replied: "They told me about the concept of the deal. They're going to give me the exact wording now."

He added on his social "media channel that he could not imagine the proposals would

be acceptable and that Iran had not paid a big enough price for what it had done.

Asked if he might restart strikes on Iran, Trump replied: "I don't want to say that. I mean, I can't tell a reporter that. If they misbehave, if they do something bad, right now we'll see. But it's a possibility that could happen."

US Navy acting "like pirates" in carrying out

Washington's naval blockade of Iranian ports during the US and Israel's war against Iran.

Trump made the comments while describing the seizure of a ship a few days ago.

"We took over the ship, we took over the cargo, we took over the oil. It's a very profitable business," Trump said in remarks on Friday evening. "We're like pirates. We're sort of like pirates, but we are not playing games."

Meanwhile, a senior Iranian military official has said renewed conflict with the US is "possible" after Donald Trump rejected the latest peace proposal from Tehran.

"Evidence has shown that the United States is not committed to any promises or agreements," said Brig Gen Mohammad Jafar Asadi, spokesman for Iran's military headquarters, in remarks carried by Iranian news agencies.

"Surprise measures are planned for the enemy, beyond their imagination," Asadi said.

Official Iranian outlets also meanwhile restated an uncompromising position on navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

"With its dominance and control over nearly 2,000 kilometers of Iran's coastline in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, the IRGC (Revolutionary Guards) Navy will make this water area a source of livelihood and power for the great Iranian people and a source of security and prosperity for the region," the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported Saturday. Iran says it's ready for diplomacy.

Trump has said repeatedly that Iran can never "have a nuclear weapon and said on Friday he was not satisfied with the latest Iranian proposal, while Iran's foreign minister said Tehran was ready for diplomacy if the US changes its approach.

Reuters and other news organisations reported over the past week that Tehran was proposing to reopen the oil. It's a very profitable business," Trump said in remarks on Friday evening. "We're like pirates. We're sort of like pirates, but we are not playing games."

"We need their permission to extend the war beyond a deadline set by law for that day because the ceasefire had "terminated" hostilities.

While saying repeatedly he is in no hurry, Trump is under "domestic pressure to break Iran's hold on the Strait, which has choked off 30% of the world's oil and gas supplies and pushed up US gasoline prices. Trump's Republican Party faces the risk of a voter "backlash over higher prices when the country votes in midterm congressional elections in November."

Iranian media said Tehran's 14-point proposal included the withdrawal of US forces from areas surrounding Iran, lifting the blockade, releasing Iran's frozen assets, payment of compensation, lifting sanctions and ending the war on all fronts, including Lebanon, as well as a new control mechanism for the Strait.

The United States and Israel suspended their bombing campaign against Iran four weeks ago, but appear no closer to a deal to end a war that has caused the biggest disruption over the Strait before nuclear issues, roiled global markets and raised worries about the possibility of a wider global economic downturn.

Iran has "been blocking nearly all shipping from the Gulf apart from its own for more than two months. Last month, the US imposed its own blockade of ships from Iranian ports.

US Secretary of State Rubio to visit Vatican, Rome after Trump's row with Pope

NEWS DESK: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will visit Rome and the Vatican this week, an Italian government source said on Sunday, just weeks after a clash between Donald Trump and Pope Leo XIV.

Rubio, who is a Catholic, is expected to meet Vatican Secretary of State Pietro Parolin and Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, the source told AFP.

Italian media reported that he would also meet Defence Minister Guido Crosetto during the Thursday-Friday visit.

The meetings come several weeks after US President Trump's extraordinary criticism of Pope Leo XIV over the Catholic leader's anti-war rhetoric.

Trump also dismissed Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni — one of his closest European allies — as lacking courage after she defended the US pontiff.

Italian media on Sunday presented Rubio's visit as a meeting to "thaw" relations. Since taking over as leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics on May 8, 2025, following the death of Pope Francis, Leo has criticised the Trump administration's crackdown on immigration.

But it was his increasing anti-war rhetoric, particularly following the US-Israeli attack on Iran, that triggered Trump's ire.

Leo, on April 7, declared Trump's threat to destroy Iran "unacceptable" and urged Americans to demand that US lawmakers "work for peace".

The US president subsequently slammed the pontiff in a social media post as "WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy".

Trump also said he was "not a big fan of Pope Leo" and that he does not "want a pope who thinks it's OK for Iran to have a nuclear weapon".

Meloni condemned as "unacceptable" Trump's criticism — prompting the president to turn his fire on her. "I'm shocked at her. I thought she had courage, but I was wrong," the US president said in an interview with Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*.

He also accused Meloni — a far-right leader who has sought to act as a bridge between diverging US and European views — of failing to help the United States with Nato.

Trump has threatened to pull US troops from Italy, saying Rome "has not been of any help to us" in the Iran war.

He has made a similar threat towards Spain, while the Pentagon has announced it is withdrawing 5,000 US troops from Germany.



British premier hints at banning some pro-Palestinian marches

NEWS DESK: Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in an interview broadcast on Saturday that banning some pro-Palestinian marches could be justified, especially when they call for the infitadah to spread.

Labour leader Starmer is under pressure to act after a spate of antisemitic incidents, including this week, when two men were stabbed in the north London suburb of Golders Green, which is home to a large Jewish community. A 45-year-old British national who was born in Somalia was remanded in custody when he made his first appearance in court on Friday accused of attempted murder.

Starmer visited the scene of the attacks and a Jewish volunteer ambulance service on Thursday and was booed by some locals, who accused him of not doing enough to protect them.



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nounced pro-Palestinian activists' holding marches in British cities, which began after Hamas's October 7, 2023 raid on Israel. The prime minister, a former human rights lawyer and chief public prosecutor whose wife is of Jewish origin, said many Jewish people had told them they were affected by "the repeat nature" of the protests. "I'm a big defender of freedom of expression, peaceful protests," he told the BBC. "But when there are chants like 'globalise the

could be taken, he added. In December last year, police in London and the northwest city of Manchester said they would arrest anyone chanting "globalise the infitadah". The Jewish community in Britain views the chant as "very, very dangerous", said Starmer. On Thursday, the UK increased its security alert level to "severe" — the second highest in part because of the attack in Golders Green.

Germany takes US troop drawdown in stride but deterrence gaps remain

NEWS DESK: A planned drawdown of 5,000 US troops from Germany should spur Europeans to strengthen their own defences, German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said on Saturday, as the continent scrambles to boost deterrence against Russia.

However, two top US Republican lawmakers expressed concern, saying the troops should not leave Europe.

The Pentagon announced the drawdown from Germany, its largest European base, on Friday, as a rift over the Iran war and tariff tensions place further strain on relations between the US and Europe.

As part of the US decision, a Biden-era

plan to deploy an American battalion with long-range Tomahawk missiles to Germany should spur Europeans to strengthen their own defences. German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said on Saturday, as the continent scrambles to boost deterrence against Russia.

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As part of the US decision, a Biden-era

signal to [Russian President] Vladimir Putin," they said in a joint statement.

