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# QUETTA VOICE

## Pakistan Army Honours Martyrs, Gallantry Award Recipients at GHQ

Web Desk:

The Pakistan Army on Thursday honoured its martyrs, decorated officers and soldiers with military awards for exceptional gallantry and distinguished service during an investiture ceremony held at the General Headquarters (GHQ), Rawalpindi.

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Staff, conferred 50 Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) and 12 Tamgha-i-Basalat awards on serving personnel and the families of martyrs. Posthumous medals were received with honour by the families of fallen soldiers.

Addressing the ceremony, the Field Marshal paid tribute to the martyrs and veterans, describing them as the enduring pride of the nation.

He said Pakistan's peace and security were secured through their supreme sacrifices and unwavering commitment to duty, adding that their legacy remained a sacred trust for every citizen.

He also praised the courage, dignity and resilience of the families of martyrs, acknowledging their unparalleled sacrifices and steadfast devotion to the homeland.

The Field Marshal further commended the operational preparedness of the Pakistan Army and law enforcement



**Field Marshal and Chief of Defense Forces General Syed Asim Munir during the Martyrs ceremony: Photo provided by ISPR**

agencies, lauding their continuous efforts against terrorism. Reaffirming the nation's

resolve, he said the fight against terrorism would continue with

full determination until lasting peace and stability are achieved across the country.

## 'World can see the face behind that mask': Pakistan rebukes India at UNSC

NEWS DESK:

Pakistan on Wednesday hit back at India's allegations at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), with Pakistani diplomat Saima Saleem slamming New Delhi as being "a state that exports terrorism abroad."

"It occupies people by force, persecutes minorities at home, weaponises water, commits aggression in the region."

Her remarks came during a right of reply at the UNSC's Annual Debate on the Protection of Civilians after India accused Pakistan of ignoring international humanitarian obligations and targeting civilians.

Pakistan had raised concerns over the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) during the session.

Saima criticised India's remarks and said New Delhi had appeared before the council "wearing the mask of a victim." "But the world can see the face behind that mask," she said.

Earlier in the debate, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Harish Parvathani accused Paki-

standards, training camps, and logistical networks involved in attacks against Pakistani civilians, security personnel, and infrastructure.

"These operations were directed solely against terrorists and their infrastructure, not against the brotherly people of Afghanistan or civilian facilities," she said.

Saima also dismissed allegations raised by the Taliban administration and echoed by India.

Calling them part of a "disinformation campaign" intended to conceal attacks against Pakistani civilians.

On IIOJK, the Pakistani diplomat said India could "neither conceal nor deny its occupation of Jammu and Kashmir."

describing the issue as "an internationally recognised dispute that remains on the agenda of this Council."

"In the occupied territory, civilians are killed, detained, dispossessed, and silenced; homes are demolished, freedoms are crushed, and an entire people are denied their right to self-determination," she added.

She also criticised India's treatment of minorities, par-

## Grenade Attack on Police Patrol in Dera Murad Jamali Injures 16, Security Tightened



From Our Correspondent:

**Dera Murad Jamali:** At least 16 people, including three police personnel, were injured after unidentified armed motorcyclists hurled a hand grenade at a police mobile van in the busy main market area of Dera Murad Jamali, officials said on Thursday.

The injured were identified as Riyaz Mengal, Muhammad Hayat, Ramesh Lal, Hakim Ali, Abdul Islam, Ameer Bukhsh, Mohabbat Khan, Pathan Basham Khan,

Saifullah, Abdul Samad, Muhammad Anwar, Muhammad Ayub, Manzoor Ahmed, Dali Jan, and Muhammad Akbar, along with three police officers.

Police officials said unknown assailants riding motorcycles targeted a police patrol vehicle by throwing a hand grenade, which exploded with a powerful blast, creating panic in the crowded marketplace.

Following the attack, heavy contingents of police and security forces rushed to the scene and cordoned off the area.

A search operation was launched to trace and arrest those involved in the incident. Authorities said security in and around the city was sig-

nificantly tightened in the aftermath of the explosion, with additional checkpoints established at key entry and exit points.

The Nasirabad region has witnessed several attacks in the past, with militants frequently targeting vital installations, police personnel, and other security forces operating in the area.

The latest incident has once again raised concerns over the security situation in parts of Balochistan.

An investigation into the attack is underway, while no group has immediately claimed responsibility.



stan of failing to uphold international humanitarian obligations and alleged that it had targeted civilians.

He also referred to what he described as Pakistan's "long-tainted record of genocidal acts," according to Indian media reports.

The Indian envoy further repeated allegations made by the Afghan Taliban regarding an alleged strike on a hospital in Kabul earlier this year.

Responding to the accusations, Saima said India's "state-sponsorship of terrorism against Pakistan"

had caused significant civilian casualties through militant groups operating from Afghan territory.

"Its terrorist proxies — including the TTP, BLA and Majeed Brigade — have killed thousands of civilians,

including women and children in our mosques, markets, schools and streets," she added.

Saima further said Pakistan's counterterrorism operations were carried out on the basis of credible intelligence and targeted militant

particularly Muslims, saying the situation should "alarm the conscience of the world."

Under state-sponsored Hindutva extremism, Islamophobia has been normalised as policy, hate speech rewarded in politics, mob violence met with impunity,"

she said, adding that Muslims, Sikhs, Dalits, and Christians faced discrimination.

Referring to the Indus Waters Treaty, Saima said India's decision to keep the agreement "in abeyance" reflected disregard for international law.

"A State that threatens the water, food security and livelihoods of millions of Pakistanis cannot certainly speak of civilian protection," she said.

Concluding her remarks, she said Pakistan remained committed to

"peace, dialogue, peaceful settlement of disputes and adherence to international law," while accusing India of "terrorism, occupation, aggression, repression and disregard for international law."

# QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

## Trump's Peace Plan: Legitimising Israel's Occupation

**Editorial:**  
A Peace agreement often loses its credibility when it fails to recognize the rights of the oppressed. This is the case with President Trump's much-surfaced Gaza peace plan. Far from being a genuine step toward peace, it presents a surrender document that legitimizes Israel's long-standing occupation of Palestine. Sadly, this so-called peace plan was endorsed by major Muslim countries, including Pakistan.

While standing with Trump, Netanyahu, accused of war crimes, accepted the plan and also threatened to finish the job if Hamas does not accept the plan wholeheartedly. However, outrage sparked among various analysts when Netanyahu claimed victory in Hebrew language at Tel Aviv. The question arises: How can Trump propose a plan for peace without involving an international arbitrator—the United Nations Organisation? Critics have rejected this plan on various grounds.

First, the plan has no two-state solution. In fact, it blurs the possibility of an independent Palestinian state in the future. Sadly, Netanyahu has already repudiated the idea of an independent state. Also, President Trump called Palestine recognition by France, Britain, Canada, and Spain a reward to Hamas. So far, the United States has stopped Israel from occupying the West Bank,



but some government officials of Netanyahu intended to do so.

Second, Hamas and the Palestine National Authority, the only representatives of Gaza and the West Bank, have been eliminated in the process. Even the United States banned the Palestinian Authority from entering New York during the UNGA annual session. It reflects the colonial plan because peace is mutual; it cannot be imposed at the dictate of aggressors.

Zahid Hussain in his essay pointed out that it practically brings to an end the concept of a Palestinian state.

Third, in the post-war administration both Hamas and PA have no share. The proposed plan contains the demilitarization of Hamas. They can live in peaceful coexistence after getting amnesty, and also safe passage will be given to those who want to exit. What kind of peace is this, where those who suffer have

no voice in the decisions that shape their future? This is total surrender to be forced on the group.

Fourth, this official instrument lost its credibility when the UN was excluded. It discredits the international organization. Although the question are raised about the ineffective role of the UN—unable to stop genocide—its sanctity must prevail. Critics always blamed the United States. For instance, every time the

US vetoed a resolution to stop Israel's evil deeds.

