

# QUETTA VOICE

**Editor: Asim Khan**

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**dquettavoice@gmail.com**

## CM Bugti Pledges Peace and Progress in Balochistan Budget 2025-26 Address

**Qaseem Shah, News Desk:**

Qasim Khan, newly deposed Balochistan Assembly speaker, said Sarfaraz Bugti delivered a comprehensive speech during the Balochistan Assembly's budget session for the fiscal year 2020-21, focusing on key developmental priorities and pressing security concerns across the province. Speaking with resolve, the Chief Minister reaffirmed his government's uncompromising stance against terrorism, stating that Balochistan would not bow to threats and violence. He emphasized that his administration is committed to peace and stability and will not allow innocent civilians to lose their lives in such activities. Urging all stakeholders to refrain from becoming part of what he termed "a meaningless war," he pledged to protect the rights and lives of ordinary citizens.

In his address, the Chief Minister reiterated his commitment to standing alongside the voiceless and underserved populations of the province.

He outlined his government's top core priorities in the upcoming budget, placing special emphasis on improving education, healthcare, water access, and agriculture. Bugti announced that 1,200 new schools would be established throughout the province to ensure broader access to quality education. He also shared that 164 basic health units (BHUs) would be inaugurated simultaneously in a single day to extend medical services to remote com-



munities

Clean drinking water remains a major challenge in the region, and the Chief Minister announced that his government would set up 1,000 water filtration plants—one in every union council—to provide safe drinking water and address the spread of waterborne diseases. To tackle water scarcity and improve agricultural productivity, he revealed that new dams were under construction and, for the first time, Rs. 4 billion had been allocated for the development of command areas to support local farmers.

Going district by district, the Chief Minister highlighted tailored development plans. He noted that Washuk district would receive a historic allocation of funds, and similar priority would be extended to Musakhel in the next fiscal year. Stressing his belief in justice, equality, and good governance, Bugti assured the assembly that transparency in fund utilization would not be compromised. He called on fellow lawmakers to work together with the provincial government to ensure peace, accountability, and equitable development across Balochistan.

The Chief Minister's address laid out a roadmap for inclusive progress, built on the pillars of security, transparency, and public welfare—marking a new chapter in Balochistan's journey toward long-term stability and growth.

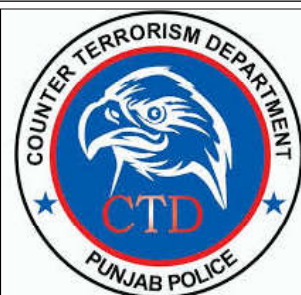
## RAW-Backed Terror Plot Foiled in Punjab by Counter Terrorism Department (CTD)

**News Desk:**

**LAHORE:** A major terror plot backed by India's intelligence agency RAW has been foiled in Punjab, as the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) conducted a series of successful operations under "Operation Yalghar", arresting six suspected facilitators across multiple districts.

According to CTD officials, large quantities of explosives, detonators, and secret maps were recovered during a raid in Toba Tek Singh. In Bahawalpur, a RAW facilitator allegedly receiving funding from Dubai was taken into custody.

Two suspects from Bahawalnagar were also arrested; investigations revealed that they had directly received IEDs from India's Border Security Force.



(BSF)

Further probe uncovered plans for potential terror attack targeting a mosque and a railway station in Bahawalpur.

CTD also intercepted audio communications of Indian officers—Major Ravindra Rathore and Inspector Singh—who were reportedly issuing direct instructions for target killings and attacks on sensitive locations in Pakistan.

From the suspects' possession, IEDs, safety fuses, and classified documents were also seized.

The CTD spokesperson affirmed that any conspiracy against Pakistan's national security will be thwarted at all costs and that operations against hostile elements will be intensified.

## Reko Diq Forms Local Development Committee in Nokundi

**News Desk:**

**NOKUNDI:** The inaugural meeting of the Community Development Committee (CDC) formed under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative of the Reko Diq Mining Company (RDMC), was held in Nokundi to oversee and consult on local social and development projects.