Pistorius said the partial withdrawal was expected and would affect a current US presence of almost 40,000 soldiers stationed in Germany.

"We Europeans must take on more responsibility for our own security," Pistorius said, adding, "Germany is on the right track" by expanding its armed forces, speeding up military procurement and building infrastructure.

Trump called for a reduced military presence in Germany as far back as his first term and has repeatedly urged Europe to take responsibility for its defence.

However, he stepped up the threat earlier this week after sparring with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz who questioned Washington's exit strategy in the Middle East.

Nato seeking details of soldiers stationed in Germany.

"We Europeans must take on more responsibility for our own security," Pistorius said, adding, "Germany is on the right track" by expanding its armed forces, speeding up military procurement and building infrastructure.

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Israel approves plan to buy F-35 and F-15A fighter jets from Lockheed, Boeing

NEWS DESK: Israel gave final approval for a strategic air superiority plan to purchase two new combat squadrons of F-35 and F-15A advanced fighter aircraft from Lockheed Martin and Boeing in a deal worth tens of billions of dollars, the defence ministry said on Sunday.

The deal, approved by Israel's Ministerial Committee on Procurement, is a first step in a 350 billion shekel (\$119 billion) plan to bolster Israel's military and "strengthen readiness ahead of a demanding decade for Israeli security," it said.

It added that the new squadrons will serve as a cornerstone of the military's long-term force development, addressing regional threats and preserving Israel's

strategic air superiority. "Alongside immediate wartime procurement needs, we have a responsibility to act now to secure the IDF's military edge ten years from now and beyond," said ministry Director General Amir Baram, referring to the Israel Defense Forces.

The recent war with Iran "reinforced just how critical the US-Israel strategic relationship is, and how essential Israel's military and advanced air power remains," he added.

Under the deal, Israel would buy a fourth F-35 squadron from Lockheed Martin and a second squadron of F-15A fighter jets from Boeing.

Israel including 25 new F-15As and an option for 25 more.

Baram said the next step would be to move forward with finalising the agreements with the US government and military counterparts.

The US and Israel launched airstrikes on Iran on February 28, but a ceasefire has been in place since April 8. The US Navy maintains a blockade of Iranian ports.

Israel aircraft have also attacked Iranian-backed Hamas militants in Gaza and Hezbollah militants in Lebanon, since the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel.

Katz said the new aircraft would lead to a significant technological leap in integrating autonomous flight capabilities, next-generation defence systems, and establishing Israeli military dominance in space.

"Our mission is clear: to ensure the IDF has the tools, capabilities, and strength to operate anywhere, at any time," Katz said. "We will continue to invest, to grow stronger, and to stay ahead of our enemies — to keep Israel secure today and in the future."

## Governor Kundi terms youth as key asset for political parties

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi has said that youth are a valuable asset for any political party and play a central role in strengthening organisational structure and highlighting public issues.

He expressed these views during a meeting with provincial leaders of Pakistan Peoples Party Youth Organization Zafar Ali Khan here at Kundi Model Farm.

During the meeting, both leaders discussed party affairs in detail, with a particular focus on the role and importance of youth in political activities.

Governor Kundi noted that the PPP has always given central importance to its youth wing, adding that active participation of young members is crucial for enhancing the party's outreach.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding power sector in Lahore.

### Marka-e-Haq anniversary observed at Mazar-e-Iqbal with special tribute

LAHORE (INP): A solemn ceremony was held at Mazar-e-Iqbal to mark the first anniversary of the Marka-e-Haq victory, where rich tributes were paid to the Thinker of Pakistan. Renowned singer Rahat Fateh Ali Khan captivated the audience by performing Iqbal's famous verses, including "Lab Pe Aati Hai Dua."

### Two rehabilitation projects inaugurated in Gwadar's old town

GWADAR (INP): GDA Haji Syed Muhammad, Project Director of the Old Town Rehabilitation Project Mir Doda Khan Marri, former Tehsil Municipal Committee chairman Sharif Mian Dad, and relevant officials were also present.

### International climate training concludes at University of Gujrat

ISLAMABAD (INP): A three-day international training workshop on climate-smart development and carbon neutrality concluded at the University of Gujrat, as part of growing efforts to strengthen academic cooperation between Pakistan and China.

The workshop brought together researchers, faculty members and students to discuss climate change, carbon neutrality strategies and sustainable development practices.

According to a Gwadar Pro's report, the sessions led by Dr. Li Wei, Associate Professor at the Department of Earth System Science at Tsinghua University, focused on global climate frameworks and carbon management. Dr. Li also discussed the carbon credit market and expressed willingness to support further training.

### Tarar condemns targeting of innocent civilians by Afghan Taliban in KP

ISLAMABAD (INP): Information Minister Attaullah Tarar has condemned the deliberate targeting of innocent civilians by Afghan Taliban in border districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, describing it as unacceptable, inhuman and reflective of their barbaric disregard for human life.

In a post on his X handle, he said resorting to targeting civilian areas after being comprehensively beaten on ground by proud security forces of Pakistan and having no courage to face them is not only despicable but also speaks volumes of the low moral character of the regime leaders.

The Information Minister said the press statement of Deputy Commissioner Bajaur highlights that only in Bajour District, nine civilians including six innocent children and women have embraced Shahadat and twelve including seven women and one minor were injured, due to the unprovoked and criminal targeting of civilian population by Afghan Taliban and their Indian backed proxy Fitna Al Khwarij.



RAWALPINDI: Parliamentary Secretary Barrister Danyal Chaudhry inaugurated Rawalpindi Grade-III Division Cricket Team trials.

## Zardari witnesses signing of Pak-China agreements in Sanya

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari witnessed the signing of one joint venture agreement and two memoranda of understanding between Pakistani and Chinese organisations in Sanya, China, covering construction machinery, animal health and medical technology.

The agreement was signed between the Livestock & Fisheries Department of the Government of Sindh and Luoyang Modern Biology Group of China for the distribution and supply of animal vaccines in Pakistan, including foot-and-mouth disease vaccines. The agreement also provides for technology exchange and future cooperation on animal track-and-trace systems in Pakistan.

An MoU was signed between Al Hassan Trade Establishment, Sany International Development and Hainan Jiaolong International Technology on cooperation in high-end equipment, manufacturing and construction machinery, according to a Gwadar Pro's report.

The MoU was signed by Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, Sany Group Vice President Li Qin, and Hainan Jiaolong International Trade Company Chairman Hao Jiaolong.

### New speed limit enforced on Shahr-e-Faisal in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): The Karachi Traffic Police have enforced the speed limit on Shahr-e-Faisal, ARY News reported on Saturday. According to a notification issued by the DIG Traffic Office, the new speed limits have been implemented to improve traffic flow and ensure public safety. In a statement shared on social media, Sindh Police said the measure aims to enhance road safety and reduce accidents across the city. The police urged the citizens to strictly follow the new speed limits to avoid fines and help maintain smoother traffic conditions.