Fifth, Hamas has been given the ultimatum of 72 hours to accept the plan. It is not a plan but a surrender charter for the group. It means Hamas has no choice but to go with the plan. They are not consulted on their fate.

The Trump-Netanyahu plan has fortified Israel further. It openly advocates for Greater Israel.

outlined that Gaza will be governed by a political committee under the supervision of a Board of Peace which will be headed by Donald Trump and Tony Blair.

Tony Blair, the former prime minister of the UK during 2003, had been widely criticized for the invasion of Iraq based on false claims about weapons of mass destruction. He is regarded as a war criminal in the UK as well as in the Muslim world. Therefore, his appointment

provoked worldwide criticism.

Seventh, no future guarantee is mentioned in the proposed framework. It fails to prevent Israel from occupying. Most important, the aggressor's accountability has not been outlined. In fact, Israel has impunity in its every action. The President assured Tel Aviv that they can do what they want if Hamas rejects the plan.

Eighth, no recognition, no peace. Durable

peace hinges on the recognition of Palestine. Both the US and Israel have rejected recognition. Seemingly, they have no plan to recognize Palestine in the near future. The record of history demonstrates that illegal occupation and peace cannot move together. Peace remains impossible without an end to illegal occupation.

On the positive side of the plan, if this project is implemented, it will end ruthless killing and Gaza genocide. The aid blockade will be drawn. The supporters of this plan also cited the same reason. The deputy prime minister, Ishaq Dar, also said that the first priority of Pakistan is to end uncontrolled killing of Gazans. He further said that we are on a bid to remove all Netanyahu's excuses to continue war.

In the end, occupation, annexation, and illegal settlements cannot run with peace. Two states are the only answer to long-term peace. This controversial plan is biased and destined to crumble.

Gazans cannot be left to the mercy of warmongers. It is a wake-up call for the United States and the World to let Gazans live a free life in their own independent state. Netanyahu's transgression must not go with impunity. The only solution lies in an independent Palestinian state.

The writer can be contacted through: dinzaad19@gmail.com

## Quetta has a better environment, rich culture, manageable population

**Amjad Rashid**  
Quetta is not a case of deprivation related to lack of resources, not a case of unemployment, not a case of climate change, and not even a case of poverty. It's a true and real case of the richness of culture, environment, climate, natural resources, and manageable human population. Unfortunately our planners, thinkers, decision-makers proved to be very selfish and greedy.

In Quetta, we had municipal water posts (I wish I can get the pictures). Quetta was a natural habitat with a small population of trees, flowers. The city had few streets with few vehicles and dynamic socio-political harmony.

We did establish universities but abandoned knowledge.

Unfortunately, global and regional influences badly affected the capital with less modernization and more adversity. We did establish a university, but abandoned consciousness, we did build plazas, but without building codes. If we look back at the pictures of Quetta of the sixties. It was like Zurich but evolved as little Karachi or Mumbai. Transformed from little London to huge slums (full of garbage and filth). Bad governance, poor education, corruption, and poor planning converted Quetta into an ugly place.

We don't see green Koh-e-Murdaar a multi-lingual culture which was its beauty and uniqueness has vanished and replaced by the prac-

tion. Every day in the morning when I look at the sleeping beauty of Quetta I feel that the mother of Quetta (sleeping beauty) has become

bricks and cement which after few more years will look like a dumping place of garbage. We must listen and learn from our heroes like Rehman

its true beauty and culture.

Climate change poses a serious threat to the developing world. Environment, Cli-

Now we from Adams to twenty-first century experienced, slavery, the industrial revolution, conflict of ideologies, various version of world orders

chambeli, bitakh, surkahi and places like hama, thandi Sarak, and associated culture of art and poetry. Masses of

motherland is demanding the attention of all irrespective of our international commitments. It's a matter of our survival. We need a green economy,



tees influenced by regional inhuman and unnatural drama. We lost our green Quetta with wild roses which was its aroma and identity.

Balochistan and Quetta need our attention.

Balochistan in general and Quetta, in particular, need our at-

sick and looking toward her siblings for help and cure.

Our water level reduced, our population increase, our poor justice system, and our greed for material gain will never make it a little London but will change its fate like the city full of garbage supported/ fixed by

Baba, Atta shad, Asher Jalili and take their vision as guiding torch. Quetta does not need more engineers but needs Thinkers, guides who should work to replace the current citizenry struggling for self-interest with the soft power and values of Quetta which can bring back

mate change, global warming, deforestation and desertification, and many such terms were alien to humanity and especially to developing world like Pakistan. We were used to singing and telling stories to our siblings (younger generation) about the kindness of nature.

driving to save and benefit humanity. But all our efforts to take humanity to its peak are being ended up as a disaster. The temperature of the motherland is increasing. habitat of Balochistan and our piece of Heaven (once called as "miss it's jangly Gulab, chakore,

Balochistan facing a host of issues

First-time after seventy-two years and since the establishment of Balochistan Province, its habitats are frequently faced by challenges like conservation.

In the context of the above-mentioned scenario, our beloved

green industry, green employment, green politics, and above all green development.

This situation calls for a committed social, political and religious commitment to rebuild and reclaim of our title. Quetta has a better environment, rich culture, manageable population

# Gaza flotilla activists to be deported after taunting by Israeli minister

**NEWS DESK:** Gaza flotilla activists who were detained by Israel and later pinned to the ground to the taunts of Israel's far-right 'Police minister have been released from prison and will be deported to Turkey on Thursday, officials said.

The activists were arrested at a port in Southern Israel after the Israeli navy intercepted their protest flotilla in international waters. Their treatment by police officers under Itamar Ben-Gvir's direction drew an international outcry and a rebuke from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Ben-Gvir and at least one other minister in Netanyahu's government, transport chief Miri Regev, posted campaign-style videos of themselves visiting the port and lambasting the protesters, attempting grabbing antics ahead of potential early elections in Israel.

Activists to be flown to Turkey from Southern Israel

Flotilla organisers say they aim to break Israel's blockade of Gaza by delivering humanitarian assistance, something aid bodies say is still in short supply despite a US-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in place since October 2025 that includes guarantees of increased aid.

The 'flotilla' departed from southern



Turkey this week before being intercepted on Wednesday.

Past flotillas - including one carrying Swedish activist Greta Thunberg - were also intercepted by Israel, with participants later deported.

In a statement, Israeli rights group Adalah said the estimated 430

activists had been released from prison in southern Israel and would be deported via the Ramon airport near Tel Aviv on the Red Sea.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said his country was conducting special flights that would bring Turkish citizens as well as third-country partici-

pants to Turkey. Those on board the flotilla included citizens of Spain, South Korea and Ireland.

"We will continue to uphold the rights of our citizens and fulfil our humanitarian responsibility toward civilians in Gaza," Fidan said. Spain's foreign minister said its diplomats

in Israel had been informed that some 44 Spanish flotilla members would depart from Gaza at 3pm local time (1200 GMT).

Taunting of activists comes ahead of Israeli election

Ben-Gvir's 'video showed officers forcing an activist to the ground after she chanted 'Free,

free Palestine'.

The video also shows dozens of detained activists kneeling in rows with their hands zip-tied behind their backs, in what appears to be an outdoor Israeli port facility.

In the background, soldiers armed with long guns can be seen patrolling the area from aboard

a military vessel.

During Israel's two-year intensified military assault in Gaza since October 2023, Israeli troops frequently lined up detained Palestinians on the ground, with their hands bound.

"Look at them now. See how they look now, not heroes and not anything," Ben-Gvir says in

normalisation would not be expected until the first or second quarter of 2027. This is not just an economic problem," he said. "In fact, this sets a dangerous precedent once you accept that a single country can hold the world's most important waterway hostage."

The Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical energy chokepoints, has been blocked since Iran moved to restrict traffic after the US and Israel launched large-scale airstrikes against Iran on February 28.

