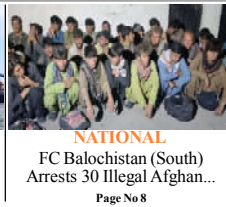




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Email address: dquettavoices@gmail.com

Website: www.quettavoices.com

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QUETTA VOICE

Balochistan High Court Stops Tender for Demolition of Historic Provincial Assembly Building

Syed Ali Shah, News Desk:

Quetta: The Balochistan High Court has restrained the provincial government from proceeding with the tender process for the demolition of the historic Balochistan Provincial Assembly building, temporarily halting a controversial multi-billion-rupee reconstruction project.

The stay order was issued by a division bench of the Balochistan High Court comprising Chief Justice Muhammad Kamran Malakhail and Justice Najam uddin Mengal during the hearing of constitutional petitions filed against the proposed demolition.

The petitions were submitted separately by senior parliamentarian Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani and senior lawyer Amanullah Khan Advocate, a former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

The petitioners challenged the provincial government's decision to demolish the historic assembly structure, arguing that the move violates constitutional protections related to cultural and historical heritage.

According to court proceedings, the Communication and Works (C&W) Department was preparing to open a tender reportedly worth millions of rupees for the demolition and reconstruction of the provincial assembly building.

However, the court directed the department not to proceed with the tender until further orders.

The controversy dates back to the provincial budget of 2024-25, when the Balochistan government announced plans to replace



the existing assembly building with a new structure under a project estimated at around Rs5 billion.

The proposal immediately sparked criticism from lawyers, civil society members, and political figures who described the building as an important historical landmark.

Speaking to reporters after the hearing, Amanullah Kanrani Advocate stated that Article 28 of the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the protection of cul-

tural identity, heritage, and historical archives. He argued that demolishing the historic building would amount to ignoring constitutional

responsibilities and erasing an important part of Balochistan's political history. The case is expected to be heard again in the coming weeks.

CM Sarfraz Bugti Meets Fazlur Rehman as JUI-F Intensifies Opposition Over Madrassa Issue

Zeeshan Ahmed:

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti met JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman in Islamabad on Monday amid

province's law and order situation, political developments, and the recent controversy surrounding madrassas.

They agreed that issues related to religious seminars should be resolved through dia-

launching a "tough opposition" campaign against its policies. He had stated that JUI-F would not allow the Balochistan Assembly proceedings to continue smoothly if pressure on madrassas persisted.

the province. Sources said Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti will also meet JUI-F's provincial leadership in Quetta on Tuesday in an effort to reduce tensions and continue political consultations on the issue.



growing political tensions over the registration and regulation of religious seminars in Balochistan. During the meeting, both leaders discussed the

logue. The meeting comes days after JUI-F Balochistan Ameer Maulana Abdul Wasay strongly criticized the provincial government and warned of

JUI-F leaders have accused the government of targeting religious institutions and described the ongoing registration measures as a "conspiracy against religious schools" in

Senior JUI-F leaders Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, Maulana Salahuddin Ayubi, and Maulana Asjad Mahmood also attended the Islamabad meeting.

UAE's Fujairah says fire breaks out at petroleum complex after Iranian drone attack

NEWS DESK:

Authorities in the United Arab Emirates' Fujairah said on Monday that a fire broke out at the Fujairah Oil Industry Zone following what they described as a drone attack originating from Iran. Civil defence teams were deployed immediately to contain the blaze, Fujairah Media Office said in a statement.

There was no immediate comment from Iran. Iran's IRGC claims hitting US warship in Hormuz, but CENTCOM denies

said in a post on X that no US Navy ships had been struck.

US Central Command, in a statement on X, said that, "US Navy guided-missile destroyers are currently operating in the Arabian Gulf after transiting the Strait of Hormuz in support of Project Freedom." It further added that American forces were actively assisting efforts to restore transit for commercial shipping. "As a first step, 2 US-flagged merchant vessels have successfully transited through the Strait of Hormuz and are safely headed on their journey," it added.

"Just like during the 40-day



Iran said it had forced a US warship to turn back from entering the Strait of Hormuz on Monday, although US Central Command quickly denied a report of a missile strike.

A senior Iranian official told Reuters Iran had fired a warning shot and that it was unclear whether the warship had been damaged.

Iran's Fars News Agency said two missiles hit a US warship in the Strait of Hormuz. However, the US Central Command

war, Iran will not allow American combat ships to pass, and any transit through the Strait of Hormuz will require authorisation from Iran's armed forces," it added.

Earlier, Iran's navy said it had "prevented the entry of enemy warships into the Strait of Hormuz by issuing a swift and decisive warning," according to state TV. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has vowed to "forcefully stop ships violating Hormuz regulations."

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Balochistan's Historic Shift to Merit-Based Government Jobs: Ending Corruption and Empowering Youth



Editorial:

In a province long plagued by nepotism and job-selling scandals, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has taken a bold and welcome stand. He has declared zero tolerance for corruption, favoritism, and the sale of government posts — and he is backing his words with action.

The announcement of filling 111 Finance Department vacancies through a fully online, paperless, and 100% merit-based recruitment process marks a genuine turning point for transparent governance in Balochistan.

For the first time in the province's history, candidates will apply and be tested entirely online.

Qualifications will be verified instantly, and successful applicants will receive appointment letters within an hour. This fast, fair system eliminates middlemen,

backdoor deals, and bribery — the very practices that have robbed deserving young people of opportunities for decades.

This merit-based recruitment drive in Balochistan is more than administrative reform; it is a lifeline for the province's educated youth.

By ensuring government jobs go to qualified candidates rather than relatives or those who can pay, the initiative restores hope and dignity.

As Chief Minister Bugti has promised, the model will soon expand to all departments, creating a culture where talent, not connections, determines success.

The broader impact on Balochistan's development and stability cannot be profound.

Transparent hiring means better-qualified civil servants, leading to more efficient public services, reduced wast-

age of funds, and faster implementation of development projects.

When resources reach the people instead of corrupt pockets, infrastructure, education, and health services improve — laying the foundation for sustained economic growth.

Equally important, fair job opportunities address a major source of youth frustration in the province. Giving young Baloch the chance to serve their homeland on merit can reduce alienation and contribute to lasting peace.

Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti's focus on merit, technology-driven transparency, and accountability offers real hope. If these anti-corruption reforms in Balochistan are implemented with consistency, they can transform governance, unlock the potential of the province's youth, and set a powerful example for the rest of Pakistan.

Land Law and Its Importance in Pakistan

By Amir Hamza

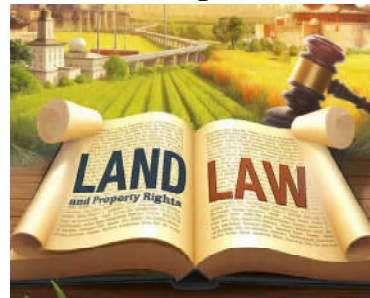
Bashir:

Land is one of the most valuable and contested assets in Pakistan. The legal framework that governs the ownership, possession, and transfer of land is known as Land Law. It ensures that property rights are protected and that disputes over land are resolved through legal and transparent means.

Historical Background of Land Law in Pakistan

The foundation of land laws in Pakistan was laid during the British colonial era through legislation such as the Land Revenue Act and the Registration Act.

After independence in 1947, these laws continued to guide Pakistan's land management system. Today, major statutes like the West Pakistan



Land Revenue Act, 1967, and the Transfer of Property Act, 1882, remain the cornerstone of land governance and property transfer in the country.

Land Record Management and Reforms

Traditionally, the Patwari system has been responsible for maintaining land

records across Pakistan. However, it has often been criticized for corruption, manipulation, and lack of transparency. In recent years, the government has initiated significant reforms through the Punjab Land Records Authority (PLRA) and other provincial projects to digitize land records and reduce human in-

terference in property registration and ownership verification. Despite reforms, Pakistan continues to face issues like illegal possession (land grabbing), forged documents, and slow judicial processes. These problems create un-

certainty for investors and ordinary citizens alike.

To overcome these challenges, there is a strong need for comprehensive digital record-keeping, specialized land tribunals, and public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about their property rights.

Land law is not just a legal framework — it is the foundation of economic stability and social justice in Pakistan. A fair, transparent, and efficient land management system encourages investment, infrastructure development, and public trust in state institutions. Strengthening land laws and ensuring their effective implementation are vital steps toward achieving legal certainty and sustainable growth in Pakistan.

The Author is a Student of LLB (7th Semester).

Quetta's Traffic Chaos: Urgent Reforms Needed to Fix the Crisis

Anjeela Kayan:

Quetta, once a city known for its peaceful ambiance, now faces an escalating traffic crisis. Every day, thousands of commuters endure hours of gridlock, navigating congested roads, reckless drivers, and deteriorating infrastructure. From rickshaws and motorcycles to private cars, the overwhelming number of vehicles clogs major roads, while encroachments and illegal parking worsen the situation.

The city's transport system is on the brink of collapse, demanding immediate intervention from both authorities and residents. This article explores the root causes of Quetta's traffic woes, identifies the most affected areas, and outlines urgent solutions to restore order to the roads.

The Strain on Quetta's Road Infrastructure

Quetta's road network, originally designed during the colonial era, was never in-

tended to accommodate the city's rapid population growth and rising number of vehicles. Although the city was rebuilt after the 1935 earthquake, its road capacity has remained largely unchanged, struggling to support over 1.2 million residents and the thousands of vehicles added each year.

Key roads such as Jinnah Road, Sariab Road, Liaquat Bazaar, Masjid Road, and Zarghoon Road have become perpetual bottlenecks, choked by illegal encroachments, unregulated parking, and an ever-increasing number of vehicles. Without a structured urban development model, these roads remain gridlocked, affecting daily life and economic activity.

