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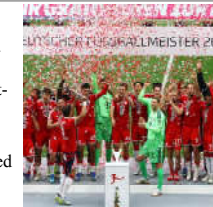


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First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan Editor: Asim Khan.

# QUETTA VOICE

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Tuesday 19, May, 2026

## Balochistan Approves Rs7.5bn Emergency Plan Amid Extreme Weather Threats

### NEWS DESK:

The Government of Balochistan has approved a Rs7.5 billion emergency response package and the Monsoon Contingency Plan 2026 as experts warned that temperatures in Balochistan could rise to 53 degrees Celsius this year. The decision was taken during a high-level meeting of the Provincial Disaster Management Commission chaired by Mir Sarfraz Bugti, where officials reviewed the province's preparedness for heatwaves, monsoon rains, floods, cloudbursts, and possible heat bursts caused by extreme climate conditions. Experts briefed the commission on increasing risks linked to global climate change, warning that unusual weather events could trigger emergencies across vulnerable districts. Relevant departments were directed to remain on high alert and complete all precautionary arrangements in advance. The commission approved funds for rescue, relief, rehabilitation, and emergency response activities, while divisional and district-level PDMA



Officials will be fully equipped with machinery, rescue tools, tents, medicines, and other essential supplies. Authorities also decided to activate 1122 rescue centers in all districts of the province, with plans to establish additional rescue facilities at the tehsil level during the second phase. In view of severe heatwave risks, hospitals across the province have been directed to enforce heatstroke emergency measures and en-

sure the availability of ambulances, medical staff, and medicines. The government also announced a province-wide public awareness campaign regarding heatwaves and possible heat bursts. Authorities will arrange cold drinking water and shaded areas in vulnerable locations, while awareness messages will be spread through educational institutions, mosques, media outlets, and social media platforms. The meeting was attended by Provincial Home Minister Mir Zia Langove, Opposition Leader Mir Younis Aziz Zehri, Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, and senior government officials. Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said protecting public lives and property remained the government's top priority amid rising climate-related threats. He directed authorities to keep drainage systems, rescue machinery, relief supplies, and heatwave relief points operational in sensitive districts, adding that the provincial government would utilize all available resources during any emergency situation.

## Dar, Qatari minister discuss evolving regional situation, stress dialogue amid US-Iran tensions

### NEWS DESK:

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar discussed the regional situation with Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mohammad bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulafai during a telephone conversation on Monday, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Both leaders discussed the "evolving regional situation and matters of mutual interest," MOFA said, adding that they "underscored the importance of dialogue and diplomatic engagement in addressing regional challenges." According to MOFA, the Qatari minister appreciated Pakistan's "constructive role and ongoing diplomatic efforts" while Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to "advancing the shared objectives of peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and beyond." The call came amid ongoing communications between Pa-



Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, thanking the Qatari leadership for its support for Pakistan's mediation and de-escalation amid ongoing regional tensions. This was the second

telephone conversation between the two leaders within a week. On May 10, PM Shehbaz spoke to the Qatari PM, exchanging views on the evolving regional situation and reaffirming support for peace in the region. Earlier, on May 7, the two leaders had a "productive exchange of views" on the regional situation in a call. PM Shehbaz and Abdulrahman once again reaffirmed their commitment to facilitating the ongoing peace efforts in order to ensure lasting peace between the US and Iran. Dar meets Saudi ambassador DPM Dar also met the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy on Monday, exchanging views on regional developments and other matters of mutual interest, MOFA stated. "Discussions focused on the fraternal Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations," the Foreign Office said. It added that DPM Dar "reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to further strength-

ening cooperation across all areas," while the Saudi ambassador "appreciated Pakistan's role in promoting peace and stability." On February 28, the US and Israel launched a joint offensive against Iran. Tehran retaliated with strikes on Israel and other Gulf countries hosting US assets. Pakistan subsequently positioned itself as a key mediator for peace, brokering a two-week ceasefire and hosting the highest-level US-Iran talks since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Although the "Islamabad Talks" ended without agreement, the ceasefire was held and later extended upon Islamabad's request. The US and Iran are expected to hold a second and final round of talks in Islamabad however there has been no official confirmation from any side regarding this. Despite no conformation, Pakistan has expressed optimism that a peace agreement between the US and Iran would be struck "soon."

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## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

### Balochistan's Tree Plantation Drive Must Go Beyond Ceremonies



#### Editorial:

Every spring, usually between February and March, Balochistan witnesses the launch of tree plantation campaigns. Saplings are planted at official ceremonies, photographs circulate on social media, and hopeful statements are issued about a greener future.

While these efforts matter, they fall short of what the province truly needs.

Balochistan is one of the most climate-vulnerable regions in Pakistan and ranks among the hardest-hit areas globally by climate change.

Rising temperatures, recurring droughts, shrinking water resources, and disappearing wildlife are no longer distant threats—they are daily realities for communities across the province.

In such circumstances, tree plantation cannot remain a symbolic activity limited to headlines and hashtags.

What is required is a serious shift toward sustainable plantation. Planting a sapling is only the first step.

Ensuring its survival—through protection, irrigation, monitoring, and community ownership—is what makes a difference. The success of plantation drives should be measured by how many trees survive after one, three, or five years, not by the number of photo sessions held.

The Forest and Wildlife Department must move beyond publicity-driven campaigns and focus on long-term environmental impact.

Native and drought-resistant species should be prioritized, while schools, universities, and local communities must be made partners in protecting and nurturing plantations.

At a time when climate change threatens livelihoods, Balochistan does not need unnecessary construction projects or decorative infrastructure.

It needs a large-scale, province-wide plantation initiative—similar to a plantation tsunami—with clear targets aimed at reducing the effects of global warming, improving air quality, and restoring ecological balance.

A genuinely sustainable tree plantation campaign can help secure Balochistan's future. The province's environment cannot wait for another season of symbolic planting; it needs action that takes root and grows.

### BUIITEMS Organizes Open Day to Inspire Students Across Balochistan

Syed Dara Shikoh Amir, QUETTA: The Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Man-

agement Sciences (BUIITEMS) Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Khalid Hafeez reaffirmed the university's mission of inclusive education and knowl-

edge sharing. He stated: "BUIITEMS is the university of every student from across the province by hosting a vibrant 'Open Day', showcasing its modern academic facilities, innovative programs, and lively campus culture."

The event attracted an enthusiastic response, with more than 2,000 students from 18+ colleges attending. Visiting students and their teach-

ings provided students with insights into BUIITEMS' wide-ranging degree programs, research projects, and campus life. Many partici-

pants strengthened the bridge between the university and youth across Balochistan.

By holding this large-scale Open Day, BUIITEMS has fur-



ther solidified its reputation as a center of excellence in higher education.

Innovation, and student empowerment in Balochistan, encouraging young learners to strive for academic success and contribute to the province's development.

Prof. Dr. Khalid Hafeez applauded the organizing team for successfully conducting the Open Day, adding that such outreach efforts

praised the initiative, calling it a valuable opportunity to connect with higher education and future career options.

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## South-West Asia and the War Against Narcotics: Where Does Pakistan Stand?

**By Dr. B. Sultan:** Lady Macbeth once remarked that "a little water clears us of this deed" after the assassination of the King. Yet, with time, she remained haunted, obsessively rubbing her hands in an attempt to cleanse the imagined stains of blood. The persistence of narcotics production and trade in South-West Asia resembles this unending struggle—a dark reality that cannot be easily washed away.

Afghanistan has long been recognized as the world's largest producer of opium, with its roots tracing back to the early 1900s. Over the decades, the repercussions of this industry spilled into neighboring Pakistan and Iran. In the late 2000s, Taliban leader Mullah Omar imposed a strict ban on poppy cultivation through threats, forced eradication, and severe punishments. However, as revealed by the UNODC Opium Survey 2007, the ban primarily targeted cultivation while the trade continued. After the fall of the Taliban, opium again became a major source of funding for logistics, weapons, and militia payments.

In 2022, the Taliban leadership once again announced a ban on poppy cultivation, with Hibatullah Akhundzada officially declaring significant reductions. Some Western reports, supported by satellite imagery, showcased de-



clining poppy fields in southern Afghanistan. However, this raises critical questions: Can Afghanistan realistically abandon such a central economic resource while facing sanctions? And what consequences does this shift have for Pakistan? While certain

international outlets hastily claim that Pakistan has become a new hub for narcotics, such narratives ignore key realities. The issue is not a simple matter of "shifting sands" but a complex regional security challenge. The porous border between Pakistan and Afghani-

stan, coupled with cross-border networks of drug traffickers, means temporary shifts in cultivation are often strategic rather than permanent. Moreover, Afghanistan's pivot towards methamphetamine production—highlighted by satellite

evidence of expanded ephedra processing hubs—reflects adaptive strategies of traffickers rather than genuine eradication. In Pakistan, however, the situation is markedly different. Since 2001, the country has largely maintained its "poppy-free"

status, despite sporadic spillovers from Afghanistan. Following the Taliban's 2022 ban, some illicit cultivations did emerge in border areas, particularly within Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Yet, these were swiftly addressed through

Pakistan's Poppy Elimination Campaign (PEC-2025). This multi-agency effort, led by the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and provincial administrations, successfully destroyed thousands of acres of illegal poppy fields. Over 250 FIRs were registered,

dozens of arrests were made, and awareness campaigns were launched across educational institutions. Importantly, independent surveys after March 2025 confirmed the effectiveness of these eradication drives.