US Energy Secre-

the video as he walks by the activists while carrying a large Israeli flag.

Posting her own video at Ashdod port, transport chief Miri Regev, a member of Netanyahu's political party, said, "This is what should be done to supporters of terror who came to break the siege on Gaza."

Netanyahu, who leads the most right-wing government in Israel's history, said Ben-Gvir's conduct was "not in line with Israel's values and norms."

The US Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, said he "betrayed (the) dignity of this nation."

Ben-Gvir's political base includes some of Israel's most nationalist voters, a bloc that Netanyahu's Likud party has in the past tried to woo ahead of national elections, the next of which is due by October 27.

This week, Israel moved closer to a snap election after lawmakers gave an initial nod to dissolve parliament, with opinion polls showing Netanyahu would lose the first national vote since the 2023 Hamas attacks.

International outcry with Israel envoys summoned

The detention and taunting of the activists led France, Canada, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands to "summon top Israeli diplomats in their countries."

# Radio station mistakenly announces death of King Charles

**NEWS DESK:** A former British pirate radio station on Wednesday apologised "for any distress caused" after accidentally announcing the death of King Charles III.

The erroneous announcement was made on Tuesday afternoon due to a computer error at its main studio in Maldon in

eastern Essex, Radio Caroline said in a post on social media.

The error had triggered the so-called death of a monarch procedure "which all UK stations hold in readiness while hoping not to require", wrote station manager Peter Moore. "Radio Caroline then fell silent as would be required, which alerted us to

restore programming and issue an on-air apology," he said on Facebook post.

"Caroline has been pleased to broadcast Her Majesty the Queen's and now the King's, Christmas message and we hope to do so for many years to come," he said, referring to the monarch's traditional Christmas

Day message to the nation. "We apologise to HM (his majesty) the king and to our listeners for any distress caused," Moore added. The mishap on Tuesday came as Charles and Queen Camilla were in Northern Ireland, where they joined an Irish folk group.

The post did not say how long it was before the mistake was discovered, but the domestic Press Association news agency reported that on Wednesday afternoon, playback for Tuesday's broadcast between 1:58pm and 5pm was unavailable on the station's website. Established in 1964 to challenge the BBC's broadcasting monopoly, Radio Caroline previously operated from ships off the English coast.



# China to buy 200 Boeing jets from US, confirms Beijing

**NEWS DESK:** China's Ministry of Commerce confirmed on Wednesday that airlines in China will introduce 200 aircraft from Boeing, marking one of the largest single procurement commitments in recent years.

The announcement came days after President Donald Trump claimed that China had agreed to buy 200 Boeing jets with GE Aerospace engines. The deal "includes approximately 200 planes and a promise of up to 750 if they do a good job".

Trump told reporters on Air Force One on Friday after concluding his high-profile visit to China.

The announcement on the website of China's Ministry of Commerce outlines the preliminary outcomes of recent high-level trade engagements between Beijing and Washington. According to the statement, the aircraft will be supplied by Boeing and introduced based on commercial demand and fleet expansion needs, with the US also ensuring the economic ties used supply of engines and critical components.

The deal was framed as part of the broader economic understanding reached during discussions involving President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, who met in Beijing during Trump's state visit from May 13 to 15.

While aviation took centre stage, the agreement sits within a much larger package of trade understandings that signal a cautious but structured effort to stabilise bilateral economic ties after years of tariff disputes, sanctions, and

countermeasures. Alongside the aircraft agreement, both sides have agreed in principle to explore a reciprocal tariff-reduction mechanism under a future Trade Council framework. The proposed arrangement would cover at least \$30 billion worth of goods on each side, potentially allowing selected products to benefit from lower tariff rates or most-favoured-nation treatment. Chinese officials stressed that the objective is to prevent future tariff escalations and to ensure that any new US trade measures

remain within agreed ceilings, particularly following legal and political uncertainty in Washington over earlier tariff policies. To manage this evolving relationship, Beijing and Washington have also agreed to establish new Trade and Investment Councils. These bodies are intended to shift bilateral engagement away from crisis-driven negotiations toward a permanent institutional mechanism for resolving disputes, coordinating policy, and expanding cooperation.



# UAE's new pipeline bypassing Strait of Hormuz nearly 50% complete, oil chief says

**NEWS DESK:** The UAE has completed nearly 50% of a second pipeline that will bypass the Strait of Hormuz, the head of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) said on Wednesday, as Gulf producers seek alternate export routes amid the prolonged closure of the key waterway.

"Right now, too much of the world's energy still moves through too few chokepoints," ADNOC CEO Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber said in an interview at the Atlantic Council.

The new pipeline is expected to double ADNOC's export capacity through Fujairah, a UAE port on the Gulf of Oman located beyond the Strait of Hormuz.

The construction of the project has been accelerated due to the Iran war, with the pipeline expected to become operational in 2027.

The UAE has already been redirecting some crude exports through an existing pipeline to Fujairah, which has a maximum capacity of 1.8 million barrels per day.

Al Jaber said Iran's blockade of Hormuz, which began in early

March, has triggered the most severe energy supply disruption in history.

Also Read: Pakistan steps up diplomatic bid to get US-Iran peace talks on track

More than 1 billion barrels of oil have been lost due to the strait's closure, while nearly 100 million additional barrels are lost every week the waterway remains blocked, he said.

Even if the conflict ends immediately, it would take at least four months to restore oil flows to 80% of normal levels, Al Jaber said, adding that full

normalisation would not be expected until the first or second quarter of 2027. This is not just an economic problem," he said. "In fact, this sets a dangerous precedent once you accept that a single country can hold the world's most important waterway hostage."

The Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical energy chokepoints, has been blocked since Iran moved to restrict traffic after the US and Israel launched large-scale airstrikes against Iran on February 28.

US Energy Secre-



# US indicts Raul Castro as fears of Cuba 'invasion' mount

**NEWS DESK:** Former Cuban President Raul Castro was indicted in the United States on murder charges, court records showed on Wednesday.

A dramatic escalation in Washington's pressure campaign that comes amid fears of a potential US military intervention against the island's communist government.

The indictment, filed in federal court in Miami, charges Castro, 94, with one count of conspiracy to kill US nationals, four counts of murder and two counts of destruction of aircraft.

The charges stem from a 1996 incident in which Cuban MiG fighters shot down two United States military planes operated by a group of Cuban exiles, killing four people.

The legal action follows increasingly aggressive rhetoric from the White House.

President Donald Trump said on Wednesday the United States would "not tolerate a rogue state harbouring hostile foreign military, intelligence and terror operations just ninety miles from the American homeland".

The move has drawn parallels to the US drug-trafficking indictment of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

which the Trump administration cited as a justification for a military raid in Caracas that led to his capture.

Trump threatened in March that Cuba "is next", prompting Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel to warn that any United States military action against the island would lead to a "blood-bath".

Castro was Cuba's defence minister on Feb 24, 1996, when Cuban jets downed two Cessnas

belonging to Brothers to the Rescue, a Miami-based humanitarian group that searched for Cuban rafters and dropped anti-government leaflets.

The group's four members, including three American citizens, were killed.

While Cuba argued the planes intruded on its airspace, the International Civil Aviation Organisation later concluded the shootdown occurred over international waters.

In Miami, members of the large Cuban American community gathered to commemorate the victims on Wednesday.

"We all hoped for a long time, for many years that this would happen," said Bobby Ramirez, 62, a musician who left Cuba in 1971.

The indictment was unveiled as US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, in a video mes-

sage to the Cuban people, offered \$100 million in aid and blamed the island's leaders for shortages of food and fuel.

In response, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez called Rubio "the mouthpiece of corrupt and vengeful interests".

"He keeps talking about an aid package of 100 million dollars that Cuba has not rejected, but whose cynicism is evident to anyone in light of the devastating effect of the economic blockade and the energy stranglehold," Rodriguez wrote in a post on X.

