

# QUETTA VOICE

## PM Shehbaz Approves Major Power Projects for Gwadar and Gilgit-Baltistan

**DAWOOD AHMED:**

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved key electricity projects for Gwadar and Gilgit-Baltistan, directing authorities to fast-track measures to ensure stable, affordable, and uninterrupted power supply in both regions.

The decision came during a review meeting chaired by the Prime Minister on ongoing reforms in the power sector. The meeting approved immediate implementation of a comprehensive plan to resolve power supply issues in Gwadar Port City.

Officials briefed the Prime Minister that, due to recent initiatives by the Ministry of Energy, power disruptions in Gwadar have already been reduced by 42%.

A detailed six-month plan has also been finalised to further stabilise the power supply system. Authorities assured that effective steps are being taken to ensure reliable electricity for domestic and commercial consumers in Gwadar.



According to the briefing, short-term projects include installing 7-9 megawatts of solar capacity in major government institutions within the next 8 to 12 months. Under long-term initiatives, a 40-megawatt power

project will be established to guarantee stable electricity supply for Gwadar. In Gilgit-Baltistan, rooftop and utility-scale solar projects are set for completion by 2027, which are expected to save the government Rs 1 billion annually.

through joint ventures between the GB government and the Ministry of Energy.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif instructed all relevant institutions to work in full coordination to ensure uninterrupted, cost-effective, and dependable electricity for Gwadar Port City.

He also directed the immediate commencement of the 100-megawatt solar project in Gilgit-Baltistan, highlighting that clean and sustainable energy is essential for the region's future.

He said the welfare, economic uplift, and development of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan remain top federal priorities.

The government is taking every possible step to enhance industrial activity, attract investment, and boost economic growth in the region.

The Prime Minister added that uninterrupted electricity and improved facilities in Gwadar will transform the port into one of the world's most efficient harbours and a future hub of regional economic activity.

## Field Marshal Munir highlights importance of integrating tri-services in maiden address as CDF



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**NEWS DESK:**

In his first address as the chief of defence forces (CDF), Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir on Monday hailed the newly instituted CDF Headquarters as "historic", stating that it would better integrate the three armed services — the army, navy and air force — to keep pace with the dynamics of future threats.

Addressing a ceremony at GHQ, the newly-appointed CDF emphasised the need for a formal arrangement for tri-services integration and synergy and highlighted that the armed forces have to remain aligned with new aspects of warfare, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The CDF highlighted emerging spheres in warfare, such as cyberspace, the electromagnetic spectrum, outer space, information operations, artificial intelligence and quantum computing, which Pakistan needs to keep up with.

CDF Field Marshal Munir further highlighted that the multi-domain operations carried out during the brief war with India in May have now become a textbook example and case study for future warfare.

"While addressing the officers of the tri services, [the CDF] reiterated the extraordinary courage and conviction displayed by the complete Pakistani nation, particularly the professionalism of the valiant men and women of the Armed Forces of Pakistan during Marka-i-Haq," the ISPR's statement read, adding that he paid homage to martyrs.

State broadcaster PTV News reported that according to the CDF, all three services of the armed forces would maintain their "internal autonomy and organisational structure".

He also emphasised that multi-domain operations must be improved under the unified armed services, in light of evolving security threats.

"The establishment of the Defence Forces Headquarters is an essential step towards this change," Field Marshal Munir stated. "Each service will maintain its individuality for its operational readiness, [while] the Defence Forces Headquarters will integrate and coordinate the operations of the services."

The CDF then turned his attention to India and Afghanistan, saying that the former should not "fall prey to any misconception, as Pakistan's response will be much more swift and severe".

given to the Taliban regime that they have no option but to choose between the khawarij mischief-makers or Pakistan," he said of Kabul. The CDF reiterated Pakistan's stance as a peaceful nation but warned that nobody would be allowed to test Islamabad's territorial integrity or sovereignty.

sovereignty. "Let everyone know that the idea of Pakistan is invincible, and its protection is ensured by the firm resolve of faithful, brave soldiers and a united nation," Field Marshal Munir stated.

According to the ISPR, in his closing remarks, the CDF envisaged the armed forces as a "culturally futuristic, combat-ready military machine that deters aggression and enjoys [the] full confidence of the nation".

Earlier today, Field Marshal Munir was presented with a guard of honour at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi.

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf and Chief of the Air Staff of Pakistan Air Force Zaheer Ahmad Babar were also present at the ceremony.

According to state-broadcaster PTV, the army chief was presented with the guard of honour by contingents from all three armed forces, in recognition of his elevation to the position of CDF.

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## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

### How Long Will Quetta Pay the Price for SSGC and Federal Negligence?



**Editorial:** Quetta is once again at the mercy of a winter crisis that has become all too familiar: low gas pressure, unannounced load shedding, and complete administrative silence. Every year, citizens are told to "bear with the situation" as temperatures fall and heaters, stoves, and geysers turn useless. Yet the authorities responsible — Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) and the federal energy managers — continue to operate without accountability.

A City Freezing While Authorities Look Away. The people of Balochistan are right to ask: Why must Quetta suffer the same crisis every winter while no structural reform is introduced? Why are consumers forced to pay heavy bills for a service that barely exists? And why do officials in Karachi and Islamabad continue to treat Balochistan's gas issues as a seasonal inconvenience rather than a governance failure?

Quetta is a city where Balochistan being an energy-producing region, its residents struggle every winter for the very resource extracted from their own soil. This contradiction reflects a deep-rooted policy imbalance in the

federation, where Balochistan remains last on the priority list — not because of a shortage of resources, but because of a shortage of political will.

SSGC's Repeated Excuses and Decades of Mismanagement. The SSGC's performance adds another layer of frustration. Each year, the company offers the same explanations — "excessive demand," "pipeline pressure issues," "technical challenges." Yet no one explains why these problems remain unresolved despite decades of complaints. Why have there been no significant infrastructure upgrades? Why has the company failed to introduce a clear winter management plan for consumers?

The unannounced nature of the load shedding exposes a complete disregard for public convenience. Outages are not scheduled or announced, families cannot plan meals, heating, or even basic daily routines. Hospitals and clinics struggle to maintain warm environments for patients. Small businesses suffer. And in a city where temperatures can drop below freezing, such negligence is not just inconvenient — it is dangerous.

Federal Government's Weak Oversight and Balochistan's Low Priority. The federal government cannot escape responsibility either. Energy management is a national issue, and the pattern of winter mismanagement in Balochistan reflects weak oversight, poor planning, and an unfair allocation of resources. The silence of policymakers during these crises sends a clear message: Quetta's suffering is not a priority. What Quetta needs is not another round of hollow statements. It needs a transparent winter gas plan, proper infrastructure investment, honest communication with the public, and real accountability for SSGC.

Most importantly, it needs the federal government to finally treat Balochistan as an equal stakeholder in national resource management.

The people of Quetta have endured enough. Their patience should not be mistaken for acceptance. Without decisive action, this recurring winter crisis will continue to expose not only the inefficiencies of SSGC but also the federal government's unwillingness to address longstanding injustices.

**Abdul Razzaq Khilji:** Fresh and clean water is an essential part of human life. It stands second to the air for the existence of all human beings and it is now a commonly known fact that groundwater quality is as important as its quantity. Balochistan is becoming the fast water-scarce province of the country particularly in urban areas including the Quetta sub-basin where 90% of the drinking water is utilized from groundwater. Groundwater quality has a direct impact on the health and welfare of the inhabitants therefore fresh and clean water supply need to be prioritized.

#### Drinking water must be free from pathogenic organisms

Water from any source must suit the purpose for which it is intended whereas, drinking water must be free from pathogenic organisms and its chemical and physical qualities must also be suitable for human consumption. Accordingly, groundwater contamination is approximately constantly the consequence of human activities.

Accordingly, the (Coliforms and E. Coli) are those bacteria that originate from wastes and intestines of animals and signal contamination in drinking water during testing. A recent report of the Irrigation Department indicates that the high rate of Coliform and E. Coli bacteria was found in the water of Quetta which signals contaminations in the drinking water that may affect human health and cause severe illness, as such



#### Contaminated water in Quetta affecting human health

On the basis of analyzed water quality data the areas of Mariabad, Shaldara Kasi Road, Gawalmandi, Sirki Road satellite town, Takhtani Bypass, airport road, Western bypass, Barwary road, Moss Colony, Spini road, Joint Road, Raisani Road, Sariab road DG WAPDA office, Gahi Khan Chowk, Sariab Railway Station where the water quality is declared unsafe due to

high concentration of Coliform and E. coli as such the analyzed values are high than the permissible limits of the WHO.

The drinking water in these areas is found objectionable and unsafe for drinking purposes on the basis of bacteriological contamination.

Accordingly, the current analysis of water quality discloses that water in most of the areas of the Quetta is exclusively microbiologically contaminated. Whereas, other contaminations include, Nitrate, Turbidity, Arsenic, hardness, TDS, and other ions have been analyzed wherein, the Nitrate concentrations have been found higher than the prescribed WHO standards.

**Water quality contamination is an extensive phenomenon**

Moreover, the change in water quality pattern in Quetta follows largely the pattern of microbiological contaminations.

The analysis indicates that water quality contamination is an extensive phenomenon in the drinking water supply system.

It is of great concern that the average concentrations of contaminations have been observed mostly in thickly populated areas of the Quetta.

The situation follows the growing rate of contaminations over the Quetta whereas the extension in the water supply system has increased in the last two decades and the density of population is also increasing with time.

The report points out that due to lack of proper water supply pipeline designing the cross-contamination is not in control and the

flow of pollutants into the main supply line is the main cause of contaminations.

The study further reports that the old age leaking pipes in the main water supply system are also the main cause of bacterial contamination in the main supply lines.

The inhabitants of Quetta may be at risk of drinking contaminated water and may suffer from various water-borne diseases. The report also specifies the high rate of Nitrate concentrations in water in some areas which may cause Blue Baby Syndrome diseases in Children.

Non-availability of regular water quality monitoring of the critical areas and issues cannot be identified.