Pakistan's determination to combat narcotics often remains under-reported internationally, overshadowed by outdated or selective portrayals. The fact remains: Pakistan continues to fight this menace not only for its own stability but also for global security. What is urgently needed is greater recognition of these efforts by the international community and enhanced cooperation from agencies such as the UNODC.

As South-West Asia remains at the heart of global narcotics trade routes, Pakistan's role is both frontline and decisive. Balochistan, in particular, holds the potential to transform from a vulnerable transit zone into a hub of opportunity, stability, and resilience. Just as Lady Macbeth's imagined guilt could not be washed away with water, the global community cannot absolve itself of responsibility by ignoring Pakistan's sacrifices and achievements in this ongoing struggle. The fight against narcotics requires collective recognition, support, and action—not selective narratives.

# Iran announces new Strait of Hormuz management body

**NEWS DESK:** Iran's top security body announced on Monday the formation of a new agency to manage the Strait of Hormuz.

The Supreme National Security Council shared a social media post for the Persian Gulf Strait Authority, saying it would provide "real-time updates on the Hormuz Strait operations and latest developments".

The Supreme National Security Council is Iran's foremost security body, with the Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, at its head.

Talks with US continue with Pakistani mediation: Iranian FM spokesperson.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Monday that talks with the United States continue through Pakistan's mediation, as per Iran's semi-official Isnam news agency on X.

"They raised speculations regarding enrichment and uranium materials, which we stated have no basis."

In a separate post on X, the spokesperson has been quoted to say that Iran has "no enmity with any country in the region, the countries of the region must learn from the recent events."

"They say that the presence of America does not bring security and causes insecurity for everyone," the post read. Un, other countries condemn drone attacks

targeting Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar have issued separate statements strongly denouncing drone attacks targeting Saudi Arabia that officials said originated from Iraqi airspace, according to Al Jazeera.

Kuwait said the incursion violates UN Security Council Resolution 2817, passed in March to protect Gulf infrastructure and affirmed its support for Saudi security measures. Qatar labelled the incident a "rejected aggression" and a direct violation of Saudi sovereignty.

Both nations expressed full solidarity with Riyadh, backing any measures taken to protect Saudi territory and citizens.

The statement follows Saudi Arabia's announcement that its air defences intercepted and destroyed three hostile drones that entered its airspace from Iraq.

Oman has also condemned the drone attack that caused a fire at the UAE's Barakah Nuclear Energy Plant, reaffirming its rejection of "all hostile and escalatory acts" in the region, according to Al Jazeera.

The Omani Foreign Ministry expressed its solidarity with the UAE over measures taken for its security and territorial safety, and called for dialogue to address regional challenges.

It also urged international respect for international law, good neighbourliness, and noninterference in the internal affairs of states.

The United Nations spokesperson account on X stated that UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres was "deeply alarmed" by reports of fires at an electrical generator near Barakh nuclear plant caused by drone strikes.

"I have consistently warned against any further escalation of the conflict in the Middle East, and this incident provides yet another reason for all sides to halt the fighting completely," He said that "there must be no further attacks near civilian infrastructure, including nuclear power plants" and "attacks to nuclear installations are totally unacceptable, a violation of international law and must be condemned."

Former US congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene wrote on X on Monday that if US troops would be sent into Iran, "there is going to be a political revolution" for US ships if tensions continue to escalate.

"My advice to the US military is to back off before the Gulf of Oman turns into a graveyard for your ships. Otherwise, our understanding is that a naval blockade is an act of war, and responding to it is our natural right, Major General Mohsen Rezaei, a member of Iran's Expeditionary Discernment Council, said in remarks carried Sunday by Iranian state television.

Rezaei added that Iran's restraint should not be interpreted as a "graveyard" for US ships if tensions continue to escalate.

"The Strait of Hormuz is open to trade, but it will be closed to military buildups and any attempts to destabilise security," he said.

Regional tensions have escalated since the US and Israel launched strikes on Iran on February 28, prompting retaliatory attacks by Tehran and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.

A ceasefire took effect on April 8 through Pakistani mediation, but talks in Islamabad failed to secure a lasting agreement. The truce was later extended by US President Donald Trump without a specified deadline.

Since April 13, the sites were used for air support, refuelling, and medical services and later played a role during the 12-day war against Iran in June 2025.

One of the sites came to light after Iraqi shepherd Avad al-Shammari encountered unusual military activity near al-Nukhabir in March and alerted local authorities after seeing helicopters, tents and what appeared to be a makeshift landing strip, according to the Times.



Aerial view of a coastal area, likely the Strait of Hormuz, showing ships and infrastructure.

Iran vowed on Sunday to confront the US over its naval blockade, with a top military adviser to the country's supreme leader warning that the Sea of Oman could become a "graveyard" for US ships if tensions continue to escalate.

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## South Korea shifts focus to 'peaceful coexistence' with North Korea instead of 'confrontation'

**NEWS DESK:** The South Korean government under President Lee Jae Myung has shifted its focus to "peaceful coexistence" with North Korea rather than "pressure and confrontation," a white paper released by the Unification Ministry showed Monday, local media reported.

The annual paper, striking a distinctly different tone from the previous government, reflects the push by the Lee administration, which took office in June last year, to repair the strained inter-Korean relationship based on building mutual trust, Yonhap News Agency reported.

The previous conservative government of President Yoon Suk Yeol sought to bring about change in North Korea through pressure and an influx of outside information.

Citing three key guiding principles, the paper said Seoul respects North Korea's system, does not pursue unification by absorption and does not engage in hostile activities.

It also cited the Lee government's decision to halt the sending of anti-Pyongyang leaflets to North Korea and to stop loud-speaker broadcasts along the border as steps to ease military tension and rebuild trust.

The paper also outlines plans to revive the inter-Korean military agreement signed by then-President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un on September 19, 2018 and pursue a bilateral accord to establish a systematic foundation for peaceful coexistence.

Inter-Korean relations remain virtually frozen, as there have been no personal and economic exchanges in five years between the two arch-rivals, North Korea earlier this month revised its constitution to remove all references to unification and cut off remaining ties with South Korea.

## Israel operated two 'covert bases' in Iraqi desert: NYT

**NEWS DESK:** The Israeli forces operated at least two covert bases in Iraq's western desert, used by Tel Aviv possibly to support military actions against Iran during the 12-day conflict in June 2025 and the ongoing war with Tehran, the New York Times reported.

According to the New York Times, one of the bases was discovered accidentally by an Iraqi shepherd who stumbled upon the closely guarded Israeli military secret, hidden in the desert. His family believes it cost him his life.

The newspaper reported that the slain shepherd contacted Iraq's regional military command to "report what he had seen: soldiers, helicopters and tents clustered around a landing strip". The NYT report confirmed an earlier report by the Wall Street Journal, which reported on the presence of one Israeli outpost in Iraq.

In response to the shepherd's report, the Iraqi army sent a reconnaissance force, which came under attack. One soldier was killed, two were wounded and two vehicles were bombed before the units decided to retreat.

Report says one of the bases "predates current conflict", also used during 2025 Iran war.

In public, Iraq's Joint Operations Command announced "foreign" forces had attacked their soldiers, and said it had raised complaints at the UN Security Council. In private, the chief of staff of Iraq's armed forces, Gen

Abdul-Amir Yarallah, called his counterparts in the US military. "They confirmed the force is not an American force, so we understood it was Israeli," the report, quoting an Iraqi general, said.

Iraq's government, for which acknowledging Israeli outposts is fraught, has still not acknowledged the Israeli bases. Iraq has no diplomatic relations with Israel, and its population sees Israel as an enemy. The newspaper report eventually revealed that the Israelis operated

two bases, intermittently, for well over a year—both in the western desert.

Regional security officials told the NYT that the discovered base predated the current conflict and was used during the 12-day war against Tehran in June 2025.

"Israeli forces began preparing to build the missile bases as late as 2024," one of the regional officials said. The outpost was made to shorten the distances Israeli aircraft had to fly to reach Iran.

UK has deployed a new low-cost missile system to the Middle East in a move aimed at strengthening protection against drone attacks targeting UK forces, citizens and regional partners."

The UK Ministry of Defence said in a statement on Saturday that the Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) has now been fitted to RAF Typhoon fighter jets operating in the region, allowing the aircraft to destroy drones and other threats at "a fraction of the price" of the missiles currently in use.

The system has now been deployed on operations in the Middle East with sorties flown by Squadron RAF Typhoon fighter jets as part of the missions to defend

British people, interests and partners from threats," it noted.

Luke Pollard, the minister for defence readiness and industry, said: "This has been a superb effort working with industry to test and deploy this system in a matter of months, which will help the RAF shoot down many more drones at a much

lower cost."

He added: "Our Typhoon fleet is the backbone of the UK and NATO air defence, with the RAF protecting Europe's Eastern flank from Russian drone incursions and defending our partners across the Middle East."

