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# QUETTA VOICE

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## CM Bugti Says Police Sacrifices Reflect a Strong and Resilient State

**Syed Muhammad Qaseem:**

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti stated on Friday that the unmatched sacrifices of the Balochistan Police, made under extremely difficult conditions, have demonstrated that the state remains firm, resilient, and stronger than before.

Speaking at the 104th Passing Out Parade held at the Police Training College (PTC) Quetta, the chief minister

praised the police force for its vital role in maintaining law and order, safeguarding lives and property, and standing at the forefront of the fight against terrorism.

Upon his arrival at the Police Training College, CM Bugti visited the Martyrs' Memorial, laid a floral wreath, and offered prayers for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks, as well as for lasting peace and stability in Balochistan and across the country.

During the visit, the chief

minister inaugurated several newly completed development projects at the college, including a modern football ground and a newly constructed mess facility.

He said these initiatives were aimed at improving the training environment by providing better facilities, quality accommodation, and healthy recreational opportunities for police personnel.

CM Bugti emphasized that strengthening training institutions is essential for producing

disciplined, professional, and capable police officers.

He added that the provincial government is giving priority to the welfare, training, and capacity-building of the police force.

He noted that the newly completed projects would reinforce the college's infrastructure and contribute to the physical fitness, mental strength,

and professional development of both trainee and serving police officials.

Reaffirming the government's commitment, the chief minister said that, subject to available resources, modern facilities would continue to be provided to the Balochistan Police to further enhance its effectiveness and operational strength.

Inspector General of Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir Khan, Commandant Police Training College Quetta Shahzad Akbar, and other senior police officers were also present at the ceremony.

## President Zardari to embark on 5-day visit to Iraq tomorrow, high-level meetings on the agenda

**NEWS DESK:**

President Asif Ali Zardari will be undertaking an official visit to Iraq from December 20-24, during which he will hold high-level meetings with the Iraqi leadership to review bilateral ties and explore ways to strengthen cooperation in key areas of mutual interest, the Foreign Office (FO) said on Friday.

According to a statement issued by the FO, President Zardari is visiting the Middle Eastern country at the invitation of his Iraqi counterpart, Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid.

The visit underscores the "longstanding, brotherly relations between Pakistan and Iraq, rooted in shared bonds of faith, culture, and mutual respect", the FO said.

It added that during his meetings with the Iraqi leadership, President Zardari will review bilateral relations between

the two countries and explore ways to further strengthen cooperation across key

areas of mutual interest, including trade and investment, energy, reconstruction, manpower, technology, education and people-to-people exchanges.

The discussions will also cover regional and international developments, as well as co-operation at multilateral forums, according to the FO statement.

"The visit is expected to reinforce the traditionally warm and cordial ties between the two countries, identify new avenues of partnership,

and enhance people-to-people linkages, particularly in the context of religious tourism and economic collaboration."

"The official visit reflects Pakistan's continued engagement with Iraq and its commitment to fostering a result-oriented, forward-looking, and strategic partnership that contributes to Iraq's stability and development, as well as to regional peace and prosperity," the statement said.

## Rawalpindi police officer suspended for taking bribes

**NEWS DESK:**

A police officer deployed in the Security Division on Old Airport Road in Rawalpindi has been suspended after being caught taking a bribe while stopping vehicles early in the morning.

The incident came to light following a complaint on social media, prompting City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mehmood Handani to take action. The officer, identified as Azam, has been suspended, and a formal charge sheet has been ordered.

According to the video circulating online, the uniformed officer is seen halting a vehicle and engaging in conversation with the driver. In the final parts of the video, the officer is seen taking something from the passenger. CPO Rawalpindi Khalid Handani expressed his dismay at the incident, stating, "We will not tolerate anyone who undermines the dignity of our department. Strict accountability will be enforced."

He further emphasised, "Corruption or abuse of power will not be tolerated. Officers must correct their conduct to maintain the integrity of the force."

## Chaman Traders Seek Reopening of Pak-Afghan Border

**Dawood Ahmed:**

Traders from Chaman have reached Islamabad to press the federal government to reopen the Pak-Afghan border crossing, warning that prolonged closure has severely damaged trade and livelihoods in the border region.

All crossings with Afghanistan have remained shut since October 11, following armed clashes along the 2,600-kilometre frontier and subsequent retaliatory actions that resulted in heavy casualties on both sides. The shutdown has brought cross-border commercial activity to a complete standstill, marking the most serious disruption since the Taliban took control of Kabul in 2021.

Despite the extended closure, there are no clear signs of reopening. Afghan authorities have also declined to allow United Nations humanitarian assistance to pass through Pakistan's land routes, even though millions in Afghanistan depend on international aid.