### Punjab approves design of Gujranwala Mass Transit system

LAHORE (INP): A key meeting chaired by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz in Lahore approved the design of the Gujranwala Mass Transit System, with a detailed briefing given on various aspects of the project.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PYMP) Chairman Rana Masood Ahmad Khan in a meeting with representatives from UNFPA and Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

## PDMA warns against heavy rains, storms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PESHAWAR (INP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Saturday has issued an alert of rain and thunderstorms in the province from May 2 to 4 calling district administrations to take precautionary measures.

The Met Office has forecast thunderstorms, rains and hailstorms under the influence of the westerly wave in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kalam, Shangla, Buner, Kohistan, Malakand, Battagram, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Balakot, Haripur, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Bajaur, Mohmand, Orakzai, Khyber, Swabi, Charsadda, Kohat, Kurram, Hangu, Karak, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, Dera Ismail Khan and Waziristan districts of the province.

Governor Balochistan Reaffirms Commitment to Press Freedom on World Press Freedom Day

QUETTA: Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, Governor of Balochistan, expressed solidarity with journalists across Pakistan and around the world on World Press Freedom Day, emphasizing that press freedom is both a constitutional right and a democratic necessity.



He stated that freedom of expression is like oxygen in the modern world, without which democratic systems cannot survive. A healthy, informed, and just society, he noted, depends on a free and independent press.

Role of Media in a Digital Age The Governor highlighted that, like other sectors, journalism is rapidly evolving with digitalization. With the rise of social media, news and information now reach millions instantly, making the media both more accessible and more sensitive.

Gwadar Administration Intensifies Anti-Dengue Campaign Amid Rising Cases

GWADAR: Amid growing concerns over Dengue Fever, the district administration of Gwadar has accelerated preventive measures under the special directives of Nakeebullah Kakar.

Active surveillance, identifying suspected cases, and monitoring mosquito larvae to curb the spread of the disease at an early stage. Targeted Operations in Affected Areas Following an increase in dengue cases in Union Council North areas—particularly Naya Abad, Shamlay Ismail, and Faqeer Colony—emergency targeted operations have been launched. Special teams, led by the Vector Borne Diseases (VBD) coordinator, are actively engaged in case detection, public awareness, environmental sanitation, and preventive actions.

House-to-House Awareness and Surveillance Lady Health Supervisors (LHS) and Lady Health Workers (LHWs) have been mobilized to conduct door-to-door awareness campaigns across the district. Teams are educating citizens on preventive measures, conducting



DC Usta Muhammad Reviews School Development Project Under BSDI, Stresses Quality and Timely Completion

MUHAMMAD USTA MUHAMMAD, Deputy Commissioner of Usta Muhammad, conducted a detailed visit to Government Boys High School Ali Abad to review ongoing development work under the Balochistan Special Development Initiative.

He paid tribute to the progress, construction materials, and expected completion timeline. He stressed that the use of substandard materials or any negligence would not be tolerated and that maintaining quality standards is non-negotiable.

Focus on School Security and Infrastructure During the visit, construction work on the school's boundary wall was found in progress under the BSDI scheme. Officials stated that the project aims to enhance security and



Balochistan Finance Minister Shoaib Noshervani Reaffirms Commitment to Press Freedom on World Press Freedom Day

QUETTA: Mir Shoaib Noshervani has emphasized the close relationship between politics and journalism, stating that both play interconnected roles in addressing societal issues.

Media professionals in Pakistan and around the world—particularly in Balochistan—for their dedication to truth, integrity, and professional responsibility. Role of Journalism in Democracy 'Noshervani highlighted that journalism forms the foundation of any civilized and democratic society. He noted that a free, unbiased, authentic, and timely information is the true essence of journalism, contributing significantly to social development and national stability.

Balochistan Health Secretary Clarifies Equipment Transfer, Terms Social Media Claims Misleading

QUETTA: Majeed ur Rehman Panezai, Secretary Health Balochistan, has rejected circulating social media reports regarding Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Hospital, calling them misleading and contrary to facts.

Once the new equipment arrives, the existing equipment will be reinstalled at Sheikh Zayed Hospital. No Reduction in Medical Services The Health Secretary emphasized that no hospital is being deprived of medical facilities. Instead, the move aims to optimize resource allocation and improve service delivery by strengthening multiple healthcare facilities across the province.

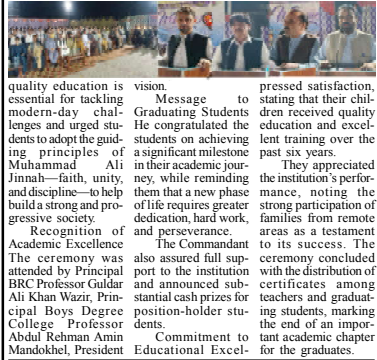
He stated that upon receiving information about the transfer of medical equipment earlier in the day, he immediately sought complete details to clarify the situation. Temporary Transfer of Equipment Panezai explained that, following approval in a high-level meeting, cardiac equipment from Sheikh Zayed Hospital is being temporarily shifted to Bolan Institute of Cardiology and Vascular Diseases.

He said the objective is to ensure patients receive quality treatment closer to their homes, saving time and improving access to healthcare services. Revival of Sheikh Khalifa Hospital Panezai noted that Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Hospital, which remained inactive in the past, has been fully revived under the current government. The hospital is now providing 24/7 services, including emergency care, gynecology, and surgery. He also highlighted the availability of modern diagnostic facilities such as MRI, CT scan, ultrasound, and other advanced medical services.

FC Commandant Emphasizes Importance of Quality Education at BRC Zhub Farewell Ceremony

ZHOB: Brigadier Muhammad Azhar Khan, Commandant Frontier Corps, highlighted the critical importance of quality education while addressing a farewell ceremony held in honor of graduating students at Balochistan Residential College Zhub.

On the occasion, Principal Professor Guldar Ali Khan Wazir and Professor Abdul Rehman Amin Mandokhel extended their best wishes to the graduating students, reaffirming the institution's commitment to promoting quality education and character building. Parents also expressed satisfaction, stating that their children received quality education and excellent training over the past six years. They appreciated the institution's performance, noting the strong participation of families from remote areas as a testament to its success. The ceremony concluded with the distribution of certificates among teachers and graduating students, marking the end of an important academic chapter for the graduates.



Balochistan: 2 Security Men Injured in Duki Landmine Blast

Hussain Zarkoon: DUKI: Two security personnel were injured in a landmine explosion in Balochistan's Duki district during the escort of coal transport vehicles of coal-laden trucks. The motorcycle reportedly hit a buried explosive, triggering a powerful explosion that left both men wounded. Following the attack, security forces sealed the area and

shifted the injured personnel to a nearby hospital for treatment. A heavy contingent of security forces later launched a search operation in the area to track down the attackers. The incident highlights growing security concerns in coal mining regions of Balochistan, particularly in Duki district, where militants have previously targeted security teams and transport convoys.



## Oil spike threatens Pakistan's economic growth

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan's inflation is likely to remain in double digits if the surge in oil prices persists amid the unresolved Middle East conflict, analysts warned, adding that rising costs and disrupted imports are already straining the country's external position.