The APKWS uses a laser targeting system to convert unguided missiles into precision-guided weapons capable of engaging drones and other airborne threats.

The ministry said the development of low-cost air defence systems would provide a more sustainable response to the growing use of drones in modern conflicts.

## Mass Ukrainian drone barrage kills four in Russia

**NEWS DESK:** A wave of almost 600 Ukrainian drones attacked Russia overnight, killing four people, including an Indian citizen, authorities said on Sunday, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called the barrage an "entirely justified" retribution for Moscow's own pummelling of Ukraine.

Air defences shot down 556 drones overnight across the country, Russia's defence ministry said, with another 30 drones intercepted after dawn in one of the largest Ukrainian barrages of the ongoing conflict so far.

These interceptions — far above the few dozen more often reported — took place across 14 Russian regions, as well as the Crimean peninsula annexed from Ukraine and the Black and Azov seas, the ministry added.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Kyiv's attack on Russia — days after a massive drone and missile bombardment of the Ukrainian capital killed at least 24 people — was "entirely justified".

"Our responses to Russia's prolongation of the war and its attacks on our cities and communities are entirely justified. This time, Ukrainian long-range sanctions reached the Moscow region, and we are clearly telling the Russians: their state must end its war." The Ukrainian defence ministry said that Moscow and the region "have experienced the largest-scale attack since the full-scale invasion began" in February 2022. Ukraine's priority remains the consistent build-up in the use

of long-range strike capabilities to the fullest extent possible against a wide range of military targets," Commander of Ukraine's Unmanned Forces, Robert Brovi, told AFP in a recent, exclusive interview before the strikes.

In Russia's capital region, a woman was killed as a result of a UAV hitting a private house," governor Andrey Vorobyov posted on Telegram, adding that the early morning attack also claimed the lives of two men. One of the victims

was an Indian citizen working in Russia, the Indian embassy in Moscow said in a statement.

Vorobyov added that infrastructure facilities were being targeted. Refinery, oil depot hit within the capital, local authorities reported that air defence systems had intercepted more than 80 drones overnight, wounding 12 people.

One of the strikes wounded construction workers at a jobsite near an oil and gas refinery, Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said.

## UK deploys low-cost anti-drone missile system to Middle East

**NEWS DESK:** Britain has deployed a new low-cost missile system to the Middle East in a move aimed at strengthening protection against drone attacks targeting UK forces, citizens and regional partners."

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US has enforced a naval blockade targeting Iranian maritime traffic in the strategic waterway.

In addition, Israel's Channel 13 is reporting that dozens of US cargo planes carrying ammunition from bases in Germany have landed in Tel Aviv in the past 24 hours, according to Al Jazeera.

The Israeli broadcaster said these were part of preparations to resume the war on Iran.

Israel built 2 secret military bases in Iraq for Iran operations.

Israel built two covert military sites in Iraq's western desert to support operations against Iran, according to a report Sunday by the New York Times.

The newspaper, citing Iraqi and regional officials, said a newly disclosed site was one of two covert facilities used intermittently by Israel inside Iraq for more than a year.

The officials said the sites were used for air support, refuelling, and medical services and later played a role during the 12-day war against Iran in June 2025.

One of the sites came to light after Iraqi shepherd Avad al-Shammari encountered unusual military activity near al-Nukhabir in March and alerted local authorities after seeing helicopters, tents and what appeared to be a makeshift landing strip, according to the Times.

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"They say that the presence of America does not bring security and causes insecurity for everyone," the post read. Un, other countries condemn drone attacks

targeting Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar have issued separate statements strongly denouncing drone attacks targeting Saudi Arabia that officials said originated from Iraqi airspace, according to Al Jazeera.

Kuwait said the incursion violates UN Security Council Resolution 2817, passed in March to protect Gulf infrastructure and affirmed its support for Saudi security measures. Qatar labelled the incident a "rejected aggression" and a direct violation of Saudi sovereignty.

Both nations expressed full solidarity with Riyadh, backing any measures taken to protect Saudi territory and citizens.

The statement follows Saudi Arabia's announcement that its air defences intercepted and destroyed three hostile drones that entered its airspace from Iraq.

Oman has also condemned the drone attack that caused a fire at the UAE's Barakah Nuclear Energy Plant, reaffirming its rejection of "all hostile and escalatory acts" in the region, according to Al Jazeera.

The Omani Foreign Ministry expressed its solidarity with the UAE over measures taken for its security and territorial safety, and called for dialogue to address regional challenges.

It also urged international respect for international law, good neighbourliness, and noninterference in the internal affairs of states.

The United Nations spokesperson account on X stated that UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres was "deeply alarmed" by reports of fires at an electrical generator near Barakh nuclear plant caused by drone strikes.

"I have consistently warned against any further escalation of the conflict in the Middle East, and this incident provides yet another reason for all sides to halt the fighting completely," He said that "there must be no further attacks near civilian infrastructure, including nuclear power plants" and "attacks to nuclear installations are totally unacceptable, a violation of international law and must be condemned."

Former US congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene wrote on X on Monday that if US troops would be sent into Iran, "there is going to be a political revolution" for US ships if tensions continue to escalate.

"My advice to the US military is to back off before the Gulf of Oman turns into a graveyard for your ships. Otherwise, our understanding is that a naval blockade is an act of war, and responding to it is our natural right, Major General Mohsen Rezaei, a member of Iran's Expeditionary Discernment Council, said in remarks carried Sunday by Iranian state television.

Rezaei added that Iran's restraint should not be interpreted as a "graveyard" for US ships if tensions continue to escalate.

"The Strait of Hormuz is open to trade, but it will be closed to military buildups and any attempts to destabilise security," he said.

Regional tensions have escalated since the US and Israel launched strikes on Iran on February 28, prompting retaliatory attacks by Tehran and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.

A ceasefire took effect on April 8 through Pakistani mediation, but talks in Islamabad failed to secure a lasting agreement. The truce was later extended by US President Donald Trump without a specified deadline.

Since April 13, the sites were used for air support, refuelling, and medical services and later played a role during the 12-day war against Iran in June 2025.

One of the sites came to light after Iraqi shepherd Avad al-Shammari encountered unusual military activity near al-Nukhabir in March and alerted local authorities after seeing helicopters, tents and what appeared to be a makeshift landing strip, according to the Times.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Monday that talks with the United States continue through Pakistan's mediation, as per Iran's semi-official Isnam news agency on X.

"They raised speculations regarding enrichment and uranium materials, which we stated have no basis."

In a separate post on X, the spokesperson has been quoted to say that Iran has "no enmity with any country in the region, the countries of the region must learn from the recent events."



# Eid-ul-Azha: Motorway police share major update

ISLAMABAD (INP): The spokesperson for the Central Region motorways has announced a complete ban on the entry of vehicles carrying sacrificial animals onto motorways during Eid-ul-Azha.

According to the spokesperson, the decision has been taken to ensure public safety and maintain smooth traffic flow during the Eid-ul-Azha holidays.

The statement said vehicles transporting sacrificial animals are often overloaded and unfit for safe travel, posing a serious risk of accidents on motorways.

The motorway spokesperson warned that overloaded and poorly maintained vehicles could lead to major road accidents, adding that such vehicles would instead be redirected towards alternative and safer routes.

The motorway spokesperson noted that several dangerous accidents involving animal transport vehicles had occurred on motorways in previous years.

Eid-ul-Adha 2026: Ruet-e-Hilal committee meets today for Zil Hajj moon sighting

Police in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been instructed to establish special check posts at motorway entry points to enforce the restriction.

Authorities have also ordered action against illegal parking near cattle markets and motorway interchanges during the Eid period.

The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee (CRHC) will meet today (Sunday) in Karachi to sight the Zil Hajj moon.

Chairman of the CRHC, Maulana Abdul Khair Azad, will preside over the meeting at the Habib Bank Plaza.

The final announcement regarding the sighting or non-sighting of the Zil Hajj



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## Sherry condemns Indian Army Chief's anti-Pakistan remarks

ISLAMABAD (INP): Vice President of Pakistan Peoples Party Senator Sherry Rehman on Sunday strongly condemned "hostile and provocative remarks" made by the Indian Army Chief against Pakistan, warning that such statements pose a serious threat to regional peace and stability.

In a statement, Sherry Rehman said Pakistan's consistent diplomatic, political and defence achievements on the global stage had left India increasingly "frustrated and unsettled."

She said that the Indian public was already facing inflation and economic hardships amid the impact of ongoing global conflicts.

Sherry Rehman urged the government of India Prime Minister Narendra Modi to respect the aspirations of its people for peace instead of pursuing confrontational policies.

Referring to previous tensions between the two countries, Sherry Rehman said Pakistan had effectively demonstrated its defensive capabilities during "Operation Buzan-un-Marsous."

saying g that Indian aircraft were brought down during the confrontation.

## FPCCI proposes tax relief for salaried class in budget 2026-27

ISLAMABAD, May (INP): The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Finance for the budget 2026-27, including major tax relief measures for salaried individuals and businesses.

Among the key recommendations is a proposal to reduce income tax rates for the salaried class by five per cent, lowering the maximum tax rate from 35 per cent to 30 per cent.