The meeting marked the formal introduction of the committee, which consists of 16 members—12 men and 4 women. Fourteen members participated in this first session. During the proceedings, the initial structure and leadership of the committee were unanimously agreed upon.

Haji Arz Muhammad Barech

was elected as Chairman, and Mufti Khalil-ur-Rehman Muhammad Hassani was elected Vice Chairman for a three-year term.

Key RDMC officials, including Ali Dost Yalanzai, Muhammad Alisi Tahir Sanjani, Noor Khan Mengal, Abdul Khaliq Digarzi, and Mehboob Sherzai, also attended the session. The CDC has been established to ensure transparency in the execution of development projects, provide recommendations, and promote meaningful public participation in the region. This initiative represents a vital component of RDMC's broader CSR policy aimed at sustainable development in the local community.

# عوام دوست بجٹ 2025-26

## ھمارا عام عالی شان بلڈھا بلوچستان

وزیراعلیٰ بلوچستان میر سر فراز بگٹی کی زیر قیادت  
یکساں اور پائیدار تعمیر و ترقی کا سفر جاری

# 1028 ارب روپے تخمینے کا سرپلس تاریخ ساز بجٹ

موجودہ حکومت کی انقلابی اقدامات کی بدولت ہر شہریت کی راہ پر گامزن

نیز ترقی پانچ لاکھ ۵۰ ہزار ۵۰۰ کے قریب ۲۴ لاکھ ۵۰۰ روپے میں

۳۳۵۳ لاکھ ۱۴۱ روپے کے لئے ۱۴۱ روپے اضافہ ہے

سوائی، نالی، پانی اور برقی توانائی کی فراہمی کے لئے ۱۰۰ لاکھ روپے

۲۵۵۰ لاکھ ۱۳۷ روپے کے لئے ۱۳۷ روپے اضافہ ہے

گلوبل سٹریٹجی ۲۰۲۱ کے تحت ۲۴۹۰ لاکھ روپے میں اضافہ ہے

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### عوام دوست بجٹ

تعلیم، صحت، تعمیر و ترقی، ماحولیات اور دیگر شعبوں کے لئے

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## World Bank Approves \$194 Million Aid for Education and Water Projects in Balochistan

**News Desk:**

**ISLAMABAD:** The World Bank has approved \$194 million in financial assistance for Balochistan to support two major development initiatives focused on education and clean water access.

According to an official statement issued by the World Bank, \$10 million will be allocated to im-

In addition, \$94 million has been earmarked for a water security and agricultural productivity initiative. The project will enhance the livelihoods of small-scale farmers by utilizing water from the Nari, Talli, and Lora rivers, aiming to boost sustainable farming and ensure long-term water availability.

prove literacy rates among children in Balochistan. The education-focused project aims to enhance the quality of primary education, directly benefiting over 250,000 students by providing improved learning en-



## Balochistan's Rs250 Billion Federal Allocation Must Drive Inclusive, Transparent Infrastructure Development

Continued to page 2

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

Continued to page 2

## Prime Minister (PM) reaffirms govt's commitment to revitalizing farm sector

Continued to page 4

## QUIET VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

### Balochistan's Rs250 Billion Federal Allocation Must Drive Inclusive, Transparent Infrastructure Development

#### Editorial:

The federal government's allocation of Rs250 billion for Balochistan in the upcoming Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) is a significant step that, if properly implemented, can transform the province's economic future. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's announcement at the Balochistan Grand Tribal Jirga in Quetta reflects a welcome shift toward prioritizing infrastructure investment, socio-economic development, and regional connectivity in a province often overlooked.

However, we emphasize that this federal funding must be utilized for high-impact, long-term infrastructure projects — not short-term political schemes or small-scale, non-transparent initiatives. Balochistan requires mega projects that foster job creation, enhance public health systems, modernize education infrastructure, and develop transportation networks to uplift the Human Development Index (HDI) of the province.

For maximum return on investment and to ensure value for taxpayer money, funds must be directed toward projects like the dualization of the Quetta-Karachi Highway, smart road infrastructure, clean drinking water systems, renewable energy integration, and digital education access. These projects not only promote regional growth but also boost national economic indicators and reduce rural-urban disparities.