The author is serving as an officer in the Balochistan Irrigation Department

## Energy shortage in Balochistan

**Ajmal Khan:** Poverty is not a static or fixed phenomenon. It is a multi-dimensional idea that encompasses quality in almost every sphere of life, ranging from calorie intake, life expectancy, living standards, literacy, and access to modern energy services.

This type of poverty is always expressed from an income perspective. Sticking with the non-income dimensions of poverty, such as health, education and living standards, are as important as employment.

The two energy indicators of non-income dimensions, including electricity (no access to electricity) and cooking fuels (wood, dung and charcoal), constitute poverty.

Goal no. 7 of SDGs contains universal access to modern energy services, increasing energy efficiency, and increasing renewable energy share.

As we know, energy plays a vital role in the development process of a country, but in case of Pakistan, energy poverty is the largest single drain on Pakistan's economy.

When we talk about Balochistan, it is the direct and major victim of energy crisis, and has slowed down the growth of the province. Balochistan is

the largest province of Pakistan, having an area of 347,190 km square and a population of 12,344,408 people. The major portion of the population live in rural areas, constituting 72.45%.

Only 36 Percent of Balochistan has access to energy.

Balochistan is facing an acute energy shortage that has stopped the development not only in the economic and agricultural sector, but also in every walk of life. According to a document submitted to the National Assembly of Pakistan, only 36% of Balochistan is electrified, while the remaining 64% of Balochistan still doesn't have access to energy. Due to the scattered population living in rural areas, it is impossible to electrify them. In 2018, the total demand of Balochistan was 1650 MW, but supply was limited to 600 MW, and in 2019 the demand has been raised to 2500 MW.

Energy Projects in CPEC. Energy is the prominent component of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Almost 70% of the CPEC projects were related to the energy sector, which comprises thermal, hydro, coal and wind. Unfortunately, Balochistan is being



left out of these projects. Out of 13 mega projects related to energy, six projects are being located in Punjab, six in Sindh and one in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Once again, the energy-starved and underdeveloped province has been ignored and not given its due share to fulfill its energy demands. The energy generated by these projects will not give any relief to the common people in Balochistan.

The already installed transmission lines are inadequate, and the province does not have the capability and capacity to absorb energy beyond 500 MW. The two transmission lines worth \$4 billion will run from Matiari to Faisalabad and Lahore, respectively. These transmission lines are providing 4000 MW to Punjab. Looking at this picture, the overall situation in rural Balochistan is not even linked with the national grid systems. This is an alarming situation where a major portion of the population still doesn't have access to electricity, and it will further deteriorate the growth of

the province.

Energy Production in Balochistan. Balochistan is producing about 2422 MW of electricity using gas-based thermal. Almost all the electricity generated in the province is being transmitted to other provinces. Electricity has been purchased by QESCO from two autonomous power producers include the Uch power plant and Habibullah Coastal Power plant. The province also receives electricity from Iran and provides it to the areas along the border.

The federal government initiative to reduce load-shedding will not positively impact the province because the existing transmission lines are not that much capable of supplying any load beyond 600 MW. There is not a single 500 kV grid station in the province.

No doubt, it is impossible to provide and extend transmission lines to the far-flung areas because it will cost too much. The electricity demand in rural areas of Balochistan is very low and the houses in rural areas need only lighting for roomed huts built of mud. Furthermore, investors feel hesitant to invest in the

province due to lack of infrastructure, revenue generation and security.

Considering all these factors, solar energy remains the best source because Balochistan receives the largest solar radiation in its area. According to a World Bank assessment, Balochistan receives the highest average sunlight in the world, which makes it rich in solar energy. Keeping in view these factors and in spite of extending the transmission lines to the far-flung and remote areas, the government should provide a solar panel to each house that is more economical and cost efficient. It will empower the socio-economic conditions of the population living in rural areas.

The Wind Corridor of Balochistan and Government's efforts. Besides solar energy, the wind energy is another essential source. Balochistan has been blessed with a high rate of wind speeds. The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), in their shared data, suggested that the wind speed in the coastal area of the province is enough to generate electricity. In this line, Pakistan Council of Renewable Energy Technologies (PCRET) has electrified 1600 villages along the coastal side

of Sindh and Balochistan. A study suggested that the coastal belt of Pakistan can produce 50,000 MW through wind resources. To minimize the cost of these projects, the government should encourage local manufacturers of wind turbines. In this regard, to overcome the energy poverty in Balochistan, the federal government can play a vital role in alleviating energy poverty by using renewable energy resources in electrifying the rural areas of Balochistan, keeping in view the solar radiance and wind speed, there is a huge potential for renewable energy in the province. They should not electrify the far-flung areas with conventional grid-based systems because it will maximize their cost as the traditional modes of energy are expensive, and in the long run, it cannot meet the energy demand for sustainable development. The government should provide the due share in CPEC related energy projects to the province. Suppose the issues related to energy poverty are not taken into account, the dream of achieving SDGs will never be achieved, and the already poverty-stricken province will observe more difficulties in the coming days.





## PAA's split pension distresses 2,500 retirees

**NEWS DESK:** The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) is operating under a single umbrella, yet enforces separate rules for its thousands of retired employees. While thousands of retirees receive full pensions and other benefits, over 2,500 employees are being deprived of annual pension increases.

According to documents and information obtained by Express News, retired PAA employees have been facing severe financial difficulties and destitution for the past five years due to the non-uniform implementation of pension increases.

The PAA management is allegedly violating regulations by creating four different categories for retired employees. Category 1: Employees who retired on or before June 30, 2014, and have been receiving all pension increases regularly until 2025 without any gap. Category 2: Approximately 2,280 employees who retired between July 1, 2014, and June 30, 2022. They are not receiving pension increases for the years 2021, 2022, 2024, and 2025. Category 3: 309 employees who retired between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023. They received increases for 2022 and 2023 but are deprived of increases for 2024 and 2025. Category 4: Employees who retired between July 1, 2023, and June 2025. They received the 2023 increase but

have not been given the increases for 2024 and 2025. The current management, which has been handling the pension issue for the past five years, is the same administration that previously declared the pension increases from 2011, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 as "excess payments."

Today, the same administration, in its 18th Board Meeting, approved the pension increases for 2011 and 2015. However, it now maintains that the increases given for 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 are declared excess for Category 2 retirees.

The question remains: How can the earlier increases (2011 and 2015) be deemed correct while the subsequent increases (2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019) are declared excess for Category 2 retirees?

Haseeb-ur-Rehman, a senior retired officer of the PAA, lodged a complaint with the Senate of Pakistan regarding this matter. The Senate conducted a full inquiry, giving secretary aviation, director human resources, the then-director general of the civil aviation authority (CAA), and director finance the opportunity to appear before it.

However, none of them could prove that the pension increases from 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 were "excess." This report is allegedly being concealed from both the PAA Board and the Senate.

Furthermore, a

## Punjab transporters call off wheel-jam strike after talks with provincial govt, 'acceptance of demands'

**NEWS DESK:** Transporters called off a Punjab-wide strike on Monday after talks with the provincial government representatives, with one of the participants included in the negotiations confirming to Dawn that authorities had largely agreed to transporters' demands.

The call for the strike today, which was also observed in Islamabad, was given by transporters' bodies primarily in protest against a new traffic ordinance that significantly increased traffic fines.

To discuss the matter, talks were held between representatives from the Punjab government, who were led by the provincial transport minister, Bilal Akbar, and a delegation of the Mutahidda Transporters' Association's action committee.

After the meeting, action committee member Lala Yasir told Dawn that the transporters called off the strike after

the government accepted their demands.

He said that apart from the revision of the Punjab Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Ordinance 2025, the

transporters also demanded an end to the registration of first information reports against drivers and owners of heavy vehicles over even minor violations of traffic laws.

According to Yasir, the government agreed that no cases would be registered against or imposed on drivers and vehicle owners.

Moreover, he said, the government also agreed to form committees to review and discuss the ordinance with transporters' representatives, and subsequently make changes to the new law in light of recommendations by the representatives of transporter associations.

A meeting between the two sides has been scheduled for tomorrow as well, he said. Earlier, Mutahidda Transport Federation of Twin Cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad Chairperson Raja Muhammad Riaz told Dawn that while negotiations were underway, "the government is not interested in resolving the matter and even attempted to divide the [transporters'] association."

Partial suspension of public transport in twin cities. In Islamabad and Rawalpindi, operations of public transport remained partially suspended earlier today as transporters observed a wheel-jam strike.

At the day's start, less than usual traffic was seen on the roads in the twin cities following the call for the strike. There were also reports of school van owners joining the strike and passengers facing difficulties at main bus stands.



## 'How long can it be ignored?': Tallal Chaudhry says PTI's rhetoric pushed army to respond

**NEWS DESK:** Minister of State for Interior Tallal Chaudhry said on Monday that the PTI's "unjustified" criticism of the army had pushed the institution to respond.

In remarks aired on the media, he also accused the opposition party of repeatedly criticising the army and its leadership for its own political gains.

Referring to arguments by the PTI that the army should not interfere in politics, Chaudhry said, "The army is not intervening in politics. You, in order to further your own politics or to come into power, you are riding on the PTI's back. Someone else's shoulders, repeatedly try to drag the army and its head into politics."

You direct unjustified and unnecessary criticism [at them]. You level allegations without any reason," he said.

He said the army had been serving the country and recalled that it defeated a "big power in the world" recently — an apparent reference to the conflict between Pakistan and India in May.

The state minister further said that the army took pride in its military victories and in protecting Pakistan, "and you criticise it and its head for no reason."

"For how long will the institution remain silent? Eventually, it had to respond. The PTI pushed them to respond," he added.

"The army and its head showed patience and overlooked [the criticism] for a very long time. But every other day, the PTI founder in his tweets and messages, and others in press conferences after meeting Imran, would make unjustified accusations and criticise."

The state minister also alleged that the PTI never criticised India's aggression or condemnation of terrorists. "Having a soft spot for those terrorists [...] and directing all criticism toward Pakistan's institutions, Pakistan's army and its head, warrants



an answer," he asserted. "How long can it be ignored, how long can it be overlooked?"