During their visit to the capital, the traders held meetings with several senior officials,



including Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, to seek government intervention for restoring trade through the Chaman crossing,

one of the most vital routes linking Pakistan and Afghanistan.

A delegation led by Chaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Abdul Nafi Jan

Chakzai also met Senate Deputy Chairman Saïdal Khan Nasir, Prime Minister's Coordinator on Commerce Rana Ihsaan Afzal, and Pakistan's Special

Representative for Afghanistan Mohammad Sadiq. Community elders and local business leaders were also part of the discussions. According to the Ministry of Commerce, traders highlighted the serious economic and social impact of repeated border closures, including financial losses, spoilage of perishable exports, rising unemployment, and growing hardship for local populations that rely heavily on cross-border trade.

The commerce minister stated that while his ministry would continue advocating for smoother trade facilitation, decisions on border operations are made at the government level in view of broader national considerations. He assured the delegation that their concerns would be raised with relevant authorities and at appropriate bilateral forums to seek sustainable and transparent border management solutions.

Business leaders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa warned that the closure has paralysed a trade corridor worth billions of dollars annually, with exporters reporting daily losses running into millions of dollars as goods remain stranded at border points.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

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



**Editorial:** 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 through 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 manipulating 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.

## Quetta City, Proposed Master Plan

**Abdul Latif Kakar :** The mountain-ringed, Quetta city needs a comprehensive master plan to ensure the solution of problems faced by citizens and

drought, and floods, the need for making a comprehensive master plan for Quetta city is growing. Rather, it is now indispensable to make this plan, before

near foothills, the soil consists of sandy loam, mixed with pebbles and rock fragments and is suitable for vegetation. In the Hanna val-

Soil erosion As far as soil erosion is concerned, both stream erosion of soil and wind erosion is occurring in the district. The stream ero-

Current and future population trends need to be reviewed.

Transportation, mass transit, and city traffic management and monitoring system,



address the mega question of climate change. Through the proposed plan, scarce resources would be transparently and rationally utilized to make it a better living city in the country. For the first in the history of the province, the Urban Planning Development (UPD) under the leadership of chief minister Balochistan, Jam

Kamal Khan has started the preparation of the master plan.

Geographical location, looming threat of natural calamities including earthquakes,

it is already late. Geography and Soil

Four main units may describe the soils of Quetta i.e. (1) piedmont plains (very deep and well-drained soil) (2) piedmont basins (3) salinity and alkalinity (4) gravelly piedmont fans and aprons bordering the mountains and plains.

The central part of the Quetta valley is covered by a soil that ranges from sandy loam to silt loam. This type of soil is good for crop production. At the margin of the valley

ley, the greater part of the valley floor is covered by barren rock

bout crops of low relief and dry mala bed. The soil is restricted to the narrow banks and low terraces along the mainstream.

However, the nature of the soil in Helhi is silty clay which is not suitable for cultivation. Similarly, the Chiltan surface has soils that are predominantly gravelly loams.

The vegetation on these soils is mainly Haloxylon which provides poor grazing for livestock.

sion takes place in the piedmont plain along the banks and beds of streams.

Such streams are Sariah Lora, Hanna river, Habib Nallah near Hudda. Wind erosion occurs in the valley.

This all requires a review of the existing plans and documents and preparation of the digitized base map of Quetta with a protocol for its updating. A review of existing policies, procedures, plans studies conducted by donor agencies, and other relevant data

Quetta City, Proposed Master Plan The author is currently serving as the secretary urban planning and development department government of Balochistan

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

Amjad Rashid

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

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

We did establish universities but abandoned knowledge

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

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

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

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

its true beauty and culture.

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

Adams to twenty-first-century experienced slavery, the industrial revolution, conflict of ideologies, various version of world orders driving to save and

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

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



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

Balochistan and Quetta need our attention

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

sick and looking toward her siblings for help and cure.

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

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

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

Now we from

benefit humanity. But all our efforts to take humanity to its peak are being ended up as a disaster.

The temperature of the motherland is increasing.

habitat of Balochistan and our piece of Heaven (once called as "miss it's jangly Gulab, chakore,

Balochistan facing a host of issues

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

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

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

This situation calls for a committed social, political and religious commitment to rebuild and reclaim of our title

Quetta has a better environment, rich culture, manageable population



## International Transport Workers' Federation urges PM Shehbaz to halt PIA privatisation

**NEWS DESK:** The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) has called for the privatisation process of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to be halted immediately, according to a letter from ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton.

In the letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Cotton requested that the privatisation process be paused "until there is meaningful dialogue with the trade unions representing the workforce of PIA."