Major Traffic Challenges on Key Roads

Severe Congestion

Traffic congestion is worst in commercial hubs such as Liaquat Bazaar, Masjid Road, Jinnah Road, and

Zarghoon Road, where vehicles move at a snail's pace during peak hours.

With no alternative routes or bypasses, all traffic is funneled through these roads, causing massive delays. Key intersections, including Balochistan University Chowk,

Meeran Chowk, and Prince Road, frequently experience severe traffic jams.

The Surge of Non-Custom Paid (NCP) and Unregistered Vehicles

The unchecked inflow of non-custom paid (NCP) and unregistered vehicles has compounded the traffic crisis.

A 2010 report estimated over 50,000 NCP vehicles on Balochistan's roads, causing an annual revenue loss of Rs 15 billion to the national exchequer.

By 2024, this number has surged to nearly 80,000, with a significant concentration in Quetta (Excise and Taxation De-

partment, 2024).

Despite periodic crackdowns, including the 2023 seizure of 115 NCP vehicles worth Rs 982 million (ARY News, 2023),

enforcement efforts have failed to stem the tide. Quetta's traffic police estimate that 40% of vehicles in the city are either unregistered or NCP (Think Transportation, 2023), worsening congestion and lawlessness on the roads.

Lack of a Proper Public Transport System

Unlike other major cities in Pakistan, Quetta lacks an organized public transport system. With no buses or mass transit options, residents rely on rickshaws, motorcycles, and private cars, further clogging the roads.

Over 50,000 rickshaws operate within the city, creating congestion in already packed areas like Masjid Road and Liaquat Bazaar (Traffic Survey: Quetta Smart and Safe City, 2023).

Although the gov-

ernment has revisited the Quetta Mass Transit Train project,

financial constraints have delayed its execution, leaving residents without an efficient alternative to private transport.

Encroachments and Illegal Parking Worsen Congestion

Unauthorized stalls and illegal parking occupy nearly 30% of road space in busy commercial zones such as Prince Road and Jinnah Road (Think Transportation, 2023). Street vendors set up shops on sidewalks, forcing pedestrians onto the roads, while shopkeepers extend their businesses onto public spaces, further restricting traffic flow.

Deteriorating Road Conditions

Over 60% of Quetta's roads are in disrepair, riddled with potholes, cracks, and poor drainage systems (INRIX, 2024). Roads such as Joint Road, Sarab Road,

Neither Capitalism nor Communism

Aziz ur Rehman Agha

The Cold War may have ended, but the ideological clash between Capitalism and Communism continues to shape global politics, economics, and international relations. Even today, global alliances reflect these old ideological divisions.

However, both Capitalist and Communist systems have failed to manage political and socio-economic affairs effectively. One system suppresses personal freedom; the other deepens inequality. Both carry serious structural flaws that make them unsuitable for modern societies.

This calls for a new, balanced approach — one found in the Islamic socio-economic and political philosophy, which follows a middle path between the two extremes.

The Flaws of Communism

Communism lies at one extreme of the ideological spectrum. It suppresses individual freedoms such as speech, press, and trade.

Historical examples from Maoist China during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) show how intellectual expression was crushed and books and music not aligned with party ideology were banned, and private libraries were destroyed. Similarly, in the USSR, any deviation from party thought was treated as a crime.



Economically, Communism eliminates private property and discourages entrepreneurship. Without personal incentive, individuals lose motivation to innovate and work for economic growth. As a result, this system hamp-

ers development and limits prosperity. The severe restrictions on basic rights and freedoms make Communism unsustainable in modern nation-states.

The Problems with Capitalism

On the other end

lies Capitalism, which has enabled just 1% of the world's population to control more wealth than the remaining 99% combined.

This system inherently promotes economic inequality, empowering elite industri-

alists while exploiting the working class. Under Capitalism, profit takes precedence over people and the environment, and ethical values are often sacrificed for industrial gains.

Furthermore, Capitalism's obsession

with rapid industrialization and profit maximization has led to environmental destruction, resource depletion, and climate crises.

It prioritizes wealth accumulation over sustainability, creating internal contradictions —

growing inequality, moral decay, and ecological harm — making Capitalism an unfit model for an equitable, sustainable society.

The Islamic Socio-Economic Philosophy: A Balanced Approach

Both Capitalism and

Communism fail because they represent extremes — one suffocates freedom; the other breeds inequality. Islam, however, offers a balanced socio-economic philosophy that harmonizes justice, freedom, and social welfare.

The Islamic economic system allows private ownership and business freedom, but regulates them through moral and legal checks. The obligation of Zakat (charity) redistributes wealth, preventing concentration in the hands of a few.

Meanwhile, the prohibition of Riba (usury) ensures financial fairness and discourages exploitation. Together, these principles foster economic justice, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

Conclusion

Neither Capitalism nor Communism provides a complete solution to humanity's political and economic challenges. Both contain inherent flaws — one curtails human freedom, the other destroys social equality.

The Islamic socio-economic model, however, offers the ideal middle path — balancing individual rights with collective welfare. With its emphasis on justice, equality, and moral responsibility, Islam presents the most sustainable and humane political and economic philosophy for the modern world.

Iran says US response to 14-point proposal received through Pakistan, under review

NEWS DESK: Iran said on Sunday that the United States had responded to its 14-point proposal via Pakistan and that it was reviewing the response, state media reported.

"At this stage, we do not have nuclear negotiations," an Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson said, according to state media.

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

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 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 were 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.

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 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" 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 contact with the US is "pos-

sible" 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 imagi-

tion," 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 dear 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 Strait before nuclear issues were resolved.

The official confirmed that this new timeline had now been spelled out in a formal proposal conveyed to the United States through mediators.

Trump also said on Friday that "on a human basis," he did not prefer

the military course of action and told congressional leaders he did not "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 20% 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 ever to global energy supplies, roiled global markets and raised worries about the possibility of a wider global economic downturn.

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Swedish coast guard seizes suspected false flag tanker in Baltic Sea

NEWS DESK: The Swedish Coast Guard said on Sunday it had seized a tanker in the Baltic Sea believed to be part of Russia's shadow fleet, the country's authorities said.

The Swedish Coast Guard said in a

statement that it and police had boarded the Syrian-flagged Jin Hui in Swedish territorial waters south of Trelleborg and begun a preliminary investigation into a lack of seaworthiness.

"The coast guard suspects that the ship is sailing 'under a false flag,' given there are a

number of irregularities concerning its flag status, and therefore does not meet demands for seaworthiness as set out in international regulations and agreements," it said.

The coast guard said the ship, whose destination was unclear and "was called shadow fleet."

European nations have stepped up efforts to "disrupt the so-called shadow fleet of tankers 'used by Moscow to fund its four-year war against Ukraine."

Russia has condemned such moves as hostile.

So far this year, Sweden has stopped five vessels "on suspicion of various offences, including oil spills and sailing under a false flag, and opened criminal proceedings against some crew members."

ing no cargo, figured on several sanctions lists, including those of the European Union and Britain.

Swedish Minister for Civil Defence, Carl-Oskar Bohlin, said separately on X "that the vessel was suspected 'of belonging to the Russian so-called shadow fleet."

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India's Modi faces key test as vote count underway

NEWS DESK: Vote counting in key Indian state elections was underway on Monday under tight security, with the focus on West Bengal, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party is hoping for crucial gains.

Elections in five states and territories took place in April and May, and Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the ruling party in the national parliament, is hoping to make inroads into opposition-held states.

In West Bengal, the Hindu-nationalist BJP waged an aggressive bid to dislodge Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the firebrand leader of the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC), in power in the state of 100 million people since 2011.

Exit polls last week predicted the BJP has a slight edge over TMC, although exit polls have a patchy record in India.

"The entire country

has its eyes on this state's election results," political analyst Biswanath Chakraborty told AFP in the main city Kolkata.

"The contest can tilt the balance of power."

The campaign this time was marked by protests over the removal of millions of names from voter rolls, billed as removing ineligible voters, but which critics said was skewed against marginalised and minority communities.

Banerjee, speaking ahead of the count, insisted her TMC would win.

"The BJP is not coming take my word for it," she said. "Be patient till the last."

But West Bengal's BJP chief Samik Bhattacharya told AFP he was confident of a win.

"It was an election of rejection," he said.



3 cruise ship passengers die in suspected hantavirus outbreak

NEWS DESK: Three people have died and three are ill after a Netherlands-based cruise ship was hit by a suspected outbreak of hantavirus, a rodent-borne virus that can cause fatal respiratory illness, authorities and media reports said on Sunday.

Netherlands-based Oceanwide Expeditions said in a news release it was "managing a serious medical situation" on a polar expedition ship, the MV Hondius, which was off Cape Verde, an island nation

in the Atlantic west of Africa. The cruise departed from Argentina about three weeks ago "with around 150 passengers and stopped in the Antarctic and other locations on its way to Cape Verde, according to media reports."

A Dutch Foreign Ministry spokesperson confirmed that "two Dutch passengers had died, but gave no further details."

The World Health Organization (WHO) said in an X post that "in one of the sick passengers was in intensive

care in South Africa. Sky News reported the passenger is British, citing South Africa's Department of Health.

WHO said it was investigating the outbreak. Lab tests have "confirmed hantavirus in one of the six people, the agency said."

Oceanwide Expeditions said Cape Verde "authorities had not given permission for passengers requiring medical care to disembark, and Dutch authorities were seeking to "organise repatriation of two symptomatic pas-

sengers along with the body of a deceased passenger."

Hantavirus can be spread when droppings and urine of rodents become airborne, such as when people sweep out sheds where mice have been living. WHO said the virus can be spread between people in rare cases.

The illness begins with flu-like symptoms and can lead to heart and lung failure, with around 40 per cent of cases resulting in death, according to the US Centres for Disease Control.