He further stated that the government had invited the PTI to Parliament for talks multiple times. "But we are now embarrassed to have invited these types of people for talks, those who are not worthy of it."

Chaudhry went on to allege that Imran "came into power by riding on someone else's shoulders." He further said that after only a "mentally ill patient" would consider himself a "know-it-all" and "necessary" for the country.

He further alleged that Imran had come into power in 2018 with the support of the military establishment.

"And since no one is supporting you today, you are levelling criticism in an effort to blackmail the army [...]" so that you can compel them into supporting your rise to power, again," Chaudhry alleged.

The state minister also questioned the PTI's performance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the last 13 years.

"Why will the people vote for you? Why will they bring you into power again? Those who couldn't win the by-election in Haripur, how will they succeed in polls in Lahore, Faisalabad or the rest of Pakistan?"

"It is because of this that you are taking out your anger and criticism on one institution and its head. This

will not be tolerated now," Chaudhry added. The state minister warned that those raising their voice against Pakistan, its institutions and their heads would now be silenced.

"Come put on a show outside Adiala (jail), and you will be told how the law is implemented," he said, seemingly referring to PTI's protests outside the prison for Imran's visitation rights.

"It cannot be that you disturb peace [...], speaks the language of our enemy after meeting [with Imran at the jail], and it is all tolerated."

He further warned that in case such a scene was created outside Adiala jail, "the prisoners in the jail would have to be shifted to a place where they can stay safe."

The minister also alleged that the KP Chief Minister was changed in October because, Ali Amin Gandapur, had refused to obey Imran's directives.

He also alleged that the new CM and the KP government were being used for efforts for a "jailbreak and riots" so that Imran could escape his punishment.

"This will not happen now. KP's re-orientation will be used for KP," he said.

## Case registered under terror charges after participants of Sindh Culture Day rally clash with police in Karachi

**NEWS DESK:** A first information report (FIR) has been registered under terrorism charges after one of the many rallies taken out in Karachi to mark Sindh Culture Day on Sunday turned violent, it emerged on Monday.

Police on Sunday resorted to tear gas shelling to prevent participants of the rally from moving towards the Red Line via Sharea Faisal and detained 45 people, 12 of whom were later released. According to the police, participants of the rally attacked personnel, who then responded with baton-charging and tear gas shelling.

According to the FIR, a copy of which is available with Dawn, a case has now been registered against 12 named individuals arrested at the scene and "300-400" unidentified individuals.

The case has been registered under Sections 147 (punishment for rioting), 148 (rioting, armed with deadly weapon), 149 (unlawful assembly), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), 144 (joining unlawful assembly armed with deadly weapon), 324

(attempted murder), 186 (obstructing public servants), 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant).

427 (mischief causing damage) of the Pakistan Penal Code and Section 7 (punishment for acts of terrorism) of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA).

The complainant, Inspector Abdul Majid Abro, said that he and other police personnel were present near the Finance and Trade Centre (FTC) flyover on Sharea Faisal at 2:30pm on Sunday when a rally, consisting of around 300-400 people on motorcycles and cars, appeared from the direction of the airport, heading

toward Saddar. "Keeping in view the ban on gatherings due to the imposition of Section 144 in the province, police personnel attempted to stop the participants of the rally," he said.

However, the participants of the rally blocked the main thoroughfare on both sides and began pelting police with stones while also opening fire, he said.

He further said that the participants of the rally also damaged cars that were passing by, including a rescue ambulance and a police mobile, adding that they were also shouting "anti-state" slogans.

"Subsequently, police personnel, with the help of officers

present on the scene, fired tear gas at the participants to prevent them from damaging property," he said.

Celebrated on the first Sunday of December each year, Sindh Cultural Day was first observed in 2009. Political parties, social organisations and civil society, as well as government bodies, organise a wide range of events, including seminars, debates, folk music programmes, theatrical performances and literary sittings to highlight the rich culture and history of Sindh.

Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar had taken strict notice of Sunday's incident and ordered immediate action against those involved.



## One killed, another injured in Saeedabad firing incident

**NEWS DESK:** A firing incident in Saeedabad, Gulshan-e-Mazdoor, left one person dead and another seriously injured, police reported.

The injured man was arrested, and a weapon, along with a motorcycle, was recovered from his possession. Police have described the incident as stemming from a family dispute and have launched further investigations.

The deceased, 45-year-old Muhammad Arif, son of Abdul Sattar, and the injured, 24-year-old Umar Mustafa, son of Ghulam Mustafa, were transferred to the Civil Trauma Center via Edhi Ambulance. The incident



occurred in the jurisdiction of Saeedabad Police Station, and the Crime Scene Unit was called to collect evidence.

SHO Saeedabad, Parvez Solangi, said

that Muhammad Arif was a local resident, while Umar Mustafa hailed from Musharraf Colony. Umar Mustafa had visited the home of a citizen named Rafiq to meet

Rafiq's daughter, with whom he was friends. After staying at the house for about 20 minutes, Umar Mustafa was seen by the women present in the home, who mistook

him for a thief and raised an alarm.

When Umar Mustafa tried to leave in panic, neighborhood residents arrived. Thinking he was a thief, they attempted to catch him. Umar Mustafa opened fire, and Muhammad Arif also fired during the confrontation. The exchange of gunfire resulted in Muhammad Arif's death and Umar Mustafa's serious injury. The SHO stated that the incident appears to be a branch of a family dispute.

Umar Mustafa was taken into custody while injured, and a weapon and motorcycle were recovered from him. Further investigation into the incident is ongoing.

## All Punjab schools ordered to strictly implement new security SOPs

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab Education Department has directed all government and private schools in the province to ensure the implementation of essential security SOPs according to which all schools are

bound to build security walls and install barred wires. As per the new SOPs, the installation of panic buttons, metal detectors, CCTV cameras, web cameras, and the appointment of a security guard must be en-

sured without delay. Security staff must be deputed at all the entry points of the schools, and during school timings, every school will open only one gate. Mock exercises with

1122, the civil defence department, must be conducted. All important numbers should be displayed in the principal offices and staff rooms. Earlier on December 3, 2025, Punjab Health

Minister and Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Law and Order, Khawaja Salman Rafique, has directed the School Education Department to enforce boundary walls, guard training, and other es-

sential security SOPs across educational institutions in the province. The meeting included a detailed review of existing security arrangements, during which the Secretary of the School Education

Department and other officials briefed the committee. Khawaja Salman Rafique said a comprehensive security audit of schools across Punjab is underway. He stressed that the instal-

lation of panic buttons in educational institutions must be ensured without delay. "Providing a peaceful and secure educational environment to students is the top priority of the government," he added.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on Readiness and Implementation effectiveness of development projects.

India releases unannounced water in Chenab to damage Pakistan's wheat crop. LAHORE, Dec 08 (INP): Pakistan on Monday accused India of once again resorting to "water aggression" after New Delhi allegedly released a sudden and unannounced surge of water into the Chenab River, raising its flow to 58,300 cusecs and triggering concerns about

damage to the standing wheat crop. India opened its dam spillways without prior intimation and is expected to refill the reservoirs shortly, a move that could reduce the Chenab's flow to near zero in the coming days.

The TV channel described in its Monday report that the development was a deliberate act of "water terrorism" aimed at harming Pakistan's agriculture.

The latest escalation comes amid growing diplomatic tensions over India's suspension of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty earlier this year.

On November 7, Pakistan's Permanent

Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar, raised the issue before the UN Security Council, calling India's actions a "textbook example" of the weaponisation of shared natural resources.

Representative to the United Nations, Asim Iftikhar, said the unilateral suspension of the treaty undermined international water law and threatened millions who depend on the Indus basin for food and energy security.

"For more than six decades, this treaty has remained a model of cooperation, even throughout periods of conflict," Ambassador

Iftikhar said, adding that India's decision "disrupts ecosystems, blocks data-sharing, and jeopardises livelihoods across Pakistan."

He stressed that no clause of the treaty allows unilateral suspension or alteration and noted that the Court of Arbitration's 2025 award had reaffirmed its continued validity. He urged India to return to full compliance "through established mechanisms."

The Security Council's discussion coincided with the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict.

UN Environment Programme Executive Director Inger Andersen highlighted how environmental degradation driven by conflict continues to deepen food insecurity and displacement, noting examples from Gaza to Haiti.

Two months earlier, on October 7, Pakistan had similarly accused India of releasing 60,000 cusecs of water into the Sutlej River, causing significant rises downstream near Kasur.

At the time, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Punjab warned that water flows in major rivers,

Hurriyat Conference condemns detentions, demands end to 'Harsh Laws' in Kashmir

ISLAMABAD, Dec 08 (INP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has strongly denounced India's continued detention of thousands of Kashmiris, including political leaders, and demanded their immediate release, saying the use of harsh laws is aimed at stifling dissent and weakening the Kashmiri freedom movement.

According to the Kashmir Media Service, APMC spokesman Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas said in a statement issued in Srinagar that more than 4,000 Kashmiris are currently held in Indian jails under laws such as the Public Safety Act (PSA) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

He said Hurriyat leaders are repeatedly arrested on what the APMC describes as fabricated charges, leaving them without political space and curbing democratic expression in the region.

The APMC also appealed to the international community to

Grenade attack foiled

KOHAH, Dec 08 (INP): District Police Officer (DPO) Kohat, Shehbaz Elahi Monday vowed that no one would be allowed to sabotage peace and security in the region after the police successfully traced and arrested suspects involved in a grenade attack and firing incident at a mosque.

On November 30, the unidentified assailants hurled a grenade at Abdullah bin Fahad Mosque in Nusrat Khail and opened fire at a nearby residence.

The Cantonment police responded immediately, registering a case on the complaint of the affected homeowner namely Mir. Taking strict notice of the incident, DPO Shehbaz Elahi ordered the immediate arrest of the culprits and formed a special investigation team comprising DSP City, Ejaz Ali, SHO Cantonment, Khizar Fareed, and SHO City Jabar Khan. Using modern investigative techniques, data analysis, and ground intelligence, the team worked tirelessly to trace the suspects.

The police later

conducted raids at multiple locations and arrested three men including Latif, Umar and Abdul Muaz, all residents of Nusrat Khail.