Topline Securities Ltd released its latest "Pakistan Strategy" report on Saturday, analysing the impact of soaring oil prices and regional tensions and their implications for Pakistan's economy and stock market. The brokerage said the situation is prolonged and evolving, with outcomes hinging on whether the conflict ends or a peaceful resolution is reached.

The report projected that if current conditions persist, Pakistan's inflation over the next 12 months could average 9-10 per cent, with fourth-quarter FY26 inflation surpassing 11pc. These forecasts are based on an oil price of \$100 per barrel, with every \$10 increase adding roughly 50 basis points to inflation. At \$120 per barrel, average annual inflation could reach 10-11pc, prompting the State Bank of Pakistan to consider further policy rate hikes to protect real returns.

Rising energy costs and inflation are expected to weigh heavily on economic growth. Topline Securities lowered its GDP forecast for FY27 to 2.5-3.0pc, down from an earlier 4.0pc, reflecting a 100-120bps impact. FY26 growth is



maintained at 3.5-4.0pc, in line with the central bank's revised guidelines. Industrial growth could fall to 1pc from 3.9pc, agriculture to 4.0pc from 4.4pc, and services to 2.8pc from 3.9pc. However, slippages or lax import controls could push it above 3.8pc (1.9pc of GDP), straining foreign exchange reserves.

The consolidated fiscal deficit for FY26 is expected to remain in the range of 4.0-4.5pc of GDP due to reduced spending, slightly above the IMF target of 4.0pc. A similar range is anticipated for FY27. A measured government response could keep FY27 currency depreciation around 5-6pc.

Without intervention, supply-demand pressures could accelerate losses. The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has suffered amid regional turmoil and rising oil prices, ranking the third worst performer globally in the January-March quarter with a 15pc decline. India and Indonesia

posted larger falls of 19.4 and 19.0pc, respectively. Heavy dependence on imported energy, Pakistan imports 85pc of its requirements, is cited as a key factor. Petroleum imports are projected at \$1.5bn for FY26, roughly 22pc of total imports.

Topline Securities recommended remaining overweight in exploration and production (E&P) firms, fertilisers, and banks, while adopting a market-weight stance on pharmaceuticals and consumer goods. Caution is advised in cyclical sectors due to potential GDP slowdown.

Imports/remittances. Non-oil imports, expected to reach \$48.5bn in FY26, could threaten macroeconomic reforms if unemployment remains high. Administrative measures have played a key role in curbing imports during crises, including FY09, FY19, FY20, and FY23. Topline Securities forecasts an 8pc fall in non-oil imports for FY27 with government intervention, alongside a 12pc decline in petroleum product consumption due to higher prices. Remittances are projected to fall 3.5pc, reflecting a 10pc decline from the Gulf Coopera-

tion Council region and modest growth elsewhere. Exports are expected to drop 4pc. With these assumptions, the FY27 current account deficit is estimated at \$3.5bn (0.8pc of GDP).

**Policy rate**  
The SBP raised its policy rate by 100bps to 11.5pc on April 27. If oil prices remain at \$120 per barrel, further rate hikes may be necessary. The rupee-dollar exchange rate is forecast to close FY26 at Rs280-282 and FY27 at Rs294-298 (average Rs289). Persistent conflict could drive depreciation above the historic 5-6pc average.

The benchmark KSE-100 index is down 7pc year-to-date and 14pc from its January 2026 peak, with geopolitical tensions, rising oil prices, and profit-taking contributing to declines. Key sectors poised to benefit include E&Ps, fertilisers, and banks.

Domestic E&P companies could ramp up production by 500-900 mncld over two years, partly offsetting reliance on imported RLNG. Fertiliser companies may benefit from rising international gas prices and restored domestic markets. Banks are expected to see improved spreads due to higher interest rates.

## Foreign investors exit T-bills

**NEWS DESK:** The war in the region has almost wiped out foreign investment in Pakistan's domestic bonds, leaving little chance of recovery if the current situation prevails, said financial experts.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data showed that foreign investors have almost left the domestic lucrative domestic bonds, which had been their preferred choice, as returns were highest in the region and very low compared with most other countries.

A day ago, the central bank further increased the yields on Treasury Bills by up to 83 basis points to almost 12pc, making them more attractive to investors.

The SBP data showed that over 94pc of foreign investment in T-bills left the country by April 17. Mideast war drives 94pc outflow from treasury bills.

This could be a result of destabilisation due to war in the region, which is still ongoing without knowing the final outcome of this deadlock in the talks between Iran and the United States.

Threats and counter-threats between the two countries have created a broad range of uncertainties, while sig-

nificant disruptions to oil and gas supplies from the region have already jeopardised fragile economies such as Pakistan's.

The oil import bill has risen to \$800m per week, up from \$300m before the Middle East conflict. The war has greatly shaken confidence, as evidenced by the \$975 million, while outflows into T-bills were \$975 million, while outflows were \$917 million, indicating a net investment of \$58m.

Experts said it is highly encouraging that Pakistan repaid a huge amount of \$3.5bn to the UAE, \$1.4bn against farobond maturity, and allowed outflows of profits and dividends from foreign investments

amounting to \$1.8bn during the first nine months of FY26. "Pakistan has re-entered the international market and raised \$750m, reflecting that the confidence of foreign investors would jump with the end of the Gulf war, and we can expect large foreign investments in the post-war era," said S. Iqbal, a money market expert. He said Pakistan would be in the best position compared with other regional countries, as it has succeeded in developing good relations with all major global powers and Gulf countries. The SBP data showed that the highest outflows from T-bills were \$291m to the UK, followed by \$271m to the UAE. Other significant outflows were \$218m to Bahrain and \$77m to

Singapore. An outflow of \$32m was to the USA.

Financial experts noted that despite the highly attractive returns on domestic bonds, Chinese investors never entered the market. Instead, Pakistan is seeking to entice the Chinese financial market through a \$250m Panda bond issuance. China has been the largest foreign investor in the country for several years and is the biggest trade partner, replacing the UAE.

They said the 100bps interest rate hike to 11.5pc was a good move, as April inflation was 10.9pc. This means the increased returns on T-bills could be highly attractive to domestic investors, as they offered Rs3.8 trillion in the auction held a couple of days ago.

## Industry opposes Sui Southern Gas Company's tariff hike petition

**KARACHI:** Business leaders have strongly opposed the Sui Southern Gas Company's (SSGC) petition to the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) seeking a substantial increase in the next fiscal year and urged the regulator to reject the proposal in the interest of the economy and industrial sustainability.

In a statement, Businessmen Group (BMG) Chairman Dr. Zubair Motiwala and Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) President Muhammad Rehan Hanif expressed concern that the steep hike could reach 286 per cent when accumulated shortfalls of over Rs45 billion are incorporated.

They said that this would push the prescribed price to approximately Rs68.85 per million British thermal units (mmbtu) and raise the total revenue requirement to around Rs1.28 trillion.