The FPCCI has also proposed abolishing the nine per cent surcharge imposed on salaried taxpayers and increasing the non-taxable income threshold from Rs600,000 to Rs1.2 million annually.

To encourage exports, the business body recommended restoring the Final Tax Regime for goods exporters, while also suggesting that the existing 25 per cent export tax rate for the IT sector should remain in place until 2035.

FPCCI President Atif Ikram Marks-e-Haq had dem-

## Pakistan's milk-yielding breed to enter global markets with Chinese cooperation

ISLAMABAD, May 17 (INP): Pakistan's internationally recognized dairy buffalo breeds, particularly the high-milk-yielding Nili-Ravi breed, are set to gain greater access to global markets through expanded cooperation with China in livestock genetics, embryo export, and advanced breeding technologies.

The development came during a high-level meeting chaired by Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain, according to a Gwadar Pro's report.

The meeting brought together senior ministry officials, representatives of the Animal Quarantine Department (AQD), technical experts, and delegates from Chinese companies engaged in livestock breeding and biotechnology.

According to an official statement, discussions focused on the export potential of buffalo embryos from Pakistan to China, development of livestock genetics, enhancement of milk production, and cooperation in modern breeding technologies aimed at promoting Pakistan's premium dairy breeds internationally.

The Chinese delegation praised Pakistan's globally recognized buffalo breeds and expressed keen interest in strengthening cooperation in animal genetics and embryo transfer technology.

Participants highlighted that Pakistan possesses some of the world's finest dairy buffalo breeds, especially the Nili-Ravi breed, known for its superior genetic traits and high milk production capacity.

The meeting noted that increasing global demand for premium dairy genetics is creating significant export and investment opportunities for Pakistan's livestock sector.

Experts observed that countries facing climate-related agricultural challenges are increasingly seeking resilient and high-performing livestock breeds, placing Pakistan in a strong position in the international dairy genetics market.

Rana Tanveer Hussain said the livestock sector holds immense potential for boosting exports and earning valuable foreign exchange and added, "Pakistan's high-quality dairy breeds could play a major role in strengthening international trade cooperation with friendly countries, particularly China."

"Stronger cooperation with China in livestock and dairy development will positively contribute to Pakistan's agricultural economy and create new opportunities for farmers, breeders, and exporters," the minister said.

Senior Director in Charge of the Animal Sciences Division, Dr. Syed Murtaza Hassan Andrabi, stressed the need for an internationally compliant framework for the export of biological and genetic material. He said Pakistan's elite livestock genetics are a valuable national asset that require both promotion and protection.

Andrabi said the proposed Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) would safeguard Pakistan's genetic and intellectual rights while facilitating transparent and sustainable international cooperation in livestock technology and embryo transfer programs.

"The pricing of Pakistan's first Panda Bond has opened a lower-cost yuan funding channel that may help the country diversify beyond traditional dollar and euro borrowing, an HBL official told China Economic Net.

The RMB 1.75 billion, or about \$250 million, issue was priced at 2.5 percent, marking Pakistan's debut in China's domestic bond market.

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal delivering remarks at Pak China 2nd Symposium on hydrological and geological hazards at NDMA HQs.

## Kashmir not border dispute but matter of Kashmiris' right to self-determination: Speakers

LAHORE (INP): Kashmir is not a border dispute but a matter of human rights, freedom, justice and right to self-determination, stated by speakers of a seminar held at Kashmir Centre, Lahore.

The seminar titled "Kashmir issue and our national responsibilities in the context of Operation Buzan-un-Marsous" was organized by Kashmir Centre Lahore in collaboration with "Bazm Waris Shah Pakistan".

They said that the immense sacrifices of Kashmiris give us the message that the candle of freedom remains lit by sacrifices, arrogance and arrogance of India.

The speakers said it is the national responsibility of Pakistani people but also the joint responsibility of Kashmiri people to keep the Kashmir dispute alive and be the voice of the Kashmiri people before the world, to make the glorious victory of Operation Buzanunum Marsous has raised Pakistan's prestige all over the world. Pakistan is not only a fundamental party to the Kashmir dispute but is also

advocate for the Kashmiris under Indian occupation, they added.

They said that the glorious victory of the Kashmiri people before the world, to make the younger generation aware of the history and reality of Kashmir.

The seminar was addressed by Naseebullah Gurdezi, Bakhtiar Ali Sial, Maulana Shaif Josh, Professor Asma Hassan, Engineer Mushtaq Ch. Engineer Abdul Waheed Khawaja, Raja Sherzaman Advocate, Inamul Hassan, Raja Shahzad Ahmed, Bilal Butt, Aftab Nazki, Naseer Haq Hashmi, Allama Mushtaq Qadri, Maula Nafid Haider, Chaudhry Muhammad Syedique, Nazir Bhandar, Maqsood Chughtai, Merajuddin Shaheen, Sheikh Amjad Zubair Qamar, Qari Khalid Mahmood, Captain (Retd) Mushtaq Mahmood-e-Tarazi, Riaz Chishti, Aslam Mughal, Usman Dar, Aslam Minhas, Matin Kashmiri and others.

## Indian Army Chief's statement exposes Modi gov't's desperation: Musha

ISLAMABAD, May 17 (INP): Chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organisation and former Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Musha Husseini Mullick, has condemned the recent statement by the Indian Army Chief, saying it reflects the Modi government's growing desperation, warning of a nuclearized region and resolve during India's aggressive posturing and misplaced assumptions of dominance.

She said threats of war demonstrated their professional capability and resolve during India's aggressive posturing and misplaced assumptions of dominance. She said threats of war demonstrated their professional capability and resolve during India's aggressive posturing and misplaced assumptions of dominance.

## KP Governor, CM discuss overall situation in province

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi and Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Sunday discussed the overall situation in the province, including law and order and key administrative matters, during a meeting at the Governor House.

The meeting reviewed the closure of CNG stations in the province and the issue of wheat transportation from Punjab.

Governor Kundi said that the closure of CNG stations in the province was against the Constitution and was badly affecting the poor segment of society. He said that both the wheat shortage and closure of CNG stations were creating hardships for low-income people.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, holding a meeting with a World Bank delegation led by Ms. Bolormaa Angabazar, Country Director for the World Bank in Pakistan, at the Finance Division.

## Pakistan may return to the Chinese bond market soon: Says top Banker

BEIJING (INP): Pakistan may return to the Chinese bond market soon after the debut issue, with discussions already under way on a possible follow-up transaction that could come within three to six months, he said.

"It is not about doing this one time," Talib said, "It is about coming to this market again and again, on a needs basis and on an opportunity basis."

HBL, which operates branches in Urumqi and Beijing, served as financial adviser for the transaction and support regulatory approvals from the National Association of Financial Market Institutional Investors and the People's

Bank of China. The bond was backed by a 95 percent guarantee from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Asian Development Bank, helping improve its rating and lower financing costs, he said.

For Pakistan, the deal brings a new class of Chinese investors into the country's financing base. Those investors will now follow the bond's performance and monitor Pakistan's companies with stronger balance sheets to consider raising funds in China, particularly those with stable cash flows, consistent earnings and a track record of operating in sufficient operating track record.

"For companies with consistent revenue streams and consistent profitability, certainly," he said, adding that bond investors usually look at an issuer's past performance.

The Panda Bond route may also become relevant for future projects under the next phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, depending on project structure, cash flows and financing needs, Talib said.

Governor Jaffar Mandokhail Attends First Convocation of Government Boys Postgraduate Degree College Saryab

QUETTA: Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has directed authorities to immediately address all issues faced by Government Boys Postgraduate Degree College Saryab, particularly the shortage of teaching staff, while reaffirming government's commitment to modernizing the historic institution.

Speaking at the first convocation of Government Boys Postgraduate Degree College Saryab, held 84 years after its establishment, the Governor said the provincial leadership is determined to equip the college with modern facilities and align it with contemporary educational and industrial standards.

He added that introducing skill-based education and training remains part of the broad vision for the institution. The event was attended by Provincial Education Minister the Raheela Hameed Khan Durani, Member of Provincial Assembly Kulsoom Niaz, Education Secretary Saleh Baloch, Dr. Zahoor Bazi, Principal Professor Dr. Abdul Razzak



Pirkani, principals of boys and girls colleges from Quetta, faculty members, and a large number of graduates. He paid tribute to the college's founding graduates and guests, Jaffar Khan Mandokhail congratulated graduating students and their parents, calling the convocation a historic milestone for the institution. He also paid tribute to the college's founding principal, Professor Muhammad Khan, for laying the foundation of

academic excellence and praised the current leadership of Professor Dr. Abdul Razzak Pirkani for carrying forward that legacy. The Governor stated that educational institutions are not only centers of learning but also platforms for building character and moral strength. Reflecting on the college's history, he noted that thousands of students have passed through its classrooms

over the past eight decades and later contributed to the development of their communities, province, and country. Jaffar Khan Mandokhail described the college as one of the oldest educational institutions and said it represents the pride of the past, the identity of the present, and a guide toward a brighter future. He assured participants that the government would place the institution back on the

path of academic and technical progress. The Governor also appreciated the successful organization of the convocation and commended Principal Professor Dr. Abdul Razzak Pirkani and his team for their efforts. Earlier, Jaffar Khan Mandokhail awarded gold medals to position-holder graduates and distributed shields among guests and organizers during the ceremony.