Cuba's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the indictment.

There is no evidence Castro has left the island or that the government would permit his extradition.

Industrialists meet Ch Shafay Hussain over RUDA charges dispute in Lahore

LAHORE (INP) A delegation of industrialists from the Daroghawala and Sagan areas met with Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain.

Commerce and Industry President Faheem-ur-Rehman Sehgal was leading the delegation. The delegation informed about the issue of RUDA imposing Rs8 million per kanal charges on industries located in the Daroghawala and Sagan areas.

There are 1,500 small industrial units in the Daroghawala and Sagan areas, which provide employment to 150,000 families. Lahore Chamber President said such a mechanism should be created so that the industry that has been operating here for decades does not close.

RUDA charges should be resolved. Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain assured the industrialists that the issue will be resolved and the charges imposed by RUDA on the industry will be reviewed again.

Chinese irrigation tech fix Pakistan's struggling agriculture

ISLAMABAD (INP) "We organized an on-line-offline training workshop on water-saving irrigation technology in Islamabad last year. Impressively, the final tally shows that online-only participants alone exceeded 960."

These trials have delivered tangible gains. Drip irrigation systems save at least 50% of water compared with traditional flood irrigation, while boosting crop yields notably and keeping long-run maintenance rates above 90% in dry periods.

WAPDA spends Rs1.9 bn on socio-economic development on Mohmand Dam

LAHORE, May 20 (INP) The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Pakistan has spent Rs1.9 billion on socio-economic development schemes in the Mohmand Dam Project area under its Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), aimed at improving the living standards of local communities.

Shahed Banda, Government Girls Primary School Shaheed Banda and Government Primary School Darab Koh in Telsli Pindivai, along with Government Girls Primary School Jhar in Bajaur and Government Girls Primary School Ghwand in Malakand.

ANF arrests seven suspects, seizes over 502 kg of narcotics

RAWALPINDI (INP) The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) conducted seven operations across the country on Wednesday and arrested seven suspects, including a woman, and recovered 502.91 kilograms (kgs) of narcotics worth more than Rs 39.8 million.

BEFORE THE JUDGE BANKING COURT QUETTA DISTRICT COURT/KACHEHRY SHARA-E-IQBAL QUETTA

Zarai Taraqati Bank Limited, Through Its Manager, Hub Chowki Branch. Plaintiff

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IHC issues notices on applications seeking early hearing of Imaan, Hadi's sentence suspension pleas

ISLAMABAD, May 20 (INP) The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday issued notices on multiple applications seeking early hearing of sentence suspension pleas filed by human rights lawyers Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and Hadi Ali Chatha in the social media posts case.

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Balochistan Expands Maternal Healthcare System on International Community Midwifery Day 2026

QUETTA: A dignified ceremony was held in Quetta to mark International Community Midwifery Day 2026, highlighting major reforms and new initiatives aimed at strengthening maternal and newborn healthcare across Balochistan.

The event was organized by the Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH) Program under the directives of Provincial Minister for Health, Dr. Bakht Muhammad Kakar and Secretary Health Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Panizai, in collaboration with United Nations Population Fund. Representatives from UNICEF and other development partners also participated in the ceremony.

Key Announcements for Maternal Health Reforms On the occasion, the MNCH Program announced several major initiatives, including: Distribution of 500 community midwifery kits Establishment of prefabricated MNCH centers in six districts Upgradation of the Community Midwifery Course into a BS Mid-



Government Commitment and Development Partner Support Speaking at the event, Secretary Health Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Panizai said that maternal and child health remains the government's top priority.

Historic Health System Reform in Balochistan was highlighted that Balochistan has become the first province in Pakistan to implement the Maternal Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPPSR) Act, marking a significant milestone in monitoring maternal and newborn deaths and ensuring evidence-based health interventions.

He emphasized that the community midwives play a critical role in providing essential healthcare services in remote and underserved areas. He appreciated the support of development partners including UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, Indus Hospital & Health Network, IRC and IDS Health Experts.

He reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the health system through ongoing investment and international partnerships to reduce maternal and infant mortality across the province.

Zhob Deputy Commissioner Holds Open Court to Address Public Issues and Development Needs

ZHOB: Deputy Commissioner Zhob, Muhammad Arif Zarkoon, chaired an important open court session on Tuesday (May 19) to directly hear public concerns and discuss development priorities.

The session was attended by the Commandant of Zhob Militia, SP Zhob, district officers from various government departments, political and social personalities, and a large number of citizens.

Representatives and residents from various areas and different villages participated in the open court and presented detailed concerns regarding local issues and development requirements in their respective areas.

education, healthcare, infrastructure, and civic amenities. Citizens demanded immediate repair and rehabilitation of roads (Kheri further noted that the Zhob Bypass project is of great importance for resolving traffic congestion and promoting commercial activities in the city, adding that its early completion is among the administration's highest priorities.

During the open court session, officers from various departments listened carefully to public complaints and suggestions, while instructions were issued on the spot to resolve several issues immediately.

Citizens appreciated the organization of the open court and praised the district administration's efforts to maintain direct engagement with the public. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Arif Zarkoon announced that similar open court sessions would continue in different union councils and surrounding areas to address public problems at the local level and ensure public participation in development planning.

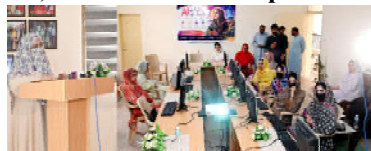
Additional demands included the early completion of the Zhob Bypass project, establishment of a car market, installation of streetlights, and construction of a modern public library.

Addressing the participants, Deputy Commissioner Zarkoon stated that the government and all available resources would be utilized to ensure the provision of basic facilities. He said comprehensive strategies are being implemented to improve education, healthcare, clean drinking water supply, urban infrastructure, and law and order across the district.

Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi Visits Benazir Bhutto Women Center, Reviews Women Helpline Services

QUETTA: Advisor to the Chief Minister Balochistan for Women Development, Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi, visited the Benazir Bhutto Women Center on Thursday and inspected various sections of the facility, including the Women Helpline service.

She was accompanied by Secretary Women Development Department Saira Atta during the visit. Detailed briefing on Women Helpline services was provided by Center Manager Rubina Zehri and Women Helpline Incharge Muhammad Asfaq Mengal. Dr. Buledi briefed the advisor on the center's performance, services being provided, and the complaint redressal mechanism for women.



Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi said that the protection, dignity, and timely access to justice for women remains a top priority of the Government of Balochistan.

She said institutional mechanisms like the Helpline and Benazir Bhutto Women Center are playing a vital role in restoring women's confidence and resolving their issues effectively. She further stated that the government is utilizing all available resources to empower women and ensure their safety, security, and equal opportunities. Institutional systems are also being strengthened to make services more efficient and responsive.

The Director directed that sensitivity, confidentiality, and rapid response must be ensured in handling women's complaints at all levels. She reaffirmed that the Women Development Department will continue to expand its services across the province to provide a safe, dignified, and supportive environment for women.

Direct Interaction with the Community System On the occasion, Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi said that the protection, dignity, and timely access to justice for women remains a top priority of the Government of Balochistan. She said institutional mechanisms like the Helpline and Benazir Bhutto Women Center are playing a vital role in restoring women's confidence and resolving their issues effectively.

Jaffarabad Marks 75th Anniversary of Pakistan-China Friendship with Flag Hoisting Ceremony

JAFFARABAD: Deputy Commissioner Jaffarabad, Khalid Khan, presided over a dignified flag-hoisting ceremony at the Deputy Commissioner Office to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Pakistan-China Friendship.

During the ceremony, a smartly turned-out police contingent presented a salute to the national flag. The event was attended by Chief Officer Municipal Corporation Ahmed Nawaz Jatak, senior police officers, district heads of various departments, government officers, and other distinguished guests.