From a public finance and fiscal policy standpoint, transparency and accountability mechanisms must be enforced. We urge the government to establish an independent monitoring authority to ensure that every rupee is spent efficiently. Government transparency, financial accountability, and public-private partnerships should guide the implementation process to avoid corruption and misuse of development funds.

This is not just an economic opportunity; it is a national security imperative. Without addressing the root causes of underdevelopment — poverty, unemployment, and lack of education — extremism, insurgency, and foreign-sponsored sabotage will continue to find fertile ground. National security, economic resilience, and social cohesion are directly tied to how well we invest in the country's largest and most resource-rich province.

As a platform committed to investigative journalism, public interest reporting, and development policy, we insist that there be no individual projects, no ghost schemes, and no politically motivated allocations. Only inclusive economic development, guided by data-driven planning and evidence-based policy, can deliver the sustainable growth Balochistan needs.

This is a defining moment. The Rs250 billion fund should not be another missed opportunity. It must become the foundation for a new era of economic empowerment, smart city development, and infrastructure modernization in Balochistan. This will not only enhance the province's GDP contribution, but also attract foreign direct investment (FDI), boost e-commerce logistics, and reduce the digital and physical divide that isolates communities.

We call on the federal and provincial governments to act decisively, inclusively, and transparently. This is about nation-building, not narrow interests. The people of Balochistan deserve no less.

### Addressing Poverty and Inequality: A Call for Sincere Leadership and Perpetual Reforms

By Amjad Rashid:

Poverty and inequality, much like man-made disasters, afflict societies worldwide, including Pakistan. These are not natural phenomena but rather systemic issues rooted in human actions and policies. To eradicate this disease, national governments must craft comprehensive strategies aimed at safeguarding future generations from its scourge.

In Pakistan, the onus lies heavily on our political elite, spanning all parties, to recognize the gravity of the situation and redirect their efforts towards combating this man-made affliction. Without a collective awakening and a shift in approach, the cure will remain elusive. Moreover, at the international level, institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and the UN must prioritize social and cultural rights over neoliberal agendas, especially as the global order undergoes significant decay.

The challenges of poverty alleviation, malnutrition, stunted growth, inadequate sanitation, and unemployment

are pervasive across South Asia and Africa. Collaborative efforts between these regions, bolstered by partnerships with nations like China, hold promise in addressing these issues. However, neoliberal policy is futile; instead, a paradigm shift towards sustainable solutions is imperative.

In Pakistan, the establishment of robust local governance structures with financial decentralization is paramount. Political elites possess a window of opportunity to empower local bodies and enact pro-poor policies. The Chinese model serves as a beacon of inspiration, demonstrating the efficacy of such strategies when implemented effectively.

Regional connectivity, underpinned by a long-term vision, emerges as a viable solution. It necessitates moving beyond the romanticized notions of democracy and socialism towards pragmatic approaches that address all stakeholders responsible for the nation's development to prioritize this agenda and steer Pakistan towards a brighter future.

### Hayat Khan Achakzai: Strengthening PPP's Presence in Balochistan

By Bashir Nichari:

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) continues to champion democracy and public rights, with Hayat Khan Achakzai emerging as a key leader in Balochistan. His relentless commitment and strategic efforts are solidifying the party's influence in the province.

**Commitment to Public Service**  
Since the beginning of his political career, Achakzai has prioritized addressing the pressing issues of Balochistan.

His steadfast support for the PPP and its mission has reinforced the party's grassroots connections. He has driven PPP towards a more organized and dynamic political presence in Balochistan.

**Amplifying PPP's Message Through Media**  
In a region where political narratives often go unheard, Achakzai has played a crucial role in leveraging media to extend PPP's reach.

As a media coordinator, he has ensured that the party's ideology resonates with the public, further strengthening its position. A leader shaping the future.

Looking ahead, Achakzai is actively working to enhance the party's appeal, particularly among the youth. His leadership is driving PPP towards a more organized and dynamic political presence in Balochistan.

