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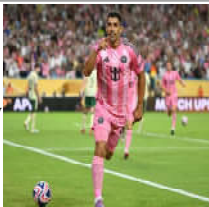


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Rs.10.00 Vol.VII:No: 87
Email address: dquettavoice@gmail.com
Website: www.quettavoice.com
Friday 19, December, 2025

First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan

Editor: Asim Khan.

QUETTA VOICE



File Photo: SBK Teachers Protest Outside Balochistan Assembly

SBKWU Teacher Recruitment Scandal Raises Alarms for Pakistan's Education System

Syed Ali Shah:

Quetta: Serious questions have emerged over the secondary teachers recruitment process conducted by Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (SBKWU), triggering widespread concern about merit, transparency, and accountability in Balochistan's education system.

It is essential to clarify a point that has caused public confusion: the advertised posts

were NOT for SBKWU itself. The university was only assigned the responsibility of conducting tests and interviews for Secondary School Teacher recruitment across Balochistan.

According to initial findings, hundreds of candidates who had failed were allegedly declared successful during the teacher recruitment process.

Given the scale of the exercise, involving thousands of applicants for secondary teaching positions across the province, such irregularities

cannot reasonably be described as clerical mistakes. The magnitude strongly suggests organised manipulation, carried out with the involvement or protection of influential individuals rather than the actions of a single official.

This issue strikes at the heart of education governance in Balochistan. Secondary school teachers shape the academic foundation of students, and any compromise on merit directly damages learning outcomes.

In Balochistan, where literacy rates remain among the lowest in the country, flawed teacher recruitment further deepens an already critical education crisis. Reports that deserving candidates were sidelined only intensify public frustration and mistrust.

All anti-corruption and accountability institutions must take immediate notice.

A transparent, independent, and time-bound investigation is necessary to identify those responsible for manipu-

lating the recruitment process conducted under SBKWU's authority. Accountability must reach every individual involved, regardless of status or influence.

This is not merely an administrative controversy; it is a matter of justice and the future of Balochistan's education system. If credibility in teacher recruitment collapses, public trust in institutions will collapse with it. Balochistan cannot afford silence where integrity is at stake.

Info minister notes 'employment issues' in advertising sector due to AI adoption

NEWS DESK:

Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Thursday acknowledged 'employment issues' among creatives within the advertising sector due to the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) tools and invited proposals to address the problem.

In a post on X, the minister wrote that widespread AI adoption is affecting the employment of creative minds in the sector, specifically referring to content creators, graphic designers and editors, creative directors, actors and models and technicians and cameramen.

"I am inviting proposals on how to address this problem and how to save these professions from becoming redundant," Tarar wrote, urging people to send proposals to an email address linked to the Press Information Department.

An International Labour Organisation (ILO) report published in May found that around "one in four workers across the world are in an occupation with some degree of exposure" to generative AI models' capabilities.

News Desk:

The Balochistan Assembly on Tuesday strongly rejected what it described as a coordinated smear campaign on social media, declaring the spread of negative propaganda against elected representatives unacceptable.

During the session, it was discussed that alleged corruption-related stories involving provincial ministers and members of the provincial assembly (MPAs) have recently gone viral on social media, prompting serious concern within the House. Lawmakers termed these circulating claims part of an organised attempt to malign elected representatives without due process.

The issue was raised by Leader of the Opposition Younas Zuhri, who alleged that the ongoing campaign was deliberately aimed at character assassination of assembly members. He said that accountability should be encouraged, but unverified and sensational allegations were being used to damage reputations. Members from across party lines endorsed this view, calling the



viral content misleading and baseless. Speaker of the Balochistan Assembly Abdul Khaliq Achakzai issued a firm ruling, stating that

the Assembly would neither succumb to blackmail nor remain silent in the face of character attacks.

He directed that the Cyber Crime Department be summoned and instructed the authorities to initiate legal action against those

CM Murad announces tech upgrades in Sindh Police

NEWS DESK:

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has announced wide-ranging reforms and technological upgrades in the Sindh Police, saying that it currently comprises 162,000 personnel and operates 618 police stations across 31 districts. The force has an annual budget of approximately Rs190 billion.

Shah said this while addressing officers of the Pakistan Navy's 55th Pakistan Navy (PN) Staff Course and 23rd Correspondence Staff Course on Thursday. The Pakistan Navy officers were led by Rear Admiral Sohail Ahmed Azmi, Commandant of the Pakistan Navy War College and Commander Central Punjab.

The ceremony was held at the Chief Minister's (CM) House and was attended by provincial ministers, Ghulam Nabi Memon, the Inspector General of Police (IGP), and provincial secretaries.

The CM added that the force is being modernised across its structure, operations and welfare domains in terms of renovation and upgrading of police stations, along with greater financial autonomy. Station House Officers (SHOs) and investigation officers have been granted Drawing and Disbursing Officer (DDO) powers, which allow them greater autonomy in managing finances, streamlining operational capacity.

Shah said the police station record management system has been linked with the forensic DNA chemical and judicial systems, allowing judges to monitor case progress online. He elaborated on the Sindh Smart Surveillance System (S-4), a digitisation mechanism for improving the law and order situation.

The S-4 Surveillance and the Police Health Insurance Scheme at the CPO Karachi were introduced in June 2024. Shah described S-4 as an initiative that will effectively monitor all entry and exit points of the city using modern technology, aiding in crime reduction. He assured that safety measures for the Safe City project would be implemented.

The CM approved Rs1.567 billion in funds for the purchase of camera systems from NRTC. He noted that modern cameras had been installed at 40 toll plazas in Sindh, including 18 in Karachi. A central control room and fusion system were established at the CPO Data Centre for real-time alerts and monitoring.

involved in running defamatory campaigns on social media.

Several members stressed that while the Assembly fully supports transparency and accountability, the circulation of alleged corruption stories without evidence cannot be justified.

They demanded comprehensive investigations into fake, anonymous, and misleading social media accounts allegedly being used to spread defamatory and anti-state narratives.

Reiterating a zero-tolerance policy on corruption, the Speaker emphasized that allegations must be backed by proof and pursued through lawful forums.

He informed the House that initial action by cyber crime authorities had already begun, with cases being registered under relevant legal provisions, including Sections 20 and 26-A.

The Assembly unanimously condemned the smear campaign and agreed that the response would not be limited to statements alone, stressing the need for effective and decisive action against those responsible for spreading unverified and defamatory content.

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?

Desperate 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 Quetta? Why is communication with consumers absent?

The unannounced nature of the load shedding exposes a complete disregard for public convenience. When 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 long-standing injustices.

The Looming threat of Climate Crisis in Pakistan



Sardar Mengal:

Climate change is unleashing its worst effects in the form of heavy rainfalls and disastrous floods. Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change had already waved multiple red flags about dire consequences of climate change in Pakistan. The authorities should have been on their toes in response to the contours of the crisis but we witnessed everything otherwise.

Balochistan Vulnerable to Climate Crisis

It is noteworthy that almost 30 districts of Balochistan have been badly hit by the current climate emergency. People who were already drowning in man made disasters of inflation, poverty,

political crisis are currently drowning in a Natural disaster. Nushki, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Bolan and Jhal Magsi received much of the inflictions of flash floods.

People were left stranded to flow with the waves as seen in footages, circulating on social media. Unfortunately, disturbing pictures of dead bodies of children covered with mud, families who were sitting helplessly on debris of their houses and sinking valuables of the people couldn't awaken the government from its stupor. Even more gloomily, the enraging waves of floods engulfing lives and property, converting everything into dust & debris and wreaking havoc all

around, couldn't merit breaking news on national media.

Prior disregard and later delayed response have multiplied inflictions of the catastrophe.

Loss of land communication has further isolated the stricken areas making true estimation of destruction more exhausting.

Timely decision and act can reduce the effect of Climate Change.

To stop ballooning problems into crisis; rescue, relief and rehabilitation operations should be carried out on full scale as the current pace is insufficient to meet the requirement. NDMA and PDMA need to reach out to the peripheral areas that are out of the

radar.

It's high time for the provincial and federal coalition government to pay special attention to those whose lives are at the stake. Political parties need to rise above the traditional politics and launch concerted efforts to help out the calamity stricken at the earliest. Social welfare organisations should come forward to heal the lesions of suffering humans. On national media, there should be special discourse and discussion on settlement and rehabilitation of the affected people.

In addition to ensuring: re-building of eroded infrastructure, compensation for losses, clean water, adequate supply of food, there should be numerous measures in pipeline to overcome the post-flood outcomes such as increased risk of infectious diseases. The flood-stricken area can become a breeding ground for many health related problems. Supplying preventive medicines and upholding precautionary measures can halt the onslaught of infectious diseases.

The state machinery in its all forms should come into play to navigate a safe passage out of this hurricane of climate emergency enveloping us now.

The author is a final year MBBS student at King Edward Medical University Lahore, Pakistan. He can be reached on twitter via @SardarMengal11.

IRC reaches to 29,000 out of school girls in Balochistan

By Shakoor Khan: International Rescue Committee (IRC) under its Teach & Educate Adolescent Girls with Community Help (TEACH) project, reached out to 29,000 out-of-school girls of 5 districts of Balochistan including Pishin, Killa Abdullah, Nushki, Khara and Chagai.

"IRC is striving hard to promote girl's education in Balochistan besides imparting vocational trainings on financial literacy and trades to make them financially independent," said Sharief Mengal, Head of IRC Balochistan during a policy dialogue titled "Improving future of girl's education in Balochistan held in collaboration with UK aid at local hotel here."

Balochistan Education Minister Naseebullah Mari was the chief guest while representatives from the Education ministry, Directorate of Special Education,

Literacy, Non-Formal Education & Human Rights Department, Balochistan Assessment and Examination Commission, Balochistan Textbook Board, Policy Planning Implementation Provincial Institute of Teachers Education, Education Support Programme, Global Partnership of Education, German Agency for International Cooperation, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Society for Community Strengthening and Promotion of Education, Balochistan, Institute for Development Studies and Practices, Japan International Cooperation Agency also attended the event.