Cotton argued that the privatisation process has excluded

unions, including the ITF-affiliated People's Unity. He said this exclusion is unacceptable, undermines collective bargaining agreements, and constitutes a violation of global labour standards.

According to the letter, the proposed privatisation affects not only essential PIA assets and core airline operations workers, but also allied operations staff, including those in ground handling, engineering, training, and catering. Cotton cautioned that without union consultation, there is a significant risk of losing

skilled and experienced workers. He added that this could affect employees' livelihoods, passenger and worker safety, and the "operational success and financial stability of the airline."

The federation has called upon the Government of Pakistan to halt the privatisation process until unions are fully involved in the discussions, guarantee that PIA respects the rights of all its employees, and ensure transparent and constructive dialogue between the airline management and relevant unions.

## Lahore air quality improves as AQI falls to 215

**NEWS DESK:** Lahore's Air Quality Index (AQI) reached 215 on Friday, showing improvement compared to previous weeks, according to provincial monitoring data.

Authorities attributed the decline to enforcement measures such as vehicular emission checks, industrial monitoring, and action against non-compliant brick kilns. The Punjab government said field monitoring had been intensified.

Following directives from Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, a zero-tolerance approach towards smog-related violations should be enforced.

Authorities advised residents, especially children, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions, to limit outdoor exposure and use protective masks.

AQI levels fluctuated earlier in December, with Lahore recording an average of 288, making it one of the most polluted cities globally.

Stagnant winter conditions and transboundary pollution trapped particulate matter over the province, and some stations reported AQI surges up to 300, placing the city in the "very unhealthy" to "hazardous" range.

Local emissions, northwesterly winds, and slow dispersion contributed to the deterioration.

Senior Provincial Minister Maryam Aurangzeb said short-, medium-, and long-term strategies are being developed to address air pollution and stressed that public cooperation is essential for sustained improvement.

Separately, the Punjab Environmental Protection Department (EPD) announced that all environmental approvals, laboratory certifications, and protection orders must now be issued exclusively through a digital platform.

EPA Director General Imran Hamid Sheikh said that environmental approvals under Section 12, which require prior clearance for industries and development projects, and enforcement actions under Section 16, which allow protection orders against polluting or non-compliant entities, will now be processed through the e-FOAS digital system.

Laboratory certifications and environmental recommendations linked to import licences will also be

handled exclusively online.

Earlier, Sheikh said the department has adopted a zero-tolerance policy toward vehicles contributing to hazardous air pollution, warning that violators could face on-the-spot confiscation instead of fines.

The decision comes as Lahore, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Multan, and other major cities continue to experience thick smog, with AQI readings frequently reaching hazardous levels.

According to the EPD, the move is intended to create a paperless regulatory framework and improve record management.

Approvals or protection orders issued outside the digital system will be considered invalid and may result in action against the responsible officers.

Each document issued through the platform will carry a unique reference number and QR code, the department said. Commissioners, deputy commissioners, industrial units, chambers of commerce, and EPA-certified laboratories have been directed to comply with the new system.

The notification takes immediate effect.

## 4 militants killed as security forces' camp comes under attack in North Waziristan's Boya

**NEWS DESK:** Four terrorists were killed after they attacked the battalion headquarters of security forces in Boya area on Friday, security sources said.

The sources identified the terrorists as those belonging to Fina-al-Khawari, a term that the state has designated for the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan.

One of the "suicide bombers" among the terrorists rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a wall of the Boya fort on Friday morning, causing a blast, the sources said.

The powerful blast was heard as far as Miranshah city, located nearly 25 kilometres away, local sources reported.

Around four to five terrorists attempted to enter the fort after the



blast, but the attempt was foiled due to timely action by security personnel, security sources said, adding that three terrorists were killed on the spot as a result of the action. The sources said there were reports that security personnel had encircled one of the remaining terrorists, and an operation was currently under way.

According to them, only the outer wall of the battalion headquarters was partially damaged in the attack. Initially, police had reported that assailants managed to enter the premises and opened fire. In the ensuing exchange of fire, four militants were killed while

four security personnel sustained injuries, police earlier said. Soon after the explosion, security forces cordoned off the area and launched a clearance operation. A heavy contingent of police and security personnel reached the site, while special teams of the bomb disposal squad

were dispatched to examine the scene.

Rescue 1122 and medical teams were also engaged in relief and rescue operations. Authorities said evidence was being collected from the site as investigations were under way.

Following the attack, security across the district was placed on high alert, and traffic on a key highway was temporarily suspended as a precautionary measure.

The incident comes two months after four terrorists were killed after security forces foiled a suicide attack on a military camp in North Waziristan's Mir Ali.

State media reported at the time that one terrorist rammed a vehicle loaded with explosives into the wall of the security forces' camp after which three more tried to enter it.