**A Key Pillar for PPP's Growth**  
Hayat Khan Achakzai's continued dedication and strategic vision are instrumental in fortifying PPP's standing in Balochistan. His leadership ensures that the party remains a formidable force advocating for democracy and public rights in the province.

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

Anjeela Kaynat:

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

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

**The Strain on Quetta's Road Infrastructure**  
Quetta's road network, originally designed during the colonial era, was never intended to accommodate the city's rapid population growth and rising number of vehicles. Although the city was rebuilt after the 1935 earthquake, its road capacity has remained largely unchanged, struggling to support over 1.2 million residents and the thousands of vehicles added each year.

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

**Major Traffic Challenges in Quetta Severe Congestion on Key Roads**  
Traffic congestion is worst in commercial hubs such as Liaquat Bazaar, Masjid Road, and Zarghoon Road, where vehicles move at a snail's pace during peak hours. With no alternative routes or bypasses, all traffic is funneled through these roads, causing massive delays. Key intersections, including Balochistan University Chowk, Meezan Chowk, and Prince Road, frequently experience severe traffic jams.

**The Surge of Non-Custom Paid (NCP) and Unregistered Vehicles**  
The unchecked influx of non-custom paid (NCP) and unregistered vehicles has compounded the traffic crisis. A 2010 report estimated over 50,000 NCP vehicles on Balochistan's roads, causing an annual revenue loss of Rs 15 billion to the national exchequer.

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

Despite periodic crackdowns, including the 2023 seizure of 115 NCP vehicles worth Rs 982 million (ARY News, 2023), enforcement efforts have failed to stem the tide. Quetta's traffic police estimate that 40% of vehicles in the city are either unregistered or NCP (Think Transportation, 2023), worsening congestion and lawlessness on the roads.

**Lack of a Proper Public Transport System**  
Unlike other major cities in Pakistan, Quetta lacks an organized public transport system. With no buses or mass transit options, residents rely on rickshaws,

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

Although the government has revisited the Quetta Mass Transit Train project, financial constraints have delayed its execution, leaving residents without an efficient alternative to private transport.

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

**Deteriorating Road Conditions**  
Over 60% of Quetta's roads are in poor repair, riddled with pot-holes, cracks, and poor drainage systems (INRIX, 2024). Roads such as Joint Road, Sarab Road, Sahal Road, and Nawa Kili are among the worst affected. During rainfall, flooding exacerbates the problem, making navigation nearly impossible.

A tragic reminder of Balochistan's road infrastructure crisis occurred in 2024, when a bus plunged into a ravine in Washuk district due to poor road conditions. Despite promising road improvements, delays in infrastructure projects continue to endanger commuters.

**Weak Traffic Management and Enforcement**  
Implementing route-based restrictions for rickshaws to prevent

congestion in commercial hubs.

• Create designated parking areas for rickshaws and motorcycles.

5. Strengthening Traffic Law Enforcement

• Deploy more traffic police officers to ensure compliance with traffic rules.

• Impose heavier fines and penalties on reckless drivers.

6. Removing Encroachments and Illegal Parking

• Conduct regular operations to clear roads of unauthorized stalls and illegally parked vehicles.

• Establish alternative vending zones to prevent the return of street vendors.

7. Traffic Awareness and Public Education

• Launch awareness campaigns to educate citizens on traffic rules and road safety.

• Integrate basic traffic education into school curriculums to instill discipline in future generations.

**Call to Action: A Collective Responsibility**

Every day, Quetta's residents face the frustration of endless traffic jams, reckless drivers, and poorly managed roads.

Yet, the problem persists—not just because of weak governance, but because of collective negligence.

Authorities must act swiftly to expand roads, enforce traffic laws, and implement public transport reforms. Citizens, too, have a role to play—by obeying traffic rules, avoiding illegal parking, and discouraging encroachments. Without a united effort, Quetta's traffic woes will only worsen.

By jeopardizing the city's economy, safety, and quality of life, Quetta stands at a turning point. The time to act is now—before the crisis spirals beyond control.