The event hosted conversations with mul-



multiple stakeholders including education experts and government functionaries on the barriers faced by girls in the province in pursuing their education and solutions to combat those barriers.

salient feature of the project IRC

While highlighting the salient feature of the project IRC chief in Balochistan Sharief Mengal said under the 'Girls' Learn' stream of the project, 22,000 girls received classes on Package A, B and C of non-formal curriculum, of them 4000 enrolled in mainstream formal schooling system.

Under 'Girls Earn' stream of the project, 7000 girls completed Package A of the non-formal curriculum, out of these 7000 girls, 5000 received training on financial literacy and business development planning. 2400 girls received training on 8 vocational trades and toolkits and 250 girls received financial grants to start a business.

Naseebullah Mari, Education Minister Balochistan, on the occasion urged that "We must do our part to remove the barriers federal by girls in the region so that every girl can pursue her education and become a valuable member of society".

"The Government is making all out efforts to combat the low literacy rate which has affected

girls from all ethnic groups, and socioeconomic backgrounds,"

We are committed to assist and contribute to building economically prosperous, and educated Balochistan, to every child has access to education.

He however welcomed the support extended by the International Rescue Committee for providing educational and vocational training opportunities, saying he is very grateful for the on-ground initiative of community-based schools in Balochistan."

Abdul Rauf Baloch - Secretary Secondary Education on the occasion appreciated the contributions of IRC for girl's education in Balochistan.

He shared that education is a complex subject which cannot be discussed without WASH, health and other facilities.

This makes it a responsibility of all relevant departments and stakeholders who should play their role effectively.

Zain Ul Abedin Khan, Deputy Director Programs, IRC, in his remarks said that "We as a society need to commit to prioritize and focus on Girls' Education through adequate resources. Girls' education in Balochistan is one of the biggest challenges faced by the country and to deal with it we must work with innovative methods like Non-Formal Education."

He further added

that, "Over the years, we have realized that if girls are unable to reach school, all stakeholders need to fill the gap and provide access to life-long learning opportunities like productive skills and life-skills within communities."

Girl's education is correlated with lower rates of poverty

The panel discussions established an opportunity for the policy makers and practitioners to understand that girl's education is correlated with lower rates of poverty and improved health outcomes. While stimulating dialogue, the stakeholders pledged to work together to eradicate the barriers to girls'

education by providing gender inclusive facilities and quality of education.

The event was a culmination of three sessions where the first was hosted to discuss the barriers faced by girls in pursuing their education.

The panelists of the first session classified the barriers into 3 categories: Cultural, Economic and Service Delivery. The panelists recommended Accelerated Learning Programs (ALPs) as a viable option while integrated with skill-based trainings and digitalized education.

Initiatives to combat the barriers to education

The second session was focused on sustainable initiatives to combat the barriers with the help of Non-Formal Education in bridging the gap between primary and secondary schooling.

Chairperson of the session, Mr. Abdul Khaliq - Chief Planning Officer Policy, Planning, and Implementation Unit welcomed the participants and emphasized the importance of solutions to these barriers.

Personal struggles in overcoming the barriers to education

The third and final session gave the TEACH clients an opportunity to express their personalized struggles in overcoming the barriers to education.

Anam - client of TEACH project from Pishin shared that after joining TEACH ALP center, she can read books and newspapers. Simra from the same district shared that her parents don't allow travelling long distances to attend school but after opening of ALP center at doorstep, she was able to join the classroom for first time in her life. Haleema from Nushki district shared that her mother is the only breadwinner of home and works at households of others to earn income. Haleema shared that she is the only child of her family who can read, thanks to joining ALP center.



Passengers offloaded, restrained from travelling must be provided with written reasons, LHC reminds authorities

NEWS DESK: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday issued a stern reminder to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and other authorities concerned, saying that any person offloaded or restrained from travelling must be provided with written reasons at the time of the action being taken.

LHC's Justice Ali Zia Bajwa made the observations in an order issued after a hearing held at the Multan Bench. On Wednesday, the judge had heard a petition filed by a citizen, Shaheryar Qandeel, against the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other authorities following his offloading from a flight despite being in possession of valid travel documents.

In the order, a copy of which is available with Dawn, Justice Bajwa said, "Let this court take a moment to remind the FIA and all concerned authorities that every exercise of power that infringes upon the fundamental rights of an individual must find its firm and unambiguous foundation in law."

He said that no administrative discretion, however broad, could justify curbing the liberty of citizens unless "it is traceable to a clear statutory provision or

legal mandate". Justice Bajwa held that the rule of law demanded that no person be deprived of their right to travel, move freely, or leave the country except through due process and fair procedure.

"The rule of law demands that no person should be deprived of their right to travel, move freely, or leave the country, particularly when in possession of valid travel documents, except in accordance with law, due process, and fair procedure," he said.

The judge also noted that during the proceedings, the law officers of the government again sought additional time to identify the specific statutory provisions or rules that empowered them to restrain passengers at the "eleventh hour".

The judge also expressed concern after learning from the law officers that no written reasons for the petitioner's offloading were available on the record.

The judge directed the FIA to provide the petitioner with written reasons for his offloading well before the next hearing. Justice Bajwa ruled that this requirement was not a mere formality, but a "substantive safeguard to uphold

PM Shehbaz approves halal meat export policy, orders preparation of strategy to enhance exports

NEWS DESK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday approved the halal meat export policy and directed relevant authorities to present a comprehensive, three-year strategy within two weeks, comprising the measures to increase exports.

Pakistan barely has a 0.25 per cent share in the global halal food trade of more than \$3 trillion, which reflects the need for the government and private sector to take proactive initiatives to explore the true potential of 'Made in Pakistan' products and establish a niche for itself.

The decision was made during a meeting of a committee established to enhance Pakistan's halal meat export market, focusing on the export of halal meat reforms. PM Shehbaz was presiding over the meeting.



A comprehensive strategy, formulated through coordination among all relevant federal ministries and provincial governments, is essential and significant to make Pakistan's share in the halal meat market in livestock in accordance with international standards and for remaining competitive with regional production volumes. Organised centres, developed through cooperation between relevant federal ministries and provincial governments, were urgently needed to enhance the production and nutritional value of halal meat, the prime minister stressed. "There is con-

He asked officials to present proposals for improving production, cold storage, and other related aspects of the initiative. He also directed the relevant authorities to take special measures for increasing halal meat production in livestock in accordance with international standards and for remaining competitive with regional production volumes. Organised centres, developed through cooperation between relevant federal ministries and provincial governments, were urgently needed to enhance the production and nutritional value of halal meat, the prime minister stressed. "There is con-

sideable potential to increase Pakistan's export share in Muslim countries as well as in the global halal meat market," he said, assuring the industry that the government would provide full support for international certification of slaughterhouses and bilateral registrations with other countries.

The premier also directed relevant authorities to take special measures for ensuring disease-free conditions and international-standard hygiene arrangements in slaughterhouses across the country. During the briefing, the prime minister was informed that Pakistan's total halal meat production stood at six million metric tons, and after fulfilling domestic requirements, a substantial quantity was available for export.

IHC CJ Dogar-led bench orders Justice Jahangiri's removal as judge 'for having invalid degree at time of appointment'

NEWS DESK: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) ordered the removal of Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri as a judge on Thursday, ruling that his degree was "invalid" at the time of his appointment.

A division bench led by Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Azam Khan announced the judgement, which was reserved earlier today, on a plea that challenged the legitimacy of Justice Jahangiri's law degree and appointment as a judge.

The bench directed Justice Jahangiri to cease his office forthwith for "having an invalid law degree at the time of his appointment and confirmation as a judge".

He also directed the law ministry to notify him as a judge. The bench's decision comes a day after Justice Jahangiri accused CJ Dogar of being "biased" against him and requested the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) to set aside the recent IHC decision to hear a petition challenging his law degree. The same day, he also filed a formal complaint before the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) — the top forum for judicial accountability that probes allegations of misconduct against judges — against the chief justice.

Prior to the issuance of the judgement, University of Karachi (KU) Registrar Imran Ahmed Siddiqui submitted a record of Justice Jahangiri's law degree to the court. He said the KU syndicate had cancelled the judge's degree for having been secured through unfair means.

"Justice Jahangiri was found cheating and creating disturbance in an examination hall in 1988," following which he was debarred from sitting an exam until 1992, he said.

However, instead of complying with the decision, the judge appeared in an exam in 1989 under a changed name, the registrar alleged.

He also submitted a log pertaining to mark sheets and results to justify the KU syndicate's decision.

During his arguments, Advocate Muhammad Akram Sheikh, who was representing Justice Jahangiri, objected to the bench hearing the case.

He contended that a judge who faced legal proceedings could not hear the petition involving a fellow judge, who had challenged his posting.

In July, Justice Jahangiri, along with four other IHC judges, had filed an intra-court appeal against the Supreme Court's constitutional bench decision of upholding the seniority of the IHC that raised Chief Justice Dogar to the top.

The five-judge requested the SC not to consider Justices Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar, Khadim Hussain Soomro and Mohammad Asif as judges of IHC until they took fresh oaths in accordance with Article 194.

The intra-court appeal was fixed before the FCC following its establishment under the 27th Constitutional Amendment and eventually dismissed for non-prosecution.

Sheikh's argument today seemed to be referring to this matter.

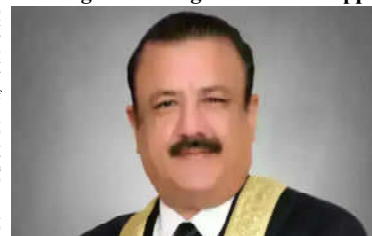
He also highlighted that the Sindh High Court (SHC) had issued a stay order in connection with the matter, arguing that the IHC bench should not hear the case.