## Over 42 million children vaccinated in Pakistan's final polio drive of 2025

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan's final nationwide polio eradication campaign of 2025 has reached its fifth day, with the National Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) reporting that over 42.2 million children were vaccinated during the first four days.

The nearly week-long campaign, running from December 15 to 21, has mobilised more than 400,000 polio workers who are visiting homes nationwide to administer drops to children under five.

The campaign is being conducted in coordination with Afghanistan, the only other country where polio remains endemic. According to the EOC, Punjab has the highest coverage with around 22.3 million



children vaccinated, followed by Sindh with 9.4 million, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 6.69 million, and Balochistan with 2.38 million.

More than 714,000 children have been vaccinated in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, while Islamabad has covered 450,000 children

and Gilgit-Baltistan 274,000, according to the EOC. The National EOC has urged parents and communities to support polio workers

and ensure children receive the vaccine, which protects against the incurable disease that can cause lifelong paralysis.

## Sindh universities told to remove faculty from administrative posts

**NEWS DESK:** The immediate removal of all faculty members occupying non-teaching or administrative positions in Sindh's public universities has been ordered by the Sindh Higher Education Commission (HEC).

Currently, there are approximately 30 public universities in Sindh. In most institutions, faculty members are serving in key roles such as Registrar, Controller of Examinations, Director of the Quality Enhancement Cell, ORIC, and other budgeted and non-budgeted posts. Many vice-chancellors justify this practice by citing the universities' severe financial crises, arguing that faculty members holding additional



charges in these roles do not receive extra pay, performing these duties within their existing salaries. In a strict directive, Sindh HEC referenced two separate court orders and granted vice-chancellors eight days

to comply, warning that failure to implement the orders would make the university administration solely responsible for any resulting consequences.

In a related letter, Assistant Director of

Sindh HEC Naeed J. Haider stated: "In compliance with the order issued by the Honourable High Court of Sindh in CP No. 1757 of 2024, the order dated December 9, 2025, issued by the Circuit Court of

Hyderabad in the same petition is being sent to the Vice-Chancellor. According to this directive, no faculty member or PhD holder shall be appointed, posted, or allowed to continue in non-teaching administrative roles, whether on additional charge, lock-after basis, or OPS."

The letter also referenced previous correspondence, noting that in a letter dated November 11, 2024, the Supreme Court of Pakistan had directed that all vacant administrative posts must be filled according to the law and that arrangements such as additional charge, lock-after, OPS, or similar provisions should be terminated.

## Karachi DSP cleared of drug sale charges

**NEWS DESK:** An internal inquiry into allegations that Karachi Police's Special Investigation Unit (SIU) sold part of a seized narcotics consignment has cleared DSP Wasif Qureshi of all charges, while confirming bribery allegations against two suspended officers.

The inquiry led by West DIG Irfan Ali Baloch found that the entire seized narcotics assignment remains intact and stored at the laboratory, rejecting claims that any portion was sold.

However, the inquiry found that Sub-Inspector Aijaz Butt and Police Officer Rehmat had accepted bribes from a convicted drug dealer and excise officer.

While the charge of drug sale has been dropped against the sub-inspector, the bribery charge remains against him and the police officer. DIG Baloch compiled the report and



submitted it to AIG Karachi Javed Alam Odho, who will oversee the case. It may be recalled that in December, the SIU suspended officers accused of selling part of a 508kg narcotics consignment, valued

at Rs280 million. The consignment included 468kg of hashish and 40kg of crystal meth. It was seized during an earlier operation, the largest till date according to officials, leading to 14 arrests. The arrests in-

cluded an Assistant Excise and Taxation Officer, Javed Rashid, after 50kg of hashish and 10kg of crystal meth were recovered from his house. The SIU launched an inquiry led by West DIG Baloch. Statements were

collected from police officers and the 14 suspects arrested in the initial crackdown. DSP Wasif Qureshi and Sub-Inspector Aijaz Butt also faced allegations of taking bribes in exchange for leniency in the case.



# Crime, accidents claim hundreds of lives in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): Karachi witnessed alarming rise in the numbers of deaths and injuries due to crime and accidents in 2025.

The report highlighted persistent public

safety and emergency response challenges in the city. The report reveals that 89 people lost their lives while resisting robberies, and in these incidents, 14 robbers were killed and 35 others

seriously injured in Karachi this year so far. Traffic accidents claimed 830 lives, leaving 11,837 people injured across the city in the ongoing year so far.

Fire-related accidents, including an explosion at a firecracker factory, killed 26 people and injured 159. Stabbing accounted for 43 deaths, while gas cylinder explosions caused 11 fatalities and 40 injuries.