There are "no specific drugs to treat hantavirus, so treatment focuses on supportive care, including putting patients on ventilators in severe cases."

WHO is facilitating coordination between member states and the ship's operators for medical evacuation of two symptomatic passengers, as well as full public health risk assessment and "support to the remaining passengers on board," the organisation said.

The British Foreign Office and South Africa's Department of Health did not immediately respond to requests for comment.



UAE says Opec exit 'not directed against anyone'

NEWS DESK: The United Arab Emirates' shocking decision to leave Saudi-dominated Opec was not targeted at anyone, the UAE minister who heads the state oil giant said on Monday.

The move aimed at focusing on national priorities and the UAE economy, said Sultan Al Jaber, who is CEO of state-owned Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (Adnoc) and the country's industry and advanced technology minister.

The decision, which took effect on Friday, followed months of tensions between Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter and de facto leader of Opec, over foreign policy, oil output

and the Middle East war, which has strained Gulf economies.

A close partnership between the Gulf nations has turned into an open rivalry since a public falling out in December over Yemen, but the minister said the decision to withdraw from the oil cartel was not aimed at any nation.

"The UAE's sovereign decision to reposition itself within the global energy landscape, and to exit Opec and Opec's, is not a decision directed against anyone," he told a conference in Abu Dhabi.

The exit of the UAE, which was Opec's fourth-largest producer, dealt a blow to the cartel's ability to control oil prices.

It also further

strained UAE-Saudi ties, which plunged after their row over Yemen in December, but analysts have long been at odds over Opec production quotas.

Leaving Opec "serves our national interests and long-term strategic objectives, aligns with our industrial, economic and developmental ambitions, and gives us greater ability to accelerate investment, expand, and create value," Jaber said.

"This move was not done in isolation," he said at the "Make It In The Emirates" conference on the UAE industry.

"It is part of a broader effort to reshape our economy and indus-

trial base through a vision that connects energy, technology, and industry, aligning our resources with national priorities to build a stronger, more resilient economy."

While the UAE is not the first country to leave Opec, it is by far the biggest producer to do so.

The UAE has long been frustrated with Opec's quotas, which sought to cap Emirat production at 3.4 million barrels a day.

Abu Dhabi seeks to expand the UAE's production capacity to five million barrels a day by 2027.

On Sunday, Adnoc pledged to spend \$55 billion on new projects over the next two years.



Federal Board issues update over overseas matric exams

ISLAMABAD (INP) The Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) has delayed the SSC Part I examinations at overseas centers. The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Part I examinations have been postponed in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, and Bahrain. Originally scheduled for May 5, the exams have been rescheduled to May 12 due to delays in logistical arrangements in these countries. FBISE stated that a detailed revised data sheet will be communicated shortly.

Earlier, the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) announced a new grading formula, which will come into effect from 2026 for Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations, while the same system will be implemented for FA and FSc examinations from 2027.

Under the new grading structure, students securing 96% to 100% marks will receive an "A++" grade, while those scoring 91% to 95% will be awarded an "A+" grade. Similarly, marks between 86% and 90% will correspond to an "A" grade, 81% to 85% to "B++", and 76% to 80% to "B+". Students achieving 71% to 75% will receive a "B" grade, while 61% to 70% will be marked as "C". Those obtaining a "D (Emerging)" grade in the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education examinations will be classified as "Ungraded".



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani in a meeting with Mr. Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Republic of Kazakhstan to Islamic Republic of Pakistan at Parliament House.

Pakistan played "pivotal and constructive role" in promoting regional peace: Malik Ahmad

LAHORE (INP) Panjab Assembly (PA) Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan on Sunday said Pakistan has played a "pivotal and constructive role" in promoting regional peace and contributing to the peaceful resolution of international disputes with its diplomatic efforts being acknowledged by the global community. He was addressing the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected office-bearers of the Ready-Made Garments Export Association, Shah Alam Market. The speaker said Pakistan's diplomatic engagement and enhanced efforts in relation to the ceasefire between the United States and Iran carried significant strategic importance. He added that under the leadership of Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Pakistan had actively contributed to peace building initiatives and regional stability.

Pakistan's diplomacy played decisive role in reducing Iran-US tensions: Rana Sanaullah

FAISALABAD (INP) Adviser to Prime Minister (PM) on Political and Public Affairs Senator Rana Sanaullah said on Saturday that Pakistan's proactive and high-level diplomacy played a decisive role in reducing tensions between Iran and the United States. Talking to the media after addressing convocation of a medical college, he said the Pakistan's political and military leadership demonstrated exceptional foresight and statesmanship in defusing a potentially devastating conflict. Commenting on social media trends, he criticized certain elements for spreading propaganda driven by personal grudges and negative politics for damaging Pakistan's image. However, the nation had consistently rejected such narratives and stood firmly behind its political and military leadership particularly during "Marka-e-Haq" when misleading campaigns were countered by strong public unity, he added.

IOJK ranked as one of world's most dangerous places for journalists: report

ISLAMABAD (INP) On World Press Freedom Day 2026, a report highlights that journalists in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) face one of the most restrictive environments and globally, characterized by state surveillance, harassment and legal intimidation under harsh laws. This repressive atmosphere continues to stifle independent journalism, putting reporters at constant risk. According to a report compiled by Kashmir Media Service Editor Raies Ahmed Mir on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day on Sunday, Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir remains one of the most dangerous places in the world for media professionals, who continue to perform their duties under extremely difficult circumstances.

As of May 2026, press freedom in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) continues to deteriorate, with independent journalism facing severe pressure from the BJP-led government. Journalists are subjected to state surveillance, harassment and legal intimidation under draconian laws, creating a climate of fear and self-censorship. The ongoing repression stands in stark contrast to the values celebrated on International Press Freedom Day, which calls for the protection of media independence, freedom of expression, and the right to access information. The situation has worsened since August 2019, with the BJP government employing strong-arm tactics to stifle independent journalism in the region. Journalists are frequently questioned about their sources, face equipment confiscation, and endure legal actions for publishing content deemed "anti-national". Many are coerced into signing undertakings pledging not to publish any material critical of the government, its policies, or the political situation in Kashmir. These tactics have led to a widespread "chilling effect" on press freedom, with local newsrooms shrinking and increasingly difficult. Reports from international press organizations highlight the escalating repression, with India's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index slipping further. In 2026, India ranked 157th out of 180 countries, a decline from 151st the previous year. Kashmir's situation is cited as a significant factor contributing to this drop, as journalists there face threats, arrests and severe restrictions on their work. Local political leaders have raised alarms about the erosion of media freedoms in the region, noting that despite these pressures, journalists continue to expose the harsh realities of life in Kashmir, often under direct threat. Several prominent journalists have faced violence, detention, and harassment while reporting on sensitive issues in IOJK. Journalists like Irfan Khan, Akanksha Saxena, and Khalid Khan have been recognized for their efforts, but their work has also subjected them to continued repression.

Health industry advancement committee formed with Yasir Niazi to drive sector growth strategy

ISLAMABAD (INP) Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has established its Standing Committee on Health Industry Advancement and appointed Yasir Khan Niazi, healthcare strategist and Group CEO of GAK Healthcare International, as its Chairman in a strategic initiative aimed at positioning healthcare as a core driver of Pakistan's economic transformation. The move signals a structural redefinition of healthcare, not only as a social service, but as a high-value economic sector with direct linkages to trade, exports, foreign exchange generation, investment inflows, and employment creation. ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood congratulated Yasir Khan Niazi on his appointment and stated that his leadership and deep understanding of healthcare economics make him well-suited to guide this transformation at a national level. The initiative comes at a time when global economic indicators highlight the expanding scale of opportunity in healthcare-linked industries. The global healthcare economy, covering clinical services, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, digital health, and healthcare financing, is valued at approximately USD 9 trillion, according to World Bank/Global Health Expenditure Database and consolidated estimates, 2024-2025. Within this global context, Pakistan's healthcare sector remains structurally underdeveloped, yet strategically positioned due to its demographic potential, regional connectivity, and emerging digital ecosystem. Upon assuming leadership of the committee, Yasir Khan Niazi outlined a comprehensive framework to reposition healthcare as an integrated economic ecosystem rather than a fragmented service delivery sector. This ecosystem brings together pharmaceutical manufacturing and distribution, digital health platforms, AI-enabled diagnostics, healthcare retail supply chains, and structured financing mechanisms. He highlighted that Pakistan's growing IT and digital services export capacity provides a strong foundation for telemedicine, hospital information systems, AI-driven diagnostics, and data-enabled healthcare delivery models that can serve both domestic and international markets. He further noted that the committee's strategy is anchored in the scale of global healthcare and allied markets. The pharmaceutical sector alone generates approximately USD 1.6 trillion annually, as per Statista/IOVIA Global Pharma Market Report 2025 estimates, while the global medical tourism market reached USD 172.0 billion in 2025 and is projected to grow to USD 770.2 billion by 2034.

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Sindh CM orders fast-track completion of Karachi BRT Red Line, Shahrah-e-Bhutto

KARACHI (INP) Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday conducted an extensive early-morning inspection of major infrastructure projects in Karachi, directing the concerned officers to accelerate work on the Karachi Bus Rapid Transit (KBRT) Red Line corridor, Shahrah-e-Bhutto and Pahalwan Goth Road while ensuring quality and transparency in all ongoing development schemes. During the visit, the chief minister announced that Shahrah-e-Bhutto would be opened for traffic before Eid, calling it an "Eid gift for the people of Karachi." He also ordered that mixed traffic lanes along the Red Line corridor be completed within two months. The chief minister, accompanied by Minister Local Government Nasir Shah, Minister P&D Jam Khan Shoro and Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, began his visit by inspecting the Red Line project on Peoples Chowringi to Safoora Chowringi before travelling to Pahalwan Goth to review rehabilitation works on the main traffic corridor. He later visited Shahrah-e-Bhutto from the Bheem Pura flyover up to Kathore, where he reviewed progress and issued on-site directives to project teams. "Our priority is to restore smooth traffic flow and provide safe, reliable infrastructure to the people of Karachi," CM Murad Ali Shah said. "The Red Line and Shahrah-e-Bhutto are critical corridors for the city, and there will be no unnecessary delays or compromise on quality." Secretary Transport Asad Zamin and Karachi's CEO Zubair Channa briefed the chief minister on compliance with directives issued during his previous visit to the Red Line corridor on April 29.