They termed this demand entirely uncalled for and unjustified, noting that even on a standalone basis, the SSGC has sought a steep 121pc increase in prescribed prices to about Rs 3.935 per mmbtu, which is disproportionately higher than the

budget rather than imposed on industrial consumers.

They stated that both SSGC and SNGPL must first transparently identify and address the root causes of their financial deficits rather than relying on steep tariff increases.

The core issue is the sharp decline in industrial gas consumption which has dropped by nearly 50pc due to unviable pricing. At the same time, high unaccounted-for-gas (UFG) losses, including theft, leakages and inefficiencies, particularly in the domestic segment, continue to persist at elevated levels, while domestic consumption remains largely unchanged due to heavy subsidies.

The KCCI leadership also objected to the inclusion of Rs3.12bn as interest on Gas Development Surcharge (GDS), which represents a financial dispute between SSGC and the Federal government and should not be transferred to consumers who have already paid the surcharge.

They also rejected the inclusion of Rs16.35bn as Balochistan revenue shortfall adjustment and Rs2.3bn for LPG arm projects, asserting that these are policy-related costs that must be borne by the government through the national

21pc rise requested by the Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL).

Warms effective increase may reach 286pc with accumulated shortfalls.

They emphasised that the petition effectively converts gas tariffs into a mechanism for recovering historical financial inefficiencies rather than reflecting the actual cost of service. Gas throughput has declined by 9.4pc, yet operating expenses have surged by more than 108pc, indicating serious lapses in cost control and operational efficiency.

Embedding a cumulative revenue shortfall of nearly Rs956bn into current tariffs places an unfair burden on exist-

ing consumers, particularly the industrial sector, which is already under stress.

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## Opec+ agrees third oil output quota hike since Hormuz closure

**NEWS DESK:** Opec+ agreed on Sunday on a modest oil output hike for June, an increase that will remain largely on paper as long as the US-Israeli war on Iran continues to disrupt Gulf oil supplies through the Strait of Hormuz.

Seven Opec+ countries will raise oil output targets by 188,000 barrels per day in June, the third consecutive monthly increase, Opec+ said in a statement after an online meeting. The increase is the same as that agreed for May minus the share of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which left the group on May 1.

The move is designed to show the group is ready to raise supplies once the war stops and signals that Opec+ is pressing on with a business-as-usual approach despite the departure of the UAE from Opec+, sources associated with the alliance analysts said.

Opec+ is sending a two-layer message to the market: continuity despite the UAE's exit, and control despite limited physical impact, said



Jorge Leon, an analyst at Rystad and former Opec+ official, said.

While output is increasing on paper, the real impact on physical supply remains very limited, given the Strait of Hormuz constraints. This is less about adding barrels and more about signaling that Opec+ still calls the shots.

Top Opec+ producer Saudi Arabia's output will rise to 10.291 million bpd in June under the agreement, far above actual production. The kingdom reported actual production of 7.7m bpd to Opec in March.

The seven members who met on Sunday were Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Algeria, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Oman.

With the UAE leaving, Opec+ comprises 21 members, including Iran. But in recent years, only the seven nations plus the UAE are involved in monthly production decisions.

The US-Israeli war on Iran, which began on February 28, and the resulting closure of the Hormuz Strait have throttled exports from Opec+ members Saudi

Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait, as well as from the UAE. Before the conflict, these producers were the only countries in the group able to raise production.

Even when shipping through the Strait of Hormuz reopens, it will take several weeks for Opec+ members to return to normalise, oil executives from the Gulf and global oil traders have said.

The supply disruption has propelled oil prices to a four-year high above \$125 per barrel as analysts begin to predict widespread jet fuel shortages in one to two months and a spike in global inflation.

## Spirit Airlines shuts down globally

**NEWS DESK:** US air carriers mobilised on Saturday to help passengers and crew members stranded by the overnight shutdown of Spirit Airlines, after last-minute talks with creditors and the White House collapsed.

The budget airline known for its bright yellow planes succumbed to crashing fuel prices and announced in the early hours of Saturday that "all flights have been cancelled, and customer service is no longer available" as it "started winding down its operations immediately."

Other carriers, including American, Delta, United, and JetBlue, leapt at the news on Saturday, offering what some dubbed "rescue jets" to those waking up with cancelled itineraries.

Some said they were increasing flights or the size of planes in and out of airports where Spirit had a significant presence.

Carriers also sought to support mired Spirit staff and hire them. Several carriers encouraged now-jobless crew members to apply to their open roles.



Spirit had been in bankruptcy since August 2025 — its second

in less than a year — as the White House had been considering a bailout.

"The recent material increase in oil prices and other pressures on the business have significantly impacted Spirit's financial outlook," the company said in a statement.

"With no additional funding available to the company, Spirit had no choice but to begin

this wind-down." It has promised refunds.

US Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy scrambled to defend the Trump administration's position as a rescue plan never materialised.

"The president was like a dog on a bone trying to figure out a way to keep Spirit afloat," Duffy said in a morning press conference.

# PSL 11 final — an opportunity for Pakistan cricket to rise again

**NEWS DESK:** When the sun sets over the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Sunday evening, the lovers of Pakistan cricket will celebrate.

They will rejoice, regardless of who takes the IBL Pakistan Super League season 11 trophy. It will be festive, even before the first ball is bowled.

This season started — thank God it did — amid the air of sadness, amid the drums of war. No hope, tasteless, bland, not worth it; that's where it all began. Behind closed doors, in front of empty stands, the action on the ground — the players, the cricket, the batting and the bowling — took over the burden of everything that was missing.

And it delivered; this sport we love gave us back more.

It is true that the PSL doesn't feature the world, unlike its Indian counterpart, but the "jewel in Pakistan's crown" — as the league is dubbed — has been known for its competitive nature. And it was generously at play this season.

Some low-scoring thrillers, a big chase here and there, batting performances, bowling shows to remember and fielding masterclasses at times — those coming from young local players



make them so much more special. The competitiveness got its representation on the league's stage points table more than it did anywhere else. Across the last three days of the stage, four teams were still in the position to vie for the playoffs.

It took the last match of the stage to decide which two teams would play the Qualifier.

The fourth spot was alas, and fittingly, was filled by the Hyderabad Kingsmen, in their debut season after becoming the seventh PSL franchise.

chise through an auction earlier this year. Story of the season

The Kingsmen went on to deliver the story of the season, losing four matches in a row before bouncing back to win as many, facing defeat again and then thrashing Rawalpindi to make the fourth spot on net runner, at the expense of defending champions Lahore Qalandars.

The Kingsmen were able to do all of that with a team that looked ordinary on paper. Their only superstar picks were Pakistan's struggling

opener Saim Ayub and Australian stalwart Glenn Maxwell, who arguably is past his best days.

Their choice for captain was unrecognisable for a fan who tunes in to watch cricket only during the PSL, domestic toilers Mohammad Ali, Akif Javed and Hunain Shah forming the pace battery, while spin contributions came from Hassan and Saim — both known as largely part-timers.