This, seemingly, was a reference of the SHC order suspending the cancellation of Justice Jahangiri's law degree by the KU syndicate.

Barrister Salahuddin Ahmad, who was also representing Justice Jahangiri, requested more time from the court to submit a reply.

For his part, the petitioner in the case, lawyer Mian Dawood, alleged that Justice Jahangiri had "misused" the SHC stay order. "Instead of clearing his name," the judge has been filing petitions and scandalising his chief justice," he commented. Following these arguments, the court reserved its judgement in the case and later ordered the removal of Justice Jahangiri.

The controversy surrounding Justice Jahangiri's law degree originated from a letter that began circulating last year on social media, purportedly from the KU controller of examinations. Subsequently, a complaint pertaining to his allegedly fake degree



was submitted to the SIC last year in July and a petition challenging his appointment was also filed in the IHC earlier this year by Dawood.

The controversy followed a protracted legal trajectory since Sept 16, when the same IHC division bench first took up the petition and issued an interim order restraining Justice Jahangiri from performing judicial functions until the maintainability of the petition could be decided. The decision, made without issuing prior notice to the judge, had sparked debate within the legal community over whether a high court could suspend a sitting judge through an interim order. On Sept 29, the SC intervened, setting aside the restraining order.

A five-member constitutional bench, headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, held that a high court could not bar a judge from performing judicial functions while hearing a quo warranto petition.

The ruling clarified that it addressed only the legality of the interim order and not the merits of the allegations. The SC later directed the IHC to decide all preliminary objections and proceed with the matter in accordance with law.

After the IHC resumed the case's proceedings, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) submitted a detailed report to the court on December 8, endorsing KU's findings that the LLB degree of Justice Jahangiri was obtained through unfair means.

The HEC claimed it had never verified Justice Jahangiri's law degree at any stage, nor had the judge ever approached the commission for verification.

At the next hearing on December 9, the court declared Dawood's plea maintainable.

Another notable development in the case came on December 15, when Justice Jahangiri appeared before the court in person, presenting arguments in his defence and raised objections on the division bench hearing his case. He expressed a lack of confidence in the bench on the ground that he had filed an intra-court appeal CJ Dogar.

He also took exception to the "haste" in which the proceedings were being held and criticised the earlier IHC directive barring him from performing judicial functions.

The court, however, dismissed his objections. On December 17, a day before today's hearing — Justice Jahangiri moved a plea through senior counsel (Zair Karim) Bhandari in the FCC, requesting it to set aside the Dec 9 order that declared Dawood's plea maintainable.

The FCC was told that CJ Dogar was biased against Justice Jahangiri and therefore disqualified from hearing any matter relating to his appointment. Justice Jahangiri recalled in the petition that he had already challenged Justice Dogar's transfer to law IHC, followed by his elevation as IHC CJ and in these circumstances judicial propriety required that the IHC chief justice should not preside over proceedings concerning the writ of quo warranto.

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The FCC was told that CJ Dogar was biased against Justice Jahangiri and therefore disqualified from hearing any matter relating to his appointment. Justice Jahangiri recalled in the petition that he had already challenged Justice Dogar's transfer to law IHC, followed by his elevation as IHC CJ and in these circumstances judicial propriety required that the IHC chief justice should not preside over proceedings concerning the writ of quo warranto.

After the IHC resumed the case's proceedings, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) submitted a detailed report to the court on December 8, endorsing KU's findings that the LLB degree of Justice Jahangiri was obtained through unfair means.

The HEC claimed it had never verified Justice Jahangiri's law degree at any stage, nor had the judge ever approached the commission for verification.

FO says Pakistan has sought clarification from India over 'abrupt variation' in Chenab water flows

NEWS DESK: Pakistan on Thursday noted with concern the variation in the flow of the Chenab River, saying that a letter had been written to India seeking clarification on the matter.

In a weekly press briefing, Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Tahir Hussain Andrabi talked about the "abrupt variation" in the flow of the Chenab River, noting that it had been in the news in the past week.

Several media outlets reported this week that India had released water into the Chenab River.

"Pakistan views these variations with extreme concern and seriousness. They allude to unilateral release of water into the Chenab River by India, without any prior notification," Andrabi said.

"Our Indus water commissioner has written a letter to his Indian counterpart seeking clarification on the matters in accordance with the procedures enshrined in the Indus Waters Treaty," he said.

"Any manipulation of river flow by India, especially at a critical time of our agricultural cycle, directly threatens the life and livelihood as well as food and economic security of our citizens," he said.

"We call upon India to respond to the queries raised by the Pakistani Indus water commissioner, refrain from any unilateral manipulation of river flow and fulfil its obligations in letter and spirit under the Indus Water Treaty provisions," he said.

He further said that the Indus Waters Treaty was a "binding international agreement", which had been "an instrument of peace and security and stability in the region".

Under the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, three rivers that flow westwards — Indus, Chenab and Jhelum — were awarded to Pakistan, with India getting three eastern-flowing rivers of the Indus Basin.

Andrabi said that violating the treaty threatened the "inviolability of international treaties and compliance with international law".

and also posed a serious threat to "regional peace, principles of good neighbourliness, and norms governing interstate relations".

The international community must take notice of India's continued disregard of a bilateral treaty, and counsel India to act responsibly and in accordance with international law and established norms as well as its own obligations," Andrabi said.

"Pakistan remains committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes and issues with India but will not compromise on the existential water rights of the people of our country," he said.

In April, India had held the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance following the attack on tourists in occupied Kashmir's Pahalgam that killed 26 — an incident New Delhi blamed on Islamabad without evidence. "Pakistan termed any attempt to suspend its water share under the treaty an 'act of war', noting the treaty had no provision for unilateral suspension.

Pakistan is one of only two countries in the world, along with Afghanistan, where polio has not yet been eradicated. The current campaign is being conducted simultaneously in both countries as part of coordinated regional efforts to eliminate the virus.

According to the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC), more than 37.8 million children under the age of five were administered polio drops during the first three days of the campaign, which began

NEWS DESK: Pakistan's final nationwide polio vaccination campaign of 2025 continued for a fourth day, with authorities reporting that nearly 38 million children have been immunised.

Pakistan is one of only two countries in the world, along with Afghanistan, where polio has not yet been eradicated. The current campaign is being conducted simultaneously in both countries as part of coordinated regional efforts to eliminate the virus.

According to the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC), more than 37.8 million children under the age of five were administered polio drops during the first three days of the campaign, which began

on 15 December and will run until 21 December. Punjab recorded the highest coverage, with about 20.8 million children immunised, followed by Sindh with more than 7.4 million. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,



over 6.1 million children received the vaccine, while Balochistan recorded more than 2.1 million vaccinations.

Officials in Islamabad reported that over 417,000 children had been immunised. In

Gilgit-Baltistan, more than 256,000 children received the vaccine, while Azad Jammu and Kashmir recorded over 689,000 vaccinations.

Health authorities said more than 400,000 polio workers are participating in the campaign, conducting door-to-door immunisations.

The National EOC has urged parents and communities to cooperate with vaccination teams, noting that polio is incurable and can cause lifelong paralysis. Officials appealed to parents to ensure all children under five are vaccinated.

Low routine immunisation coverage, vaccine hesitancy, and population movement continue to leave spaces where the virus survives, and health officials have repeatedly warned that the success of the polio eradication programme depends heavily on community participation and public trust, particularly in high-risk areas.

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KP Govt launches 'Home Stay' initiative to boost tourism

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has taken a landmark step to promote tourism by launching the "Home Stay" initiative under the Mezbani

(Host) Program, Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi said while distributing interest-free loan cheques among beneficiaries. The CM stated that the project aims to pro-

vide interest-free loans of up to Rs3 million to establish home-stay facilities. According to an official briefing, cheques have so far been distributed among

95 beneficiaries under the Mezbani Program. The scheme covers residents of Swat, Upper and Lower Chitral, Upper and Lower Dir, Abbottabad, and Mansehra.

Sohail Afridi said the initiative will enable national and international tourists to enjoy quality accommodation in private homes, offering them a sense of hospitality along with

modern facilities. "The core objective of the Mezbani Program is to provide tourists with warmth, dignity, and quality services," he added. The CM emphasized that the KP

government believes in earning with dignity and giving dignity, adding that despite limited resources, the PTI-led provincial government is investing directly in its people.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the working group on IT.

DG ISPR holds special interactive session with faculty, students of COMSATS university

RAWALPINDI, Dec 18 (INP): Director General Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) Lt General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry visited COMSATS university Islamabad Campus and held a detailed discussion on the country's internal security situation, the spread of misinformation, and other important issues with the faculty members and students. During the special session, the DG ISPR gave comprehensive and well-reasoned answers to the questions raised by the participants. The participants paid glowing tribute to the everlasting sacrifices of the Pakistan Armed Forces for the motherland. They said the spread of unverified information without proper facts checking

144 textile mills closed in country, says APTMA Chairman

LAHORE (INP): As many as 144 textile mills have been closed across the country, said All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) Chairman Kamran Arshad on Thursday. He said that the rates of gas and electricity for these mills were extremely high. "Heavy taxes are also to blame for the closure of mills," he said, and added, "To make matters worse, the government has again increased the prices of electricity for industrial units." The APTMA chairman said that industries would only grow in the country when electricity would be available at Rs25 per unit, not at Rs35 per unit. "Electricity in Pakistan is costly than India, Bangladesh and Vietnam," he informed that 10 per cent less electricity was consumed in November. Arshad said that due to the closure of these units, the export of textile products has dropped. He also demanded bringing the interest rate down to single digits. On the other hand, despite the fact that the strike by the containerers' association is over, it has hit the textile industry badly, prompting the mills' owners to write to concerned ministries to make demands. Mills' owners have said that the one-and-a-half-week-long strike delayed the transportation of import and export items. APTMA, the representative body of mills' owners, has demanded the government to give time for the payment of electricity bills. APTMA Zonal Chairman Naveed Gulzar has said that the textile industry was already grappling with so many issues, and the strike by the containerers' association exacerbated the situation.