RCB accelerates emergency measures to improve water supply system ahead of summer

RAWALPINDI, May 03 (INP): The Rawalpindi Cantonment board (RCB) has accelerated emergency measures to improve the water supply system ahead of summer, aiming to ensure its uninterrupted provision to residents. Chief Executive Officer RCB Aamir Rashid told APP on Sunday that work on laying around 300 feet of new pipeline in Dlok Gujran was nearing completion, with excavation finished and installation in its final stages. He said repair and replacement of pipelines, valves and spindles were underway in various areas, with field teams mobilized to replace old or damaged lines on priority. The measures were aimed not only at ensuring a continuous supply but also at preventing water losses by addressing leakages, he added. Rashid said damaged valves and spindles had been replaced in areas including Chahar Chushtabad and People's Colony, improving water supply. He added that a six-inch water supply line on Valley Road, affected during the underpass project on Peshawar Road, had been restored after replacement of about 150 feet of pipeline. Similarly, a four-inch water line in Qasimabad had been repaired, normalizing supply. A damaged 50-horsepower water supply motor had also been repaired and reactivated, while the system was further stabilized by replacing a foot valve on the main pipeline from Khanpur Dam, he said. Rashid said that provision of basic civic facilities remained the Board's top priority, adding that staff had been directed to conduct regular field visits and ensure immediate action in case of water leakage or wastage.



ISLAMABAD: Head of Forces School and Systems Bushra Irfan along with Resident of Galdar-e-Quaid Abah Khan Niazi speaks about KP police enter wrong FIR during an addressing a press conference at NPC.

Safi at Muttahida Yakjehti Council meeting highlights Kashmir issue

MUZAFFARABAD (INP) In Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Convener of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC-AJK chapter), Ghulam Muhammad Safi, participated in an important high-level meeting of the Muttahida Yakjehti Council in Muzaffarabad, where participants discussed key national, regional and international issues, with a special focus on the Kashmir dispute. According to Kashmir Media Service, addressing the meeting, Safi described "Marka-e-Haq" not merely as a military success but as a comprehensive national strategy reflecting a blend of military capability, political wisdom and effective diplomacy. He said the development demonstrates that Pakistan is not only strong in defence but is also having a responsible role in promoting peace and stability in the region. He paid tribute to Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for his leadership, stating that under his command Pakistan has emerged as a strong and dignified force on the global stage. He added that the armed forces, through professionalism and strategic planning, have effectively countered the Indian aggression, enhancing the country's defence capability and prestige. Safi said the development sends a clear message that Pakistan will not compromise on its sovereignty or principled stance. He also appreciated the diplomatic efforts of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, noting that Pakistan's political leadership has effectively highlighted the Kashmir issue at international forums and exposed India's unilateral actions. Highlighting the situation in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Safi said India continues to commit serious human rights violations and is attempting to alter the demographic composition of the territory through systematic measures. He urged the international community to ensure implementation of United Nations resolutions and to support the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination. Reaffirming contin-

ued support, he said the Kashmiri people's freedom movement will continue until its logical conclusion, and the APHC will keep representing their aspirations at every level. Participants of the meeting also expressed full solidarity with the people of Kashmir and endorsed Pakistan's principled stand on the dispute. Meanwhile, on World Press Freedom Day, APHC-AJK chapter Information Secretary Mushfiq Ahmed Butt expressed serious concern over the deteriorating state of media in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He said journalism in the territory is going through one of its worst phases.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Musadik Malik held a meeting with Mr. MA Jun, President Institute of Finance and Sustainability.

Open Court Held in Pasni to Address Public Issues, Focus on BSDI Development Projects

GWADAR/PASNI : On the special directives of Nakeebullah Kakar, a comprehensive open court (Khuli Kachehri) was organized in Nalant, Pasni to address public issues of residents from Nalant, Kapar, Kalanch, and Kalag areas.

Participation of Civil and Military Officials The session was attended by key officials, including Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Zahoor Ahmed Baloch, Assistant Commissioner Pasni Khusrro Dallawari, District Health Officer Dr. Yasir Tahir, PPHI District Manager Dr. Murshid Dasthi, along with representatives from the Pakistan Army, B&R Department, education sector, and local government.

Review of Development Projects During the open court, detailed discussions were held on ongoing development projects under the Balochistan Special Development Initiative Phase II.

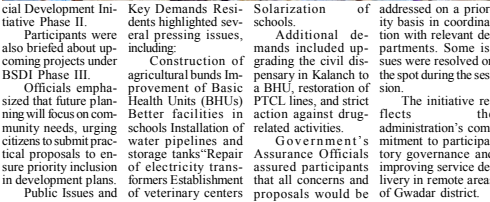
Participants were also briefed about upcoming projects under BSDI Phase III. Officials emphasized that future planning will focus on community needs, urging citizens to submit practical proposals to ensure priority inclusion in development plans.

Public Issues and Key Demands Residents highlighted several pressing issues, including the construction of agricultural bunds, improvement of Basic Health Units (BHUs), Better facilities in schools, Installation of water pipelines and storage tanks, Repair of electricity transformers, Establishment of veterinary centers

Solarization of schools. Additional demands included upgrading the civil dispensary in Kalanch to a BHU, restoration of PTCL lines, and strict action against drug-related activities.

Government's Assurance Officials assured participants that all concerns and proposals would be addressed on a priority basis in coordination with relevant departments. Some issues were resolved on the spot during the session.

The initiative reflects the administration's commitment to participatory governance and improving service delivery in remote areas of Gwadar district.



Cleanliness Drive Intensified in Loralai to Ensure Healthy Environment for Citizens

LORALAI: On the special directives of Wali Muhammad Bareeh and Chief Officer Moshabbah Baloch, extensive efforts are also ensuring strict monitoring of operations. Public Cooperation Urged Authorities emphasized that providing a clean and healthy environment remains a top priority for the district administration. Alongside improving

clearing blocked drains, and maintaining cleanliness in streets and neighborhoods. The removal of accumulated waste and debris has improved water flow, significantly reducing issues faced by nearby residents.

Similarly, a special cleanliness drive was carried out in the Teaching Hospital area, where waste was promptly removed to maintain hygiene standards for patients, attendants, and staff.

Continuous Monitoring and Field Activity Major roads—including Mini Bypass, Shaheed Mir Murad Abro Road, Al-Hussaini Chowk, and Mir Muhammad Saad Umrani Road—are being redesigned and upgraded on modern lines to improve traffic flow and urban facilities.

Water Supply and Sewerage Projects The Executive Engineer added that significant progress is also being made on water supply

and sewerage systems. A 100,000-gallon overhead water tank and fully equipped district

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Progress of BSDI Projects Reviewed in Jaffarabad, DC Stresses Quality and Timely Completion

JAFFARABAD : A detailed review meeting on development projects under the Balochistan Special Development Initiative was held under the chairmanship of Khalid Khan in Jaffarabad.

The meeting was attended by Executive Engineer Public Health Engineering Muhammad Kazim Luni, Executive Engineer B&R Irfan Ali Rajput, and Sub-Divisional Officer Muhammad Siddique Zehri, and other officials from relevant departments.

Review of Ongoing and Completed Projects Officials presented detailed brief-

ings on ongoing, completed, and under-construction projects under BSDI Phase I and Phase II across the district.

Progress, construction quality, and challenges faced in various sectors were discussed in detail.

Emphasis on Transparency and Quality Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Khalid Khan directed that all development projects must be completed on time and according to high-quality standards, in line with the vision of Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti.

He stressed that development schemes are a public trust and no compromise will be made on transparency or quality.

Officials were instructed to perform their duties with integrity and professionalism. Strict Monitoring and Accountability The Deputy Commissioner stated that the administration will continue strict monitoring and regular evaluations to ensure projects are completed within the stipulated timeframe and deliver essential services to the public.

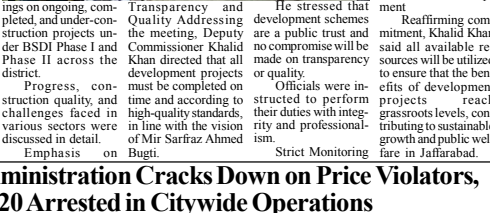
Commitment to Sustainable Development Reaffirming commitment, Khalid Khan said all available resources will be utilized to ensure that the benefits of development projects reach their cities levels, contributing to sustainable growth and public welfare in Jaffarabad.

Focus on Quality and Public Welfare About Rehman Kakar highlighted that engineers and staff of the C&W Department are working tirelessly to complete projects on time and according to set standards, ensuring modern infrastructure and essential facilities for the public.

He also credited Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa and Secretary C&W Babar Khan for their effective policies and efforts, which have significantly improved the department's performance and restored public confidence.

Major Infrastructure Developments He noted that ongoing development projects in Nasirabad reflect the dedication of B&R engineers and field staff, ensuring steady progress.

Under the Dera Murad Jamali Master Plan, development has



Development Projects in Nasirabad Accelerate Under Govt Vision, Says C&W Executive Engineer

NASIRABAD: Abdul Rehman Kakar, Executive Engineer of Communication and Works (C&W) Nasirabad, has stated that development projects in the district—particularly in Dera Murad Jamali—are progressing rapidly with a focus on transparency and quality.