But Friday night gave Pakistan cricket fans a new household name: Hunain. The right-

Niaz and Pakistan discarder Hassan Khan, who left the country to find greener pastures in the United States.

Hyderabad's bowling attack was unrecognisable for a fan who tunes in to watch cricket only during the PSL, domestic toilers Mohammad Ali, Akif Javed and Hunain Shah forming the pace battery, while spin contributions came from Hassan and Saim — both known as largely part-timers.

But Friday night gave Pakistan cricket fans a new household name: Hunain. The right-

army defended six runs in the final over of the second Eliminator to deny three-time champions Islamabad United

another shot at the title. Babar rises again Hunain, the brother of Pakistan fast-bowling star Naseem Shah, the flag-bearer of Kingsmen's inspiring, storied run to the PSL decider, will steam in one last time on Sunday.

On the other end will be the other story of this PSL edition — Babar Azam and his Peshawar Zalmi — the dream team of the season, who won eight of their 10 matches

to finish top of the league table. The former Pakistan skipper, despite all the criticism one could pile against him and all the blame one could direct towards him, is someone all Pakistan fans love to see do well.

It was the first of his two centuries this season — which has seen him amass 588 runs — that truly turned eyeballs towards the PSL after the West Asia conflict and the consequent Islamabad Talks had slightly driven attention away from cricket.

Although for its own shortcomings, it was when the right-hander put on a century that made noise return to empty arenas.

It wasn't a one-off by Babar. After Hyderabad had largely struggled, stars have lost their star-dust, the cricketing system is in shambles, and the administrators have repeatedly displayed incompetence.

After Karachi only, making the filled-to-capacity National Bank Stadium buzz with chants of "Babar! Babar!" as the floor shook at the iconic venue.

A day later, Hyderabad registered a comprehensive win to knock out Multan Sultans — a formidable unit all season — at the back of Usman and Maaz's half-centuries and collective contribution from the bowling unit.

What Hunain did in the last over against United, then set it all up perfectly ahead of the finale.

Two amazing stories will come together at the Gaddafi Stadium, masterclass to help the fact that Zalmi will be hungry for their second PSL trophy in nine years, the handing over of the league title will be ceremonial in the bigger scheme of things.

Pakistan cricket will be the centre of attention again.

The love we have for this sport will be at its peak again. We will love Babar again. Hunain will give us hope again; hope that has eluded Pakistan cricket fans for most of the last few years.

The national side has largely struggled, stars have lost their star-dust, the cricketing system is in shambles, and the administrators have repeatedly displayed incompetence.

## Zalmi look to outsmart rejuvenated Kingsmen in PSL title clash

**NEWS DESK:** Finally, the big day has come as Babar Azam's Peshawar Zalmi lock horns with an inspiring Hyderabad Kingsmen side led by Marnus Labuschagne in the summit clash of the IBL Pakistan Super League here at the Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday.

Luckily, enthusiastic fans who were allowed entry at the start of this PSL edition only at the eleventh hour before the playoffs, will keep the atmosphere energised when the rival captains come out for the toss.

Interestingly, both the finalists have come to the big stage through contrasting routes. While Zalmi, who has won one PSL title back in 2017, remained significantly consistent in this season by winning eight of their 10 initial-stage matches and the qualifier, Kingsmen had a nightmarish start to the campaign losing five games on the trot before getting back on track to win the next five fixtures and qualify for the playoffs.

The rejuvenated Kingsmen side then brushed aside Multan Sultans in Eliminator-1 before edging Islamabad United in Eliminator-2 to reach the decider.

Babar in his pre-match media conference on Saturday indicated that his side would try to keep the winning formula intact.

"So far our journey in this edition has been quite nice. Our strategy is paying off so we will try to apply it in the final too," Babar said during the media conference on Saturday after unveiling the PSL trophy alongside Labuschagne at the Gaddafi Stadium.

"Like every other match, the final is also a game of pressure. Tomorrow's game has its own pressure. As captain, every-one dreams of their team lifting the trophy so I am quite excited.

"Momentum is always important for a team to win and it is good that our momentum has been there from the very beginning," Babar, the leading scorer

of this year's PSL, with 588 runs, added.

"Every team makes their own strategy accordingly. [However], sometimes things suddenly change but my team is experienced, one having the ability to control such situations."

Zalmi had two informative bowlers from Bangladesh — Nahid Rana and Shoriful Islam — but when they left for national duty, the team management arranged the alternate combination and that also clicked, Babar underlined.

According to Babar, there was no room for his team to show complacency against Kingsmen. Commenting on his own batting show in this PSL season, the right-handed batter with two centuries under his belt in this edition said that he had tried some old techniques which came off.

When asked if batting as opener proved crucial in bringing his form back, the 31-year-old said that almost all his impressive perfor-

mances came when he opened.

"It is a different scenario question [to which] I will talk about later."

Babar said but went on to add that sometimes a player as per the team's requirement had to bat at different positions.

"The coach of [the] team management have to plan where a player can be more suitable."

"[Studying] in which country we are going to play and what are their playing conditions are is their job and it is better if you put forward this question to them, they will give a better reply," Babar said.

Speaking at his presser, Labuschagne said that remaining firm with the procedure will be important for Kingsmen in the high-pressure decider. "For us it is important to control the situation and make sure we stick to our process of plans and rest will take care of itself. It is going to be a great occasion, a great moment," the skipper told reporters.

## Young fires 67 to seize PGA lead

**NEWS DESK:** Fourth-ranked Cameron Young rode a hot start and surged to a five-stroke lead after Friday's second round of the PGA Cadillac Championship.

Young birdied four of the first seven holes on his way to firing a five-under par 67 and stand on 13-under 131 after 36 holes at Trump National Doral in Florida.

"I've just putted really well," Young said. "I've left myself in mostly double spots when I've missed greens."

"But I haven't driven it great and that's something I hopefully look to return to normal over the next couple days."

Three-time major winner Jordan Spieth, fellow American Alex Smalley and Canada's Nick Taylor shared second on 136 with American Gary Woodland on 137.

Young, who won the Players Championship in March and captured his first PGA title last August at Greensboro, said he feels comfortable with a big lead, well aware it could vanish quickly on the weekend.

"I've been around the lead quite a bit and

I'm not particularly uncomfortable. I've liked this golf course but so far, Young said.

"There's a lot of guys four or five back. I'm sure somebody will be four- or five-under tomorrow so you have to prepare for that."

Young topped putting and scrambling statistics.

"I avoided the bad misses for the most part. It's not like I drove it awful but I would love to play from the fairway a couple more times the next couple days," he said.

"There's a lot of golf to be played on a difficult golf course but so far, I've played well. If I can drive it a little bit better, I feel like I can keep cruising and see what happens."

Young reached the green in two and birdied the par-five first hole to grab the solo lead then stretched the margin with a 17-foot birdie putt at the third and a 27-foot birdie putt at the fifth.

The lead reached four strokes when Young sank a seven-foot birdie putt at the seventh.