Quetta Reviews First Day Performance of Anti-Polio Campaign

QUETTA: A review meeting on the first day of the anti-polio campaign was presented. The report included assessments of teams such as CBOs, UC SPs, USMOs, assistant commissioners, and

properly addressed and covered. He emphasized that district teams should provide full support to polio workers, especially in difficult and hard-to-reach areas.

The meeting was attended by the District Health Officer Quetta, District Coordinator, EOC members, monitors, assistant commissioners, and other relevant officials. During the session, a detailed performance report of the



other field staff. Updates were also shared regarding cluster performance, NAs, NTs, refusal cases, and missed houses. Mehruallah Badini directed authorities to further strengthen monitoring of the campaign and ensure that all refusal cases are

He further instructed that special attention must be given to refusing parents and missing children cases, and that all teams should take necessary measures to achieve 100 percent coverage of campaign targets during the anti-polio drive.

DC Abdul Qadoos Achakzai Chairs District Education Group Meeting in Ziarat



ZIARAT: An important meeting of the District Education Group was held under the chairmanship of Abdul Qadoos Achakzai to review educational affairs and improve the overall performance of schools across the district.

The meeting was attended by FC Captain Muhammad Hameed, District Commissioner Abdullah Kashani, District Education Officer Latifullah Gharshin, District Officer Chaham Razaq Panizai, DDO Naqebullah Kakar, DDO Female Farzana Arbab, Accounts Officer Abdul Ghani Panizai, DDO Female Sanjiv, Farzana Kulsoom, GIA President Muhammad Noor Damar, UIC Aini President Feroy Khan, UNICEF BF District Organizer Fida

Hussain Panizai, RTSM Badrudin, and several cluster heads. During the meeting, participants reviewed educational affairs across the district, including school performance, teachers' attendance, and the provision of educational facilities. Addressing the session, Abdul Qadoos Achakzai directed all cluster heads to ensure the provision of

essential equipment and facilities in all schools by June 2026 so that students can benefit from an improved learning environment. The Deputy Commissioner also instructed field officers to conduct school visits for at least fifteen days every month to monitor teaching activities and identify absentee teachers. He warned that strict legal action

would be taken against teachers found negligent or careless in performing their duties. Abdul Qadoos Achakzai emphasized that the provision of quality education remains the top priority of the district administration and urged all concerned officers and teachers to perform their responsibilities with honesty, professionalism, and a strong sense of accountability.

viewed several key technical aspects, including: expiry dates of medicines to prevent the sale of expired drugs; Batch numbers for verification of ability of safe and quality medicines for citizens. Rizwan Hafeez carried out surprise inspections of medical stores and pharmacies across various markets and areas of Harnai district. The primary objective of the campaign was to curb the sale of substandard and unregistered medicines and to safeguard public health. During the inspections, the Drug Inspector thoroughly examined medicine stocks available at medical stores and re-

Drug Inspector Rizwan Hafeez Conducts Crackdown on Medical Stores in Harnai to Ensure Safe Medicines

HARNAI: On the directives of the provincial government, the district administration and Health Department launched a major operation to ensure the availability of safe and quality medicines for citizens.

according to recommended temperature requirements, and strictly avoid keeping expired or unauthorized medicines. He further warned that strict legal action under the Drug Act would be taken against violators, including heavy fines and sealing of medical stores involved in unlawful practices. Residents and social circles in Harnai appreciated the timely action taken by the district administration and Rizwan Hafeez, expressing hope that such surprise inspections would continue in the future to ensure the availability of genuine and quality medicines for the public, especially low-income communities.

He suggested organizing weekly speech competitions to encourage students toward quality and modern education, adding that awards and appreciation certificates would help build students' confidence and motivation for academic success.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner closely inspected the performance of polio teams, reviewed tally sheets,

and personally administered polio drops to various children. Major (R) Ilyas Kabzai directed the teams to ensure 100 percent coverage so that no child remains deprived of the life-saving polio vaccine. He particularly instructed officials to make sure that children traveling through public transport are also vaccinated during the campaign. He stated that the elimination of polio requires dedicated efforts from field teams, full cooperation from parents, and effective monitoring by authorities. The Deputy Commissioner urged all concerned departments and institutions to perform their responsibilities with commitment.

During the session, the District Education Officers for male and female schools provided a detailed briefing on the overall condition of the Education Department in Chaman. A comprehensive report was also presented regarding shortages of essential facilities within the education sector, along with discussions on the issues and challenges faced by various educational institutions in the district. Addressing the meeting, Habib Ahmed Bangzalai emphasized that teachers must ensure regular attendance and punctuality, stating that the quality of education in a classroom largely depends on the presence and commitment of teachers. He warned that no leniency or compromise would be shown in this regard. The Deputy Commissioner further directed all monitoring teams to accelerate the monitoring process and instructed schools to deliver daily lectures highlighting the importance and benefits of education.

DC Chaman Chairs District Education Committee Meeting to Review School Performance and Development

CHAMAN: A monthly performance review meeting of the District Education Committee was held under the chairmanship of Habib Ahmed Bangzalai to assess the performance of educational institutions across Chaman district.

The meeting focused on the performance of schools, ongoing development projects, and administrative matters related to the education sector. During the session, the District Education Officers for male and female schools provided a detailed briefing on the



overall condition of the Education Department in Chaman. A comprehensive report was also presented regarding shortages of essential facilities within the education sector, along with discussions on the issues and challenges faced by various educational institutions in the district. Addressing the meeting, Habib Ahmed Bangzalai emphasized that teachers must ensure regular attendance and punctuality, stating that the quality of education in a classroom largely depends on the presence and commitment of teachers. He warned that no leniency or compromise would be shown in this regard. The Deputy Commissioner further directed all monitoring teams to accelerate the monitoring process and instructed schools to deliver daily lectures highlighting the importance and benefits of education.

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DC Sibi Reviews Ongoing Polio Campaign, Stresses 100 Percent Coverage

SIBI: Major (R) Ilyas Kabzai visited various areas of Sibi district to review the ongoing anti-polio campaign and monitor field operations aimed at eradicating the disease. During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner closely inspected the performance of polio teams, reviewed tally sheets,

and personally administered polio drops to various children. Major (R) Ilyas Kabzai directed the teams to ensure 100 percent coverage so that no child remains deprived of the life-saving polio vaccine. He particularly instructed officials to make sure that children traveling through public transport are also vaccinated during the campaign. He stated that the elimination of polio requires dedicated efforts from field teams, full cooperation from parents, and effective monitoring by authorities. The Deputy Commissioner urged all concerned departments and institutions to perform their responsibilities with commitment.

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TENDER NOTICE
THE DIRECTORATE OF INDUSTRIES invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items. TSE-252681956873 Only electronic bid will be submitted. No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements of QCB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, it is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA QCB. Tender Fee: 1,000 PKR

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
The Executive Engineer, Public Health Engineering & M Division Quetta invites the tenders from the approved Government Contractors. Tender Fee: 1000 PKR and Bid Security 2% in shape of Call deposit for each work

SCHEDULE FOR DRG MEETINGS
With reference to advertisement published in daily newspapers vide PRO No. 3442/23-01-2026 the DRG Schedule for teaching posts (BPS-14 to BPS-15) on contractual basis (I) of District Quetta is as under:

## Oil touches two-week high after drone attack on UAE nuclear power plant

**NEWS DESK:** Oil prices extended gains on Monday as efforts to end the Iran war appeared to have stalled.

after a nuclear power plant in the United Arab Emirates came under attack and as US President Donald Trump is expected to discuss military options on Iran.

Brent crude futures climbed \$2.01, or 1.84 per cent, to \$111.27 a barrel by 0432 GMT.

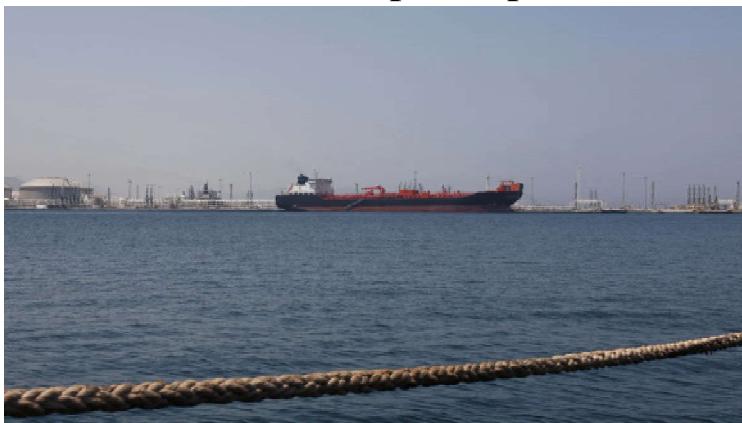
but were off the \$112 they had touched earlier for their highest since May 5.

US West Texas Intermediate crude stood at \$107.75 a barrel, up \$2.33, or 2.21pc,

after a rise to \$108.70, its highest since April 30. The front-month June contract expires on Tuesday.