The report of the social welfare organisation further highlighted that drowning incidents took 96 lives, including 13 in open drains, and train accidents caused 51 fatalities.

Suicides were reported in 119 cases, and drug overdoses claimed the lives of 386 individuals, including 31 men and five women. Tragically, the bodies of

33 newborns were also recovered during the year.

Most of the recovered bodies were unidentified and have been laid to rest at the Chhipa graveyard.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Australia Tim Kane called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## Lahore High Court (LHC) warns of FIRs over tree-cutting at Nasir Bagh

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) has issued a strong warning against tree-cutting at Nasir Bagh, declaring that any violation will result in criminal cases being registered directly by the court.

Hearing petitions related to smog and environmental degradation, LHC judge Justice Shahid Karim reassured residents that his court would safeguard the environmental rights of Lahore's citizens.

Justice Shahid Karim warned that unauthorised tree-cutting would result in FIRs registered under his personal supervision, remarking that trees, like humans, deserve protection.

He emphasised that Nasir Bagh, formerly known as Gol Bagh, is a historic landmark and an inte-

gral part of Lahore's identity. He warned that the court would not tolerate any attempt to damage the site, including the cutting of trees.

The judge also noted that the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) has identified 804 parks in the city, adding that the court would ensure the restoration of 700 of them. During the proceedings, a commission member highlighted increased dust pollution due to the construction of the Nawaz Sharif IT City, noting that the mapping of parks by PHA had improved monitoring and transparency.

When questioned about developments at Nasir Bagh, the Lahore Development Authority's (LDA) court informed the court that only 11 kanals of land were

being used, not the entire garden. Justice Shahid Karim rejected the justification, stating that the LDA's explanations, though the authority maintained that only a small portion of the garden was affected and that replanted trees were healthy.

The court said the action against all violators and asked the Advocate General to take a special interest in the matter of Nasir Bagh. He noted that previous projects had already caused irreversible damage to the historical city's heritage.

Questioning the rationale behind selecting Nasir Bagh for an underground parking project, the judge observed that while much of the city has already undergone unchecked development, Nasir Bagh

should have been spared. Citizens told the court they remained unconvinced by LDA's explanations, though the authority maintained that only a small portion of the garden was affected and that replanted trees were healthy.

The court said the action against all violators and asked the Advocate General to take a special interest in the matter of Nasir Bagh. He noted that previous projects had already caused irreversible damage to the historical city's heritage.

Questioning the rationale behind selecting Nasir Bagh for an underground parking project, the judge observed that while much of the city has already undergone unchecked development, Nasir Bagh

## KP Health Minister demands vigilant leadership to revolutionize hospital services

PESHAWAR, Dec 19 (INP): KP Provincial Minister for Health, Mr. Khaliq Ur Rehman has stated that hospital heads as the "eyes and ears" of the Health Department and said that active, vigilant and responsible administration can bring about substantial improvements in service delivery.

He chaired an important meeting of Directors, Medical Superintendents (MSs) and Heads of Departments (HoDs) of all major hospitals across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to review healthcare services and discuss measures for further improvement in the public health sector.

During the meeting, the Health Minister issued clear and firm directions to all concerned heads, stating that officers who fail to perform

their duties with commitment and responsibility will be relieved of their positions. He emphasized that public service is a sacred trust and must not be taken for granted.

"We are all accountable to the people and it is our collective responsibility to serve them with honesty, dedication and integrity," he added.

Mr. Khaliq Ur Rehman stated that the Health Department and the Provincial Government are continuously addressing challenges faced by hospitals by providing adequate funds, human resources and essential medical equipment. However, he stressed that without sincerity, dedication and professional ethics, meaningful progress and positive change cannot be achieved. The Health Minister directed hospi-

tal heads to ensure strict transparency and establish strong monitoring mechanisms in their respective institutions so that there remains no room for corruption, negligence or mismanagement. He particularly emphasized that a hygienic environment is an essential component of quality healthcare.

He described hospital heads as the "eyes and ears" of the Health Department and said that active, vigilant and responsible administration can bring about substantial improvements in service delivery. The Health Minister assured all participants of full financial, moral and administrative support from the Provincial Government in their efforts to elevate healthcare services to a level of excellence and public admiration.

He appreciated the report's observations on the inherent right to self-transnational violence and targeted killings at

He noted that serious violations of human rights are not only a transnational issue but also a targeted killings at

## PM Shehbaz welcomes Australian interest in mines and minerals, highlights Reko Diq's potential

ISLAMABAD, Dec 19 (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday welcomed the positive trajectory of Pakistan-Australia relations and emphasized the importance of expanding bilateral trade and investment, particularly in the agriculture and livestock sectors, which hold significant potential for increased cooperation.