Quetta's traffic crisis is a multi-faceted problem that requires a multi-faceted approach. It is not just about fixing roads; it is about transforming the way we move and live in the city. With the right policies, enforcement, and public participation, Quetta can overcome its traffic woes and emerge as a more livable, safer, and more prosperous city.

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## Gandapur seeks meeting with Imran Khan, Justice Mansoor recuses

ISLAMABAD (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur appeared before the Supreme Court on Wednesday to request permission for a meeting with former premier and PTI founder Imran Khan, citing urgent party consultations ahead of the provincial budget.

However, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah declined to hear the matter, stating it was not a judicial issue.

CM Gandapur arrived at the courtroom while another case was underway, accompanied by senior lawyer Latif Khosa and KP Advocate General Shah Faisal.

Addressing the bench, Gandapur argued that the KP Assembly is in the midst of

passing its budget and the budget committee urgently needs guidance from the party head.

He lamented that repeated requests to meet Imran Khan had been ignored, despite Khan's formal letter to the Supreme Court.

Justice Shah, however, refused to take up the petition, noting, "This is not a matter for the judicial side; you have approached the wrong forum. The proper course is to submit your request to the SC Registrar or Chief Justice Yahya Afridi, who also chairs the Practice and Procedure Committee."

Advocate Khosa urged the court to treat the matter as urgent, but Justice Shah reiterated that no judicial proceed-

ings could be undertaken on this issue.

Speaking to media outside the court, CM Gandapur expressed frustration, claiming a conspiracy was underway to isolate Imran Khan. "We've sacrificed for this country," he said. "Our mandate was stolen, and now the judiciary has been handcuffed after the 26th constitutional amendment."

He emphasised that his visit to the court was made under the PTI founder's instructions and expressed hope that the Supreme Court would soon fix a hearing date for the request.

Regarding the KP budget, Gandapur declared it the best presented to date and aligned with Imran Khan's vision.



QUETTA: Member of Provincial Assembly Asad Baloch meeting with Governor Balochistan Jafar Khan Mandokhail.

## Punjab CM directs for foolproof security during Muharram

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired a high-level meeting on Tuesday to review and finalize arrangements for Muharram-ul-Haram, with a strong emphasis on ensuring foolproof security, religious harmony, and public welfare.

The CM issued clear directives for an emergency preparedness plan and ordered strict implementation of the code of conduct during Muharram. She categorically stated that there will be zero tolerance for any violation of these directives.

CM Maryam Nawaz called for the immediate arrest of individuals involved in spreading hate speech or inciting violence through social media. She also imposed a province-wide ban on banners, posters, wall chalking, and unauthorized drone activity, directing law enforcement to take swift action against violators.

She instructed provincial ministers, commissioners, deputy commissioners, RPOs, and DPOs to personally supervise local arrangements and to

visit religious scholars to promote coordination and community engagement.

The CM directed the Punjab Safe Cities Authority to immediately repair all non-functional CCTV cameras and tasked the Special Monitoring Unit with identifying and reporting hate content. She also ordered mock security drills to test preparedness and directed the installation of standardized 'saheels' (refreshment stations) along procession routes, with proper monitoring and the provision of lemon water, cold drinks, and bottled water for participants.

To mitigate the effects of extreme heat and humidity, CM Maryam Nawaz instructed authorities to install water sprinkling systems along procession routes and to establish mobile clinics and field hospitals. She further directed the implementation of an effective traffic management plan and real-time advisories, while ensuring timely water drainage in case of rainfall.

She called for the activation of systems like Hotel Eye and Travel Eye and emphasized

the continuation of combing operations. Procurement of anti-drone systems was also discussed to enhance surveillance capabilities.

Highlighting the importance of strict SOPs enforcement, she directed WAPDA and related authorities to eliminate dangling power lines and ensure uninterrupted electricity and functioning streetlights throughout Muharram.

Expressing concern over recurring infrastructure issues, she censured responsible agencies for negligence, especially in relation to uncovered manholes and potholes on procession routes. She directed private housing societies to immediately fix sewerage covers in their areas.