Both contracts gained more than the past week as hopes

dimmed for a peace deal to end ship



attacks and seizures around the key waterway of the Strait of Hormuz.

Last week's talks between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping ended without

an indication from the world's top oil importer that it would help resolve the conflict unleashed by the US-Israeli attacks on Iran.

"These drone strikes are a pointed

warning — renewed US or Israeli strikes on Iran could trigger more proxy

attacks on Gulf energy and critical infrastructure by Iran or its regional proxies,"

IG market analyst Tony Sycamore said.

Emirati officials said they were investigating the source of the strike on the Barakah nuclear power plant, adding

that the UAE had the full right to respond to such "terrorist attacks".

Saudi Arabia, which intercepted three drones that entered from Iraqi air-

space, warned it would take the necessary operational measures to respond to any attempt to violate its sovereignty and security.

Trump is expected to meet top national security advisers on Tuesday to discuss options for military action regarding Iran, Axios reported.

In a move that could support oil prices,

the Trump administration on Saturday allowed the lapse of a sanctions waiver that had previously allowed countries,

including India, to buy Russian seaborne oil after a month-long extension.

"Fears of renewed strikes on Iran have worsened supply fears

in the United States letting the Russia sanctions waiver lapse didn't help,"

said Vandana Hari, founder of oil market analysis provider Vanda Insights.

## Auto parts makers hail drop in used car import

**NEWS DESK:** Auto parts makers have welcomed the reduction in imports of used cars, calling it a key step towards promoting industrialisation in the country.

In a statement, the Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts and Accessories Manufacturers (Papaam) lauded the government's policy measures, which have significantly reduced the import of used vehicles while supporting local manufacturing and contributing positively to large-scale manufacturing (LSM) growth.

According to recent import data for April this year, only 148 used vehicles were imported under various schemes, including 19 under the gift scheme, 120 under the baggage scheme, and nine under the transfer of residence scheme.

This marks a substantial decline from the 3,500 to 4,000 used vehicles imported monthly during last year.

The association noted that the encouraging reduction in used vehicle imports had been achieved through the government's timely efforts to plug loopholes in schemes that were previously being misused for commercial imports under facilities meant for

overseas Pakistanis. It added that for every vehicle locally produced in Pakistan, local parts worth an average of Rs1.5 million are used, resulting in over Rs60 billion annually for local parts manufacturers due to the import of used vehicles.

"The corrective measures taken by the government have shifted consumer demand towards locally

manufactured vehicles, leading to increased production by domestic assemblers and auto parts manufacturers," it added.

The association continued that "this positive momentum is now contributing directly to Pakistan's industrial recovery and supporting LSM growth, which remains one of the most important indicators of economic performance".



## Squandering the potential of procurement

**NEWS DESK:** Sindh's wheat crop has almost been harvested, however, the province's food department has only been able to procure about 65,000 tonnes of grain until May 12, against the government-approved target of one million tonnes under the Wheat Policy 2026.

Given the mid-May procurement figures, it seems nearly impossible that the food department will meet its procurement target.

The price of wheat in the open market has already begun to surge. This would lead to a price increase in flour for consumers already hit by an unprecedented hike in fuel prices due to the ongoing US-Israeli war.

This year, the Sindh government has decided to procure wheat at Rs3,500 per 40kg or Rs750 per 100kg for the 2025-26 rabi season. The government took this decision after a one-year gap in line with International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions.

It had planned to buy wheat from small farmers with land of one to 25 acres.

The government was set to buy wheat only from farmers registered under the Benazir Hari Card to be used for the first time in Sindh) a departure from conven-

tional procurement practices.

Amid a medley of issues, government support prices face considerable barriers to make any real positive impact on the agriculture sector, especially for smaller farmers.

These registered small farmers have already received cash support from the government for wheat cultivation under the Wheat Growers Support Programme at a cost of Rs84bn aimed at supporting grain production. According to the food department, around 330,000 farmers have been registered under the Benazir Hari Card to be used for the first time in Sindh) a departure from conven-

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## Rising fuel prices drive surge in demand for e-bikes in Rawalpindi

**NEWS DESK:** With petrol prices soaring, more and more people, especially from the middle class, have found electronic bikes to be a cheaper substitute for petrol-driven motorcycles.

The growing sale of e-bikes has also increased production. Locally manufactured e-bikes are available from Rs130,000 to Rs300,000 and are cheaper than petrol-driven bikes.

Walking from Warris Khan Police Station to Banni Chowk on Circular Road, one can find shops selling e-bikes that were once hubs of petrol-driven motorcycles, where shopkeepers are now selling them briskly.

Junaid Abbasi, a motorbike owner, said that as petrol became more expensive, people shifted from regular motorcycles to e-bikes. He said the maintenance of e-bikes was easier compared to fuel-driven two-wheelers.

A shield is also available for protection from rain and sun.

"Only 1.5 units of electricity are used to charge the bike, which is enough to drive 30 to 90 kilometres. Lithium batteries are fitted in most e-bikes and come with a five-year warranty," he said.

He said the price of electronic scooters starts from Rs135,000 to

Rs240,000, while e-bikes range from Rs150,000 to Rs300,000. He said most people now preferred e-bikes and the sale of regular petrol-driven motorcycles had declined.

a variety of helmets and accessory boxes are also available. Qari Khalid, president of the Motorcycle Association Circular Road, told Dawn that the sale of e-bikes had increased manifold, with around 50 bikes being sold daily in the main bazaar.

He said most people bought e-bikes because they were easy to handle and required lower maintenance costs. "Usually, around Rs2,500 is spent monthly on petrol-driven motorcycles for motor oil changes and other

maintenance, but there are almost no monthly maintenance charges for e-bikes. "Battery used in the electric bikes is placed under the seat.

He said most people in the main motorcycle bazaars on Circular Road and Murree Road were replacing petrol-driven bikes with e-bikes. He added that both new and second-hand motorcycles were available in the market, but their prices and fuel expenses had increased.

M u h a m m a d Shoaib, a resident of Committee Chowk, said petrol prices had increased manifold and he had no option but to replace his petrol-powered bike with an electric bike, as he could not afford to spend Rs1,000 daily on fuel to commute



## Tax design, not rates, is Pakistan's real problem

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan's tax debate often starts in the wrong place. We argue over rates, targets and quarterly shortfalls, but avoid the central problem: the design of the tax system itself.

Atax regime that depends on a largely undocumented retail tax outside the net, which will keep producing distortion, leakage and resentment. That is exactly what has happened under the current General Sales Tax framework. The result is a system that is informally broad, administratively porous. It burdens those who are visible, compliant and documented, while allowing large parts of the market to stay outside the net.

This is why Pakistan needs to stop pretending that more punitive taxation at the retail end will somehow produce mass documentation. The evidence points the other way. Unregistered retailers

face a 4% further tax, and non-filers face an additional advance income tax burden, yet the share of undocumented retail activity remains overwhelmingly high.

If rates — higher penalties, schemes, notices and enforcement drives have not altered this reality, then policymakers must admit that the problem is not weak resolve. It is poor architecture.

In practice, these taxes do not discipline the informal economy as exposed to enforcement shift the burden upwards to the formal sector, especially manufacturers in fast-moving consumer goods. Producers that are already registered, audited and exposed to enforcement pressure end up absorbing costs to preserve self space and market access.

The informal retailer stays largely untouched, the state still struggles to capture full revenue, and the compli-

ant business pays the price for everybody else's non-compliance. This is not tax reform. It is a policy arrangement that penalises formality.

A more realistic alternative already exists within Pakistan's own legal framework. The Third Schedule of the Sales Tax Act offers a structurally cleaner route for certain categories of consumer goods. Under this method, tax is a policy arrangement charged on the printed retail price and collected upfront at the manufacturing or import stage.

The rate does not need to rise. What changes are the collection and the visibility of the tax base. In a market where downstream informality is entrenched, this matters far more than another round of threats or another registration campaign.

There is another reason this matters: consumers. Printed retail prices do more than simplify tax administration.

They create transparency in everyday markets where arbitrary pricing is common and weak enforcement is the norm. For essential household items, especially in smaller towns and low-information markets, a visible price on the pack is a modest but meaningful form of consumer protection. It reduces room for unjustified markups, improves enforcement by provincial authorities and gives households a reference point in an inflationary environment where every rupee counts.

The current debate around expanding the Third Schedule to products such as cooking oil, milk, dairy items, flour, frozen foods and condiments is therefore worth taking seriously. Recent reporting in The Express Tribune has highlighted industry concerns that the existing GST chain is too complex, too vulnerable to leakages and too unfree to firms already inside the tax net.

# Two joint ventures qualified for submission of financial bids for cricket stadium in Islamabad

**NEWS DESK:** Two joint ventures (JVs) of construction firms have been qualified for submission of financial bids for construction of the first-ever cricket stadium in Islamabad.

In response to the Capital Development Authority (CDA)'s tenders, Habib Construction, ZKB-EA and JV of Lemar Builders, Kingerete and BK Consultants had submitted their bids.

Sources said technical bids of both the JVs had been approved and now they were in the race to get award of the construction work.

The CDA, in collaboration with Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), plans to construct the stadium on around 50 acres in the proposed Olympic Village to be set up in 175 acres near D-12 at the foothills of Margalla.