The weapons used in the attack were also recovered, while further investigation is underway.

Addressing a press conference, DSP City Ejaz Ali said that the police had solved a highly complex case in a short time, bringing dangerous suspects into the grip of law.

DPO Shehbaz Elahi reiterated that protecting citizens' lives and property remained the top priority, and strict action would continue against those involved in such incidents without discrimination.

In a separate op-

## Senate by-election: PML-N's Abid Sher Ali returned unopposed

ISLAMABAD (INP): The ruling party in the central and Punjab province, the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), leader Abid Sher Ali, has been elected unopposed to the Senate on the general seat left vacant following the death of Senator Irfan Siddiqui. The seat became vacant earlier this month, prompting the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to initiate the by-election process.

Two candidates, Rana Ihsan and Abdul Jabbar, had initially filed nomination papers to contest against

Abid Sher Ali, who belongs to the Faisalabad district, but

both withdrew their candidature ahead of the polling day.

No other political party submitted nomination papers against the PML-N nominee, clearing the way for his unopposed return to the upper house of parliament.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif congratulated PML-N leader Abid Sher Ali on his victory and extended his best wishes for the senator's future responsibilities.

The PM said that by the grace of Almighty Allah, the Pakistan Muslim League-N was earning success on multiple fronts owing to its commitment to public

service. The prime minister praised Sher Ali as an active party member who has fulfilled the public during previous tenures.

He expressed confidence that, as senator, Sher Ali would continue to contribute to national development and public welfare under the leadership of former prime minister and PML-N President Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

Chaudhry Abid Sher Ali (born on November 21, 1971) is a Pakistani politician who served as Minister of State for Power, in office from August 2017 to May 2018.

Abid Sher Ali is

the son of former mayor of Faisalabad and senior PML-N leader Chaudhry Sher Ali, who is a relative of Kalsoom Nawaz Sharif.

He served as the Minister of State for Water and Power from 2013 to 2017. He was a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan from 2002 to 2018.

He has served in various political fields and has held positions in the Standing Committee on Education (as chairman), the Standing Committee on Privatisation and Investment, the Standing Committee on Water and Power, and the Standing Committee on Youth Affairs.

## Pakistan committed to SAARC Charter goals: President, PM

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif have expressed Pakistan's firm commitment to objectives of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

In their messages on SAARC Charter Day, being observed today, they said Pakistan is ready to work with all willing states in South Asia to promote trade, transit, energy linkages and people-to-people ties that benefit the entire region. The President

in his message said important regional countries like Iran and China had also made part of the revival plan.

He said their participation would strengthen connectivity, economic integration and stability across the wider neighbourhood.

The President said that he encourages all South Asian nations to approach the future with clarity and sincerity.

The Prime Minister would Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in his

message said this auspicious occasion, reminding us of our shared aspirations for peace, progress and prosperity across the region of South Asia.

He said our region also faces common challenges such as poverty, climate induced natural disasters, food and energy insecurity and public health issues.

He said these challenges transcend borders and require collective responses based on mutual trust, goodwill, and a spirit of mutual cooperation.

## ANF recovers over 200kg drugs

ISLAMABAD (INP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting various operations across the country rounded up six suspects and recovered over 200 kg drugs, valued at more than Rs 217 million.

According to an ANF spokesman, in an operation near a college in District Attock, 1.2 kg hashish was recovered from a motorcyclist.

The arrested suspect confessed selling drugs to the students of different educational institutions. In another operation near Motorway Toll Plaza Islamabad, 15.6 kg hashish was seized from a truck and two accused were arrested during the operation. In third operation near a restaurant on GT Road Burhan, District Attock, 4 kg hashish was seized.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi on Monday administered oath of office to Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb as Judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan during a ceremony held at Supreme Court of Pakistan.

## Goods, private public transport shuts down against traffic fines, FIRs

LAHORE (INP): Transporters across Punjab brought the province to a standstill on Monday as they launched a wheel-jam strike against the newly introduced Motor Vehicle Ordinance 2025, which they say has led to excessive fines and a surge in FIRs registered against drivers for road-law violations.

The strike called by the Pakistan Transport Muttahida Action Committee (PTMAC), quickly rippled across Punjab, disrupting public mobility, commercial activity and supply chains throughout the province.

PTMAC has put forward fourteen demands to the Punjab government, including the complete withdrawal of the new ordinance, while trans-

port associations have also submitted twelve demands to the federal government.

Despite several appeals, goods and public transport leaders said the provincial authorities had refused to negotiate, prompting a united show of resistance by transport bodies.

Addressing a press conference at the organisation's office in Lahore's Babu Sabu area, PTMAC Chairman Ismatullah Khan Niazi said the protest had originally been planned only for Punjab but had now expanded nationwide as transporters from across Pakistan joined the strike.

Chaudhry Sher Ali, central president of the Mini Muzda Association, Pakistan, said that transporters

would stand together until their rights were secured. Several other leaders also expressed their commitment to the wheel-jam protest.

Pakistan Goods Transport Alliance (PGTA) President Malik Shehbaz Awan said in a video message that the Punjab government

had been given a 72-hour ultimatum, which expired without any progress. As a result, he said, a full shutdown would be observed across the country, including Karachi, with goods transporters halting all loading operations.

Transport leaders warned that if their demands remained unmet, a broader nationwide strike would begin on December 10. The president of the All Pakistan Goods Transport As-

sociation, Tariq Gujjar, said after talks with fellow associations that oil tanker operators and local public transporters had also joined the strike. He added that port-related transport operations would cease from Monday evening.

Transport leaders accused the government of forcing their hand, citing thousands of FIRs filed in Punjab under the Motor Vehicle Ordinance 2025 and alleging that vehicles were being held in police stations across the province.

Khanzada Khan Mehsum, senior vice chairman of the Oil Tankers Association, urged the government to stop harassment of transporters and warned that many operators were being pushed toward bankruptcy.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaz Malik chaired a meeting to review the overall gas supply and assess the performance of the complaint redressal.



## Poverty Alarms in Balochistan: 51% Income Poor, 71% Multidimensionally Poor, Says Bugti

**Syed Muhammad Qaseem:** Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has issued a strong call for intensified climate action, warning that the province is facing an alarming overlap of environmental shocks and widespread poverty. Speaking at a high-level symposium titled "Sustainable Development and Environmental Resilience in Balochistan", he said the province is battling climate change on multiple fronts while striving for long-term sustainable development.

Bugti revealed that 51% of households in Balochistan live under income poverty, while 71% of the population faces multidimensional poverty, making the province one of the most climate-vulnerable regions in Pakistan. He said recurring droughts, abnormal rainfall, flash



floods, severe heatwaves, and unpredictable weather patterns have disproportionately impacted the poorest communities.

The symposium was organized by the Balochistan Planning

and Development Department and focused on climate resilience, renewable energy, food security, and environmental sustainability.

Bugti stressed that, following COP30, the global community must accelerate climate commitments, adding that regions like Balochistan need urgent support and strategic partnerships.

Highlighting the provincial government's response, he said Balochistan has introduced a comprehensive Climate Change Policy covering energy, transport, agriculture, and water sectors.

The province is expanding solar and wind power projects, promoting electric mobility, and strengthening green infrastructure to cut reliance on fossil fuels.

In the agriculture sector, the government is promoting conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and climate-smart farming techniques to boost food security and reduce emissions. He said efficient water management

and the revival of forest cover have also been prioritised to shield communities from future climate shocks.

Bugti emphasized that carbon trading presents a major opportunity for Balochistan to tap into international climate finance.

The province is developing an advanced carbon market framework, including blue carbon projects modelled after the successful Delta Blue Carbon initiative in Sindh.

Calling for collective action, he urged public institutions, global partners, the private sector, and civil society to work together for a resilient and sustainable future.

Bugti congratulated the organisers and expressed hope that continuous collaboration would turn climate challenges into achievable development goals.

### Justice Muhammad Kamran Mulakhail Sworn In as Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court

**News Desk:** QUETTA: Justice Muhammad Kamran Mulakhail assumed his responsibilities as the Chief Justice of the Balochistan High Court after taking oath at a ceremony held at the Governor House on Monday.

The oath was administered by Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jaffer Mandokhail.

The event was attended by judges of the Balochistan High Court, senior members of the legal community, bar representatives, provincial ministers, and people from various fields. Attendees extended



their congratulations to the new Chief Justice and expressed optimism that his appointment would further

strengthen the province's judicial framework. The participants reiterated their resolve to enhance transparency within the legal system and ensure the prompt delivery of justice across Balochistan.

### Governor Balochistan Distributes Best Teacher and Researcher Awards at Women's University

**QUETTA:** Governor Balochistan, Jaffer Mandokhail, distributed the Best Teacher and Researcher Awards 2025 at Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (SBKWU).

In his address, Mandokhail praised the university's remarkable performance, noting that SBKWU has improved its ranking from 37th to 67th in a short span of one year. He expressed confidence that the university will soon achieve its target of 80%.

The Governor emphasized the importance of women's education, stating that an educated woman has access to numerous opportunities in life.



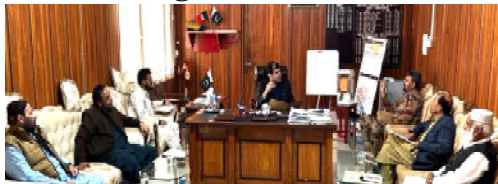
He encouraged women to pursue modern scientific education and congratulated the award winners, saying their efforts will inspire and empower future generations.

Mandokhail acknowledged the

university's commitment to academic excellence and recognized the dedication of its faculty members. He stated that teaching is a noble profession that requires passion, commitment, and a strong sense of responsibility.

The ceremony was attended by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Rubina Mushtaq, Principal Secretary to Governor Balochistan Kaleemullah Babar, Registrar SBKWU Rahela Manzoor, faculty members, and students.

### District Coordination Committee Meeting Held in Barkhan



**BARKHAN:** A crucial meeting of the District Coordination Committee (DCC) was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Barkhan, Abdullah Khoso.