He said the work is being carried out under the vision of Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, directives of Shakeel Qadir Khan, and special interest of Mir Muhammad Sadiq Khan Umrani.

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QUETTA: On the directives of Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, the district administration of Quetta launched large-scale operations against price violators under the supervision of Mehrullah Badini.

Citywide Inspections Under Price Control Special checking campaigns were conducted in key areas including Prince Road, Gawa Im an d i Chowk, Qalandar Maqam, Nawab Killi, Airport Road, and Alamo Chowk to ensure strict compliance with officially notified price lists. Arrests and

Legal Action During operations led by Assistant Commissioner (City) Muhammad Ameer Hamza, tandoors and meat shops were inspected. A total of 14 individuals were arrested and sent to jail for violating government price rates, while sev-

eral shopkeepers were issued strict warnings. In separate actions, Assistant Commissioner (Saddar) Muhammad Yousef Hashmi carried out raids in Nawab Killi, Airport Road, and Alamo Chowk, resulting in the arrest of 6 more individuals.

Additionally, 3 shops were sealed over serious violations. Zero Tolerance for Overpricing According to the district administration, overcharging, hoarding, and non-compliance with official price lists will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Authorities reiterated that indiscriminate actions will continue across the city to address public complaints and ensure the availability of essential commodities at controlled prices.

Staffing and Resource Deployment The meeting also finalized a phased strategy for the systematic transfer of newly appointed staff to Turbat.

This approach aims to ensure a smooth and well-organized transition process, enabling the new district administration to function effectively.

The initiative reflects the government's commitment to strengthening administrative capacity and improving governance in newly established districts.



Administrative Planning Meeting Held for Newly Formed Tamp District in Turbat

TURBAT: In line with the directives of Shakeel Qadir Khan, a key meeting was held under the chairmanship of Barkat Ali Baloch to streamline administrative affairs of the newly formed Tamp district.

The meeting took place at the District Council Hall in Turbat and was attended by senior officials, including Assistant Commissioner Shehbaz Hayat, Additional Deputy Commissioner Tabish Ali Baloch, DHO Tamp Dr. Nouruz Yaqoob, District Education Officer

Manzoor Baloch, District Manager Haji Khan, and DHO Turbat Dr. Abdul Rauf Baloch, along with representatives from various departments of Kech District.

Focus on Administrative Structure Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Barkat Ali Baloch stated that the primary objective was to develop a comprehensive strategy for establishing an efficient and organized administrative structure in Tamp.

He emphasized the importance of close coordination with the administration of Kech district to fill vacant positions and ensure smooth governance.

Staffing and Resource Deployment Detailed discussions were held on creating new posts and transferring surplus staff from various departments in Kech to Tamp.

Officials reviewed departmental staffing lists, including both vacant and filled positions, to assess workforce availability.

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He also credited Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa and Secretary C&W Babar Khan for their effective policies and efforts, which have significantly improved the department's performance and restored public confidence.

Administrative Planning Meeting Held for Newly Formed Tamp District in Turbat

TURBAT: In line with the directives of Shakeel Qadir Khan, a key meeting was held under the chairmanship of Barkat Ali Baloch to streamline administrative affairs of the newly formed Tamp district.

The meeting took place at the District Council Hall in Turbat and was attended by senior officials, including Assistant Commissioner Shehbaz Hayat, Additional Deputy Commissioner Tabish Ali Baloch, DHO Tamp Dr. Nouruz Yaqoob, District Education Officer

Manzoor Baloch, District Manager Haji Khan, and DHO Turbat Dr. Abdul Rauf Baloch, along with representatives from various departments of Kech District.

Focus on Administrative Structure Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Barkat Ali Baloch stated that the primary objective was to develop a comprehensive strategy for establishing an efficient and organized administrative structure in Tamp.

He emphasized the importance of close coordination with the administration of Kech district to fill vacant positions and ensure smooth governance.

Staffing and Resource Deployment Detailed discussions were held on creating new posts and transferring surplus staff from various departments in Kech to Tamp.

Officials reviewed departmental staffing lists, including both vacant and filled positions, to assess workforce availability.

Strategy for Staff Deployment The meeting also finalized a phased strategy for the systematic transfer of newly appointed staff to Tamp.

This approach aims to ensure a smooth and well-organized transition process, enabling the new district administration to function effectively.

The initiative reflects the government's commitment to strengthening administrative capacity and improving governance in newly established districts.

He also credited Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa and Secretary C&W Babar Khan for their effective policies and efforts, which have significantly improved the department's performance and restored public confidence.

Major Infrastructure Developments He noted that ongoing development projects in Nasirabad reflect the dedication of B&R engineers and field staff, ensuring steady progress.

Under the Dera Murad Jamali Master Plan, development has

accelerated significantly, aligning with the government's vision for modern infrastructure and essential facilities for the public.

Quetta Administration Cracks Down on Price Violators, 20 Arrested in Citywide Operations

QUETTA: On the directives of Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, the district administration of Quetta launched large-scale operations against price violators under the supervision of Mehrullah Badini.

Citywide Inspections Under Price Control Special checking campaigns were conducted in key areas including Prince Road, Gawa Im an d i Chowk, Qalandar Maqam, Nawab Killi, Airport Road, and Alamo Chowk to ensure strict compliance with officially notified price lists. Arrests and

Legal Action During operations led by Assistant Commissioner (City) Muhammad Ameer Hamza, tandoors and meat shops were inspected. A total of 14 individuals were arrested and sent to jail for violating government price rates, while sev-

eral shopkeepers were issued strict warnings. In separate actions, Assistant Commissioner (Saddar) Muhammad Yousef Hashmi carried out raids in Nawab Killi, Airport Road, and Alamo Chowk, resulting in the arrest of 6 more individuals.

Additionally, 3 shops were sealed over serious violations. Zero Tolerance for Overpricing According to the district administration, overcharging, hoarding, and non-compliance with official price lists will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Authorities reiterated that indiscriminate actions will continue across the city to address public complaints and ensure the availability of essential commodities at controlled prices.

Staffing and Resource Deployment The meeting also finalized a phased strategy for the systematic transfer of newly appointed staff to Turbat.

This approach aims to ensure a smooth and well-organized transition process, enabling the new district administration to function effectively.

The initiative reflects the government's commitment to strengthening administrative capacity and improving governance in newly established districts.

Rate hike signals deeper concern

NEWS DESK: Few remarks capture the ambiguity of central banking as sharply as former Fed Chair Alan Greenspan's oft-quoted line:

"I know you think you understand what you thought I said, but I'm not sure you realise that what you heard is not what I meant."

It is a fitting lens through which to view the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)'s recent 100 basis points increase in the policy rate — an action that,

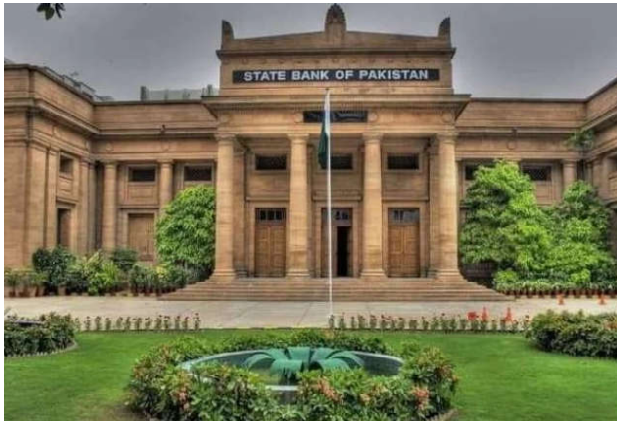
beyond its stated intent, has left markets and industry grappling with what exactly the central bank is trying to signal.

On one level, the decision is grounded in conventional monetary logic.

Inflation has edged higher, core measures remain sticky, and global uncertainties — particularly stemming from geopolitical tensions and elevated energy prices — pose clear upside risks.

The central bank's own assessment suggests that inflation may remain above target in the coming quarters, warranting a tightening stance to anchor expectations and prevent second-round effects. Yet,

in Pakistan's con-



text, the significance of monetary policy lies not merely in its intent but in its interpretation.

A large and unexpected rate hike is seldom viewed as a technical adjustment.

It is read as a signal — often a warning — that policymakers see risks beyond what is immediately visible in the data.

If the macroeconomic narrative is one of cautious stabilisation — with a manageable current account position, improving reserves and moderate growth recovery — then the scale of the hike appears disproportionate.

On the other hand, if risks are indeed intensifying to justify such

urgency, then the absence of explicit communication about those risks creates uncertainty rather than reassurance. In such an environment, markets tend to assume the worst.

Monetary tightening in Pakistan carries a disproportionate fiscal cost.

With government borrowing dominating the credit landscape, higher interest rates translate directly into a surge in debt servicing obligations, which already constitute the single largest component of public expenditure.

This dynamic raises a critical question: to what extent is monetary policy targeting inflation, and to what extent is it reshaping fiscal pressures? When the cost of servicing debt rises sharply, it crowds out development spending and constrains

growth — potentially undermining the very stability that policy seeks to achieve.

Moreover, the transmission of monetary policy to the real economy remains uneven.

Private sector credit constitutes a relatively small share of total lending, while key industries have already been operating under tight financial conditions.

Evidence suggests that high borrowing costs, combined with elevated input prices, have contributed to widespread industrial stress, including factory closures in major sectors.

This concern is echoed by industry stakeholders, who argue that the rate hike risks stifling a nascent recovery.

For businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises, access to affordable financing is critical.

Higher interest rates not only increase the cost of working capital but also deter new investment, limit expansion and erode competitiveness.

More fundamentally, there is scepticism about the effectiveness of monetary tightening in addressing Pakistan's inflation.

A significant portion of price pressures is supply-driven, stemming from energy costs, exchange rate pass-through and structural inefficiencies.