Young's approach at the par-five eighth was plugged in a bunker. He punched out into an

adjacent bunker then blasted to five feet and rescued par.

"At the par-three ninth, Young missed the green but rolled the ball just outside six feet and saved par again."

Young sank a 16-foot birdie putt at the par-three 10th, boosting his advantage to five, but then needed two shots to escape greenside rough at 14 and made his first bogey of the tournament.

Young drove the green at the par-four 16th and two-putted for birdie from 26 feet to restore his five-stroke margin.



## West Ham's defeat gives Spurs hope of survival in EPL

**NEWS DESK:** West Ham United's 3-0 defeat at Brentford offered Tottenham Hotspur a lifeline in the battle for Premier League survival on Saturday.

Spurs remain in the relegation zone, two points from safety, but can move out of the bottom three with victory at Aston Villa on Sunday after the Hammers succumbed to just their third defeat in 11 league games.

Brentford boosted their chances of European qualification for the first time with a first win in eight matches.

Konstantinos Mavropanos was left to rue his luck in two key first-half incidents.

The Greek defender was unfortunate not to be awarded a free-kick as he turned the ball into his own net to open the scoring. Mavropanos thought he had made amends moments later with a bullet header, but was ruled marginally offside by a VAR review.

Brentford had another call go in their favour early in the second half when Dango Ouattara won a penalty and Igor Thiago coolly converted his 22nd Premier League goal of the



season. Mikkel Damsgaard's strike round-off a damaging day for West Ham, who face title-chasing Arsenal next weekend.

Brentford moved up to sixth, which could be enough to secure Champions League qualification. Meanwhile, Newcastle's United eased any lingering fears of being drawn into the relegation battle with a 3-1 win over Brighton and Hove Albion to end a five-game losing streak.

William Osula and Dan Burn scored in the opening 24 minutes as Newcastle edged up to 13th. Jack Hinshelwood pulled a goal back, but

defeat could prove costly to Brighton's European ambitions as they were second in sixth, they could end it outside the top half. Harvey Barnes rounded off the scoring in stoppage time to bring some relief to the under-fire Eddie Howe.

Sunderland's bid for Europe was also dented by a 1-1 draw at bottom-of-the-table Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Nordi Mukiele put the Black Cats in front early on, but Sunderland played for over an hour a man down after a red card for Dan Ballard. Ballard was sent off for pulling the hair of

Tolu Arokodare Ballard became the second player to penalised for pulling the hair of opponent Michael Keane received a straight red for the same misdeed in January. Santiago Bueno leapt but Wolves could not muster just a fourth league win of the season.

On Friday, Leeds United all but secured their place in the Premier League next season with a 3-1 win over relegated Burnley. Goals

from Anton Stach, Noah Okatar and Dominic Calvert-Lewin took Daniel Farke's side nine points clear of the relegation zone with just four games remaining for those below them.

## Qualifying for LA2028 Olympics Pakistan's main focus, says Manzoor Sr

**NEWS DESK:** The year 2026 is crucial for Pakistan hockey that has endured many crises on and off the field for ages. After a gap of eight years, the national team finally made it to this year's World Cup, by reaching the final of a qualifying event in Ismailia, Egypt during March. Following the World Cup, Pakistan are slated to lock horns with their continental rivals in the Asian Games scheduled for late August in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan during Sept-ember-October.

Pakistan, the former four-time World Cup winners, lost the decider in Ismailia 4-1 to England, the same team whom the Green-shirts will be facing in the pool stage of the World Cup. Pakistan looks strong in the Netherlands and the Netherlands from Aug 15 to 30.

So, the challenge for Pakistan looks tough particularly when the Green-shirts are given one glance at the prevailing state of affairs in the national game. Head coach stays upbeat ahead of this

year's World Cup. However, Manzoor-ul-Hassan Senior, the recently-appointed head coach of the national senior team, remains optimistic about Pakistan's show in the forthcoming World Cup.

"In my opinion, the current Pakistan team contains six, seven players who can be ranked among the world's top players. They have the capability to perform [well] in any [top-level] tournament will be crucial."

Manzoor, who replaced Khawaja Junaid after the Ismailia event, said in an exclusive interview with Dawn.

"Nothing is impossible in sports, as it depends on how a team performs on a given day," the member of Pakistan's bronze-medal winning squad at the 1976 Olympics added.

"As regards the World Cup, the players' hard work will be crucial. As the head coach, I will try my best to facilitate them in every way so that they can focus fully on the game and perform to the best of their abilities."

Interestingly, the head coach responding to a query asserted that Pakistan's main focus, above everything, was on qualifying for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"Definitely my and the team's aim is to give our best in the World Cup. However, our main target is to play the [2026] Asian Games final in order to qualify for the Olympic Games," he said.

"Time has come for Pakistan to start producing legendary Olympians again; in this regard, we have an extremely rich legacy which should be revived."

On what steps the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) was planning to take for building medal strength of the players, Manzoor said that it depended on a player's calibre.

"If a player is talented, and succeeds in keeping his performance above average for the first couple of years in any global-level contest, he sooner or later embarks on a journey in international competition," the coach stated.

"We, on our part, will try to engage and groom players of national senior and junior teams, or other players who have been part of national training camps during the past five years or so in order to develop a solid pool of campers to secure the future of Pakistan hockey."

Answering a question on Pakistan's strategy for the World Cup, the 74-year-old coach elaborated a plan.

"We held trials in Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar [for national senior and junior teams] last month, in which some 200 players appeared. On the basis of these trials, we will now select a certain number of players who will participate in a national camp during the first week of May," the head coach added. "In this camp, we will be concentrating on polishing the best available talent in any global-level contest, he sooner or later embarks on a journey in international competition," the coach stated.

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# PM Shehbaz calls on Nawaz, discusses political situation in country, steps taken for peace in Middle East

**NEWS DESK:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called on PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif at their Jati Umra residence in Lahore on Sunday. A statement issued by the PM's Office (PMO) said, adding that the Middle East conflict and the political situation in the country were discussed during the meeting.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz was also present on the occasion.

The PMO statement said the premier briefed Nawaz on the "situation in the country" and exchanged views on the political situation.

He further informed him about the situation in the Middle East and Pakistan's efforts for the restoration of peace in the region, the statement added.

The conflict in the Middle East, which is



— through which one-fifth of the world's oil and gas supply used to pass in peacetime — giving rise to a global energy crisis and an increase in prices in the international market.

The PMO statement said PM Shehbaz also took Nawaz into confidence regarding oil prices in the international market and the steps the government has taken to "provide relief" to the people against this backdrop.

After the US-Israeli war on Iran began, the government initially hiked petrol and diesel prices by Rs55 per litre on March 6 and announced unprecedented austerity measures on March 9.

However, in the following weeks, PM Shehbaz said he had rejected recommendations to further increase fuel prices despite an increase in the

global market on three occasions.

But on April 2, Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik and Finance Minister Muttiah Muralidharan announced an unprecedented increase of 43 per cent and 55pc in the prices of petrol and high-speed diesel, respectively.