Khalid Khan further stated that through various development projects, particularly the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, China is playing a vital role in strengthening the friendship between the two countries.

He emphasized that Pakistan and China are always playing the role of a sincere friend and reliable partner for Pakistan, while Pakistan also highly values its relations with China. He said China has always played the role of a sincere friend and reliable partner for Pakistan, while Pakistan also highly values its relations with China.

the friendship between the two countries is not limited to diplomatic ties alone but is also based on strong bonds of brotherhood, cooperation, and mutual trust between the people of both nations.

Quetta DC Reviews Metropolitan Corporation Lease Properties and Legal Matters

QUETTA: Meeting rearing leased, under the Metropolitan Corporation and lease agreements granted to various individuals and institutions. The briefing covered lease durations, contractual terms and conditions, pending matters, expired leases, and legal procedures related to the recovery and repossession of properties.

During the meeting, officials provided a detailed briefing on the properties owned by the Metropolitan Corporation and lease agreements granted to various individuals and institutions. The briefing covered lease durations, contractual terms and conditions, pending matters, expired leases, and legal procedures related to the recovery and repossession of properties.

Auction Notice for the Director Agriculture, Economics and Marketing, Balochistan Quetta. The notice details the process for bidding on rights of market fee collection for various districts including Lasbella & Hub, Jaffarabad, and Waseerabad. It includes terms and conditions, eligibility criteria, and contact information for the Director's office.

# MQM-P leader Khalid Maqbool made member of Economic Coordination Committee

**NEWS DESK:** Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) leader and Education Minister Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui has been made a member of the Economic Coordination Committee, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said on Thursday.

The statement said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had approved an increase in the number of ECC members.

"Minister for Education Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui has been included as a member of the ECC," the statement said.

"I am hopeful that Siddiqui will play an active role as a member of the ECC and contribute fully to the progress and development of the country and the nation," PM Shehbaz was quoted as saying.

The development comes a day after an MQM-P delegation led by Siddiqui, called on the premier and presented the party's proposals for the coming budget.



PM Shehbaz was quoted as saying that the party was an important coalition partner of the federal government.

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He directed the relevant authorities to review the MQM-P's budget proposals and formulate a feasible and comprehensive plan for consideration, the PMO statement said.

In 2025, PM Shehbaz had approved changes in the structure of the federal cabinet's ECC, a key body responsible for handling urgent economic decisions and ensuring coordination among different government departments on financial and economic policy matters.

As part of the revised arrangement, the chairmanship of the ECC was assigned to Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb instead of the traditional practice, where the finance minister would only preside over meetings without a formal restructuring of roles.

The ECC is considered the most important committee of the cabinet, with broad terms of reference that include reviewing urgent economic issues, coordinating economic policies across government divisions, and proposing measures for the country's progress toward a welfare state.

It also monitors monetary and credit conditions and makes recommendations for regulating credit in order to maximise production and exports while helping to prevent inflation.

The impact of global climate change is pronounced in Pakistan, which is the 15th most affected country from climate events between 1995 and 2024," said the report.

Moreover, signs of continued climate stress in Pakistan are increasingly evident in higher temperatures, erratic rainfall, rising sea levels, and rapid glacial retreat. Damages from climate change can escalate nonlinearly as each other, such as heavy rains after a heat wave.

Between 1995 and 2024, more than 9.7 billion global climatic events have led to direct economic losses of around \$4.5 trillion (in real terms), affecting 5.7 billion people, and causing more than 832,000 fatalities worldwide.

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## Oil ministry seeks Rs1tr levy cap

**NEWS DESK:** The Petroleum Division has opposed increasing the petroleum levy tax target and suggested cutting it to Rs1 trillion while reducing the rate to Rs50 per litre until global prices remain high, warning that higher levies were eroding the affordability issues and threatening social stability.

The division has submitted its budget 2026-27 recommendations to the finance ministry.

Discussions have also been held at the Prime Minister's Office to find a way out of the current situation, where consumers face the brunt of higher fuel prices coupled with higher taxes.

Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik recently wrote to Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, saying that considering the US-Iran conflict and its impact on global energy prices, reducing reliance on petroleum levies had become imperative to cushion vulnerable segments of society.

The Petroleum Division has proposed that the annual petroleum levy collection target be reduced to Rs1 trillion for the next fiscal year.

This is Rs727 billion less than the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s projection for the next year and also Rs468 billion less than this year's original target.

As an alternative, the division has proposed reducing the levy rate on petrol and diesel to Rs50 per litre — a cut of Rs30 from the rates agreed with the IMF.

The government is currently charging Rs118 per litre in levy on petrol.

The division proposed that the levy rate could be increased from Rs50 per litre only if global prices fall below \$60 per barrel.

After the war began, Pakistan increased diesel prices by 48% and petrol by almost 56% to recover global prices and collect more taxes on petrol.

The recommendations have been shared with the finance ministry ahead of the budget, which the government plans to unveil on June 5.

Discussions with the IMF on the next year's budget have also concluded.

The Petroleum Division believes that reducing targets and rates is critical to easing the burden on the people and ensuring economic stability.

However, the levy appears to be the most favoured tool of the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) government. Data shows that since the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government also recommended addressing Pakistan State Oil (PSO)'s legacy issues through budget allocations and ending cross-subsidies on gas prices.

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The Petroleum Division has also sent proposals to the finance ministry on issues facing the oil and gas sector, recommending that they be resolved in the upcoming budget.

Oil and gas companies are complaining about undue tax burden, unjustified tax demands, and the blocking of their refunds to inflate tax revenues.

The tax on petrol is almost 36% of the total price. By comparison, the government charges 18% sales tax on jet fuel.

The Petroleum Division has also urged the finance ministry to reduce sales tax on LPG — a fuel used by the poor — from 18% to 10% in the next budget.

It has recommended not increasing the petrol levy collection target on LPG.

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## 'Vulnerable' Pakistan faces climate losses

**NEWS DESK:** Climatic disasters in Pakistan have been higher than both global and regional averages in 2000-2024, as well as in the preceding two decades, according to a detailed report by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) included in the half-yearly State Bank Economy report.

Pakistan faces a particularly challenging position. On the one hand, it is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries despite contributing less than 1% to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. On the other hand, it needs to develop its economy and increase GDP growth, while decreasing emission intensity.

"This is indeed a daunting challenge, considering that decoupling of GDP growth," said the SBP report.

In the long term, World Bank (2022) estimates show that Pakistan's GDP is projected to fall by 4.5-6.5pc by 2050 due to climate change in the optimistic scenario, and by as much as 7-9pc in the pessimistic scenario, with agriculture and industry the most exposed sectors.

World Bank sees up to 9pc GDP drop by 2050. "Without timely climate action, the output of both these sectors is estimated to drop by up to 17pc by 2050," said the report.

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## Food import bill swells 14pc, exports dip 32pc

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan's food import bill rose 13.81 per cent year-on-year to \$7.848 billion in the first 10 months of 2025-26, mainly driven by higher purchases of sugar and edible oil.

The gap between food imports and exports has widened during the review period. This has increased the country's dependence on imported food items in the current fiscal year. Meanwhile, exports of raw food products decreased 32.02pc to \$4.190 billion in 10MFY26 from \$6.16bn a year earlier.

The drop in exports was a broad-based, with volumes declining across nearly all major food categories, except meat, which showed some resilience during the period.

Overall rice exports in April dropped 9.33pc year-on-year. However, exports of basmati rice surged 56.12pc in value and 62.36pc in quantity. By contrast, exports of non-basmati shrank by 27.97pc in value and 24.16pc in quantity in April.

Sugar and edible oil drive imports to \$7.85bn in July-April. The government has announced a cash subsidy to boost rice exports.



Similarly, meat exports grew 18.33pc in April. Exports of fish products rose 7pc. Most of the other food products record a negative growth.