The project worth Rs1.4 billion will be executed under the Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) model in which the JVs, besides technical bids, had submitted their designs.

Bids of two consulting firms already received, however, CDA planning to hire a gov-



ernment-owned consultant, says official.

Sources said now their designs will be reviewed by an experts committee of CDA, which may also get an input from the PCB.

Whichever design is approved, may be with some modifications, the same will be handed over to the two JVs, asking

them to submit their financial bids and the lowest bidder will be awarded work.

The sources said a tough competition was expected as both the JVs wanted to get the mega project.

Both have the expertise of executing cricket stadium projects. One was involved in the

construction of Peshawar Cricket Stadium and the other group was involved in the Gaddafi Stadium Lahore.

Meanwhile, CDA has already received bids from two consultant firms - a Pakistani, an Asian with a Turkish company as JV and Nespak.

However, sources

said, instead of selecting one of the firms, the CDA was planning to hire only a government-owned consultant.

Soon a decision will be made in this regard.

The sources said if agreed by authorities, the CDA will write to government-owned consultants to get their financial bids for the su-

perision of the project.

It is relevant to note that the area where the cricket stadium is going to be constructed falls in Zone III, where sports and recreational activities are permissible.

However, the CDA will have to get permission from the federal government for allied work such as commercial

areas and construction of hotels. A few months ago, the CDA also moved a summary to the ministry of interior for this purpose.

Meanwhile, Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) in January this year had asked the CDA to share with it the layout plan of the proposed cricket

stadium.

A letter from the IWMB stated: "With reference to the advertisement issued by CDA inviting bids for the construction of cricket stadium near sector D-12 Islamabad,

under EPC mode, this office seeks clarification regarding the exact location and layout plan of the proposed project site."

The letter questioned whether the proposed site falls within or overlaps notified boundaries of the national park.

It added, "Whether the proposed site falls within, abuts, or otherwise overlaps the notified boundaries of Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP) or any area falling within 100-metre buffer zone declared as protected area under the Islamabad Nature Conservation and Wildlife Management Act, 2024."

The letter also explained section 14 of the Act, which says: "An area falling within 100 metres outside the boundary of a national park or a wildlife sanctuary shall be considered a protected area buffer zone, provided it is state land or acquired for this purpose."

## Pakistan squash stars set for Asian Junior Championships

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan's young squash players are all set to showcase their talent at the 33rd Asian Junior Individual Squash Championships 2026, scheduled to be held from May 20 to 24 in Panzhihua, China.

According to Pakistan Squash Federation, the national contingent,

led by Director Academies Group

Captain (R) Irfan Asghar and Head Coach Fahim Gul, will compete against top emerging players from across Asia in the prestigious junior event.

Pakistan's squad comprises five boys and two girls competing in different age categories.

In the boys' events, Abdullah Nawaz will participate in the Under-19 cat-

egory. Noman Khan in Under-17, Ahmed Rayyan Khalil and Sohail Adnan in Under-15, while Mustafa Khan will feature in the Under-13 category.

In the girls' competitions, Schirish Ali and Mahnoor Ali will represent Pakistan in the Under-15 category.

The championship is regarded as one of

Asia's premier junior squash

events and provides a major platform for young players to gain international exposure and improve continental rankings.

Pakistan squash officials expressed confidence that the young

players would deliver strong performances and continue the country's rich legacy in the sport.



## Svitolina wins Italian Open title

**NEWS DESK:** Elina Svitolina won the Italian Open on Saturday after beating Coco Gauff 6-4, 6-7 (3/7), 6-2 to claim her third Rome title, while Janik Sinner set a date with Casper Ruud in the men's final.

Ukraine's Svitolina had not claimed a WTA 1000 title since her last victory at the Foro Italico eight years ago but prevailed over the ever-erratic Gauff to claim her 20th tournament triumph.

Saturday's win over Gauff was her third in a row against a player in the top four of the world rankings—including Iga Swiatek and Elena Rybakina—ahead of the French Open which starts next weekend.

"Of course it gives me a lot of confidence going into Roland Garros," Svitolina told reporters.

"I'm very proud of the effort, of the intensity that I've been able to put in to beat those players."

American star Gauff was aiming to become the first American to win in the Italian capital since Serena Williams in 2016, but the problems

with her serve which have so long dogged her game began to resurface on centre court.

Her serve was broken three times by Svitolina on her way to losing the first set, thanks in part to four double-faults, two of which came in the fourth which allowed her opponent to move ahead in the match.

At 5-4 down she hit a bizarre second serve which flew into the wrong side of the court, before gifting Svitolina the advantage by an-

other double-fault at set point.

A livid Gauff then smacked herself on the head with her own racket before storming down the tunnel.

emerging shortly afterwards to have a heated discussion with her coach, Jean-Christophe Faurel.

That talking to seemed to turn things around as Gauff got a handle on her serve in a hard-fought second set which featured some fun rallies, particularly as she won the tie-break.

But two more breaks of serve cost Gauff her first tournament win of the season with her French Open title defence.

"I think this week I experienced all the ups and downs of a tournament that can bring you before a Grand Slam of I've been down, had the lead, lost the lead, I've been in the final, been down match-point," said Gauff.

"I think I've experienced every scenario that can prepare me for Roland Garros."



## Iran holds 'constructive' meeting with FIFA over World Cup preparations

**NEWS DESK:** FIFA secretary general Mattias Grafstrom described as "excellent" and "constructive" the meeting held on Saturday in Istanbul with the Iranian federation to ensure Iran's participation in the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The Iranians are scheduled to be based and play all three of their group matches in the US in spite of the war currently being waged in the Middle East.

"We've had an excellent meeting, a constructive meeting together with the Iran FA," said Grafstrom.

"I think we're working closely together and looking very much forward to welcoming them to the World Cup."

"We've had the opportunity to discuss some of the operational matters, like we do with every member association."

"But I'm very happy that we were able to have this positive exchange, and both the Iran FA and FIFA are very happy with the meeting and looking forward to welcoming

Team Melli in the US, Canada and Mexico."

The president of the Iranian Football Federation, Mehdi Taj, had said on Thursday that no visas had yet been issued for Iran's team.

But he also described Saturday's meeting as "positive and constructive" without going into the details.

"We discussed our concerns and expressed our joint commitment to ensure the smooth participation of Team

Melli," he said.

The meeting, which was held at the headquarters of the Turkish Football Federation, comes as the Iranian team prepares to leave on Monday morning for a training camp in Turkey before heading to the US.

Iran hope to play two friendlies in Antalya. They have already confirmed one match, against The Gambia, on May 29, said Sam Mehdi-zadeh, an Ira-

nian-Canadian who heads a company that sets up friendlies for the team. They are taking a squad of 30 players, which will have to be trimmed to the World Cup maximum of 26.

While Porto striker Mehdi Taremi is on the list, this is not the case for the other star striker, Sardar Azmoun, who has scored 57 goals for the national team and previously played for Bayer Leverkusen and AS Roma.



## Harry Kane hits hat-trick, St Pauli relegated

**NEWS DESK:** Forward Harry Kane scored a hat-trick as Bayern Munich celebrated their 35th German title on a gripping final day of the German Bundesliga season on Saturday with a 5-1 win over Cologne.

VfB Stuttgart secured Champions League qualification and St. Pauli and Heidenheim were relegated elsewhere on an action-packed final match-day.

England's Kane scored an elegant volley and a direct free-kick in the first half before rounding off his hat-trick of the season, ending as the league's top scorer with 36 goals.

Said El Muli scored a superb solo goal for Cologne, but efforts from Kane, Tom Bischof and Niclas Jackson saw Bayern run away with victory.

At the other end of the table, VfL Wolfsburg won a dramatic, three-way fight with St. Pauli and Heidenheim to avoid automatic relegation.

The bottom three all began the day on equal points, but Wolfsburg's pulse-racing 3-1 win

over St. Pauli meant they secured the all-important relegation play-off place in fifth.

St. Pauli goalkeeper Nikola Vasilij kept Wolfsburg at bay with some smart saves in the first half before Konstantinos Koulierakis headed the visitors in front from a corner.

Half-time substitute Abdoulaye Ceesay gave St. Pauli hope with a header on 57 minutes, but tempers flared after Wolfsburg restored the lead in controversial circumstances.

Vasilij claimed he had been pushed after deflecting the ball into his own net at a corner, but the goal was given after a nail-biting VAR check.

Christian Eriksen missed a penalty for Wolfsburg 15 minutes from time, but Deran Pejcinovic sealed St. Pauli's fate with a cool finish shortly afterwards.

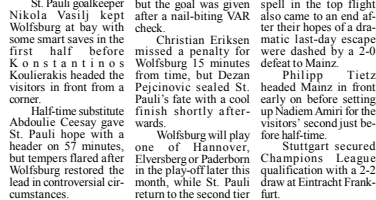
Wolfsburg will play one of Hannover, Elversberg or Paderborn in the play-off later this month, while St. Pauli return to the second tier

after two years in the Bundesliga.

Meanwhile, Heidenheim's three-year spell in the top flight also came to an end after their hopes of a dramatic last-day escape were dashed by a 2-0 defeat to Mainz.