The ministers had also announced a targeted fuel subsidy programme.

However, just a day later, PM Shehbaz slashed the petroleum levy by Rs80 per litre and brought the price of petrol down to Rs78 per litre. On April 10, PM Shehbaz further decreased diesel prices and petrol prices by Rs135 and Rs172 per litre, respectively.

The government has twice increased the prices of the two commodities since, first on April 4 and later on April 30.

now more than two months old, began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28. And while hostilities have paused following a Pakistan-brokered two-week

and military leadership has been engaged in feverish diplomacy, leading the efforts for de-escalation.

On April 11-12, Pakistan hosted its first high-level contact

between Iran and the US in decades and mediated the meetings, known as the "Islamabad Talks".

However, with challenges in convening a second round,

Islamabad has shifted back to its role as a facilitator and go-between.

Meanwhile, the conflict has also resulted in the closure of the Strait of Hormuz

## Justice Khan becomes IHC senior puisne judge

**NEWS DESK:** The seniority of judges at the Islamabad High Court (IHC) has reshuffled after three judges transferred to different provincial high courts. Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan is now the senior puisne judge.

Last week, the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) approved the transfer of Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, Justice Babar Sattar and Justice Saman Raza Imtiaz to the Lahore High Court, the Peshawar High Court and the Sindh High Court, respectively, by a majority vote.

Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani previously held the position of senior puisne judge.

Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan will now serve as the second most senior judge in the court until new appointments or transfers occur.

The registrar also issued a new roster for the upcoming week, effective from May 4 until further orders. According to the schedule, seven single benches and four division benches will hear cases.

A special division bench comprising Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir has been formed to hear tax-related cases.

Justice Muhammad Asif will serve on multiple benches, including division benches dealing with criminal and

## Sharjeel Memon says BRT Red Line 'very tough' project, asserts no delay from Sindh govt

**NEWS DESK:** Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Memon on Sunday acknowledged that the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Red Line had proven to be a "very tough" project for the provincial government, but asserted that there had been no delay on its part.

Speaking to reporters in Karachi, Memon said the Sindh government had to make some difficult decisions on the BRT Red Line after "all other options were exhausted".

The fourth division bench will consist of Justice Muhammad Azam Khan and Justice Raja Inaam Ameen Minhas. The newly issued roster outlines the court's functioning for the coming week and will remain in force until further notice.

around 27 kilometres from Malir Halt to Numaish via University Road, work on BRT Red Line commenced in early 2022. While initially scheduled for completion by 2024, the project has faced persistent delays, with its finishing timeline most recently pushed to 2028.

A week ago, CM Murad, while "apologising" to the people of Karachi, announced that the deteriorated University Road will be reconstructed within 90 days.

In today's media talk, Memon reiterated, "We will try that by the end of July, this road is opened for mixed traffic by working day and night, so that there is no

nuisance for the public."

"We realise the difficulty being faced by the public, but as they say, you have to swallow a bitter pill to achieve something big," he remarked.

The minister recalled that the Sindh government approached the FWO for the reconstruction of University Road after "issuing warnings and clearing claims" of the contractors of the BRT Red Line project.

He noted that the government also took the Asian Development Bank (ADB) into confidence about the FWO's involvement in the road reconstruction. While the BRT Red Line is an ADB-funded scheme, the reconstruction of

the University Road will be undertaken as a separate project funded through the Sindh government's own resources.

For the bus project itself, Memon said the government would follow up with the necessary legal actions, such as re-contracting or re-tendering.

The minister said it would have been "very easy" for the government to simply launch buses, such as the People's Bus Service, but it decided to construct the BRT project for future generations, considering Karachi's growing population.

Criticising certain political elements for



## Policeman gunned down near his home in KP's Lakki Marwat

**NEWS DESK:** A police officer was martyred in a gun attack in the Kaichi Kamar area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Lakki Marwat district on Sunday.

Lakki Marwat district police officer's (DPO) spokesman Qudratullah Khan confirmed that terrorists targeted Constable Irfanullah near his house in the trans-river belt area.

The incident occurred within the limits of Dadwala police station. Qudratullah said that the policeman received critical bullet injuries and died on the way to the Tehsil Head-

quarters Hospital in the Seraf Naurang town.

The police official said that the martyred cop was posted in Peshawar and had come to his native village on leave.

"After the attack, a large police contingent reached the area and launched a search for the assailants," he added.

Today's incident comes just a day after unknown terrorists attacked the house of a police official with explosives in the district's Shadkhal area, causing significant damage.

Also in the Shadkhal area, a policeman embraced martyr-



Designed to cover

## President, PM renew resolve to protect journalistic freedom, stress credible reporting

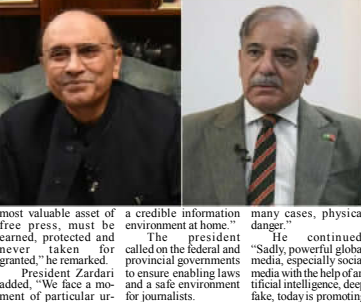
**NEWS DESK:** President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed the government's resolve to protect press freedom and stressed the importance of credible journalism.

They issued separate messages on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, reaffirming that Pakistan, as a democratic nation, is committed to safeguarding and promoting freedom of the press.

In his message, President Zardari said this year's theme, "Shaping a Future at Peace", underscored that peace cannot be secured without the freedom of the press.

Noting that Article 19 of the Constitution guaranteed the right to press freedom subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law, the president said, "A free, independent and diverse media is not a threat to a confident nation, rather a proof of one."

"At the same time, freedom brings responsibility. Accuracy must not be sacrificed for speed and balance must not give way to partisanship. Public trust, the



most valuable asset of a free press, must be earned, protected and never taken for granted," he remarked.

President Zardari added, "We face a moment of particular urgency. Deliberate campaigns of falsehood targeting Pakistan seek to sow division and weaken our national cohesion."

He hailed the Pakistani media for "standing firm like a wall against the wave of disinformation" during the conflict with India last year.

"It responded not with force, but with facts. Not with noise, but with balance. Not with speed, but with trust. Aspires to be a trusted voice in the world needs a credible information environment at home."

The president called on the federal and provincial governments to ensure enabling laws and a safe environment for journalists.

"I also urge media institutions to uphold rigorous ethical standards and call upon the citizens to reject falsehood and support credible journalism," he added.

In his statement, the president also pointed out the risks posed by disinformation, misinformation and artificial intelligence.

"Across the world, journalists continue to face threats. Legal intimidation, economic pressure and in far too many cases, physical danger."

He continued, "Sadly, powerful global media, especially social media with the help of artificial intelligence, deep fake, today is promoting jingoistic, xenophobic, fascist, populist, fascist and might-is-right agendas."

The prime minister said the spread of "fake news and coordinated disinformation campaigns poses a real threat to national cohesion and global credibility."

"Ensuring both speed and credibility in news dissemination is imperative. I urge all journalists to uphold the highest standards of verification, integrity, and professionalism, so that in this fast-paced digital era, competition never comes at the cost of truth," he said.