The meeting reviewed ongoing development projects, including BSI Phase 2, and discussed departmental performance, administrative matters, and public welfare initiatives.

The meeting aimed to enhance transparency, inter-departmental coordination, and development work quality to expedite public service delivery.

Participants included Wing Commander 129 FC Colonel Muhammad Younus, XEN Roads & Buildings Fazel Muhammad Zarkoon, DHO Dr. Mujeeb ur Rehman Bugti, and Assistant Director Local Government Muhammad Waris.

Key decisions were made on road construction, healthcare improvement, sanitation, law and order, and civic amenities.

DC Abdullah Khoso emphasized completing projects on time and ensuring no negligence or delay in public interest.

### Balochistan Government Imposes Section 144 in Quetta, Restrictions Until December 22



**Web Desk:**

**QUETTA:** The Government of Balochistan's Home Department has imposed restrictions under Section 144 in Quetta district.

The order bans the display and use of firearms, double riding on motorcycles, use of

dark-tinted vehicle glass, movement of unregistered motor-cycles, gatherings of five or more people, processions or rallies, and the use of masks or mufflers to cover faces in public areas including by women and children.

According to the notification, the transportation of acid and explosive materials is also strictly prohibited within the district.

The police, levies, and Frontier Corps have been granted full authority to enforce these orders. Violators will face

action under Section 188 of the Pakistan Penal Code and other applicable laws. The Home Department has instructed the Deputy Commissioner of Quetta to submit daily reports on the enforcement of these restrictions.

### Healthcare Monitoring: District Support Manager Inspects Basic Health Centers in Gwadar

**GWADAR:** Dr. Murshad Dashti, District Support Manager of PPHI, conducted a monitoring visit to various Basic Health Centers (BHCs) in Gwadar, including BHU Nalini, BHU Kuper, and BHU Bandi Kuper.

During the visit, he reviewed staff attendance, OPD records, EPI sites, vaccination processes, medical staff presence, and other essen-

tial facilities. Inspecting patient services, he directed staff to ensure quality and timely healthcare for the public.

He also issued necessary instructions to improve EPI program performance. Locals expressed satisfaction with improved health center arrangements, praising the District Support Manager's initiative as a positive step for public health.

### Polio Campaign: Important Meeting Held in Sibi Division, Commissioner Issues Directives

**SIBI:** A crucial meeting of the Divisional Task Force for the Polio Campaign was held under the chairmanship of Commissioner Sibi Division, Asadullah Faiz. The meeting was attended by DCGP Sibi Range, Barkat Hussain Khoso, SSP Sibi, Shah Nawaz Chachar, and other health officials. The meeting reviewed the arrangements for the polio campaign, security, team performance, field challenges, and strategy. The Commissioner directed the concerned departments to utilize all resources to

eradicate polio, a national challenge. The Health Department briefed that the polio campaign will run from December 15 to 18, administering drops to children under five. The meeting decided that monitoring teams will oversee the campaign, and district administration, police, and health institutions will strengthen cooperation. The Commissioner encouraged polio teams, stating that all officials, volunteers, and field workers should fulfill their national responsibility.

**TENDER NOTICE**

Only electronic bid will be submitted. No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements of GOS Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, it is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPIA GOS. The Assistant Director Local Government & Rural Development, Quetta invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2026 based on Composite schedule rates 2023 on Percentage Rates.

Tender Fee 2300 PKR. and Bid Security 2% for each work.

S.No.	Name of Works	EST.
1.	REHABILITATION/IMPROVEMENT OF BLACK TOP ROAD/SEWERAGE LINE AND SOLAR STREET LIGHTS FROM MAIN SARAB ROAD ANWAR PUNJ TORALWAY STATION ROAD SARAB MILL QUETTA (PSOP NO. 3576) TSE-25261291040	33,650,000
2.	CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK TOP ROAD SIDE DRAIN AT KILLI CHILAN STREET NOT 8 STREET NO 2 AND ADJOINING AREAS OF SARAB KILLI TALENT. 4KM (PSOP NO. 3765) TSE-25261291013	49,270,000

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: Presence of Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required. Fresh Audit report of the firm of last three years. The bidder must have completed 2 Assignment of similar nature of work Turn over of at least 37,555,000 PKR Amount in subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm.

For work at S.No.1: Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) C-5 and above (Up to 65 million) Relevant Category And Specialized Code is CE0901 (Sewerage Works), CE1101 (Road and Pavements Drainage & Retaining Structure), EE1101 (General Electrical Works Only). For work at S.No.1 Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) C-5 and above (Up to 65 million) Relevant Category And Specialized Code is CE0901 (Sewerage Works), CE1101 (Road and Pavements Drainage & Retaining Structure). For work at S.No.2: Tender processing fee of amount Rs. 2500 in account No. CSB79 having head, Senior AD LG Quetta. Bid Security of 3% of estimated cost. Tender processing fee of amount Rs. 2500 in account No. CSB79 having head, Senior AD LG Quetta. Procedure of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure. Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 3% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank.

Tender Documents: The bidding documents can be obtained electronically from [www.bppia.gov.pk](http://www.bppia.gov.pk). Issuance of Tender Documents: Complete bidding documents can be viewed at [www.bppia.gov.pk](http://www.bppia.gov.pk). Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2025 in 10:40 AM through supplier dashboard. For work No.1, and 10:30 AM through supplier dashboard. For work at S.No.2. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at 11:00 AM on EPPS System for work at S.No.1 and at 12:30 AM on EPPS System for work at S.No.2. Address: District Assistant Director, Local Government & Rural Development Quetta.

Phone no: 081950208. Email: [sad@lgo.gov.pk](mailto:sad@lgo.gov.pk)

**PRD No. 3727/08-12-2025**

**SENIOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**  
Local Government & Rural Development Quetta

# Govt plans large battery storage to 'stabilise grid'

**NEWS DESK:** The government is working on large, utility-scale Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) to ensure stability of the national grid, which is currently facing challenges such as frequency fluctuations caused by the induction of intermittent renewable energy sources faster than planned targets.

"The government is pursuing the development of large-scale battery energy storage systems through private-sector investments to address the intermittency of variable renewable energy, optimise grid demand management, and enhance overall system stability," Power Minister Sardar Awais Leghari told the National Assembly in a written statement on Friday.

In response to a series of questions from various MNAs, the minister also confirmed that the government was gradually moving away from Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) as part of its policy to reduce reliance on imported fuels amid higher global prices. He added that the government had set ambitious targets under its various power policies to increase the share of on-grid



the clean energy share in the country had reached 46 per cent by 2025 and 60pc by 2030.

He added that the government's 40pc capacity target for 2025, 10 per cent tax-to-GDP ratio.

renewable energy capacity to 40pc by 2025 and 60pc by 2030. Currently, 60 private-sector renewable energy projects with a cumulative capacity of 4,753MW are operational, including 680MW of solar, 1,937MW of on-shore hydropower, 1,845MW

of wind, and 291MW of bagasse cogeneration. A long side 9,619MW of public-sector hydropower and 100MW of solar in K-Electric's system, renewables account for more than 37pc of the generation mix.

Net-metering-based solar photovoltaic (PV) has further added 6,390MW as of September 2025, raising the clean energy share to approximately 46pc, thereby surpassing the government's 40pc renewable energy capacity target for 2025," the minister said.

In parallel, the minister said the government had finalised an initial quantum of 800MW for the Competitive Trading Bilateral Contract Market framework to provide market access to renewable energy producers and enable large consumers to enter into direct supply contracts with

producers of their choice, subject to a wheeling charge of about Rs13 per unit. Mr Leghari emphasised that the availability of reliable, efficient, eco-friendly, and affordable electricity was crucial for sustainable economic growth. "Therefore, the government is prioritising the effective use of renewable and indigenous energy sources through its national policies aimed at diversifying the energy mix by promoting clean and renewable sources such as wind, solar, hydropower, and bagasse," he added.

Discussing LNG diversion, the minister reported that dependence on imported fuel plants had comparatively reduced in recent years, and priority was being given to the utilisation of local energy resources, including Thar coal, solar, wind, bagasse, and hydropower, to minimise reliance on imported fuels.

He conceded that dependence on imported LNG had comparatively decreased in recent years. "This policy shift is primarily aimed at promoting indigenously produced and renewable energy resources and ensuring least-cost dispatch in the overall generation mix," he added.

He continued that the government was actively promoting the adoption of solar energy technology at the consumer level across residential, commercial, and industrial sectors. He said the net-metering regulations provided a framework for integrating solar and wind generation systems of up to 1MW capacity, enabling consumers to offset their electricity consumption and contribute to the national grid.

## Dovetailing economic growth with stability

**NEWS DESK:** The national debate on diverse approaches or strategies to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth has intensified with greater clarity on how long-term stability is linked to improving productivity and competitiveness across all sectors of the economy.

Similarly, all stakeholders need to be taken on board and actively help evolve a common minimum programme and action plan for the correction course.

On a positive note, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Nov 30 that the government was making a decisive shift towards an inclusive, private-sector-driven and export-led growth model.

Earlier, he told a Pakistan Business Council (PBC) event that the policy focus was shifting towards steady, sustainable and able growth that could break recurring boom-and-bust cycles.

Expecting a "good" National Finance Commission output, he said both the federation and the provinces would have to contribute to enhance revenue mobilisation to run the country sustainably. "You cannot run the country on an eight to 10 per cent tax-to-GDP ratio."

In another PBC session, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan said exports must grow faster than imports to ease pressure on the economy and secure long-term stability. As for now, the trade deficit has further widened by 37pc to \$15.5 billion in 5MFY26.

International collaboration aside, Pakistan must create an ecosystem where experimentation is rewarded, and ideas can move freely between universities, firms, and the market.

A stronger export performance requires support for manufacturing and local production, adding that producing key inputs such as steel domestically is necessary to expand export capacity. Pakistan should strengthen domestic investment before relying on foreign investors. Faster economic progress, he said, is needed to create employment.

According to the Labour Force Survey 2024-25, the number of unemployed individuals surged from 4.5 million in FY21 to 5.9 million in FY25. A crucial lesson learnt was that foreign direct investment will only follow once local investors are engaged, acknowledged the National Coordinator of the Special Investment Facilitation Council, Lt Gen Sarfraz Ahmed, in a meeting with the PBC held later on Nov 2.