President, PM pay tribute to Lance Naik Muhammad Mehfooz Shaheed

ISLAMABAD, Dec 18 (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif have paid glowing tributes to the valor and audacity of Lance Naik Muhammad Mehfooz Shaheed, who was injured on the Wagah Border in the 1971 War. Lance Naik Muhammad Mehfooz Shaheed stood firm against the enemy. In their separate statements, they said the bravery and historic sacrifice of Lance Naik Muhammad Mehfooz Shaheed in the battlefield will always remain a beacon of light for the nation and future generations.

The President, in his message, said Lance Naik Muhammad Mehfooz Shaheed is a shining symbol of bravery, sacrifice and unwavering loyalty to the country. He said, despite being seriously injured on the Wagah Border in the 1971 War, Lance Naik Muhammad Mehfooz Shaheed stood firm against the enemy. President Asif Ali Zardari said the sacrifice of Lance Naik Muhammad Mehfooz Shaheed in the battlefield will always remain a beacon of light for the nation and future generations. The Prime Minister said Lance Naik Muhammad Mehfooz Shaheed, with his

Tarar warns fake news on social media poses biggest challenge of digital age

ISLAMABAD, Dec 18 (INP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday cautioned that fake news, circulating on social media has become the greatest challenge of the digital era. He emphasized that in today's world, it is vital to use social media responsibly and to strike a balance in the face of rapidly evolving technologies. Speaking at the closing session of the National Cyber Security Seminar, the minister underscored that a grasp of cybersecurity must start with demographic realities. Pakistan's digital landscape, he noted, encompasses more than 117 million internet users, 148 million mobile broadband

subscribers, and upwards of 79 million active social media accounts. He said, digital life today is split along a generational fault line. On one side are the digital immigrants—those who stepped into the online world later in life, adapting to its rapid evolution. On the other are the digital natives—a generation born into cyberspace, fluent in its language from the start. Speaking on the divide between generations, he noted that digital natives tend to navigate technology instinctively, while digital immigrants are still learning to use social media responsibly. He emphasized that during this period, editorial oversight existed, boards of directors were in place, and in

India's unannounced water discharge threatens regional stability: FO

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan on Thursday strongly condemned India's sudden and unannounced release of water into shared rivers as an act of water aggression, warning that violations of the Indus Waters Treaty pose a serious threat to regional peace and stability. Speaking at a weekly press briefing in Islamabad, Foreign

Office spokesperson Tahir Hussain Andarabi said that an unusual fluctuation in the Chenab River's water level was recorded on December 7, raising alarm in Pakistan over the potential risks associated with unannounced water releases. The spokesperson stressed that unilateral actions concerning shared rivers were unacceptable under the treaty framework and warned that such actions could undermine peace and stability in the region. The spokesperson also raised concerns over the treatment of religious minorities in India, stating that minority communities continued to face discriminatory practices. He called on the Indian government to fulfill its constitutional and international obligations by ensuring the protection of minority religious rights.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain chairing a high-level meeting on molecular assessment of olive varieties and olive sector development at the Ministry's Secretariat.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Chaudhry speaks with a delegation from China's Shandong Xinru Group during a meeting.

China leads Pakistan's FDI inflows in November with \$81.6m: Report

ISLAMABAD, Dec 18 (INP): China remained Pakistan's largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in November, injecting a net \$81.6 million into the economy as total inflows from all partner countries stood at \$197.7 million, data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) showed, according to Gwadar Pro. China accounted for more than 41% of the total FDI received during the month. Gross inflows from the Chinese mainland amounted to \$92.7 million, while outflows of \$11.1 million reduced the figure to a net \$81.6 million. Hong Kong of China, classified sepa-

rately in the SBP data, contributed net inflows of \$23.3 million in November. Other major investment partners during the month included Switzerland (\$16.8 million), the United Arab Emirates (\$14.5 million) and South Korea (\$8.3 million), while the remaining inflows came from other countries. China also remained its position as Pakistan's leading investor during the first five months of the ongoing fiscal year 2025-26. From July to November, China injected \$308.4 million, accounting for about one-third of the \$927.4 million in total net FDI received during the period. During the July-

November period, Pakistan received net FDI from the UAE (\$100.8 million), Switzerland (\$89.4 million), the United Kingdom (\$55.6 million), South Korea (\$40.4 million), Canada (\$38.3 million), Japan (\$32.5 million), Bahrain (\$22.2 million), Malaysia (\$16.7 million), the Netherlands (\$16.3 million), France (\$12.2 million), Norway (\$11.2 million), the United States (\$11.2 million) and Singapore (\$10.2 million). Sector-wise data showed that in November, the power sector attracted the largest inflows at \$86.8 million, including investments in thermal (\$6.9 million), hydel

(\$36.3 million) and coal-based projects (\$43.6 million). Financial businesses followed with \$67.7 million, while electrical machinery received \$13 million. In the first five months of FY26, the power sector remained the dominant destination for foreign investment, drawing \$383.8 million, including coal-based projects (\$187.5 million), hydel (\$162.7 million) and thermal (\$33.6 million). Other sectors attracting inflows included food (\$44.3 million), electrical machinery (\$58.5 million), petroleum refining (\$28.6 million) and textiles (\$16.8 million), according to SBP data.

Chief Minister (CM) Reviews Plan to Extend Green Bus Service in Quetta

NEWS DESK:
Q U E T T A : Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting to review a proposal

for extending the Green Bus Service to the Harley Health Services Projects area in Quetta. Buy vitamins and supplements

The meeting examined the progress of the expansion initiative,

proposed new routes, and measures to enhance travel facilities for the public, particularly patients and healthcare workers.

Discussions also focused on improving the standard and efficiency of public transport services in the city.

Officials briefed the Chief Minister that the proposed extension



sion would provide convenient and timely access to the Harley Health Services Projects area, easing travel for residents, patients, and medical staff. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Bugti said that ensuring safe, modern, and efficient public transport for urban populations is a key priority of the provincial government.

He directed the relevant departments to complete the expansion project within the approved timeline, stressing that service quality, cleanliness, punctuality, and passenger comfort must be maintained without compromise. He further instructed that route planning should be designed to benefit the maximum number of commuters, with special attention given to the needs of women, senior citizens, patients, and persons with disabilities. The meeting was attended by Parliamentary Secretary for Transport Mir Liaquat Ali Lehri, Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary for Development and Planning Zahid Saleem, Principal Secretary Babar Khan, Secretary Transport Hayat Khan Kakar, Commissioner Quetta Division Shahzaib Kakar, Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehrullah Badini, and other concerned officials, who also shared recommendations regarding the execution of the project.

Chagai: Saudi Arabia's Governor of Tabuk Prince Fahd bin Sultan Arrives in Dalbandin for Houbara Bustard Hunting

News Desk:
D A L B A N D I N : Saudi Arabia's Governor of Tabuk, Prince Fahd bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, arrived in Dalbandin Airport on a special flight for Houbara Bustard hunting. He was received by Provincial Finance Minister Balochistan, Mir Shoaib Jan Noshirwani, and other senior officials, including Commissioner

Rakhshan Division Mahboob Achakzai and Deputy Commissioner Chagai Aftal Muneem Baloch.

The Prince proceeded to his hunting camp under tight security



arrangements. Sources say Prince Fahd bin Sultan visited the Chagai district every year in December and January for Houbara Bustard hunting. Security forces had taken stringent measures to ensure a safe visit.

DC Loralai Inspects New Central Jail, Pledges Support



LORALAI: Deputy Commissioner Miran Baloch inspected the newly constructed Central Jail, reviewing facilities and services. Accompanied by ADIG Prisons Sikandar Khan Shabozai and other officials, he assessed administrative block, women's and

children's barracks, library, hospital, kitchen, and sanitation. Baloch emphasized providing better environment, food, and healthcare for inmates. ADIG Prisons Sikandar Khan Shabozai highlighted the jail's significance as the largest in

Pashtun belt. DC Baloch assured resolving issues, directing B&R department to complete works and hand over the jail. He stated the district administration will support making the jail functional, focusing on rehabilitation and guidance.

Grand Jirga in Nasirabad Emphasizes Peace and Unity

DERA MURAD JAMALI: A grand jirga was held in Nasirabad, organized by FC Balochistan North, with Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jafar Khan Mandokhail, Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, and other dignitaries in attendance.

The jirga discussed regional security, harmony, tribal relations, and development.

Tribal leaders praised Pakistan Army and FC Balochistan North's efforts for peace. Governor Mandokhail emphasized the importance of joint strategy for sustained peace and development. Chief Minister Bugti assured continued efforts for peace, stability, and basic facilities.



LI Gen Rahat Naseem Ahmad Khan stressed unity against terrorism and praised tribal leaders' role in maintaining peace. The jirga concluded with a commitment to stand with state institutions for regional peace, unity, and development.

Preparations Underway for Quaid-e-Azam's 149th Birth Anniversary



TURBATA: meeting was held at the Deputy Commissioner Kech Office Turbat to discuss arrangements for Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's 149th birth

anniversary celebrations in Kech district. Chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner Kech, Tabish Ali Baloch, and Assistant Commissioner Turbat,

Muhammad Hanif Khazai, the meeting was attended by officials from education, agriculture, fisheries, PDMA, MMD, social welfare, industry, environment, and information departments.