Philipp Tietz headed Mainz in front early on before setting up Nadiem Amiri for the visitors' second just before half-time.

Stuttgart secured Champions League qualification with a 2-2 draw at Eintracht Frankfurt.



# Markets, shops, eateries exempted from early closure timings till May 31

**NEWS DESK:** The federal government has allowed temporary exemption of shops, markets and eateries from early closure timing of 8pm, state broadcaster PTV News reported, citing a notification, on Monday.

The Cabinet Division notification dated May 18 states that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has given the approval to exempt "with immediate effect and till May 31" several entities from the closure timings specified in a April 6 notification.

According to the latest notification, all shops, departmental stores, markets, shopping malls, bakeries, tandoors, restaurants and grocery stores have been exempted from the early closure timings for all days of the week.

On April 6, the federal government had announced that all markets across the country, barring Sindh, would close by 8pm throughout the week



as part of energy conservation measures amid a global fuel crisis triggered by the US-Israeli war on Iran.

Meanwhile, the closure time for wedding halls, bakeries, restaurants, tandoors and other eateries was set at 10pm.

Days later on April 10, the Sindh government had also notified that all shops, markets and shopping malls in Karachi and other divisional headquarters of the province would close at 9pm throughout the week.

Tandoors (as standalone shops), milk and dairy shops, bakeries, medical stores and pharmacies, clinics and hospitals, as well as fuel stations, were, however, exempted from the order. Hotels, restaurants, and food outlets were given the permission to operate between 7pm and 11:30pm for dinner timings, were, however, wedding halls and banquets in the province were given the permission to operate between 8pm and midnight. However, Sindh, as well as Punjab, Balochistan and

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments lifted closure timing restrictions last week.

Punjab was the first one to make the decision in response to traders' protests and appeals by the shopping malls association and general public to revise 8pm business closure timings.

The Punjab government granted partial relief on May 15 and lifted the restriction on market timings until June 1. It notified that "all the shops, markets, shopping malls, hotels, restaurants and food outlets are exempted from the prescribed closure timings till June 1, 2026".

The next day, Sindh, KP and Baloch-is-tan governments also relaxed the restrictions. While the notification by the Balochistan Home Department said the restrictions had been relaxed till June 1, the KP and Sindh governments withdrew the restrictions without setting any timeline.

## Federal Shariat Court strikes down 2022 legislation decriminalising suicide attempts

**NEWS DESK:** The Federal Shariat Court (FSC) on Monday declared the decriminalisation of suicide attempts un-Islamic and struck down the 2022 legislation through which it had been omitted from the Pakistan Penal Code. A three-member bench comprising Chief Justice Iqbal Hameedur Rehman, Justice Syed Muhammad Anwar and Justice Amir Khan announced the reserved verdict on two separate petitions challenging the amendments introduced through the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Act, 2022.

The petitions were pursued by Advocates Hammad Hassan Dar and Azam Malik.

The court declared the relevant provisions of the 2022

law repugnant to the injunctions of Islam and consequently void. Through the impugned legislation, parliament had omitted Section 325 of the Pakistan Penal Code, which had criminalised the attempt to commit suicide.

With the judgement, the deleted provision of the penal code stands restored. According to the short order, the FSC held that the state has the authority under Islamic injunctions to prohibit and penalise acts that endanger human life, including attempted suicide.

The court observed that Islam unequivocally prohibits suicide and emphasises the sanctity and protection of human life. It further noted that removing criminal liability for attempted suicide was inconsistent with the constitutional obligation requiring all laws to conform to Islamic injunctions.

The bench accepted both petitions and directed that the omission of Section 325 of the PPC through the 2022 amendment would have no legal effect following the judgement. Prior to the 2022 amendment, Section 325 prescribed simple imprisonment or a fine for a person who attempted suicide.

The provision had been repealed as part of broader criminal law reforms aimed at treating suicide attempts as a mental health issue rather than a criminal offence.

## Two policemen deployed with polio teams martyred in KP's Bajaur

**NEWS DESK:** At least two policemen, deployed with polio vaccination teams, were martyred in firing by unidentified assailants in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district on Monday.

The attacks were carried out on the first day of a four-day anti-polio campaign across KP.

In the first incident, Bajaur police spokesperson Israr Khan told Dawn that a 35-year-old martyred cop was returning home when the assailants, carrying rifles, opened fire on him.

Separately, Salazarai Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Jamal Shah told reporters that the martyred cop, Constable Sayed Aziz, sustained multiple bullet wounds and died on the way to the hospital.

Soon after the incident, a team from the Salazarai police station reached the site of the incident and began tracing the attackers, who had fled the scene, he said.

The DSP said an investigation had been launched to identify the

attacker. Meanwhile, the Bajaur police spokesperson said that the second incident also happened in Salazarai Tehsil on Monday afternoon, about two hours after the killing of Constable Sayed Aziz in the Dag Qala area.

He told Dawn that police constable Sayed Qadar Shah, who was escorting a polio team, was also returning home after duty when unidentified attackers ambushed him with automatic rifles in the Tabai area.

The official added that the 45-year-old cop was critically wounded in the ambush and was shifted to the district headquarters hospital for treatment. However, he said that the policeman had succumbed to his injuries.

No group has claimed responsibility for the incident like the first until the filing of this report. While the motive behind the attack is not clear, cops deputed for polio vaccination teams' security have been targeted several times in the past.

"The murder of the two policemen by unidentified armed assailants in the same Salazarai tehsil while they were escorting polio teams has also prompted the local police to further tighten security for vaccination teams across the district, particularly in the affected region," said a senior police official.

Meanwhile, the official funeral prayers for both the victims were offered at the Police Lines ground in Khar simultaneously.

The funeral was attended by officials of the district administration, police personnel, and local elders.

Later, the victims' bodies were sent to their native towns for burial.

In December last year, two people, including a constable, lost their lives after assailants attacked a polio team in Bajaur.

This year's first attack on a polio team was recorded in February in Balochistan's Chaman, where firing by armed terrorists resulted in the martyrdom of a police officer.

Last month, a police constable was martyred and four others were injured in an attack on a law enforcement party en route to provide security for polio teams in KP's Hangu district.

While the motive behind the attack is not clear, cops deputed for polio vaccination teams' security have been targeted several times in the past.

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## Sindh Rangers, CTD arrest most-wanted Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA) terrorist Abdul Jabbar Sarki

**NEWS DESK:** A most-wanted terrorist affiliated with the banned Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA) was arrested during a joint intelligence-based operation conducted by the Sindh Rangers and the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Monday, officials said, adding that weapons and explosive material were recovered from his possession.

The suspect, identified as Abdul Jabbar Sarki, son of Ghulam Rasool, was arrested at the Rangers check post near Raees Goth on Hub River Road while travelling from Quetta to Karachi, according to an official statement. Authorities said detonators, ball bearings, weapons, and explosive material were seized during the operation.

Officials said the arrested militant was allegedly planning terrorist activities at sensitive locations in Karachi in coordination with other associates. Authorities added that he had re-

mained in contact from abroad with SRA commander Sajjad Shah, who is accused of orchestrating various sabotage activities in Karachi and other parts of Sindh.

According to investigators, Sarki joined Sajjad Shah's group in 2020 and later became involved in militant activities linked to the banned organisation.

Police officials alleged that the suspect, along with an accomplice, carried out a grenade attack on a Rangers check post near the National Highway's Manzil Pump in June 2020. The attack injured two

passersby and partially damaged the Rangers post.

Authorities further claimed that the militant had also conducted reconnaissance of an Independence Day stall in Gulshan-e-Handeeds ahead of August 14 celebrations as part of a planned terrorist ac-

tivity. Officials said the suspect's name is listed in the CTD Red Book as a highly wanted terrorist. The arrested militant, along with the recovered weapons and explosive material, has been handed over to CTD police for further legal proceedings.

## Two police personnel killed as trailer rams into mobile van on Super Highway

**NEWS DESK:** Aspending dumper truck on Monday rams into a police mobile van deployed for checking near Chakwal Pump on the Super Highway (Hyderabad-Karachi road), killing a sub-inspector and a constable, police said. The driver has been arrested.

According to police, a 22-wheel trailer struck the stationary police mobile during routine checking at around 5:40am, killing two officers on the spot. A third officer survived the incident. The impact was so severe that the police vehicle was crushed and trapped beneath the trailer.

Police said the driver, identified as Shahabuddin, was taken into custody. In his initial statement, he reportedly told investigators he fell asleep while driving, which led to the ac-

cident. Rescue 1122 and Edhi volunteers reached the scene along with ambulances after being alerted. Motorway Police also assisted in the recovery operation.

Heavy machinery, including a crane and a sub-inspector and a constable, was used to pull apart the wreckage and retrieve the bodies from the mangled vehicle.

According to police, Sub-Inspector Sahib Khan, Constable Parwarish, and Constable Wajid were on duty in the police mobile when the trailer hit them.

Sub-Inspector Sahib Khan died on the spot, while Constable Wajid was trapped in critical condition and later succumbed to his injuries during rescue efforts. Constable Parwarish remained unharmed. The bodies of the deceased personnel were shifted to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital and a private hospital near Gadani City police station. Both were posted at Gadani City police station.

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