In a meeting with the newly appointed Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Tim Kane, who paid a courtesy call on the Prime Minister, Shehbaz also expressed his appreciation for Australia's interest in Pakistan's

mining and minerals sector. He highlighted Reko-Diq as a prime example of Pakistan's vast potential in this field.

Prime Minister Shehbaz conveyed deepest condolences over the tragic loss of innocent lives in the Bondi Beach shooting, Sydney, on December 14, and said that Pakistan unequivocally condemned that cowardly act of terrorism.

He reiterated that Pakistan unequivocally condemned the cowardly act of terrorism and reaffirmed Pakistan's solidarity with Australia during its time of grief. He emphasized that ter-

rorism has no religion and must be condemned in all its forms, urging collective international action to eliminate this global menace.

The Prime Minister also commended the invaluable contribution of the vibrant Pakistani diaspora in Australia, which serves as a vital bridge between the two nations. He noted that both countries share strong people-to-people linkages and cultural ties, with a shared passion for cricket.

Prime Minister Shehbaz conveyed his warm regards to the Australian leadership

and expressed his eagerness to work with them to further strengthen ties between the two countries. Ambassador Tim Kane thanked the Prime Minister for the warm reception and reaffirmed Australia's keen desire to enhance Pakistan-Australia relations across all areas of mutual interest.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi, and Foreign Secretary Anna Baloch.

## President welcomes UN report on India's military actions against Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari has welcomed the report issued by United Nations human rights experts, which raises serious concerns over India's military action against Pakistan in May this year and its wider conduct, affecting global peace and stability.

In a statement, the President said the report reinforces Pakistan's long-standing position that the unilateral use of force across international borders constitutes a violation of the United Nations Charter and a grave breach of Pakistan's sovereignty.

He said the findings relating to civilian deaths, damage to populated areas and religious sites of Pakistan in May and the heightened risk of escalation caused by India are deeply disturbing.

He appreciated the report's observations on the inherent right to self-transnational violence and targeted killings at

tributed to India, raised in multiple countries, point to a dangerous pattern that extends beyond the region and undermines global norms.

The President also expressed concern that the report clearly manifests the irresponsible state behaviour of India.

He said India has long stonewalled its minorities and ignored its commitments to international forums such as the United Nations, but this pattern of rogue behaviour cannot continue indefinitely. He underscored that such behaviour cannot be allowed to persist. The President noted the report's clear conclusion that international law does not recognize any separate right to unilateral military action under the pretext of counter-terrorism.

He said the affirmation of Pakistan's rights of its people and defence under international law highlights the

seriousness of the violations identified.

Asif Ali Zardari welcomed the UN experts' scrutiny of India's regional conduct, including concerns relating to support for terror outfits and the use of an illegitimate Afghan government to advance hostile objectives and called for transparency and accountability in this regard. The President also welcomed the call by UN Special Rapporteurs for credible evidence, compensation for civilian losses, adherence to treaty obligations and a commitment to peaceful dialogue, including on Jammu and Kashmir.

Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to peace, restraint and respect for international law, the President said Pakistan will continue to pursue diplomatic and legal avenues to safeguard its sovereignty, protect the rights of its people and promote stability in the region.



MALE: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq called on Vice President of Maldives Hussain Mohamed Latheef at Male, Maldives.

## Punjab CM to evaluate, monitor performance of govt departments

LAHORE (INP): For the first time in province, a Punjab Performance Management Unit will be established to evaluate and monitor the performance of government departments.

This decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif in Lahore on Friday. It was appreciated in the meeting that CM IT Units will also be established at both divisional and district levels to strengthen governance. The Chief Minister will personally carry out live monitor-

ing across the province through a virtual tour wall and an integrated digital dashboard.

The Punjab Performance Management Unit will ensure continuous tracking of 22 key performance indicators, enabling transparent and efficient services delivery.

In Punjab, open manholes, inflation, stray dogs, wall chalking, overflowing sewers, graveyards or cart bazaars, and the staff and officers of all institutions will be monitored.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's eyes will now be on every hospital, every

educational institution, and every government office, said the press release issued by the government.

Maryam Nawaz will also check the attendance and performance of every officer and employee in Punjab through the virtual tour.

Punjab Performance Management Unit will continuously monitor 22 key performance indicators. First KP Dashboard activated to evaluate the performance of commissioners, deputy commissioners, and assistant commissioners.

With the establish-

ment of the Performance Management Unit, prices of flour, bread, and food items will no longer fall prey to negligence.

Performance Management Unit will directly monitor the campaign to protect children from stray dogs.