The meeting discussed educational and cultural activities, including speeches, tableaux, and national songs, to be held in schools. Officials were urged to

ensure their active participation in the celebrations, which will be held on December 25, to make the event a success. (News Report #9438/2025, Turbat, December 18)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Executive Engineer, Urban Planning & Development Department Loralai Division invites sealed certificate tender based on Composite Schedule of Rates 2023, Government of Balochistan, amended up-to-date from interested Contractors. Firm who have the renewal for the year 2025-26, for the work

Interest/bid/earn: Earnest Money 2%, Tender Fee 1000/- and Time limit 10-05-2026 for each work

S.NO	Name of work	Estimate
1	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF SOLAR FORALREADY BORE AT MALK RAMHUTHANAKHIL PAKAN KOT DISTRICT LORALAI TSE-252612924053	2.00 M
2	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF SOLAR FORALREADY BORE AT HAJI KHAN KIRAZ KILLI SHAHBOZAI DISTRICT LORALAI TSE-252612924044	2.00 M
3	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT NASIRABAD-3 DISTRICT LORALAI TSE-252612924033	28.71 M
4	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT KILLISAFI DISTRICT LORALAI TSE-252612924023	16.00 M
5	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT NEW KACHAMAKZAI & DARGA CHINMALI DISTRICT LORALAI TSE-252612924093	20.00 M
6	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT KILLI CHAPALI ZANGHAI & KILLI TATTI NASARAN DISTRICT LORALAI TSE-252612923993	10.00 M
7	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT TEHSIL NEIGHANILLI MENTKILLI KILLI NALI & SURROUNDING AREAS DISTRICT LORALAI TSE-252612923983	20.00 M
8	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT KILLI BHAGHAD DISTRICT BARKHAN TSE-252612923973	15.00 M
9	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT KILLI KHARKAN DISTRICT BARKHAN TSE-252612923963	10.00 M
10	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT KILLI SHAWOZAI LAMAN SHAWOZAI KILLI KHARNDI KILLI MOZAI DISTRICT MUSAKHAI TSE-252612923913	15.00 M
11	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT KILLI TERABAT, TUPHILZAI KILLI MARAZAN DISTRICT MUSAKHAI TSE-252612923903	10.00 M
12	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT KILLI THALLI KILLI ISMAIL SHAR KILLI NANA SAG KILLI YARD SHAR AND SURROUNDING AREAS DISTRICT DUKI TSE-252612923893	13.00 M
13	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT KILLI MISZAI, KILLI ZANGAL, KILLI HAJI FAZIR DISTRICT DUKI TSE-252612923883	20.00 M
14	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT KILLI HAJI SAHQI, KILLI HAJI TOR NAZAR, KILLI SALMAN DISTRICT DUKI TSE-252612923873	17.00 M
15	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT NASIRABAD-II DISTRICT DUKI TSE-252612923863	25.00 M
16	PROVISION/INSTALLATION OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM AT NASIRABAD-III AND SURROUNDING AREAS DISTRICT DUKI TSE-252612923853	25.00 M

ELIGIBILITY OF BIDDERS: The Contractor must have valid registration with Pakistan Engineering Council in relevant Category G & A above for work in relevant discipline codes. Registration with tax authorities i.e. (NTN, BSA and Sales Tax Department), where applicable. Three Years Relevant Work Experience. The contractor must not either be black listed nor involved in any litigation must be provided on stamp paper showing dates after publication of tender. The bidder must have similar work experience or has completed or has similar work in hand for applying in the tender and produce certificate (original) of completion. Turnover of at least equivalent to 70% average in last three years showing financial capacity of firm. The firm quoting their rates 10% below of contract cost must attach the analysis of rates breakdown of each work. The bidder must provide Call deposit verification letter from the concerned bank showing the serial number, amount and must showing the concerned firm Name. ISO 9001:2015, AS9100 Certificate METHOD OF PROCUREMENT: Single Stage - Two Envelope Procedure BIDDING/ TENDER DOCUMENTS: The Tender Form Bidding Documents will be issued from the date of first publication till submission date and time during working hours and working days, from the address mentioned below head office or production/ green channel form for an amount as mentioned above respectively (as bidding documents charge. Non-refundable) deposited in the head of account C-20870 through Government Treasury / National Bank of Pakistan against written request which should be on original letter head pad having name, address, phone numbers and signature of the contractor. Or can be downloaded from BPPRA website: www.bppra.gov.pk. Tender application should accompany with Earnest Money in shape of deposit at call in favor of the undersigned issued from any scheduled bank against firm's Account. Name of firm should be clearly mentioned on instrument (Deposit at call). Application for issuance of tender documents accompanied with valid copies of PCC, Licenses, NTN and Sales Tax, BSA Certificates, CNIC, and Registration of firm Partnership Deed/Sole Proprietorship/Power of Attorney/Authority letter from the contractor in favor of their representative. No tender will be issued without showing the required documents in ORIGINAL. **ISSUANCE OF TENDER DOCUMENTS:** The tender documents will be issued from the date of publication of this NIT till date of submission i.e. 02nd January, 2026 during office hours. **DEADLINE OF BID SUBMISSION:** The technical and financial proposals from tendering contractors/ firms sealed in one single envelope clearly marked with work title and type of proposal must be submitted latest by 02nd January, 2026 at 10:00 AM at the office of the undersigned. **TENDER OPENING:** The Envelope bids will be opened on the same day i.e. 02nd January, 2026 at 11:00 AM in the office of the undersigned before procurement committee in the presence of contractors or their authorized representatives. **PLACE OF ISSUANCE AND SUBMISSION WILL BE:** Address: Office of the Executive Engineer Urban Planning & Development Department Loralai Division, Loralai. E-mail Address: bidbaloch100@gmail.com. **BID VALIDITY PERIOD:** Ninety (90) Days. **TERMS AND CONDITIONS:** Bidding, Integrity Pact and All other AFFIDAVITS (To be provided by the bidder on Stamp Paper of worth Rs.100/- duly attested by notary public) and detail Terms and conditions are mentioned (incorporated in detail in bidding documents).

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
Urban Planning & Development
Loralai Division at Loralai

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PM seeks post International Monetary Fund (IMF) exit strategy

NEWS DESK: The government has begun discussions to develop a credible strategy to permanently exit the International Monetary Fund (IMF) after the expiry of the \$7 billion bailout package, underscoring the urgent need for co-ordinated national efforts to build buffers and avoid any future programme.

Government sources told The Express Tribune that a high-level meeting has recently taken place to determine whether Pakistan can sustain its economy in the absence of the IMF umbrella after September 2027, when the bailout package would come to an end.

In the absence of urgent reform measures that require building sufficient foreign exchange reserves and creating complete value chains for industries to enhance exports, Pakistan risks slipping into another programme, according to an assessment by the Planning Commission.

When contacted, Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal said, "Our recommendation was that if we are to make the current IMF programme the last one, then we need to come

ourselves to \$63 billion in exports by 2029; otherwise, we will face an external sector gap."

The sources said the official assessment was that when the country transitions from stabilisation to growth mode, its current account deficit may temporarily increase to below 2% of GDP, or over \$10 billion per annum. This would require additional financing of \$4 billion in 2027-28, \$5.5 billion in 2028-29, and another \$3 billion in 2029-30.

The sources said the Planning Commission's assessment was that the country can sustain itself without the IMF and can also manage a projected external financing requirement of over \$12 billion from 2028-30, subject to urgent implementation of deep-rooted reforms.

According to the assessment, Pakistan's additional gross financing needs could exceed \$12 billion during the 2028-31 period. This is projected to be met by increasing exports by another \$4 billion, attracting \$4 billion more in remittances, and securing \$3 billion in new foreign direct investment.

The rest of the gap is projected to be filled through agriculture import substitutes.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The sources said the assessment was that the government should explore options to convert the current \$14 billion short-term bilateral loans into long-term financing to lower external financing requirements.

The Ministry of Finance spokesperson did not reply to a question on whether it agreed with the Commission's assessment of the external financing requirements and the feasibility of converting short-term loans into long-term financing.

Discussions about the country's long-term economic stability have begun after recent public statements by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) regarding the ineffectiveness

of existing economic growth models. There have also been questions as to why the government's plans are not creating any meaningful impact on Pakistan's macroeconomic horizon and why the country remains dependent on the IMF and other international creditors.

The Planning Commission has proposed a three-tier implementation plan, with the first phase starting next year until 2027.

It would require reforms in fiscal management, energy, governance, human resource development and export alignment, and laying foundations for the next phase.

The second phase, 2029-32, would require accelerated strategic focus on investment attraction as a growth catalyst, to kick-start key economic processes with full thrust and focus on industrialisation, export expansion, technological adoption and agricultural modernisation.

In the third phase, it has proposed a strategic focus on drivers of high-quality growth towards a techno-economy.

The sources said the Commission's perspective was that its Urban Pakistan, a 10-year economic plan, could help keep inflation low, maintain economic growth above 6% and enhance exports to a point where external buffers can be built.

There has been criticism over the lack of practical aspects of these plans, including Urban Pakistan, which

talks about making Pakistan a \$1 trillion economy by 2035, but contains no effective strategy to achieve it.

Sources said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has instructed the Planning Commission to develop a result-based strategy to translate the plan into outcomes so that reliance on the IMF can be permanently avoided.

The Commission's assessment was that public and private investment is declining and there is a lack of investment in productive sectors.

There is also a lack of an integrated and structured approach, and poor alignment of investment with strategic plans.

Economic growth is on a downward trajectory, averaging 3.9% compared to 4% in regional countries since 2000, representing declining total factor productivity.

The unemployment rate has risen since 2018-19, with unemployed persons increasing to 4.7 million in 2020-21 and reaching about 6 million by 2024-25.

Pakistan ranks 168 out of 193 on the Human Development Index – well below South Asia and global peers.