In such a context, higher interest rates may suppress demand without meaningfully reducing the root causes of inflation.

In the treasury auction immediately after the monetary policy announcement, the Ministry of Finance rejected all bids for Pakistan Investment Bonds and Jarah Sukuk.

This was a rare move, effectively refusing to accept the higher yields demanded by investors in response to the tightening stance.

The implication was clear: while the central bank raised rates, the government maintained that it was unwilling to lock in borrowing at those elevated levels.

On one hand, monetary policy is attempting to enforce tighter financial conditions.

On the other, fiscal authorities appear to be betting that such conditions are temporary and that rates may have peaked.

For investors, this creates confusion about the future trajectory of interest rates.

When tax zealotry chokes export growth

NEWS DESK: Pakistan's value-added garments sector has long been regarded as the country's most promising engine for export growth. It combines labour intensity with high value addition, links backward industries such as spinning and weaving with global markets, and has the potential to generate employment on a scale unmatched by most other sectors.

However, despite this inherent strength, policy choices in recent years have steadily undermined its competitiveness.

The latest demands by exporters to restore the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) to its original form are not merely routine lobbying; they reflect a deeper structural failure in tax policy and administration.

When the Export Facilitation Scheme was introduced through SRO 957(I) 2021, its core objective was clear: remove the burden of duties and taxes from export production.

It consolidated earlier fragmented schemes and allowed exporters to import inputs free of customs duty, sales tax

and other levies, while also permitting zero-rated local supplies. This was not a concession but a recognition of a fundamental principle: exports must be tax neutral.

The scheme aimed to eliminate the need for refunds, reduce compliance costs and ensure liquidity for exporters operating in highly competitive global markets.

That principle has since been diluted. Changes introduced in recent budgets have effectively reversed the

logic of the scheme. Zero-rating on local supplies has been withdrawn, duties and taxes have been imposed on imports for exporters, and the system has been pushed back into a refund-based regime.

Exporters who were earlier insulated from upfront taxation are now forced to pay taxes first and wait for refunds later. The result is predictable: liquidity pressures, delayed refunds and rising cost of doing business.

The scale of the

problem is not trivial. Exporters report that billions of rupees are currently stuck in refund claims, effectively converting the state into a borrower of working capital from the private sector.

This is precisely what the original EFS sought to avoid. A scheme designed to eliminate refunds has been transformed into one that depends on them. The contradiction is not merely administrative; it reflects a deeper policy inconsistency.



Empowering the third tier

NEWS DESK: The near-term future of a strong grassroots democracy remains uncertain despite escalating pressure for it in an intensifying national debate, with the country's ruling parties apparently unwilling or unable to uphold principles underlying the empowerment of the third tier of government.

The views vary among and within political parties, with political leaders often divided between those who stand for some sort of 'limited empowerment' of the local government (LG) system and those who seek devolution of political, administrative and financial responsibility to the elected local representatives as provided under Article 140-A of the Constitution. Addressing a seminar he organised in Hyderabad on April 25, former PTI leader Asad Umar stressed that, "It was the right time to seriously discuss the LG issue head-on before finding a solution."

He noted that LGs were constitutionally the third tier of government, but without constitutional protection.

"Establishing empowered local governments with fiscal and decision-making authority is a constitutional duty, not a policy option," says analyst, lawyer and social activist Nadeem Khurshid. "Cities perform when authority lies with elected local leaders, and citizens are treated as participants, not spectators."

In his article titled 'Ceremonial local governments' published in The Express Tribune, he argues that, "Even in developed countries, empowered local governments wield immense economic power and fiscal authority."

He notes New York City manages a budget exceeding \$100 billion across transport, housing, sanitation, policing, and public health. Asad Umar pointed out that, "Conditions in southern Punjab were different in central Punjab, and the same goes for some districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. We don't want exclusion of provinces while empowering LG." He, however, clarified that the new province could only be created after the concerned assembly passes a resolution for it. Speaking on the occasion, Sindh United Party President

Green hydrogen for energy security

NEWS DESK: Recent geopolitical tensions in the Middle East have once again highlighted Pakistan's continued reliance on imported energy and the associated exposure to global price volatility.

With around 85% of oil demand and a growing share of liquefied natural gas (LNG) sourced from international markets, external supply disruptions can quickly translate into higher domestic energy costs, inflationary pressures and broader macroeconomic instability.

Energy imports account for nearly one-third of Pakistan's total import bill, contributing to persistent trade deficits and foreign-exchange constraints.

It is encouraging that over the past decade, Pakistan has significantly diversified its energy mix by expanding solar, wind and hydropower capacity, thereby reducing its reliance on imported fuels. However, this effort can be further strengthened by adopting new technologies, as several countries are already doing.

To ensure long-term energy security, future-oriented planning must also consider emerging technologies that are reshaping global energy markets.

India provides a relevant regional example. Through its National Green Hydrogen Mission and the Strategic In-

terventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) programme, the country is seeking to integrate hydrogen into its future energy mix while improving cost competitiveness.

With financial incentives aimed at supporting domestic electrolyser manufacturing and large-scale production of green hydrogen and its derivatives, the initiative reflects a broader industrial strategy to capture opportunities in the evolving global energy economy rather than functioning solely as a subsidy.

It also enables India to access the full potential of its renewable energy, as it is seen as a core part of green hydrogen infrastructure rather than simply another energy input. Pakistan's

engagement with hydrogen, by contrast, remains limited and largely focused on feasibility assessments and pilot initiatives.

Hydrogen can improve the overall efficiency and utilisation of Pakistan's renewable energy resources by providing a flexible pathway to absorb excess electricity generation.

As solar and wind capacity expands, periods of surplus production, particularly during high solar output hours or strong wind conditions, may increasingly lead to curtailment if grid demand or transmission capacity is limited.

Converting this surplus renewable electricity into green hydrogen through electrolysis can enable productive use of otherwise underutilised en-

ergy, effectively transforming variable power into a storable and transportable energy carrier.

In this way, hydrogen can complement grid-scale storage and system-balancing solutions by helping smooth fluctuations in renewable output and supporting greater integration of intermittent electricity generation.

Beyond its role in system flexibility, hydrogen can also contribute to sectoral energy efficiency by enabling renewable electricity to be deployed in applications that are difficult to electrify directly.

This can improve the overall load factor of renewable assets, reduce curtailment losses and enhance the economic viability of large-scale renewable investments.



Ministries told to surrender unspent funds

NEWS DESK: The Ministry of Finance has directed all ministries, divisions, departments, and autonomous bodies to surrender,

within 10 days, all savings and unspent allocations that are not expected to be utilised during the current fiscal year.

The instructions have been issued to ensure that revised estimates that revised estimates for FY2025-26 are finalised and budget estimates for the upcoming fiscal year (FY2026-27) are finalised in a timely manner.

In a communication, the MoF directed all principal accounting officers (PAOs) to 'surrender anticipated savings' under all four major expenditure heads to the Finance Division by May 10.

They have also been instructed not only to issue 'surrender orders' but also to communicate the surrendered amounts to the Budget Section of the MoF by the same date for entry

into the computer system. These heads include: (i) running of the civil government — both employee-related expenditures (ERE) and non-ERE,

(ii) grants, (iii) subsidies, and (iv) development funds under the Investment Programme (PSDP).

It may be noted that, under Section 12 of the PFM Act, 2019, all ministries and divisions are required to surrender savings to the Finance Division by May 31 each year.

The MoF said the deadline had been advanced by nearly a month on the directives of Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to improve fiscal prudence and ensure the timely surrender of savings so that funds can be made available where required.

The PSDP has already been cut by Rs173 billion (about 20 per cent of the budgeted allocation) to transfer funds to

the Prime Minister's fund for fuel subsidies following rising petroleum prices in the wake of the US-Israel war on Iran.

The PSDP has already been facing challenging conditions, as federal entities spent less than half of their budget allocations on public welfare projects during the first three quarters of the current fiscal year.

There were, however, some exceptions, as about 70pc of allocations for ruling parliamentarians' schemes were utilised in the first nine months.

According to the Ministry of Planning and Development, total utilisation of PSDP funds amounted to Rs415bn during July, accounting for 41.5pc of the Rs1 trillion budget allocation.

This was slightly better than 36.4pc during the same period last year, when PSDP expenditure stood at Rs40bn against an allocation of

Rs1.1tr.

The government began bulk disbursements to parliamentarians' schemes, codenamed the Sustainable Development Goals Achievement Element Programme (SAP), after the first five months of the fiscal year.

By the end of the nine-month period (July-March), the Planning Commission had authorised nearly 90pc (Rs57.23bn) of the revised annual allocation of Rs65.24bn, of which more than Rs44bn (70pc) had been spent.

Notably, these funds were authorised and utilised within a short span of around four months, making it the fastest-executed programme.

As of March 31, 2026, ministries and divisions had sanctioned Rs599bn, against which Rs414.96bn (45.6pc of the total allocation) had been reported as expenditure. The annual PSDP allocation for FY2025-26 stands at Rs1tr.

Hardie heroics deny Kingsmen fairytale as Zalmi reign supreme in decider

NEWS DESK: It was not a day of veterans of both the teams at a jam-packed Gaddafi Stadium. Though Hyderabad Kingsmen's captain Marnus Labuschagne, team-mates Glenn Maxwell and Kusal Perera, and Peshawar Zalmi skipper Babar Azam and partner Kusal Mendis could not contribute productively, the big game — dominated by bowlers — still carried entertainment and excitement for the lively spectators on Sunday night.

It was Aaron Hardie's time to excel. Rising to the massive occasion, the 27-year-old Australian all-rounder, playing his sixth game of this PSL, made the difference both with bat and ball to steer Zalmi to a five-wicket triumph — giving them their second PSL crown. They won their first in 2017.