The Performance Management Unit will ensure implementation of the ban on wall chalking in cities. Punjab Performance Management Unit will continuously monitor cleanliness under the "Clean Punjab" program, drainage and sewage systems in every city.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a consultative meeting with traders, community leaders, and representatives of the Chaman Chamber of Commerce & Industry to discuss challenges and facilitation of Pak-Afghan border trade at Chaman.

## Blast Damages Railway Track Near Machh, Trains Cancelled



**From Our Correspondent:** MACHH, BOLAN: A powerful explosion on the railway track near Machh-Sibi section late last night damaged more than three feet of the railway line, disrupting train operations in the area.

According to rail-

way sources, explosive material planted on the track between Machh and Sibi detonated with a loud blast, causing significant damage to the track. Railway teams reached the site immediately after receiving information and carried out the repair work to restore the

damaged section. Meanwhile, another explosion occurred between Quetta and Kolpur, where explosive material detonated on the railway track.

However, the track remained safe and no damage was reported in that section.

Due to the non-clearance from security forces, railway authorities cancelled the Jaffar Express (Quetta-Peshawar) and Bolan Mail (Quetta-Karachi) on Friday.

Keeping public convenience in view, railway officials announced that a special Jaffar Express will depart from Quetta at 8:00 am on Saturday, while another Jaffar Express will leave according to its scheduled time.

Security agencies are continuing investigations into the incidents.

## Polio Campaign Review Meeting Held in Gwadar



**GWADAR:** Under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Nageebullah Kakar, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Dr. Abdul Shakoor chaired an evening review meeting on the final day of the polio eradication campaign.

The meeting was attended by District Health Officer Dr. Yasir Tahir, World Health Organization (WHO) representative Dr. Zafar Iqbal, DSP Police Chakar

Baloch, officers of polio teams and other relevant stakeholders. Participants were informed that a total target of 35,464 children was set for the polio campaign in the district, out of which 35,265 children were administered polio drops.

In this way, around 90 percent of the target was achieved during the campaign.

The meeting also told that 15 parents refused polio vaccination, including 12 refusal cases from Gwadar Central and three from Gwadar North.

It was further highlighted that the number of "not available" children was comparatively higher this time, mainly due to winter vacations and the closure of schools, as many families had travelled to other areas along with their children during the holidays.

According to the data, a total of 1,701

houses were found locked, including 162 in Pasni, 72 in Ormara and 284 in the Jiwan area.

Addressing the meeting, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Dr. Abdul Shakoor directed that all "not available" children must be covered by tomorrow at any cost.

He also instructed that refusal cases should be addressed and covered through special teams of senior medical officers, and swift action should

be ensured at all identified hotspots.

He emphasized that the health management team must further strengthen monitoring of the polio campaign to effectively continue the fight against the polio virus. He also stressed the need for accurate and transparent data to avoid any gaps or ambiguities.

The meeting was assured that all missed children and refusal cases would be fully covered by tomorrow.

## Balochistan Assembly Offers Prayers for Late Journalist Raja Matloob Tahir



**QUETTA:** The Balochistan Assembly on Friday offered special prayers for the forgiveness of senior journalist and social media activist Raja Matloob Tahir. At the start of the assembly session, Pakistan Muslim League Member of Provincial Assembly Zarak Khan Mandokhail requested the House to offer prayers for the departed soul, which were subsequently observed by the members. Paying rich tribute,

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that Raja Matloob Tahir was not only a close friend of his but also headed an active social media team highlighting issues related to Balochistan. He said the late journalist led a vibrant, purposeful and dynamic professional life and played a key role in effectively projecting the province's issues. The Chief Minister informed the House that Raja Matloob

Tahir was in Balochistan for a week in connection with the recording of a renowned television programme.

He added that he had spoken to the deceased just half an hour before the tragic incident. Sharing details of the accident, the Chief Minister said Raja Matloob Tahir lost his life after his vehicle collided with a road divider in Islamabad, triggering deep grief across journalistic circles and throughout Balochistan.

He said the Balochistan Assembly stands in complete solidarity with the bereaved family and shares their sorrow.

The Chief Minister

prayed that Allah Almighty grants the departed soul eternal peace and gives patience and strength to the grieving family to bear this irreplaceable loss.

**TENDER NOTICE**

**TSE #252812024082 Electronic Bids Only**

Balochistan Provincial Assembly Secretariat invites electronic bids in per Balochistan Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (BPPRA) Rules, 2014 from well-respected, established and experienced firms for **REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF ENGINE GENERATOR** having registration and active status of NTN and GSTS with Federal Board of Revenue and Balochistan Revenue Authority respectively on the basis of following terms & conditions:

1. The bidder shall not be blacklisted by any of Provincial or Federal Government Department, Agency, Organization or Autonomous Body or Private Sector Organization anywhere in Pakistan.