Vegetables registered the steepest fall, plunging by 78.38pc. However, exports of tobacco surged 80.29pc, and exports of spices rose 2pc in April. According to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, palm oil constituted the largest share among imported food items, followed by pulses, tea, soyabean oil and sugar.

Pakistan imported 309,157 tonnes of sugar during July-April 2025-26, marking an unprecedented increase of 10,181.2pc compared to just 3,007 tonnes in the same period last year.

In value terms, sugar imports jumped to \$74.90bn in 10MFY26 from \$2.978bn a year earlier, reflecting a sharp rise of 5,773.3pc. The surge follows the government's decision to allow large-scale imports to address domestic shortages and contain rising prices in local markets.

Retail sugar prices have remained volatile, hovering between Rs150 and Rs180 per kilogram in different cities, prompting authorities to step in and improve supply through imports.

Officials say the move was aimed at stabilising the market amid tight domestic availability, as the country increasingly relied on external supplies to meet demand.

The value of palm oil imports rose 15.41pc to \$3.313bn during July-April 2026 from \$2.87bn a year ago. In terms of quantity, import of palm oil increased 11.77pc to 3,075 million tonnes in 10MFY26 from 2.751m tonnes a year earlier.

However, Pakistan imported pulses worth \$624.38m in 10MFY26, compared with \$823.63m in the same period last year, representing a 24.19pc decline.



## AIIB eyes road, power projects

**NEWS DESK:** Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) Vice President Konstantin Limitovskiy met Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan and Power Minister Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari to discuss infrastructure and energy projects, according to an official statement on Wednesday.

Abdul Aleem Khan said the government aims to complete vital transportation projects within two years, with the Karachi-Hyderabad and Hyderabad-Sukkur motorway being the most critical for economic development. The section connecting to Karachi Port will have eight lanes, while the Hyderabad-Sukkur section will feature six lanes.

The minister assured that all available resources will be utilised to ensure timely completion. The Lahore-Sialkot and Kharan-Rawalpindi motorways are also slated for completion within two years. These projects will reduce travel distance between Lahore and Islamabad by 100 kilometres, saving an hour of travel time and resulting in billions of rupees in annual fuel savings.

In a significant safety initiative, an ambulance service and modern trauma centres will be established on motorways in collaboration with the Pakistan Air Force. Limitovskiy expressed strong interest in collaborating with the National Highway Authority, describing the visit as pleasant and confirming that the delegation would also visit Lahore.



Separately, Leghari briefed the AIIB delegation on power sector reforms and future projects.

He said Pakistan is focused on improving efficiency, transparency and sustainability in the energy sector.

The delegation expressed interest in investing in Pakistan's energy sector, noting a potential investment pipeline of \$100.75 billion. Referring to its experience in other countries, the delegation said it is exploring opportunities to support renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure and transmission projects in Pakistan.

The top 10 GHG-emitting economies together account for about 70pc of global GHG emissions.

In contrast, Pakistan contributes only 1pc to total global GHG emissions. Similarly, Pakistan's per capita emissions remain notably low, ranking 147th globally.

Pakistan's emission intensity — measured as GHG emission per unit of GDP — is relatively high, despite modest improvement over time.

Pakistan ranks 20th in global GHG emissions as against 45th rank in terms of nominal GDP. "Nearly 54pc of total global GHG are contributed by the top 4 emitting economies in 2021," said the report.

Since the 1960s, total emissions have increased significantly, with the energy and agriculture sectors as the major contributors. Pakistan's high emission intensity puts the country at risk of materially increasing its emissions if its economy continues on a traditional development path.

The same is true for Pakistan, where growth in population and income, alongside the relatively high carbon intensity of energy, are driving increases in CO2 emissions from the energy sector.

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# North Korean women win rare match in South to reach final

**NEWS DESK:**North Korea's first sports team to visit the South in eight years reached the Asian Women's Champions League final on Wednesday as Naegohyang beat Suwon FC Women 2-1.

Naegohyang came from behind to defeat their rivals from the South amid torrential rain in Suwon, in a hard-fought semi-final played in a fair spirit without any major flashpoints.

Suwon captain Ji So-yun missed a penalty with just over 10 minutes to play.

The North Koreans will stay in the South for Saturday's final,

where they will take on Japan's Tokyo Verdy Beleza at the same stadium.

Interest in the rare North-South semi-final was intense, and 7,087

general admission tickets sold out within hours of going on sale last week.

A woman in her 70s who gave her surname as Lee told AFP



before kick-off that she lived nearby and attended the match "hoping to catch a glimpse of the North Korean players".

"I'll cheer for both teams, although I'm rooting slightly more for the North since they travelled such a long way to get here," she said.

Bad weather meant half the seats in the roofless Suwon Sports Complex Stadium were empty.

A large group of spectators from civic groups backed by Seoul's unification ministry were in the stadium to support both teams, although

they were mostly silent.

Suwon fans banged drums and chanted for their team.

There were no official away supporters because North Koreans

are generally not allowed into the South, and the two countries have technically remained at war since 1950.

The two teams had met in the group stage earlier in the

competition, with Naegohyang winning 3-0.

Former Chelsea midfielder Ji said Suwon were expecting the semi-final to be a tough physical battle

and were ready to give

as good as they got.

The action was fast and fair as both teams created early chances.

Naegohyang had a goal ruled out for offside in the fifth minute, and Suwon's Japanese striker Haruhi Suzuki headed against the post midway through the first half.

Suzuki gave Suwon the lead in the 49th minute when she pounced on a chance with the Naegohyang defence hesitating.

The North Koreans equalised six minutes later when Choe headed home from a free-kick.

Prolific striker Kim Kyong Yong then gave Naegohyang the lead when she finished off a scrappy attack with a header in the 67th minute.

Suwon were awarded a penalty after a VAR review, but Ji hit her spot kick wide with the goalkeeper diving the wrong way.

Tokyo beat Australia's Melbourne City 3-1 in the other semi-final earlier in the day.

## Langer left in awe by Sooryavanshi's batting

**NEWS DESK:**Former Australia coach Justin Langer lauded Virat Kohli's "breath-taking" batting after the 15-year-old's latest destructive IPL innings.

Sooryavanshi struck a 38-ball 93 on Tuesday to lead Rajasthan Royals closer to the IPL play-offs with a win over Lucknow Super Giants.

The batting blitz from the opener added to a string of impressive

performances in the T20 competition this season, including a 36-ball century.

Sooryavanshi hit 10 sixes as he went past Lucknow opener Mitchell Marsh's total of 563 runs in the IPL batting chart.

The teenager is now top with 579 runs in 13 matches, earning him the right to wear the orange cap as the competition's highest run-scorer.

"I've seen some amazing players in 35 years of cricket," Langer, the former Australia opening batsman and now Lucknow coach, told reporters in Jaipur.

"To see a young man bat like that, not just tonight but throughout the series, is breathtaking."

Sooryavanshi took apart some world-class fast bowlers including Australia's Mitchell Starc and South Africa's Anrich Nortje.

"It's quite incredible, actually, to be able to play that way and now have the orange cap," said Langer, who played 105 Tests for Australia.

The scary thing going forward -- if the expressions on the face of Mitch Starc and Nortje and every bowler tells a story now -- is what about when he learns how to bat?" Langer said.

"Gosh, he's so young. He's a brilliant player, and it's a real privilege to watch him bat."

"He'll adapt, he'll keep getting better and better, which is scary for world cricket."

Sooryavanshi's performances have sparked calls for him to be fast-tracked into the senior Indian national team, but the selectors are in no rush.

"We've picked him for the India A team again," chief selector Ajit Agarkar said on Tuesday.

"We are very excited with what he's been doing in the IPL, and hopefully he shows a bit of that when he travels with India A."



## Knicks rally from 22 points down to stun Cavs

**NEWS DESK:**The New York Knicks, fueled by 38 points from Jalen Brunson, erased a 22-point fourth-quarter deficit to stun the Cleveland Cavaliers 115-104 in overtime Monday in game one of the NBA Eastern Conference finals.