Gold prices rise continuously, further increases today

NEWS DESK: The price of gold climbed again on Thursday, with both global bullion rates and local market values pushing the yellow metal to higher levels amid continued demand and broader trends in international markets.

In the international bullion market, the price of gold per ounce rose by \$22 to reach \$4,334, prompting gains in local bullion markets as well. As a result, the price of 24-carat gold in Pakistan increased by Rs2,200 to settle at Rs455,762 per tola, according to the All-Pakistan Gems and Jewellers Sarafa Association. Likewise, the price of gold per 10 grams rose by Rs1,800 to Rs390,742.

Meanwhile, silver also registered gains: the price of silver per tola climbed by Rs78 to Rs6,900, and the price per 10 grams rose by Rs67 to Rs5,915.

The ongoing rise in gold prices comes against a backdrop of strong international de-

mand and broader safe-haven buying, even as some analysts suggest the current rally could moderate next year. Morgan Stanley has projected that while gold may continue to trend higher, gains could slow in 2026 with prices possibly peaking between \$5,000 and \$5,500 per ounce after an extraordinary rally over the past two years.

The firm notes that central bank buying and global economic conditions remain supportive, but technical indicators point to a likely consolidation phase for precious metals in the months ahead.

Gold's rally has been underpinned by robust investor interest globally, with bullion attracting safe-haven flows amid economic and geopolitical uncertainty. Local markets in Pakistan have largely mirrored international trends, with gold maintaining elevated levels despite occasional dips in the months ahead.

Analysts say that in addition to global factors, domestic demand and currency movements can also influence local gold rates, making the precious metal a continued focus for investors and consumers alike.



NEWS DESK: The recent decision by the Sindh Cabinet to reduce the wheat issue price to Rs8,000 per 50kg bag from Rs9,500 has come too late to prevent the ongoing surge in flour prices, already a burden on consumers in recent months due to rising wheat costs in the open market.

The new price, approved as part of a revision to the Wheat Release Policy for FY26, aims to ease pressures on flour mills, chakkies, and traders, but its impact on retail flour prices will take time to materialise.

A sub-committee was constituted to closely monitor the trend and, if required, it would recommend adjustments to the wheat issue price for cabinet consideration. Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah hoped that early release of wheat would help maintain grain quality,

free up storage space and support affordable flour prices for the end users.

Roti makers said the 50kg bag of fine flour rate has already surged to Rs6,000 which was Rs5,700 in September while flour No.2.5 and maida (super fine flour) are now priced at Rs5,700 and Rs5,900 as compared to Rs5,300 and

Rs5,600, respectively. Wheat issue price cut may take time to stabilise rates.

They said the price of chapatti is now Rs14-15 as compared to Rs12-13 while those tandoor owners, who were selling naan (180 grams) at Rs20 and Rs25, are now charging Rs25 and Rs30, respectively. As per data of Sensitive

Price Index ending Dec 11, the price of 20kg flour bag rose to Rs2,300-2,500 from Rs2,200-2,400 prevailing on Dec 4, while 10kg wheat bag and fine flour rates surged to Rs970 and Rs132 per kg from Rs930 and Rs124.

As Sindh's new crop will find its way into the markets in March, wheat price

may come down after the provincial government's decision on lowering the issue price of wheat to the millers but it will take some time as millers had wheat stocks purchased at Rs13,300-10,500 per 100kg bag, a miller said.

He added it is also not clear now how much quota will be allotted to each mill.



Remittances drive Pakistan's current account \$100m surplus

NEWS DESK: Pakistan recorded a current account surplus of \$100 million in November 2025, reversing a deficit of \$291 million in October, but the modest improvement came despite a sharp decline in goods exports and was driven almost entirely by remittances sent by overseas Pakistani labourers who continue to receive little to no institutional support from the state.

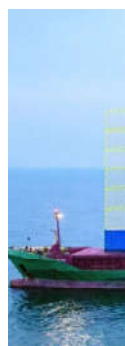
Rather than reflecting a strengthening of export competitiveness or productive capacity, the surplus underscores Pakistan's growing dependence on remittance inflows generated by migrant workers, many of whom face systemic hurdles, harassment, and mistreatment at the hands of immigration, labour, and enforcement authorities, including the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

The surplus comes despite clear stress on the trade front. Goods exports declined on a year-on-year basis, reflecting price pressures, lack of interest of corporations, and competitiveness challenges faced by Pakistan's export sectors. SBP data shows exports of goods stood at \$2.7 billion, while imports amounted to \$4.73 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of \$2.45 billion for the month.

The deterioration in merchandise trade highlights the fragile nature of Pakistan's recovery, with export momentum failing to keep pace with import growth.

Yet, the external account remained in surplus largely due to robust secondary income inflows, dominated by workers' remittances. Remittances reached \$3.19 billion in November, lifting total secondary income inflows to \$3.46 billion for the month, more than offsetting deficits in goods, services, and primary income accounts.

Pakistan's substantial remittance inflows, reaching around \$38 billion annually and constituting about 10% of GDP, have paradoxically acted as an economic trap rather than a lifeline, as highlighted by econo-



mist Atif Mian in his recent blog. These large inflows from overseas workers fuel rapid consumption growth that outpaces the expansion of productive capacity. This imbalance triggers real appreciation of the Pakistani rupee, resulting in an overvalued exchange rate that undermines the competitiveness of export sectors. As a consequence, tra-

ditional export industries weaken, while the economy becomes increasingly dependent on continuous remittance flows to sustain foreign exchange reserves and household consumption.

This phenomenon closely resembles "Dutch disease", where resource windfalls crowd out the private sector and perpetuate structural vulnerabilities.

Mian highlights persistently low investment-to-GDP ratios as a direct outcome, as overvaluation discourages productive investments in manufacturing and exports.

Instead, the economy remains stuck in a cycle of reliance on remittances, fostering stagnation and reduced long-term growth potential, as elites in rent-seeking sectors benefit from the status quo without incentives for broader reforms.

On a cumulative basis, the July-November FY26 period recorded a current account surplus of \$578 million, compared to a deficit of \$1.88 billion in the same period last year, underscoring the decisive role played by overseas Pakistanis

in stabilising the balance of payments.

The export slowdown reflects persistent structural bottlenecks, including high energy costs, limited value addition, and subdued demand in key markets. SBP data shows negative export growth in November, with goods exports contracting 18.5% month-on-month, while imports expanded by 15%, intensifying pressure on the trade balance.

Economists note that Pakistan's reliance on a narrow export base, dominated by textiles, has made it particularly vulnerable to global slowdowns and pricing shocks.

Despite a modest recovery in services exports, including IT-receipts, the overall goods and services deficit widened to \$2.59 billion in November.

Behind the headline surplus lies a more sobering reality: Pakistan's external resilience is increasingly being financed by low-paid migrant labour, much of it employed in

the Gulf and other regions under challenging conditions. Analysts point out that the surge in remittances is not necessarily a reflection of improved migrant welfare, but rather greater financial strain on overseas workers, who are sending a larger share of their earnings home to support families grappling with inflation and stagnant incomes.

Many of these workers face job insecurity, delayed wages, longer working hours, and limited legal protections, particularly in construction, domestic work, and low-skilled services.

Despite these headwinds, remittance flows have remained resilient, effectively acting as Pakistan's first line of defence against external shocks.

SBP figures show that workers' remittances accounted for over 93% of total secondary income inflows in November, highlighting the economy's deep dependence on migrant earnings rather than expected growth or foreign investment.

England Ashes dreams on life-support as Australia rip through batting

NEWS DESK: A pumped-up Australia ripped through England's fragile batting Thursday to leave the tourists staring down the barrel of a third Test defeat with their Ashes campaign on the brink, barring a miracle.

At stumps on a sweltering day two, the visitors had ground to 213-8, trailing by 158 after Australia added 45 to their overnight 326-8 as temperatures soared to 40 Celsius.

A gutsy Ben Stokes was not out 45 after facing 151 balls with Jofa Archer on 30 in a Test England must win and on a pitch ideal for batting. They were not helped by another suspect decision by the Snicko technology, but at least avoided the follow-on.

Australia lead the five-match series 2-0 but will retain the urn if they

win or draw after back-to-back eight-wicket thumpings in Perth and Brisbane.

Opening pair Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley saw off the early overs from Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins. But it was a mirage with England losing three wickets for five runs in a 15-ball blitz, the latest chapter in a familiar tale.

Cummins' first tempted an edge from Crawley, on nine, to wicketkeeper Alex Carey in the Australian skipper's first Test since July after lower back issues.

Then in a stroke of genius, he brought on spin king Nathan Lyon, who was controversially left out for the pink-ball second Test at the Gabba.

Lyon grabbed two wickets in a sensational



opening over with a hapless Ollie Pope (3) flicking to Josh Inglis at midwicket before he bowled Duckett for 29. Joe Root was fortunate to survive in the next over when he edged Scott Boland to Carey,

but a review showed it did not carry.

England's most experienced player failed to capitalise and was gone in the third over after lunch to Cummins, with Carey collecting another edge.

It was the 12th time Cummins has dismissed Root - more than any other bowler on tour.

With the Ashes on the line, Stokes needed to show what he called "a bit of dog" and he barely flinched when a

Starc bouncer dangerously hit the back of his helmet.

He was given the all-clear and set about rescuing the innings before Cameron Green was introduced just before tea and Carey took an

other catch to remove Harry Brook.

Jamie Smith settled in but departed for 22 when Carey took what Australia claimed was a faint bottom edge off Cummins.

The Snicko showed a small spike despite a gap between bat and ball, with Stokes shaking his head as Smith trudged off.

On day one, Carey starred with an emotional century on his home ground, but it was shrouded in controversy over a Snicko error when he was on 72 and given not out.

England failed to have the decision overturned on review with replays showing a noise spike before the ball reached his bat.

ogy operator admitted to an error.