On Dec 3, Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif reportedly issued instructions to take up a tax relief proposal for the corporates and salaried class with the International Monetary Fund, the proposal suggests a Rs975bn income-tax relief package.

The private sector should also pursue partnerships and joint ventures abroad, technology transfer, and knowledge exchange to improve productivity and competitiveness at home.

Furthermore, the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has changed the international financial architecture. Under the new global financial architecture, private capital flows are calling the shots.

Under the changed international financial architecture, the economy has been experiencing a trade deficit in goods and services. Retentions cover a large part of the trade deficit, while the remaining deficit requires capital inflows, which are financed by external debt. In the event of a high economic growth rate, the external deficit deteriorates fast, and the country requires higher capital inflows. This implies the accumulation of external debt, which also increases debt servicing.

When economic growth is high, imports grow faster than exports, so demand for foreign currency increases relative to supply. The demand is met through dollars, which are in short supply. Hence, foreign exchange reserves decrease if additional borrowing is not forthcoming. As the foreign currency reserves plummet, the country approaches the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The IMF programme provides funding along with the conditional clause. The conditions require following a macroeconomic framework. The purpose of the framework is to restore balance to repay the loans borrowed from the IMF. So the country adheres to good macroeconomic policies.

A combination of tight fiscal and monetary policies is used to rewire aggregate demand, which results in import compression. In addition, GDP/national income and the rate of inflation also decrease. However, the debt servicing remains as such, slowing the current account through a high policy rate. The domestic policy rate is kept high vis-à-vis international policy rates, which creates interest rate differentials.

## Why Pakistan's growth cycle keeps ending in IMF programmes

**NEWS DESK:** The post-war Bretton Woods system was based on exchange rate stability, where the Official Development Assistance (ODA) was used to provide necessary development finance to the developing countries. The system ran successfully during the 1950s and 1960s, when developing economies achieved high rates of capital accumulation.

However, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in the early 1970s brought a turn in development finance, where private international finance started to take a driving seat. The private turn in international finance has changed the international financial architecture. Under the new global financial architecture, private capital flows are calling the shots.

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The interest rate differentials attract capital financial flows. These commodities fall into the category of Financial capitalists keep moving their capital from one asset class to another.

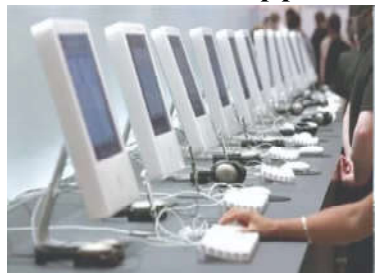
For instance, the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has been witnessing a historic boom since FY 2024. PSX index has already crossed 170,000 and now hovers around 167,000. Stocks are valued highly as investors flock to the market, and a low inflation rate is supporting them in this regard.

## A global shift in robotics and AI is underway, and Pakistan must keep pace

**NEWS DESK:** The global economy is undergoing a seismic technological shift. Robotics, automation, and AI are no longer futuristic ideas; they are now mainstream drivers of productivity, competitiveness, and innovation.

According to the International Federation of Robotics (IFR), the industries worldwide deployed over 553,000 new industrial robots in 2023, marking a historic peak in automation demand. Meanwhile, global AI investment is projected to exceed \$300 billion by 2026, as estimated by the International Data Corporation (IDC). The world is accelerating rapidly, but Pakistan risks being left behind unless decisive and strategic action is taken.

Pakistan's current standing in global technological competitiveness reflects this urgent need. The World Intellectual Property Organisation's Global Innovation Index 2024 ranked Pakistan 88 out of 132 countries, trailing significantly behind regional peers such as India (40), China (12), and even Iran (62).



Although Pakistan has a young and rapidly growing digital population, its innovation input including research spending, patenting, STEM education quality, and industrial automation remains limited. One of the clearest indicators of Pakistan's lag is its extremely low adoption of industrial robotics. While China deployed more than 290,000 robots in 2023, India installed over 4,000, and Southeast Asian economies like Vietnam and Thailand

each installed several thousand per year, Pakistan's installations remain negligible estimated in the low hundreds, primarily within automotive assembly and select textile units. This places Pakistan far below global benchmarks for robotics penetration per 10,000 manufacturing workers, a critical indicator used by the IFR.

AI development, too, is growing slowly despite considerable potential. Estimates suggest Pakistan's AI industry is currently valued at around \$100-120 million, a fraction of India's AI ecosystem, which alone exceeds \$7.8 billion in valuation.

Global tech corporations and venture investors have poured tens of billions of dollars into the research and development of AI models, automation platforms, and robotics labs. Pakistan, however, lacks a cohesive national AI strategy, consistent funding pipelines, or large-scale industrial automation programmes that could unlock similar growth.

Pakistan has strong foundations that can be leveraged. The country produces more than 35,000 IT and engineering graduates annually, according to the Higher Education Commission (HEC). Freelancers and digital workers generate over \$400 million in annual export earnings, reflecting global demand for Pakistani technical talent. Moreover, private-sector automation efforts in Karachi and Lahore to automation efforts in large industrial groups demonstrate that capacity exists when given the right incentives and resources.

Pakistan must pivot from scattered initiatives to a coordinated national strategy. Three priority areas stand out. First, the country must invest in industrial automation at scale. The manufacturing sector, which accounts for nearly 12-13% of GDP, suffers from low productivity, energy inefficiencies, and technology gaps.

Robotics adoption in textiles, food processing, and pharmaceuticals, the market, encouraging both institutional and individual investors to take fresh positions. The IMF inflow is expected to strengthen Pakistan's external account position, support the currency, and guide fiscal reforms—all factors contributing to Mondy's upbeat performance.

KITrade Securities wrote in its market wrap that PSX kicked off the week with a solid upside, opening with a gap-up followed by a controlled consolidation phase. KSE-100 index advanced 1,217 points (+0.73%) to close at 168,303, keeping momentum firmly on the front foot.

Leadership came from Fauji Fertiliser, with additional strength from Systems Limited. National Bank of Pakistan, Pakistan Telecommunication, DG Khan Cement, and Pakistan Petroleum helping sustain broader confidence.

Market participation stayed healthy, with All-Share volumes clocking in at 781 million shares. Looking ahead, sentiment remains constructive as investors position themselves ahead of today's IMF board meeting and the expected tranche approval. On the domestic front, the operational launch of the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) office added another layer of optimism, likely enhancing investor confidence.

## PSX jumps 1,200 points on IMF hopes

**NEWS DESK:** The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) opened the week on a strong note as bullish sentiment dominated trading throughout the session. Investor confidence was buoyed by expectations that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Board would approve the long-awaited \$1 billion disbursement for Pakistan later in the day, a development widely seen as pivotal for shaping the country's near-term economic trajectory.

The benchmark index recorded a high of 168,755.19 and a low of 167,386.44, ultimately gaining 1,217.67 points, or 0.73%, to settle at 168,303.25.

The market's broad-based rally reflected optimism across key sectors, particularly cement, banking and fertiliser and energy.

The anticipated IMF approval has reduced uncertainty in the market, encouraging both institutional and individual investors to take fresh positions. The IMF inflow is expected to strengthen Pakistan's external account position, support the currency, and guide fiscal reforms—all factors contributing to Mondy's upbeat performance.

KITrade Securities wrote in its market wrap that PSX kicked off the week with a solid upside, opening with a gap-up followed by a controlled consolidation phase. KSE-100 index advanced 1,217 points (+0.73%) to close at 168,303, keeping momentum firmly on the front foot.

Leadership came from Fauji Fertiliser, with additional strength from Systems Limited. National Bank of Pakistan, Pakistan Telecommunication, DG Khan Cement, and Pakistan Petroleum helping sustain broader confidence.



## Javelin star Arshad Nadeem rouses crowd, wins gold at National Games

**NEWS DESK:** Arshad Nadeem was the man of the hour on Monday morning when he allowed the audience to be part of history as they witnessed him launch his javelin to claim gold at the National Games.

It was not lost on the 28-year-old that the crowd of a few hundred was delighted by his very presence at the PNS Karsaz ground, his throws the cheer on the top as they got to see the Olympic champion in action before their very own eyes.

A robust lineup of track and field events commenced with the start of the men's javelin, headlined by Arshad. A dozen cameramen lined the javelin sector's periphery to get the perfect shot of Arshad in action as the heat bore down on the synthetic rubber track, the sun climbing higher in the sky to signal the advent of afternoon.

The track reverberated with the soft thud of spikes and echoes of the commentators' effusive praise for Pakistan's sporting hero ahead of his first throw of 78.74m that, unsurprisingly, guaranteed him the lead.

"Yeh din Arshad ka hai (This day belongs to Arshad)" because he is the Olympic champion and we're honoured to have him here," the commentators said.

Praise and appreciation were meted out in equal measure for Yasir Sultan, silver medalist at the Islamic Solidarity Games last month and the closest athlete to potentially challenge Arshad for first place.

"Make videos, take photos, keep a digital memory of this moment," the commentator's voice boomed through the speakers.

The injury-prone athlete was speculated to throw just once, but a sense of disappointment and a thirst for satisfaction was written on his face after two throws in the late 70s.

He wanted to breach the 80m mark — hardly a feat for him when his personal best stands at 92.97m — and he willed it into existence with his third and final throw of 81.81m as he pumped his fists in the air and a smile spread across his face.

Yasir's lone throw of 70m was enough to secure silver and give Wapda a top-two podium finish as he avoided aggravating an injury, while Army's Abrar Ali won bronze with a 67.68m throw.

Finishing in sixth place was Arshad's younger brother Aleem, not quite the replica of the family jewel but perhaps a work in progress to reach that level of sporting excellence.

Arshad's coach Salman Butt was giving him advice in the two throws before pivoting back to



Arshad with technical advice and motivation.

Arshad was showered with well-wishes and selfies and handshakes from the end of the event till the medal ceremony.

The international superstar looked just as pleased with the local stardom he radiates everywhere he goes, his very presence at an event marking it as historic.