The Knicks looked done for when they trailed 93-71 with 7:52 left in regulation.

But Brunson spearheaded an 18-1 New York run and banked in a floater to tie it at 101-101 with 19.3 seconds left in regulation when Cleveland's Sam Merrill missed a three-pointer they went to the extra session -- in which the Knicks scored the first nine points.

Brunson admitted he did not know how the Knicks had pulled off the sensational comeback.

"I don't have an answer for you," he told broadcaster ESPN.

"We got some stops. We kept fighting, just keep chipping away."

"They were playing great basketball and we just found a way."



Mikal Bridges added 18 points, and OG Anunoby, back from a two-game injury absence, was one of three Knicks players with 13 points.

Donovan Mitchell scored 29 points to lead the Cavaliers and James Harden added 15.

The Knicks will have a chance to double their lead in the best-of-seven series when they host game two on Thursday. The winner of the series will face either the defending champion Oklahoma City Thunder or San Antonio Spurs in

the championship series.

The Spurs, fueled by a 41-point performance by Victor Wembanyama, beat the Thunder in double-overtime in game one of the Western Conference finals. It is the first time in NBA history that the first games in both conference finals have been decided in overtime.

Rust may have played a role in a sluggish Knicks start. New York had been off for nine days after sweeping the Philadelphia

76ers in the second round. The Cavaliers, meanwhile, were battle tested if not rested having polished off a second straight seven-game series with a triumph at top-seeded Detroit on Sunday.

A three-pointer by Mitchell saw Cleveland emerge from a back-and-forth first half with a 48-46 lead, and the Cavaliers pulled away relentlessly in the second half as the Madison Square Garden crowd looked on in stunned, silent disbelief.

## Djokovic trying to hold back time

**NEWS DESK:**Novak Djokovic arrives at Roland Garros this year facing a familiar opponent, but one that cannot be outmanoeuvred even by the record 24-time Grand Slam champion.

The Serbian, who turns 39 this week, is no longer the immovable presence he once was, his famed durability now increasingly a concern in a sport shaped by the younger, physically explosive rivals.

The question is not simply whether he can win another French Open, but how he continues to adjust his game and mindset to defy the natural erosion that comes with advancing years.

While his scheduling is more selective and his approach more pragmatic, Djokovic conceded he would have liked more time on clay before coming to Paris.

He has played in just three tournaments in 2026, and lost his only match on clay to Croatian qualifier Dino Prizmic at this month's Italian Open.

Djokovic pulled out of tournaments in Miami, Monte Carlo and Madrid

while dealing with a shoulder injury -- with strapping visible during his brief stay in Rome.

"It's not an ideal preparation, to be honest," said Djokovic, who will be seeded third at Roland Garros.

"I don't recall the last time I had in the last couple of years a preparation where I didn't have any kind of physical issues or health issues coming into the tournament. There's always something. Kind of a new reality that I have to deal with."

It is a candid admission from a player who has built his career on meticulous planning and physical resilience, but who is confronting the realities of an ageing body.

"It is frustrating," he said. "At the same time it's my decision to still perform in that kind of state and conditions."

Djokovic's record at Roland Garros underlines why he cannot be discounted.

The absence of defending two-time champion Carlos Alcaraz is another factor in his favour.

A three-time French Open champion and one of the few players to consistently trouble Rafael Nadal on the surface, Djokovic has reached the quarter-finals or better at each edition since a third-round loss in 2009.

"See what I'm missing?"

But the physical demands of clay are unforgiving, and Djokovic is acutely aware of the marginal losses that come with age.

"See what I'm missing," he said. "Late half a step."

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## Jhonatan Narvaez edges Mas to complete hat-trick of stage wins at Giro

**NEWS DESK:**Ecuador's Jhonatan Narvaez edged out Spaniard Enric Mas at the end of Wednesday's stage 11 to win his third stage of this year's Giro d'Italia as Alfonso Eualilo retained the leader's pink jersey.

Narvaez (UAE Team Emirates XRG) and Mas (Movistar) battled for the win after leaving the breakaway group on the final climb and Mas made the first move, only for the Ecuadorian to overtake him before the line.

"Mas was the strongest in the climb and I knew I had to play my game. I just had to defend myself on the uphill," Narvaez said.

"I was scared because when he did the sprint he almost closed me on the barriers and I was on the limit, but it was full gas racing all day, because we don't race just in the uphills, we race on the downhill also."

Italian Diego Ulissi (XDS Astana) won the race for third place at the end of the 195-km ride from Porcari to Chiavari.

There was no change at the top of the general classification, with Portugal's Eualilo



maintaining his 27-second lead over race favourite Jonas Vingegaard.

The first half of the stage gave plenty of opportunity for breakaways from the peloton before the riders reached the first of three categorised climbs.

Early attacks were reeled in and the group that managed to get away grew in size as others left the bunch to go in chase.

Before the race settled down on the second climb with a 12-man

group over three minutes ahead of the peloton.

A crash on the descent brought down three of the leaders, and the breakaway began to split.

On the uncategorised climb before the finish, Mas attacked and Narvaez followed and with the Spaniard unable to shake off the Ecuadorian before the descent, Narvaez was always going to be the favourite in a sprint finish.

Enric Mas, three-times runner-up in the Vuelta a Espana, is out of contention for the overall win and the Spaniard was desperate for a stage victory on his Giro debut, but Narvaez claimed the fifth Giro stage win of his career.

The peloton, containing all the GC contenders, trailed in over three minutes behind the winner, and Eualilo (Bahram Victorious) will wear the pink in Thursday's stage 12, a flat 175-km ride from Imperia to Novi Ligure.

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# PM Shehbaz lauds 'steadfast' Pak-China friendship, says Beijing supported Islamabad in 'unwavering fashion'

**NEWS DESK:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday lauded the "steadfast" Pakistan-China friendship, maintaining that Beijing has supported Islamabad in an "unwavering fashion unmatched in the annals of history."

The premier was addressing a ceremony in Islamabad to mark the 75th anniversary of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations.

The prime minister began his speech by extending felicitations to the Chinese leadership and people on behalf of the government and people of Pakistan.

"Seventy-five years ago, our founding fathers laid the foundation of our bilateral diplomatic relations," he said, adding,

"Pakistan was the first Muslim country to recognise China and one of the first countries in the world to do so."

"Through our mutual efforts and endeavours, and above all, sincerity of purpose, we have built a relationship that is second to none and very unique in the world," he said.



"Earthquakes, floods, peace and difficult times — China has always supported Pakistan. Till today and forever, we support the One China policy, without fear or favour."

The premier also affirmed that Pakistan has always supported the "One China" policy. "Till today and forever, we support the One China policy, without fear or favour."

Shehbaz said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), under China's Belt and Road Initiative of President Xi Jinping, was a "great manifestation" of

China's commitment to support Pakistan, promote its economy, provide jobs, and bring prosperity and development.

Referring to recent efforts to hold peace

talks between the United States and Iran, the prime minister said that China had "fully supported" Pakistan's peace initiative.

"There has been a history of supporting each other without political swings or conditions."

China has been a steadfast and trusted friend of Pakistan," he said, adding that the journey would continue.

He said that in the industrial and technological sectors, China was second to none, emphasising that the "world cannot move forward without China."

The prime minister also reiterated that the security of Chinese nationals in Pakistan was a matter of "paramount importance" for the government.

"We will spare no effort to provide the highest level of security to Chinese nationals."

Zardari remarked that President Xi's initiatives and support for deeper bilateral cooperation had opened new avenues for shared prosperity and regional stability.

May 21, 2026. — Photo via Presidency

"Cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy"

In his remarks, President Asif Ali Zardari said, "Seventy-five years ago, our two nations began a journey rooted in mutual respect and shared aspirations. Today, this journey has evolved into an all-weather, unique strategic cooperation."