Debutants Kingsmen, who came back strongly to make the final after initial hepcups, failed to complete the job.

Hardie earned the man-of-the-match honours while his Zalmi team-mate left-arm wrist spinner Sufiyan Muzammil (22 wickets) emerged as the man-of-the-tournament award.

Zalmi bowlers justified their captain's designation to field first by restricting Kingsmen team for a pretty moderate-



looking total of 129 as pacer Hardie led the task with a four-wicket haul.

Zalmi had a night-marish start to the chase, losing both Babar and Mohammad Haris in the opening over bowled by pacer Mohammad Ali.

Haris was taken at mid-off by Labuschagne on the third ball of the innings as the batter tried to play a lofted shot off a fuller ball across the line.

Babar, the highest run-getter of this PSL, flirted with a ball way outside off but only managed to get an edge and Usman Khan took a simple catch as Zalmi facing a very early double shock slumped to 7-2.

A huge moment came in the fourth over when Mendis, the second-highest scorer of the ongoing PSL, was caught by Maaz Sadaqat at backward point off pacerman

Hunain Shah to leave Zalmi struggling at 33-3.

When Michael Bracewell was caught behind by a diving Usman off pacer Akif Javed in the fifth over to leave Zalmi tottering at 40-4, the match looked evenly poised.

Hardie, alongside Abdul Samad, however, looked rock solid amid pressure as Zalmi reached 53-4 in powerplay.

Hardie played some fluent strokes, without hitting a six, while Samad smashed four maximums besides three fours in his 48-run knock off 34 balls.

As the pair got past 100 in 12 overs needing just 30 more, Kingsmen were put on the backfoot.

Hardie completed the fifty, his first of this PSL, off 35 balls, his innings embellished with nine fours.

After a priceless 85-run stand, Samad was sent back to the dugout by Mohammad Ali in the 15th over, but it was too little, too late with only five needed by Zalmi for victory.

When Farhan Yousaf struck Hunain for a four in the 16th, it sealed a well-deserved win for Zalmi who lost only one match in this entire PSL season.

Kingsmen innings, earlier, faced a spectacu-

lar collapse after they got off to a flying start in powerplay despite the loss of two wickets in that period.

Opener Maaz (11) was dismissed early by pacer Mohammad Basit in the second over as the batter attempted a pull only to be caught by Samad at deep square leg.

Labuschagne, alongside Saim Ayub tried to accelerate and in the process, they cruised to 50 in 4.3 overs. On the next ball, however, Kingsmen suffered a big blow as pacer Hardie gave Zalmi the prized wicket of Labuschagne who trying to square cut nicked a rising ball outside off to Haris.

Kingsmen continued their charge through Saim, who alongside Usman Khan, lifted their team to 69-2 in powerplay.

Now came the phase that dented Kingsmen badly as they lost as many as five wickets in the space of 20 balls for the addition of mere 19 runs.

In-form Usman did not last long, deceived by a straight delivery by Sufiyan in the seventh over. The right-handed wicket-keeper batter opted for a review but to no avail.

In the same over, new batter Irfan Khan failed to return to crease from halfway down the pitch as Bracewell sent

in a perfect throw from the cover position to Sufiyan who broke the stumps at the non-striker's end. Kingsmen were now reeling at 72-4.

Another massive moment of the game in the next over when big-hitting boss Glenn Maxwell got a golden duck as the batter mistimed a pull shot off pacer Nahid Rana only to give Farhan a simple catch at mid-on which left Kingsmen at a sorry 72-5.

In the same over, non-striker Perera was run out in controversial circumstances after involving in a mix-up with bowler Nahid, who attempted to collect the ball on his way through, while trying to complete a run. The batter was not happy with the bowler's action during the run.

The on-field umpires discussed the matter before referring to the third umpire who endorsed the run-out leaving Perera extremely dejected as Kingsmen nosived further to 73-6.

While Saim stood firmly at one end, wickets kept falling at the other.

At the total of 90 in the 10th over, Hassan Khan was the next to go after mistiming a short-pitched ball outside off-stump to be caught superbly by a diving Mendis at deep backward point.

Pistons rout Magic to cap comeback

NEWS DESK: The Detroit Pistons routed the Orlando Magic 114-94 on Sunday to cap a remarkable NBA playoff comeback and book an Eastern Conference semi-final clash with Cleveland.

Cade Cunningham scored 32 points and handed out 12 assists and Tobias Harris added 30 points with nine rebounds and six assists against the Magic — erasing a 24-point deficit on Friday to force Sunday's decider.

It's the second time the Pistons have rallied from 3-1 down to top the

"We had a great regular season, we built a lot of momentum going into these playoffs," Cunningham said. "To lose in the first round would have really stung."

"To come back from 3-1, odds against us, and to come back and win it at home — it feels good."

Detroit had already fended off elimination with victories in games five and six against the Magic — erasing a 24-point deficit on Friday to force Sunday's decider.

Magic, having accomplished the feat in the first round in 2003. "They really pushed us to the limit," Cunningham said. "We've grown a lot because of that team."

Paolo Banchero scored 28 points with nine rebounds and six assists for Orlando but got precious little scoring support.

Banchero scored the Magic's first 11 points and Orlando emerged from a tight first quarter with a two-point lead. The back-and-forth action continued early

in the second, Detroit finally creating some separation behind a 17-point second-quarter outburst from Harris.

They led 60-49 at halftime and pushed their lead to as many as 25, taking full advantage of 16 Magic turnovers that led to 19 Pistons points.

"We're excited for what's to come," Cunningham said. "We want to win games, win series and (our) ultimate goal is a championship."

That quest continues with game one against Cleveland on Tuesday.



Pakistan women face Zimbabwe in first ODI today

NEWS DESK: Pakistan face Zimbabwe in a six-match women's white-ball series which commences with the opening ODI here at the National Bank Stadium on Monday.

The series comprises three ODIs, which are part of the ICC Women's Championship 2025-29, followed by three T20s.

The ODI series will be staged on May 4, 6 and 9 to be followed by the T20s on May 12, 14 and 15.

The Pakistan squad, to be led by Fatima Sana, features one uncapped player, Momina Riasat. The squad for the T20 series will be announced in due course.

Pakistan are currently placed fifth in the ICC Women's Championship standings with two points after featuring in an away ODI series against South Africa earlier this year.

The forthcoming T20 series will provide the Pakistan women's team an opportunity to fine-tune preparations ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World

Cup, scheduled to take place in England and Wales from June 12 to July 5.

Prior to the ICC event, Pakistan will participate in a T20 tri-nation tournament (May 28-June 4) in Ireland also featuring Ireland and West Indies.

Commenting on the West Indies series, Fatima said, "This series is a crucial opportunity for us to start strong in the ICC Women's Championship 2025-29 cycle."

Playing at home always gives us added confidence and we are looking to make the most of these conditions.

"Our preparations have been thorough and the players are clear about their roles. While our bowling attack has been one of our strengths, we are working hard to ensure more consistency from the batting unit so that we can perform collectively as a team."

Zimbabwe skipper Nomsulo Sibanda said that the tourists were excited about the series in Pakistan, which was their first.

"This tour is a historic moment for us as it is Zimbabwe women team's first visit to Pakistan."

The players are excited about the opportunity and we are looking forward to competing in different conditions."

Pakistan squad: Fatima Sana (captain), Aliya Riaz, Ayesha Zafar, Diana Baig, Gul Ferroza, Momina Riasat, Muneeba Ali (wicket-keeper), Najjha Ali (wicket-keeper), Nashra Sundus, Natalia Parvaiz, Rameen Shamim, Sadaf Shamas, Sidra Amin, Syeda Aroob Shah, Tasma Rubab.

Reserves: Iram Javed, Eymen Fatima, Saira Ishaq, Tuba Hassan, Ambar Kanat.

Vinicius double delays Barca title

NEWS DESK: Vinicius Junior struck twice for Real Madrid in a 2-0 win over Espanyol on Sunday to make La Liga leaders Barcelona want to be crowned Spanish champions.

The Catalans would have completed their title defence if Madrid dropped points at Espanyol but Alvaro Arbeloa's side trimmed the gap on Barca to 11 points, with four matches remaining.

Barcelona's next chance to claim their 29th league title comes in a week's time, when they host Real Madrid in a spicy Clasico clash. Once again, only a Real win will stop Hansi Flick's side.

"We've got a big game coming against a great rival, who are doing things very well," Arbeloa told Real Madrid TV.

"It's special for the fans and for us. We'll rest very well and prepare well for this game."

Without injured French superstar Kylian Mbappe and with just three wins in their last nine league games, Real Madrid arrived in

Catalonia at a low ebb. They knew that even with a victory to postpone Barca's celebrations they are virtually certain to end a second consecutive season without a major trophy.

The Catalans beat Osasuna in Pamplona on Saturday night and were waiting for a Madrid slip-up to celebrate back-to-back Liga titles.

Instead they will have the chance to claim the trophy at Camp Nou in front of 60,000 fans.

Manolo Gonzalez's Espanyol, now without a win in 17 league matches, are fighting for

top flight survival and needed the points.

The Pericos are 13th, five points above the drop zone, although that gap could shrink on Monday if Sevilla, 18th, beat Real Sociedad.

Madrid had more of the ball but were unable to convert that into real danger. Vinicius Junior came closest in the first half with a deflected shot which hit the post.

The Brazilian winger was engaged in a running battle with Espanyol defender Omar El Hilali.

Vinicius was booked for a foul on the Morocco international, who was shown a red card a few minutes later for a foul on the Madrid star.



Players keep up battle with tennis majors

NEWS DESK: Top players including world number one Jannik Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka kept up the pressure on the Grand Slam tournaments with a letter to Roland Garros on Monday expressing "deep disappointment" over the French major's 2026 prize money.