"All stakeholders must stay vigilant and united. The success of Operation Bayaan-ul-Marsous has disturbed hostile elements, and we must not allow them any opportunity to exploit the situation," she said. She instructed cabinet members to ensure effective implementation in their respective districts and involve all stakeholders in decision-making.

## Pakistan's relationship with Saudi Arabia based on shared faith, history: Gillani

ISLAMABAD (INP): Senate Chairman Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Tuesday said Pakistan's relationship with Saudi Arabia is based on shared faith, history, and mutual respect, rather than transactional interests, Pakistan real estate listings.

He made these remarks during a meeting with Major General (Rtd) Dr. Abdul Rahman bin Sanhat Al-Harbi, head of the Saudi-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Group, at Parliament House.

Gilani recalled his successful visit to Saudi Arabia last year and the reciprocal visit by the Chairman of the Shura Council to Pakistan.

He said these high-level exchanges highlight the growing importance of parliamentary diplomacy.

The Chairman called for institutionalizing regular dialogue

between the Senate of Pakistan and the Saudi Shura Council through frequent high-level visits and enhanced people-to-people contacts.

He also shared his impressions from meetings with Saudi leadership, noting that both countries enjoy deep-rooted sentiments of mutual love and respect.

He thanked the Kingdom for consistently improving Hajj and Umrah facilities for Pakistani pilgrims.

Gilani praised the role of over 2.5 million Pakistanis working in Saudi Arabia, describing them as vital contributors to both Saudi development and Pakistan's economy through remittances.

He appreciated the Kingdom's efforts in taking care of the Pakistani diaspora.

Reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering commitment to its alliance with Saudi Arabia, the Senate

Chairman expressed hope that the Friendship Group would help usher in a new era of strategic and future-oriented cooperation. "We also look forward to the visit of His Highness, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia," he said.

He highlighted the historical depth of Pakistan-Saudi defence and security ties and said economic and trade cooperation has also played a key role in strengthening the partnership.

Referring to the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), Gilani said the forum offers a one-window solution for promoting trade and investment across various sectors.

He called for early implementation of the Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) signed between the two countries, and reiterated Pakistan's desire to further enhance its fraternal ties with the Kingdom.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chair a meeting regarding reforms in the Agriculture.

## Prime Minister (PM) reaffirms govt's commitment to revitalizing farm sector

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday reaffirmed the government's commitment to revitalizing the agriculture sector by introducing sustainable reforms in the sector.

Describing the agriculture sector as the backbone of the national economy, the prime minister emphasised that the introduction of sustainable reforms in agriculture will not only boost the country's economic development but also significantly enhance per-acre yield and reduce production costs.

Chairing a high-level meeting on agricultural sector reforms, the prime minister directed the relevant authorities to gradually reduce taxes on agricultural machinery and tools to encourage farm mechanization across the country. He also instructed to expedite efforts aimed at increasing the storage capacity for agricultural produce.

PM Shehbaz Sharif welcomed the provision of funds by provincial governments for

new agricultural projects, stating that these initiatives would play a key role in accelerating sectoral growth.

He expressed optimism that the agriculture students and scientists currently pursuing scholarships in China would contribute to the sector's development as entrepreneurs upon their return.

He informed that no new taxes were being imposed on fertilizers or agricultural pesticides in the upcoming fiscal year, reaffirming the government's commitment to support farmers and keep input costs manageable.

The prime minister noted that the development of the agriculture sector would directly benefit farmers and uplift rural communities across the country.

He stressed that increasing agricultural productivity, modernizing infrastructure, and facilitating access to affordable credit were all crucial pillars of the reform agenda.

During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed on

key recommendations focused on increasing agricultural output, improving infrastructure, and expanding farmers' access to easy agri-loans.

The briefing highlighted the National Agriculture Innovation and Growth Action Plan, which aimed to raise farmers' incomes, boost production, and steer reforms in the right direction.