"If this event were happening in any other South Asian country, people would be leaning out the windows to get a glimpse of his throw," one of the commentators said.

"We're thankful that the Olympic record holder is here competing among the younger players and inspiring the next generation. This day will be remembered for ages to come."

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## Shakib wants home farewell series

**NEWS DESK:** Former Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan wants to return home to play a match in all three formats before ending his international career, the 38-year-old said.

Considered the greatest cricketer ever produced by Bangladesh, Shakib left the country after the toppling of the Sheikh Hasina-led government last year.

The all-rounder had been a member of parliament for the Awami League led by Hasina, whose 15-year rule as prime minister ended with her fleeing to India following deadly protests.

"I am officially not retired from all formats," Shakib said on the *Beard Before Wicket* podcast on Sunday.

"This is the first time I'll be revealing that. My plan is to go



back to Bangladesh, play one full series of ODI, test, and T20, and retire.

"I mean, (I can) retire from all formats in a series ... I want to play a whole series and retire. That's what I want."

Shakib has not played international cricket since his 71st test in India last year, after which he announced his retirement from T20 Internationals.

He then expressed to play a farewell test

when he featured in the second Test against India in Kanpur.

His long absence has been tied to political unrest in Bangladesh, where the Awami League, the party he represented as an MP, was ousted from power in August.

After the regime change, Shakib remained outside the country while continuing to feature in away Tests in Pakistan and India.

Shakib Al Hasan had previously announced a step back from T20s and said he wished to play his final Test during the home series against South Africa last October.

However, protests around the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium and security concerns led the BCB, under the interim government, to omit him from the squad.

Shakib has not played for Bangladesh since October 2024.

## Torres treble helps Barca extend Liga lead

**NEWS DESK:** Ferran Torres netted a first-half hat-trick to help Barcelona thrash Real Betis 5-3 and move four points clear at the top of La Liga on Saturday.

Lamine Yamal and Roony Bardghji scored the other goals as the champions racked up what was mostly a comfortable victory in Seville, until they conceded two late goals.

Real Madrid, second, host Celta Vigo on Sunday aiming to reel Hansi Flick's side back in.

Fourth-place Atletico Madrid fell to a second defeat this week with a 1-0 loss at Athletic Bilbao.

Villarreal, third, kept the pressure on La Liga's top two with a 2-0 win over 10-man Getafe.

After some shaky performances Barca beat Diego Simeone's Atletico in midweek and then built on it with another triumph at Betis.

"We are fighting and (my players) were exhausted, so at the end not everyone was 100 percent, and this is normal," Flick told reporters.

"Today is positive. Really positive and compliments for my players." Flick opted to make some rotations, with a key Champions League clash against Eintracht Frankfurt on Tuesday in mind. The German coach started Bardghji on the right wing and Torres up front in place of Robert Lewandowski, as well as moving teenage star Yamal into a central attacking midfield role, where he impressed.

Former Manchester United forward Antony opened the scoring for Betis, fifth, at their temporary La Cartuja home, blasting home after Jules Kounde played him



on the side.

The French defender made amends to help Barca get back level five minutes later, with Torres polishing off his cross at the end of a sharp team move.

Torres struck again in the 15th minute in similar fashion from Bardghji's cross to put Barca in front, and they never looked back.

Bardghji scored the third himself after good work by Pedri to bring the ball forward, the Swedish winger finishing with aplomb.

Torres completed his hat-trick before half-time with a stroke of luck, as his shot deflected home past Alvaro Valls. It was his 11th league goal, making him the second top scorer in La Liga behind Madrid's Kylian Mbappe.

"I already knew I could do this," Torres told Movistar.

"That's what you have to do at Barca, and I'm aiming for many more (goals)."

Yamal netted Barca's fifth from the penalty spot before the hour mark, after former Blaugrana defender Marc Bartra was harshly

penalised for handball.

Marcus Rashford's shot was blocked by Bartra but the ball flew up and struck his hand.

Yamal and Rashford missed big chances before Betis nabbed two late goals, with Diego Llorente turning home at the back post from a corner that Barca defended badly.

Kounde clumsily felled another former Barca player in Ez Abde and Cucho Hernandez rolled home from the spot.

Alex Berenguer's superb late strike from outside the area earned Athletic their late win over Atletico, who are now nine points behind Barcelona.

Atletico had been on a run of 13 matches unbeaten before Barca defeated them in mid-week, with the Basques following it up at their buzzing San Mames stadium.

Ernesto Valverde's Athletic, seventh, were also beaten by Real Madrid on Wednesday but produced a far better showing to defeat the visitors.

"It's impossible to maintain this pace," said the Villarreal coach. "But (the points) you win, you can't lose them."

## Army maintain stranglehold as National Games roll on

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan Army served a powerful reminder of their sporting prowess, seizing 12 gold medals across multiple disciplines as the National Games charged through a pulsating day of action.

Their goldrush on Sunday was spearheaded by utter dominance in taekwondo and sharp shooting on the ranges.

The clearest demonstration of authority came in the taekwondo Poomsae events, where Army fighters ruled the roost, clinching eight gold medals across age categories.

Their women set the tone: Sana Sahir (Under-50), Naila (U-30), Mehar-Un-Nisa (U-40) and Zeena Sheraz (Under-20) all stood atop the podium. The men followed suit with Adil Hussain (U-9), Mohammad Mumtaz (U-40), Ishad Ali (U-50) and Syed Zohaib (U-20) securing their own golds.

On the shooting ranges, Army and Navy engaged in a high-class duel, sharing three gold medals apiece.

Navy swept the 10m air pistol events, with Rabia Kabir (22-2) edging Army's Rimsha Nadeem (231-6) for individual glory before teaming with Rasm Gul and Hadia Liaquat for team gold.

Army struck back in the 25m rapid fire pistol through Mohammad Shabbir while Navy's G



M. Bashir, Maqbool Hussain and Abdul Qudus took the team title.

Army also claimed both skeet Olympic titles, with Imam Haroon (score 49) leading the charge.

Sindh's first gold came in the women's 48kg taekwondo final, where Sindh's most dramatic narrative unfolded away from the established powers, as the Sindh women's netball team rose above a feisty, fractious final to secure a dominating 20-12 victory over favourites Wapda, claiming a state-

ment gold — a first for the contingent.

It was a triumph of provincial grit over a departmental side with round training access.

"That makes this even better," Sindh skipper Qurat-ulain told Dawn. Team-mate Huma echoed the hunger for more support: "We'll go a long way if we get that

opportunity."

The match itself descended into chaos. After Sindh seized a 13-9 half-time lead, the Sindh fans seemed to boil over.

A third-quarter collision escalated into a shoving match. In the final quarter, a Wapda player made an explosive gesture, inciting the crowd. Sindh held their nerve, but sportsman-

ship evaporated at the final buzzer.

Handshakes were skipped, and an hour later, a sullen Wapda and bronze-winning Army

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## Tearful Norris takes F1 title as Verstappen wins Abu Dhabi race

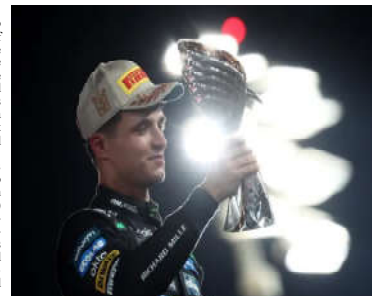
**NEWS DESK:** Lando Norris sebbled tears of joy and relief as he won the Formula One championship for the first time and ended Max Verstappen's four-year reign with a nervy third place at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Sunday.

Red Bull's Verstappen, who ended the campaign with more wins (eight) than any driver, triumphed in the season-end race with McLaren's Oscar Piastri second and 12.5 seconds behind at the chequered flag.

Norris, Britain's 11th Formula One world champion, took his points tally to 423 with Verstappen on 421 and Piastri third with 410.

McLaren, who secured the constructors' championship in October for the second year in a row, won both titles in the season for the first time since 1998.

"I've not cried in a while, I didn't think I would cry but I did," said an emotional



Norris in a post-race interview, after also shedding tears inside his helmet.

"It feels amazing. I now know what Max feels like a little bit."

"I want to congratulate Max and Oscar, my two biggest competitors the whole season. It's been a pleasure to race against both of them. It's been an honour, I've learned a lot from both," he added.

Norris's mother Cisca gave Piastri a

consoling hug while both Verstappen and the Australian congratulated the new champion in a show of sportsmanship.

The victory denied Verstappen the achievement of five titles in a row, something only Ferrari great Michael Schumacher has managed so far.

Charles Leclerc finished fourth in Sunday's race for Ferrari with George Russell fifth for Mercedes and

Fernando Alonso sixth for Aston Martin.

Esteban Ocon was seventh for Haas, ahead of Ferrari's seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton — who failed to stand on the podium all year in a career low for the 40-year-old who joined the Italian team this year from Mercedes.

Sauber's Nico Hulkenberg was ninth in the German's 25th race and Lance Stroll 10th for Aston Martin.

## 'Time of brutality, impunity and indifference': UN slams world's 'apathy' in launching aid appeal for 2026

**NEWS DESK:** The United Nations on Monday hit out at global "apathy" over widespread suffering as it launched its 2026 appeal for humanitarian assistance, which is limited in scope as aid operations confront major funding cuts.

"This is a time of brutality, impunity and indifference," UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher told reporters, condemning "the ferocity and the intensity of the killing, the complete disregard for international law, horrific levels of sexual violence" he had seen on the ground in 2025.

"This is a time when the rules are in retreat, when the scaffolding of coexistence is under sustained attack, when our survival antennae have been numbed by distraction and corroded by apathy," he said.

He said it was also a time "when politicians boast of cutting aid," as he unveiled a stream-

lined plan to raise at least \$23 billion to help 87 million people in the world's most dangerous places such as Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Haiti and Myanmar.

The United Nations would like to ultimately raise \$33bn to help 135m people in 2026 — but is painfully aware that its overall goal may be difficult to reach, given US President Donald Trump's slashing of foreign aid.