"In my view it's not good enough," Cricket Australia boss Todd Greenberg said of the technology before play started on Thursday.

"We're hoping to get some answers so we can be assured it won't happen again."

Scott Boland removed Will Jacks (6) and Brydon Carse (0) before Archer dug in with Stokes.

The hosts resumed on the back of Carey's 106 and a gritty 82 from Usman Khawaja, with Starc on 33 and Lyon yet to score.

Starc plundered five quick fours before being bowled by Archer for 54. Lyon and Boland then piled on the pain in a 23-run last-wicket stand before Lyon was trapped lbw for nine by Archer, who ended with 5-53.

Veteran Luis Suarez signs new Inter Miami contract

NEWS DESK: Former Uruguay striker Luis Suarez has signed a contract with Inter Miami for the upcoming season, the Major League Soccer side said on Wednesday.

Suarez, who turns 39 in January, joined Lionel Messi's outfit in 2024 before helping the club to the 2025 MLS Cup and Eastern Conference title.

The former Barcelona, Liverpool and Atletico Madrid attacker won the Champions League, La Liga and the League Cup during his time in Europe. "Suarez signs a new contract after recently concluding the historic 2025 season for what was his second year at the club," Inter Miami said. "The striker's vast experience and leadership were crucial as Inter Miami clinched its third and fourth titles by winning the Eastern Conference Championship and the MLS Cup... while also excelling on the international stage with a historic run to the round of 16 at the revamped 2025 FIFA Club World Cup and reaching the semifinals of the 2025 Concacaf Champions Cup." "Suarez made a total 50 appearances across all competitions in 2025, scoring 17 goals and dishing out 17 assists for a total 34 goal contributions," it added.



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Man City look to extend winning streak against West Ham

N E W S DESK: Manchester City have the chance to climb above Arsenal and seize the Premier League lead this Saturday with a home clash against struggling West Ham United, before Mikel Arteta's injury-hit side head to Everton later in the day.

Pep Guardiola's side sit two points behind Arsenal and will move provisionally top with a win over West Ham.

City are in imperious form, with one loss at the Etihad in their last 11 matches and riding a six-game winning streak in all competitions.

Despite injuries to key players like Rodri and John Stones, and missing Omar Marmoush and Ryan Ait-Nouri to interna-

tional duty, their depth and attacking firepower make them heavy favourites against a West Ham side stuck in the relegation zone and winless in five.

Guardiola's men are unbeaten in their last 19 league games against West Ham since a 2-1 home defeat in September 2015.

Arsenal travel to Merseyside on Saturday evening to face an Everton team that have found some rhythm, winning four of their last six matches.

Arteta's team have stuttered slightly in recent weeks, winning three of their last six league games and a slip at Hills Dickinson Stadium could hand Guardiola's side a psychological edge head-

ing into the busy festive fixtures.

Arsenal have been hard hit by injuries, with Kai Havertz, Gabriel Magalhaes, Christian Mosquera, Max Dowman, Ben White and Martin Zubimendi all missing training on Tuesday.

This weekend's league games also mark the first since the exodus of players to the Africa Cup of Nations.

Sunderland, who head to Brighton & Hove Albion, are the hardest hit, with six players on international duty. Sunderland continue to defy expectations, sitting eighth in the standings, while Brighton are three points behind them in 10th.

Manchester United, who drew 4-4 with Bournemouth in a

wild game on Monday, face a huge challenge when they travel to Aston Villa on Sunday.

Third-place Villa are three points behind Arsenal, while United are sixth on 26 points. If the task was not already tough enough, Ruben Amorim's United are missing Bryan Mbeumo, Noussair Mazraoui and Amad Diallo to AFCON.

The weekend begins with Newcastle United hosting Chelsea, while Tottenham Hotspur and Liverpool will both look for a morale-boosting victory when they meet in North London later on Saturday.

Bottom side Wolverhampton Wanderers continue to chase their first win of the season when they host Brentford.



Several Pakistani cricketers ready to leave BBL

NEWS DESK: In preparation for the upcoming World Cup, several Pakistani cricketers are ready to leave the Big Bash League (BBL) and travel to Sri Lanka, although a final decision will be made after consultation with the selectors.

According to details, a number of Pakistani players are currently representing different teams in the Big Bash League. Cricket Australia's CEO, Todd Greenberg, stated yesterday that despite the upcoming series against Sri Lanka, Pakistani players would remain available for the entire BBL season. However, Pakistan's national team is scheduled to play three T20 matches against Sri Lanka in Dambulla on January 7, 10, and 11, 2026. The World Cup matches, beginning on February 7, will also be held in Sri Lankan venues.

Sources revealed that some Pakistani cricketers have contacted the national "think tank," expressing their desire to participate in the Sri Lanka series. They believe that the conditions and pitches in Australia and Sri Lanka are completely different, and going straight into the World Cup from Australian

conditions could affect their performance.

It is worth noting that when the Big Bash contracts were signed, the Sri Lanka series had not yet been scheduled. Players also fear that if their performance in the mega event is poor, they could be blamed for prioritizing money and league commitments over proper national preparation. Meanwhile, the selectors are reportedly interested in testing some new players, which is why they are considering not calling senior players back from Australia. However, if any player unilaterally decides to return, they could face significant financial penalties for breaching their contract.



Mbappe edges closer to Ronaldo record as Real survive Copa del Rey test

NEWS DESK: Kylian Mbappe moved tantalisingly close to Cristiano Ronaldo's calendar-year scoring record for Real Madrid with a brace as they earned a 3-2 victory at third-tier Talavera de la Reina on Wednesday to reach the Copa del Rey's last 16 after a pulsating encounter.

The French striker's two goals, combined with an own-goal by defender Manuel Farranto, proved enough despite strikes from Nahuel Ayrooy and Gonzalo Di Renzo that threatened to spoil Real's evening in front of a raucous crowd.

Mbappe, who came into the game with 56 goals scored in all competitions in 2025, is now one goal shy of the 59-goal calendar-year record set

by Ronaldo in 2013. With one match still to play this year on Saturday against struggling Sevilla in La Liga at Santiago Bernabeu - the French forward could surpass the Portuguese great.

In front of 4,000 passionate supporters in Castilla-La Mancha, Real Madrid dominated the early stages, with young talents Endrick, Arda Guler and Gonzalo Garcia combining well alongside Mbappe. However, they were repeatedly thwarted by Talavera's inspired goalkeeper Jaime Gonzalez.

With coach Xabi Alonso resting first-choice stars, including Vinicius Jr, Jude Bellingham and Thibaut Courtois, Madrid looked to Mbappe for inspiration.

Fran Garcia's header was denied by a brilliant goal-line clearance from Alvaro Lopez in the 39th minute, but controversy followed seconds later. Referee Guillermo Cuadra penalised the hosts' Marcos Moreno for handball after what appeared to be contact created by Madrid's Alvaro Carreras during a tussle in the box.

With no VAR until the Copa del Rey's last 16, the decision stood, and Mbappe converted the penalty in the 41st minute to move closer to Ronaldo's tally.

Before halftime, Mbappe helped Real find the net again - this time with a slice of fortune. His effort from close range deflected off defender Farranto and into Talavera's goal, handing the visitors a 2-0 advantage at the

break. Madrid squandered several opportunities to extend their lead in the second half, with Mbappe missing a clear one-on-one chance in the 52nd minute before Gonzalez stopped a fierce long-range drive.

Talavera punished Madrid for their profligacy in the 80th minute when Farranto engineered a quick counter-attack, delivering a perfect low cross to Ayrooy, who rifled a powerful strike past Andriy Lunin to make it 2-1.

The hosts sensed an upset, but they were undone by a goalkeeping error late on. Mbappe's tame shot from outside the box in the 83rd minute was fumbled by Gonzalez, with the ball bobbling into the net to restore Madrid's two-goal cushion.



Palestinians collect belongings before West Bank homes demolition

NEWS DESK: Dozens of residents from the West Bank's emptied Nur Shams refugee camp returned on Wednesday to retrieve belongings ahead of the Israeli military's demolition of 25 residential buildings there.

Early this year, the military launched an on-going operation it said was aimed at rooting out Palestinian armed groups from camps in the northern occupied West Bank — including Nur Shams, Tulkeram and Jenin.

Loading furniture, children's toys and even a window frame onto small trucks, Palestinian residents hurriedly came out with family photos, mattresses and heaters.

More than 32,000 people remain displaced from the now-empty camps, where Israeli troops are stationed, according to the UN's agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA.

Mahmud Abdallah,



to be demolished.

Some who were able to enter salvaged large empty water tanks, while others came out with family photos, mattresses and heaters.

More than 32,000 people remain displaced from the now-empty camps, where Israeli troops are stationed, according to the UN's agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA.

Mahmud Abdallah,

who was displaced from Nur Shams and was able to enter a part of the camp on Wednesday, said he witnessed for the first time the destruction that had taken place after he was forced to leave.

"I was surprised to find that there were no habitable houses; maybe two or three, but they were not suitable for living," he said. "The camp is destroyed."

Determined to return, the demolitions, affecting 25 buildings housing up to 100 families, were announced earlier this week and are scheduled for Thursday.

They are officially part of a broader Israeli strategy of home demolitions to ease its military vehicles' access in the dense refugee camps of the northern West Bank.

Israel has occupied the Palestinian territory since 1967.

Ahmed al-Masri, a camp resident whose house was to be demolished, told AFP that his request for access was denied.

"When I asked why, I was told: 'Your name is not in the liaison office records,'" he said.

UNRWA's director for the West Bank and east Jerusalem, Roland Friedrich, said an estimated 1,600 houses were fully or partially destroyed during the military operation, making it "the most severe displacement crisis that the West Bank has seen since 1967".

Nur Shams, along with other refugee camps in the West Bank, was established after the creation of Israel in 1948, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced from their homes in what is now Israel.