He emphasised that friendship with China is a cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy, which enjoys "total public, political and institutional support; thus, the relationship enjoys continuity across generations."

Zardari remarked that President Xi's initiatives and support for deeper bilateral cooperation had opened new avenues for shared prosperity and regional stability.

## Quadcopter attack kills two schoolchildren in KP's Bajaur

**NEWS DESK:** Two schoolchildren were killed after a quadcopter drone, reportedly operated from an unknown location, struck a hilly area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district on Thursday.

Local residents and official sources told Dawn that the fatal incident occurred in the Shahi Thangi area, located about 25 kilometres from Khar, the district headquarters of Bajaur, around noon.

They added that the children were returning home from school when they were hit, leaving them critically wounded.

The two boys, aged 10 and 12, were immediately taken by locals to the District Headquarters Hospital in Khar for treatment.

However, both were pronounced dead upon arrival, they said.

It remains unconfirmed where the quadcopter was launched from and who was responsible for the attack.

Meanwhile, sources in the local police told Dawn that they have launched an investigation into the incident to determine who was responsible and what the motive was.

The killing of two innocent schoolchildren in the strike sparked condemnation and concern among locals and political circles.

PTI MPA Dr Hamidur Rehman and Bajaur Aman Jirga chief Sahibzada Haroon Rashid condemned the incident in the "strongest terms".

In statements shared on social media soon after the incident, both leaders called for an investigation into the attack in which the two students were martyred.

Relatives of stranded transporters end protest

Relatives of transporters stranded in Afghanistan ended their protest after receiving assurances from local authorities regarding their repatriation.

They had staged a protest on the main road leading to the Torkham border crossing on Thursday, causing severe traffic disruption.

Most transporters have remained stranded on the Afghan side of the border since its closure in October last year.

A local tribal elder, Shakir Afridi, said on the occasion that the Afghan Taliban authorities had assured a jirga that they had no objection to the stranded transporters returning to Pakistan, provided they were allowed entry by the Pakistani border and immigration authorities.

The Khyber Transporters Association distanced itself from Thursday's protest. Its president, Azeemullah Shinwari, insisted that the association was neither behind the protest nor consulted by the relatives of the stranded transporters.

He acknowledged that more than 600 transporters, along with nearly 900 vehicles, were anxiously awaiting a green signal from the Pakistani authorities.

He added that the association was in close coordination with the relevant officials to resolve the issue amicably at the earliest.

## Delays by Imran's counsel in £190m graft case irk IHC

**NEWS DESK:** The High Court on Wednesday directed counsel for PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, to begin arguments at the next hearing of their appeals against their conviction in the £190-million reference, warning that the law will take its course if proceedings were delayed further.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Sardaar Muhammad Sarfaraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif also ordered that powers of attorney for the PTI founder and Bushra Bibi be signed, while adjourning the hearing indefinitely.

During the hearing, Barrister Salman Akram Raja appeared before the court on behalf of Advocate Salman Saffar.

He informed the bench that Saffar was undergoing medical treatment and would travel to Tokyo for further check-ups, rendering him unavailable for several weeks.

Chief Justice Dogar reminded counsel that at the previous hearing, the court had directed the defence to commence arguments on the appeals.

"You met them, so the powers of attorney should also have been signed," the chief justice remarked.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor told the court that thumb impressions and powers of attorney had already been submitted when the appeals were filed.

"If Salman Saffar is unavailable, can no one else argue the case?" the chief justice inquired, adding that another lawyer could represent the appellants if necessary.

The bench also referred to its earlier order allowing meetings with the PTI founder and Bushra Bibi.

Barrister Raja argued that the PTI founder and Bushra Bibi intended to challenge the rejection of their suspension of sentence

pleas before a superior forum, but were unable to proceed because jail authorities had not facilitated the signing of the required documents.

Chief Justice Dogar responded that the matter concerning further appeals was separate from the pending proceedings before the high court.

"You can challenge it there, we have no objection."

But today we are hearing the appeals and you are not advancing your arguments," he observed.



## Punjab gov imposes Section 144 around airports, PAF bases for 30 days

**NEWS DESK:** Punjab government on Thursday banned multiple activities near airports and Pakistan Air Force (PAF) bases, which may pose a "serious risk" to flight operations and aviation assets, under Section 144 for 30 days.

A notification issued by the Home Department dated May 19 said that, according to reliable sources, certain activities — including pigeon homing, the use of laser lights, and throwing of meat (sadda) for the consumption of carnivorous birds around air

bases and airports — may "pose a serious risk to flight operations and aviation assets".

It said that there were sufficient grounds to proceed under Section 144 as an "immediate prevention to disturbance of public peace, safety of lives and property of public and tranquillity".

Therefore, the government banned pigeon homing; the use of laser lights by hotels, malls, or shops, etc.; and throwing of meat (sadda) in open areas or on rooftops.

The Home Department secretary, under Section 144(6) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPc), banned the activities in and around the funnel area of all PAF bases and commercial airports across the province within a 13km radius for a period of 30 days, with immediate effect.

The disposal of meat close to airports during Eidul Azha attracts birds, posing a serious threat to flight safety, passengers and nearby surroundings.

Awareness campaigns have been launched in recent years to avoid such incidents.

FO condemns mistreatment of flotilla activists, calls for release of detainees including Pakistani citizen

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan on Thursday condemned the "unlawful interception" of the Global Sumud Flotilla by Israeli forces in international waters and called for the immediate release of all detained humanitarian activists, including a Pakistani humanitarian activist Saad Edhi.

A statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that Pakistan condemned "in the strongest possible terms" the interception of the flotilla by Israeli occupying forces as well as the "arbitrary detention and reported mistreatment of humanitarian activists."

It said that those detained reportedly included Pakistani humanitarian activist Saad Edhi, the grandson of Abdul Sattar Edhi, the renowned philanthropist.

Pakistan condemns illegal detention and mistreatment of humanitarian activists, including a Pakistani citizen

The FO said it remained in contact with Pakistani diplomatic missions in the region regarding the matter and to ensure the safe return of any detained Pakistani nationals.

Earlier in the week, the organisers said that Israeli forces had intercepted 39 of their boats in the eastern Mediterranean, while the remaining vessels were continuing to sail towards the enclave.

Ships from the Global Sumud Flotilla had set sail for a third time on Thursday from southern Turkey, after earlier attempts to deliver aid to Gaza were intercepted by Israel in international waters.

## FO condemns mistreatment of flotilla activists, calls for release of detainees including Pakistani citizen

national waters, and Israeli forces have no right to arrest them. We don't know where they have taken them," he said.

Faisal had appealed to the federal government and the Foreign Office to take legal action against the Israeli forces for detaining a Pakistani citizen.

A day earlier, Pakistan joined nine other nations in a joint condemnation of Israel's interception of the Gaza-bound flotilla. The foreign ministers of Turkey, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Jordan, Libya, the Maldives, and Spain co-signed the declaration, which described the Global Sumud Flotilla as a peaceful civilian humanitarian mission seeking to highlight the dire conditions facing Palestinians and called Israel's assault on it wholly unacceptable.

Human Rights Council of Pakistan also strongly condemned the attack on the Global Sumud Flotilla and the arrest and torture of human rights activists, including Saad Edhi, describing the action as a blatant violation of human rights, humanitarian assistance, and freedom of expression.

Among the detained is Saad Edhi, who was representing Pakistan and heading toward Gaza with his team.

Edhi Foundation Chairman Faisal Edhi alleged that Israeli forces had detained his son, Saad, along with other volunteers.

In a message on Meta, Faisal said that around 1pm Pakistan Standard Time, Israeli forces intervened in the Gaza aid flotilla near Cyprus in international waters and arrested his son along with other volunteers.

"They were in inter-

national waters, and Israeli forces have no right to arrest them. We don't know where they have taken them," he said.

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