Fletcher said the "highly prioritised appeal" was "based on excruciating life-and-death choices, adding that he hoped Washington would see the choices made, and the reforms undertaken to improve aid efficiency, and choose to "renew that commitment" to help.

The world body estimates that 240m people in conflict zones, suffering from epidemics, or victims of natural disasters and climate change are in need of emergency aid.



"Lowest in a decade" In 2025, the UN's appeal for more than \$45bn was only funded to the \$12bn mark — the lowest in a decade, the world body said.

That only allowed it to help 98m people, 25m fewer than the year before. According to UN data, the United States

remains the top humanitarian aid donor in the world, but that amount fell dramatically in 2025 to \$2.7bn, down from \$11bn in 2024.

Atop the list of priorities for 2026 are Gaza and the West Bank. The UN is asking for \$4.1bn for the occupied Palestinian territories, in order to provide assistance to three million people.

Another country with urgent need is Sudan, where deadly

conflict has displaced millions: the UN is hoping to collect \$2.9bn to help 20m people.

In Tawila, where residents of Sudan's western city of El-Fasher fled ethnically targeted violence, Fletcher said he met a young mother who saw her husband and child murdered.

She fled, with the malnourished baby of her slain neighbors along what he called "the most dangerous road in the world" to Tawila. Men "attacked her, raped her, broke her leg and yet something kept her going through the horror and the brutality," he said. "Does anyone, wherever you come from, whatever you believe, however you vote, not think that we should be there for her?" The United Nations will ask member states to open their government coffers over the next 87 days — one day for each million people who need assistance.

## Qatari PM calls for dialogue with non-state actors for regional peace

**NEWS DESK:** In a region grappling with conflicts from Afghanistan to Gaza, Qatar on Sunday pushed for inclusive political engagement, even with non-state actors, as the only realistic path to lasting stability.

Speaking at the 23rd edition of the Doha Forum, Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani said that durable peace requires "direct communication with all parties involved in a conflict, including armed groups often shunned by Western capitals."

In a session moderated by US journalist Tucker Carlson, Sheikh Mohammed said regional crises, whether in Afghanistan, Palestine, or beyond, cannot be solved by excluding key actors on the ground. "You cannot resolve or reach a solution if you have no one speaking to non-state actors," he said.

It is noteworthy that Qatar is trying to seek a rapprochement between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban regime.

He noted that Qatar's long-standing approach to mediation has been shaped by this principle, which has underpinned its involvement in negotiations from the Afghan peace process to repeated ceasefire efforts in Gaza. Sheikh Mohammed explained that Qatar's relationship with Hamas began more than a decade ago at the request of the United States, which wanted a reliable communication channel with the Palestinian armed group. "When they moved their office back in 2012 here, it was

used only for communication and to facilitate ceasefires and aid to Gaza," he said.

Similarly, he said the Taliban's political office in Doha, established in 2013, was also opened at Washington's request during the group's war with the US and the former Afghan government.

Qatar hosted years of Afghan peace talks, which eventually paved the way for the Doha Agreement and the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

"These experiences, Sheikh Mohammed argued, demonstrate the necessity of having a 'durable peace requires direct communication with all parties involved in a conflict, including armed groups often shunned by Western capitals.'"

Responding to allegations that Qatari funds intended for humanitarian relief in Gaza had been diverted to Hamas, the prime minister was emphatic: "All our aid, financing, and all our support went to the people in Gaza, and it was a very transparent process that the United States is very aware of."

He said Israel itself

had facilitated the distribution of funds and humanitarian assistance into the besieged enclave.

Sheikh Mohammed criticised political actors who, he claimed, were distorting Qatar's role for domestic gain. "Politicians are trying to use this for short-term political gains... to fuel their narratives," he said.

He emphasised that Qatar's mediation has delivered tangible results, including multiple ceasefires, humanitarian pauses, hostage releases, and evacuation arrangements.

This year's Doha Forum, the 23rd edition, brought together over 5,000 delegates from 162 countries, including presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers, military policy experts, and heads of international organisations.

The event, one of the Middle East's most influential policy platforms, explored conflict resolution, humanitarian crises, global governance, and economic instability. The Qatari prime minister also spoke about the Israeli strike on Qatari territory

in September, describing it as a blatant breach of diplomatic norms and the principles of mediation. "The mediator being bombed by one of the parties — this has been unprecedented," he said. "It was an unethical move."

Sheikh Mohammed revealed that US President Donald Trump reacted with surprise and frustration upon learning of Israel's actions. "President Trump expressed his frustration, his disappointment, because he knows everything about the process and how helpful we were throughout," he said.

Commenting on Gaza's devastation following Israel's two-year military campaign, he reiterated Qatar's commitment to humanitarian support but said the burden of reconstruction must fall on the responsible party.

"We will do whatever to alleviate their suffering," he said. "But we will not write the cheque for what others destroyed."

He criticised the international community for what he described as a "double standard."



## Netanyahu expects to move to Gaza truce second phase soon

**NEWS DESK:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced Sunday he expected the second phase of the US-sponsored ceasefire plan for Gaza to begin soon, and said he would meet President Donald Trump this month.

The truce, in effect since October 10, has halted the war that began after Hamas's deadly attack on Israel on October 7, 2023.

But it remains delicate as Israel and Hamas accuse each other of violations.

Under the terms of the ceasefire that entered into force on October 10, Palestinian militants released the remaining 47 living and dead captives seized on their October 7, 2023 attack on Israel. All of the hostages have so far been released except for the



body of an Israeli police officer.

Speaking after meeting German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in Jerusalem, Netanyahu said: "We very shortly expect to move into the second phase, which is more difficult."

The plan's initial steps saw Israeli troops withdraw to positions behind a so-called "Yellow Line" in Gaza, though still in control of

more than half the territory.

Israel's army chief, Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir, said the demarcation line is a "new border line," the military quoted him as saying later Sunday.

The second stage of the Gaza truce plan concerns disarming Hamas, the further withdrawal of Israeli forces as a transitional authority is established, and

the deployment of an international stabilisation force.

A final goal of the agreement is the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza in phases if certain conditions are met.

"We have a second phase, no less daunting, and that is to achieve the disarmament of Hamas and the demilitarisation of Gaza," Netanyahu said.

Flurry of aid diplomacy Qatar and Egypt,

which helped secure the long-elusive truce, called Saturday for the next steps to be taken including the withdrawal of Israeli troops.

Hamas said on the same day it was ready to hand over its weapons in Gaza to a Palestinian authority on the condition that the Israeli army's occupation ends.

## Thailand launches air strikes at Cambodia as border tensions reignite

**NEWS DESK:** Thailand has launched air strikes along its disputed border with Cambodia, the Thai military said on Monday, after both countries' armies accused the other of breaching a ceasefire agreement brokered by US President Donald Trump.

At least one Thai soldier has been killed and four wounded in the fresh clashes that broke out around two areas in the easternmost province of Ubon Ratchathani.

Thailand's military said in a statement, after its troops came under Cambodian fire.

"The Thai side has now begun using aircraft to strike military targets in several areas," the statement said.

Cambodia's defence ministry said in a statement that the Thai military had launched down attacks on its forces at two locations, following days of provocative

actions, and added that Cambodian troops had not retaliated.

Thailand's army said Cambodia's military had fired BM-21 rockets towards Thai civilian areas, adding there were no reports of casualties.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim urged Thailand and Cambodia to exercise restraint, warning the fighting risked undoing the careful work that went into a ceasefire he helped to broker.

"We urge both sides to exercise maximum restraint, maintain open channels of communication and make full use of the mechanisms in place," the statement said.

Anwar, the chair of the regional bloc ASEAN, said in a post on X.

Ceasefire breakdown

The border dispute had erupted into a five-day conflict in July, before a ceasefire deal

brokered by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and Trump, who also witnessed the signing of an expanded peace agreement between the two countries in Kuala Lumpur in October.

At least 48 people were killed and an estimated 300,000 temporarily displaced during the July clashes, with the neighbours exchanging rockets and heavy artillery fire.

Following a landmine blast last month that maimed one of its soldiers, Thailand said it was halting the implementation of the ceasefire pact with Cambodia.

Cambodia's influential former longtime leader Hun Sen, father of current premier Hun Manet, said Thailand's military were "aggressors" seeking to provoke a retaliatory response and urged Cambodian forces to exercise re-

straint.

"The red line for responding has already been set. I urge commanders at all levels to educate all officers and soldiers accordingly," Hun Sen said on Facebook, without elaborating.

In Thailand, more than 385,000 civilians across four border districts are being evacuated, with over 35,000 already housed in temporary shelters, the Thai military said.

Thailand and Cambodia have for more than a century contested sovereignty at undermarked points along their 817km land border, first mapped in 1907 by France when it ruled Cambodia as a colony.

Simmering tension has occasionally exploded into skirmishes, such as a weeklong artillery exchange in 2011, despite attempts to peacefully resolve overlapping claims.



## India's Goa state orders probe after nightclub fire kills 25

**NEWS DESK:** Indian authorities ordered an investigation and offered compensation to victims on Sunday after a fire ripped through a nightclub in the western state of Goa, killing 25.

Police were alerted to the blaze at the Birch by Romeo Lane club at 12:04am, Goa's police chief told the ANI news agency. The fire worked through the night to bring the fire under control and finally all the bodies were recovered.

Images on local and social media showed firefighters dousing flames and ambulances lining up. Reuters could not immediately verify whether the images were from the nightclub.

"Most people died due to suffocation in the basement and kitchen area," Nitin V. Raiker,

Goa's fire chief, told Indian broadcaster CNN News18. "I received information that there was a club party going on and a fire show was organised in the club. The wooden parts of the club caught fire, and smoke spread throughout the building." Four tourists among dead;

Modi announces compensation At least four

of the dead were tourists and 14 were club staff, police told ANI. Police did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Goa, a former Portuguese colony on the shores of the Arabian Sea, lures millions of tourists every year with its nightlife, sandy beaches and laid-back coastal atmosphere.

About 5.5 million tourists, including 271,000 from abroad, visited Goa in the first half of the year, according to government data.

"Today is a very painful day for all of us," Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said in a statement, saying that 25 people have lost their lives and six have been injured.

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