Last year almost all the leading players signed two letters to the four Grand Slam bosses demanding an increase in prize money, payments into a player welfare fund to improve retirement and maternity benefits, as well as involvement in decisions that affected them.

The letters set a target of a 22-percent share in tournament revenue, which would bring the majors in line with the nine combined 1000-level events run by the ATP men's tour and the women's WTA tour.

On Monday, players said in a statement that an announcement by Roland Garros on April 16 of a 9.5 percent prize money rise was not good enough.

It said that last year the French Open generated 395 million euros (\$463 mn), a 14-percent

increase. However the total purse went up by just 5.4 percent, reducing player share of revenue to 14.3 percent.

It estimated that this year's revenues would pass 400m euros, leaving the player cut still below 15 percent.

The letter also complained that Roland Garros was ignoring the other issues raised by players.

"The announcement does not address the structural issues that players have consistently and rea-

sonably raised over the past year," it said.

There has been no engagement on player welfare and no progress towards establishing a formal mechanism for player consultation within Grand Slam decision making.

"While the tours did not release the names of the players who had signed the letters last year, copies of the first, in March, showed that 10 of the 11 top-ranked women had signed."

Sinner, Novak Djokovic, Alexander

Zverev and Carlos Alcaraz were among the men who signed — although Djokovic reportedly did not sign the second letter in the summer.

The Serbian has not signed the latest letter either, a spokesperson for the players told AFP.



Pakistan facilitates transfer of 22 Iranian crew members from seized ship MV Touska: FO

NEWSDESK: Pakistan on Monday facilitated the transfer of 22 Iranian crew members who were held aboard the container ship MV Touska, previously seized by the US, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) said.

In a statement issued, the Foreign Office (FO) said the individuals were flown to Pakistan last night and will be handed over to Iranian authorities today.

"As a confidence-building measure by the United States of America, twenty-two crew members held aboard the seized Iranian container ship, 'MV Touska', have been evacuated to Pakistan," it added.

"The Iranian ship will also be backdropped to Pakistani territorial waters for return to its original owners after necessary repairs," the statement added.

FO said these returns are being coordinated in tandem with the support of both the Iranian and US sides.

Pakistan welcomes such "confidence-building measures" and will continue to facilitate dialogue and diplomacy while pursuing ongoing



mediation efforts for regional peace and security, the FO concludes.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly demanded that freedom of navigation be restored through

Horrmuz since declaring a ceasefire early last month. But Iranian officials have responded that the strait will remain under Iran's supervi-

sion. Some of Tehran's vessels have been seized by the US after leaving Iranian ports, along with sanctioned container ships and Iranian tank-

ers in Asian waters. Iran has blocked nearly all ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz apart from its own since the start of the war. Trump has im-

posed a separate blockade of Iranian ports.

The US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28. Iran responded with its own strikes on Israel and the Gulf states

that host US bases. US-Israeli strikes on Iran and Israeli attacks in Lebanon have killed thousands of civilians and displaced millions.

The war has raised oil prices and led to the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, a chokepoint for about 20% of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments.

Trump, who has offered shifting timelines and goals for the war that remains unpopular in the US, has faced widespread condemnation over his comments on the conflict, including when he threatened to destroy Iran's entire civilisation last month.

Iran's military warned US forces on Monday not to enter the Strait of Hormuz after the US and Israel. Trump said the United States would start helping to free ships stranded in the Gulf by the US-Israeli war on Iran. Trump gave few details of the plan to aid ships and their crews that have been "locked up" in the vital waterway and are running low on food and other supplies.

On February 28, the US and Israel launched a joint offensive on Iran, and Tehran retaliated with strikes on Israel and other regional countries hosting US assets.

National Party Leaders Criticize Federal Policy on Balochistan, Demand Political Dialogue

From Our Correspondent TURBANI: Central President of the National Party and former Chief Minister of Balochistan, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch, along with former Secretary General and Senator Muhammad Baloch, strongly criticized Islamabad's approach toward Balochistan while addressing a council meeting of National Party Tehsil Dasht.

The leaders stated that the federal government and powerful institutions are not taking the issues of Balochistan seriously.

Balochistan depends on recognizing the political role of democratic nationalist parties. "The Balochistan issue is fundamentally political and national in nature, and it can only be resolved through meaningful political dialogues," they stated, criticizing the reliance on force-based policies.

Referring to past policies, the leaders remarked that the current situation is the result of flawed strategies, tracing the roots of unrest back to the era of Pervez Musharraf. They warned that such policies have

led to corruption in development projects.

Increased focus on education in Balochistan.

Merit-based employment opportunities for Baloch youth.

Release of political prisoners or their presentation in courts.

Immediate halt to illegal and extrajudicial measures.

The term "Marka-i-Haq" is used by the state to refer to the 2025 conflict with India, starting from the April 22 Pahalgam attack to the end of Operation Bunyanum Marsoos with a ceasefire on May 10.

"This victory was not the victory of weapons alone. It was a triumph of unity and of people who refused to kneel," said Bilawal, who is also the former foreign minister and had led a delegation abroad to convey Pakistan's stance on the conflict.

From the mountains of the north to the shores of the Arabian Sea, from the fields of Punjab to the deserts of Sindh and Balochistan, Pakistan stood as one," he affirmed.

NEWSDESK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar spoke with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, with the regional situation and Pakistan's ongoing diplomatic efforts coming under discussion, the Foreign Office (FO) said on Monday.

"Discussion focused on the regional situation and Pakistan's ongoing diplomatic efforts for peace and stability in the region," the FO said, adding that the call took place late Sunday night. It added that the Iranian foreign minister appreciated Pakistan for its "constructive engagement and under-

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'Not a nation that bows': Bilawal hails Pakistan's victory against India during Marka-i-Haq

"We are not a nation that bows before pressure. We are not a nation that compromises its sovereignty. We are a nation that rises again and again, stronger, prouder and more united," the PPP chairman declared.

Bilawal recalled, "Our armed forces fought with courage, discipline and honour. Our diplomats defended our position with clarity and conviction, and our brave and resilient people stood firm behind their nation."

"Today, we do not merely mark the passage of time. We mark the endurance of a nation. We commemorate not just a victory, but the vindication of the very idea of Pakistan," he said.

Bilawal recalled that a year ago, Pakistan

"stood at the edge of uncertainty [as] drums of conflict echoed our borders." "The air was thick with fear, speculation, and the designs of those who believed Pakistan could be bent, broken or bullied. They were wrong," the PPP chairman added.

He emphasised that victory was "not measured by territory held or battles won", but by "dignity preserved [and] sovereignty defended".

Victory, he added, was measured "by the message sent to the world that Pakistan will never be coerced, never be silenced, and will never surrender".

The ex-FM also took aim at those "beyond our borders who seek to rewrite history", asserting that history was "not written by

noise", but rather by nations that endured.

Bilawal clarified that Pakistan did not seek conflict or glory war.

"But when the test came, we did not falter. We stood our ground, not out of aggression, but out of necessity; not out of ambition, but out of duty. This moment demands not arrogance but reflection, not complacency but responsibility," he added.

The PPP chairman also spoke about the country's path forward, noting that "victory brought with it the burden to build a stronger Pakistan".

"The burden to ensure that the sacrifices made are honoured not only in words but in action. [...] This means investing in our people, education, health, and

opportunity. It means strengthening our economy so that no external pressure can dictate our destiny. It means pursuing peace not as a sign of weakness, but as a reflection of strength," he added.

The former FM asserted that peace must be just, dignified and mutual. Addressing the youth, he said, "This victory belongs to you as much as it does to any institution or any individual. You are the custodians of this nation's future."

Just two days after the Pahalgam attack in occupied Kashmir that killed 26 people, India took a series of aggressive measures against Pakistan, including unilaterally suspending the critical Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).

Pakistan retaliated by suspending all kinds of trade, closing its airspace for Indian flights and shutting down the Wagah border.

Subsequently, New Delhi launched deadly overnight air strikes on Pakistan on May 6-7 over allegations about the Pahalgam attack, which Islamabad denied.

In retaliation, Pakistan Air Force downed five Indian jets, later raising the tally to seven.



They emphasized that the state appears more interested in the province's natural resources than in the welfare and rights of its people. According to them, even basic democratic rights such as voting are not being fully ensured in the region.

The National Party leadership called for a national reconciliation policy in Balochistan, urging the government to initiate political negotiations, restore public trust, and avoid unconstitutional actions. They also demanded:

Other speakers at the meeting included Haji Fida Hussain Dashti, Younis Javed, Dr. Sajjad Dashti, Azizullah Dashti, Waseem Baloch, Iqbal Anwar Dashti, Hamal Dashti, Nisar Ahmed, Ishaq Baloch, Faisal Baloch, and Shabbir Advocate.

They highlighted that lasting peace in

intensified tensions and suffering in the province.

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FC Balochistan (South) Arrests 30 Illegal Afghan Nationals in Nokkundi Operation

Yousuf Sasoli NOKKUNDI: Frontier Corps (FC) Balochistan (South) arrested 30 undocumented Afghan nationals during an intelligence-led operation in the Nokkundi area, as part of continued efforts to combat illegal immigration and strengthen border security.

Officials stated that FC Taftan Rifles acted on credible intelligence about suspicious individuals in the region. Responding swiftly, security personnel sealed off the area and conducted a targeted search operation, resulting in the arrest of all 30 suspects.

The detainees are currently being questioned as investigations continue to verify their identities and assess any potential security concerns. Authorities noted that such operations are part of a broader strategy to maintain law and order in border areas and prevent unauthorized cross-border movement.

Security forces have intensified surveillance and intelligence-based actions across Balochistan to tackle illegal immigration, smuggling, and other security-related challenges.



Dar and Iran's Araghchi discuss regional situation, Pakistan's ongoing diplomatic efforts



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