It was also shared that increasing exports of value-added agricultural products would further enhance farmers' earnings. Under the National Technology Fund's project Iqna, a total of 129 agricultural start-ups have been launched to date, aimed at fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in the sector.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain, Minister for Climate Change Dr. Musadik Malik, PM's Chief Coordinator Musharraf Zaidi, Chief Coordinator for Agriculture Sector Ahmad Umar, as well as private sector entrepreneurs and senior government officials.

## SBP releases third quarterly payment systems review for FY25

KARACHI (INP): State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has released its Quarterly Payment Systems Review for Q3 FY25, providing a summary on the payment systems, and presenting notable changes in the digital payment landscape of the country.

The digital payments in the country continued its upward trajectory during Q3-FY25, with substantial increase in transactional volume and value. Retail payment volumes climbed 12 percent to reach 2,408 million transactions, while the overall transaction value grew by 8 percent to Rs 164 trillion.

Further, the number of transactions through digital channels accounted for 89 percent of all retail transactions. Mobile app-based platforms, including mobile banking apps, branchless banking (BB) wallets, and e-money wallets, collectively processed 1,686 million transactions valuing Rs 27 trillion, reflecting a 16 percent growth in volume and a 22

percent surge in value. The number of users of digital banking services also witnessed a steady rise.

Mobile banking app users grew to 22.6 million (up by 7pc), Money and BB wallet users increased to 5.3 million (up by 12pc) and 68.5 million (up by 10pc) respectively, while internet banking users reached 14.1 million (up by 7pc).

E-commerce payments increased by 40 percent in volume to 213 million and 34 percent by value to Rs 258 billion, as compared to the previous quarter. Digital wallets were the largest contributor in e-commerce payments, accounting for 94 percent (199.1 million) by value, while card-based online payments accounted for only 6 percent (13.5 million) only.

For in-store purchases, 140,861 merchants processed 99 million (up 12pc) transactions of Rs 550 billion (up by 8pc) using a network of 179,383 point-of-sale terminals. Further, merchants ac-

cepting QR codes also processed 21.7 million transactions valued at Rs 61 billion.

SBP operated payment systems, Raast (Instant Payment System) and RTGS (Real-time Gross Settlement System) have been instrumental in accelerating digital payments.

Raast processed 371 million transactions worth Rs 8.5 trillion during the quarter, bringing cumulative volumes since launch to 1.5 billion in volume and more than Rs 34 trillion in value. Large-value payments via RTGS handled 1.5 million large-value payments amounting Rs 347 trillion.

The shift towards a digital economy is well-supported by SBP's strategic initiatives as well as the concerted efforts of banks, fintechs, and payment service providers.

As digital payments expand, SBP remains dedicated to promoting financial inclusion and improving payment efficiency for all stakeholders.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaz Malik and US Charge d'Affaires to Pakistan, Natalie Baker co-hosted a webinar to promote investment in Pakistan's mining sector amongst American investors at OGDCL head office.

## Tessori challenges SHC decision giving access to acting Governor

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori on Wednesday challenged the Sindh High Court (SHC) decision—giving access to acting Governor Awaiz Qadir Shah to all rooms, offices and chambers of the Governor House except the residential portion to carry out his official business, without hearing the other party.

Kamran Tessori approached the Supreme Court (SC) and filed a constitutional petition through Barrister Abid Zuberi, with the hearing scheduled in Islamabad's principal bench. The petitioner main-

tained that SHC issued its ruling without hearing their perspective, allowing caretaker Governor Syed Awaiz Qadir Shah to conduct meetings despite 'restrictions'.

Kamran Tessori contended that the 2015 law prohibits the caretaker government from fully using the Governor House, adding that Syed Awaiz Qadir Shah was 'given' all protocol enriched in the constitution.

He added that the acting governor was not restricted from holding the meeting at the Governor House.

The petitioner also attached what he called evidence from images and videos showing full protocol extended to the caretaker governor and argued that the constitution defines the limited scope of a caretaker governor's authority.

Kamran Tessori maintained that the SHC disposed of the case 'hastily', requesting the apex to rule the decision null and void.

The Supreme Court Karachi Registry confirmed that the constitutional matter will be adjudicated by the principal bench in Islamabad.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting regarding arrangement during Muharram.