Azerbaijan in no mood to join Gaza 'stabilisation force': paper

NEWS DESK: As the fate of the proposed International Stabilisation Force for Gaza remains uncertain, Azerbaijan reportedly has no plans to be a part of the US-sponsored body, reported Israeli media outlet Haaretz.

The central Asian country was absent on Tuesday from the American-sponsored conference in Qatar to prepare the groundwork for the international stabilisation force, even though it had been invited, Haaretz reported, citing unnamed sources.

The newspaper also said that Baku did not want to join the Abraham Accords, despite having diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv. It claimed that about 15 countries invited to the Doha conference refrained from sending representatives, including Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Belgium, Romania, Estonia, South Korea and Nepal.

"Among the countries that did attend were Germany, Britain, France,

Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Greece, Cyprus, Yemen, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the partially-recognised state of Kosovo," it said.

Turkiye was not invited due to Israeli opposition.

It is not clear if Pakistan was present at the meeting. However, Islamabad has repeatedly advocated that the stabilisation force should act under the UN mandate for legitimacy.

US media reports earlier this week said the Trump administration was seeking to assemble a multinational force of around 10,000 troops, potentially under the command of a US general, which could take much of the next year.

The Wall Street Journal had reported that while Washington was pressing other countries to contribute troops, "none have stepped forward yet".

"There is deep sensitivity about legitimacy," a diplomat in Washington explained. "No country wants its troops to be seen as imposing security rather than supporting peace."



Trump administration intends to ramp up efforts to revoke citizenship of some naturalised Americans: report

NEWS DESK: The Trump administration intends to increase efforts to strip some naturalised Americans of their US citizenship, according to internal guidance obtained by The New York Times.

The move comes as US President Donald Trump, in a prime-time address, pledged to further intensify his hard-line immigration policies, signalling a broader crackdown on migrants and stricter enforcement measures across the country.

Internal instructions issued this week to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) field offices direct them to "supply Office of Immigration Litigation with 100-200 denaturalisation cases per month" in the 2026 fiscal year, the Times reported.

That would mark a dramatic increase in denaturalisation cases, which, according to the Immigrant Legal Resource Centre, stood at about 11 per year between 1990 and 2017.

A USCIS spokesperson told Reuters that the agency's focus was on individuals who "unlawfully obtained US citizenship", asserting that the expanded denaturalisation push forms part of efforts to combat immigration fraud.

In the US, the government can revoke the US citizenship of a naturalised citizen for various criminal and security issues.

Denaturalisation cases are civil actions filed in federal court and historically have been pursued sparingly.

Under US law,

denaturalisation can occur only in specific circumstances — principally when citizenship was "illegally procured" or gained by fraud or misrepresentation during the naturalisation process.

The timeline for denaturalisation cases varies, but they can take years to resolve.

Trump's remarks on immigration in his rapid-fire address at the White House, Trump reinforced his administration's broader immigration agenda, touching on economic and other policy themes, with immigration a recurring emphasis.

While not unveiling new immigration measures during the

speech itself, he continued longstanding attacks on US border policy and blamed his predecessors for what he described as national security and social challenges.

In early December, Trump told reporters that he would "absolutely" denaturalise some US citizens if he had the authority to do so — specifically citing

to charge people promoting hate speech and violence.

Penalties would be increased, cancelling or imposing visas would be made easier, and a regime for targeting organisations whose leaders engage in hate speech would be developed, he said.

"Americans are shocked and angry. I am angry. It is clear we need to do more to combat this evil scourge much more," Albanese told a news conference announcing the reforms.

Albanese's government has said it has consistently denounced anti-Semitism over the last two years.

It passed legislation to criminalise hate speech, and in August, it expelled the Iranian ambassador after accusing Tehran of directing two anti-Semitic arson attacks in the cities of Sydney and Melbourne.

Still, anti-Semitic incidents have been mounting. A 19-year-old Sydney man was charged and will face court on Thursday after allegedly threatening

violence towards a Jewish person on a flight from Bali to Sydney on Wednesday.

"Police will allege the man made antisemitic threats and hand gestures indicating violence towards the alleged victim, who the man knew to be affiliated with the Jewish community," Australian Federal Police said on Thursday.

seven additional countries to a full travel ban list and imposed partial restrictions on several more, continuing a broader crackdown on entry from nations it deems to have deficient vetting systems.

Broader immigration enforcement.

The expanded denaturalisation guidance arrives amid a broader suite of immigration policies implemented by the Trump administration.

These include expanded travel bans affecting citizens of multiple countries, a halt or severe curtailment of asylum processing, and a review of green cards and immigration status for nationals from countries the administration designates as "countries

of concern". Critics of the denaturalisation push warn that applying numerical targets to citizenship revocation — a process historically reserved for clear fraud in the naturalisation process — could politicise what should be a narrowly applied enforcement tool and inject fear into immigrant communities.

Earlier this month, Trump announced on social media that his administration would "permanently pause migration from all Third World Countries" and promised measures to promote immigrants he labelled as security risks or burdens on federal benefits systems. Earlier this week, Trump also added

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Complaint filed against Bihar CM for pulling down woman's niqab: Indian media

NEWS DESK: A complaint has been filed with police against the chief minister of Bihar, Nitish Kumar, and Uttar Pradesh cabinet minister Sanjay Nishad in relation to an incident involving the former pulling down a woman's face veil (niqab), according to Indian media.

Kumar has been facing criticism after he pulled off a woman doctor's niqab at a graduation ceremony. A clip of the incident was widely shared on social media, showing the 74-year-old politician handing a certificate to a woman doctor during

the event on Monday and motioning to her to remove her niqab.

Before the woman could react, Kumar pulled down a woman's hijab. For a person holding a constitutional position to behave in this manner means he is encouraging his other workers to engage in similar acts," she was quoted as saying.

"A video of Bihar CM Nitish Kumar is going viral on social media in which he is seen pulling down a woman's hijab. For a person holding a constitutional position to behave in this manner means he is encouraging his other workers to engage in similar acts," she was quoted as saying.

ANI reported, "What Sanjay Nishad has done incites religious sentiments," he was quoted as saying.

"This is a clear-cut case under Section 153A, as you are knowingly engaging in such acts that could instigate riots, create unrest, and disturb the law and order of the state."

ANI reported, "What Sanjay Nishad has done incites religious sentiments," he was quoted as saying.

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Meanwhile, he added, "Section 354 will be applied to him (Nitish Kumar) directly for grabbing and pulling it (the niqab)."

According to ANI, Rana also objected to Nishad's remarks and recalled that the minister had commented that "why is there so much controversy over removing a burqa. His hand only touched her face. If his hand had touched somewhere else, what have happened then?"

"Based on this, I have filed a complaint," she said.

Advocate Misham Zaedi, who was one of the lawyers present with Rana, said that Kumar's act and the remarks by Nishad had "hurt the modesty of a woman".

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'We need to do more': Australian PM vows crackdown on hate speech after Bondi shooting

NEWS DESK: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Thursday promised a crackdown on hate speech in the wake of an attack on a Jewish holiday event at Sydney's Bondi Beach, as the youngest of 15 victims was laid to rest.

The alleged father-and-son gunman opened fire as hundreds of people celebrated Hanukkah on Sydney's famous Bondi Beach on Sunday. The attack, which shocked the nation and led to fears over rising anti-Semitism, appears to have been inspired by the Islamic State, authorities say.

Criticised by many in the Jewish community for not doing enough to combat a rise in anti-Semitism since the start of Israel's military campaign in Gaza, Albanese said the government will seek to introduce legislation that makes it easier

to charge people promoting hate speech and violence.

Penalties would be increased, cancelling or imposing visas would be made easier, and a regime for targeting organisations whose leaders engage in hate speech would be developed, he said.

"Australians are shocked and angry. I am angry. It is clear we need to do more to combat this evil scourge much more," Albanese told a news conference announcing the reforms.

Albanese's government has said it has consistently denounced anti-Semitism over the last two years.

It passed legislation to criminalise hate speech, and in August, it expelled the Iranian ambassador after accusing Tehran of directing two anti-Semitic arson attacks in the cities of Sydney and Melbourne.

Still, anti-Semitic incidents have been mounting. A 19-year-old Sydney man was charged and will face court on Thursday after allegedly threatening

violence towards a Jewish person on a flight from Bali to Sydney on Wednesday.

"Police will allege the man made antisemitic threats and hand gestures indicating violence towards the alleged victim, who the man knew to be affiliated with the Jewish community," Australian Federal Police said on Thursday.

Youngest victim laid to rest.

Yellow toy bears topped the coffin of 10-year-old Matilda, who was remembered as a "ray of sunshine" who

loved animals and dancing. Matilda's middle name was Bee, which inspired attendees to wear bee stickers, and beeh-themed toys and balloons, while some mourners wore yellow.

Matilda's family has asked the media not to use their surname.

"The tragic, so totally cruel, unfathomable murder of young Matilda is something to all of us as if our own daughter [were] taken from us," said Rabbi Yehoram Ullman.

"Matilda grew up like a child, loving what children love. She loved the outdoors, animals. She went to school, she had friends, everybody loved her."

The line outside the hall where Matilda's funeral was held in Sydney's eastern suburbs snaked down the street. Many mourners who could not get in watched the service on

a screen outside the building.

"It's like your heart's been ripped out. It's terrible... no one wants this," said Jae Glover, 25, as he handed out bee stickers.

"It's a feeling, it could have been avoided. Anti-Semitism has now been brewing in Australia for over two years. Philippines, Islamic State links investigated. Police allege the attack was carried out by Sajid Akram, 30, and his 24-year-old son Naveed. Sajid was shot dead by police at the scene, while Naveed Akram was charged with 59 offences on Wednesday after waking from a coma, including murder and terror charges.