2. Detailed bidding document can be downloaded from BPPRA website [www.bppra.gov.pk](http://www.bppra.gov.pk).

3. Single stage two envelope bidding method shall be used as per Rule 11 of the BPPRA Rules, 2014.

4. Contract will be awarded as per the evaluation criteria mentioned in bidding document.

5. Bid can be submitted electronically through BPPRA e-portal or on paper **MONDAY, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2026 (11:00 am)**. Technical bids will be opened on the same day at (12:00 pm) at the Procurement Cell Room # 16 of Balochistan Provincial Assembly Secretariat, Zarghoon Road Quetta. Financial bids of technically qualified bidders will be opened on the same day at (12:30 pm).

6. Bidding document fee of Rs.1000/- shall be submitted through Green Deposit Chalan in National Bank of Pakistan (Head of Accounts CO-3020).

7. The bidder must accompany Bid Security of 3% of Offered cost in the shape of Cash Deposit issued from a scheduled bank in favor of Secretary Balochistan Provincial Assembly Secretariat.

8. Bidders shall quote their rates inclusive of all applicable taxes and duties for each and every item enlisted in bidding document/Data sheet.

9. The Balochistan Provincial Assembly Secretariat reserves the right to reject any or all bids in per provisions of BPPRA Rules, 2014.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Telephone Number: 081-8203079 Ext.- 375, 376.

Fax Number: 081-8202975.

Email Address: [balprocurement@bal.gov.pk](mailto:balprocurement@bal.gov.pk)

**Procurement Cell Balochistan Provincial Assembly Secretariat**

Zarghoon Road Quetta

PRQ No.2576/19-12-2025

[www.bppra.gov.pk](http://www.bppra.gov.pk) [www.bal.gov.pk](http://www.bal.gov.pk)

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## Balochistan Govt approves Rs 28b for Gwadar Water Supply

**ISLAMABAD (INP):** Balochistan government has approved Rs 28 billion for a major water supply project aimed at addressing potable water shortages in Gwadar.

Chief Minister of Balochistan has earmarked the funds for the project,

which is expected to ease the city's long-standing water scarcity and related public hardships.

Under the plan, a 160-kilometre pipeline will be constructed to transport water from Mirani Dam in Turbat to Gwadar city and its surrounding sub-districts.

According to a

Gwadar Pro's report, the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) has been assigned to implement the project.

The pipeline network is scheduled for completion within one year.

Once completed, the project is expected to provide a permanent solution to Gwadar's water woes.

Mirani Dam, the second-largest dam in Balochistan, has a storage capacity of 302,000 acre-feet.

Meanwhile, the Secretary for Water has also approved an annual budget of Rs 150 million for the operation and maintenance of the

China-aided 1.2 MGD desalination plant.

The plant is currently operating at optimal capacity and is supplying a significant amount of water to the city.

Gwadar is facing an acute water crisis as the region enters its second consecutive year without meaningful rainfall.

Local reservoirs, including the Ankara and Sawad dams, have nearly dried up.

The Shadi Kaur Dam pipeline, which was reactivated in September, has yet to reach full capacity and is currently supplying only limited water to the city.

Security agencies are continuing investigations into the incidents.

He emphasized that the health management team must further strengthen monitoring of the polio campaign to effectively continue the fight against the polio virus. He also stressed the need for accurate and transparent data to avoid any gaps or ambiguities.

The meeting was assured that all missed children and refusal cases would be fully covered by tomorrow.

He said that the presence of a Saudi consulate would provide various facilities to pilgrims travelling for Hajj and Umrah and would further strengthen the cordial relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The delegation included Maulana Ismatullah Salim, Abdul Rehman Ansari, Maulana Zakaria Zakar, Hafiz Masood Panezai, Samiullah Kakar, Mahmood Ali and Abdul Basit

Rahmani. During the meeting, the delegation urged the Governor to establish a Department of Arabic at the University of Balochistan, stating that it would benefit the people of Balochistan, particularly those working in Arab countries.

Governor Balochistan assured the delegation of his full cooperation in this regard and said that practical steps would be taken to address the proposal.

The Governor expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation led by Acting Ameer of Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith Pakistan, Dr. Ali Muhammad Abu Turab, at the Governor House Quetta.

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## ECC okays Rs200bn equity injection for Discos amid cash-flow stress

**NEWS DESK:** The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet on Thursday approved more than Rs225 billion in supplementary grants, including for parliamentarians' schemes and power sector subsidy through government's equity injection.

The meeting of the committee presided over by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb also eased eligibility criteria for prime minister's fan replacement programme, approved compensation for missing persons' families and noted easing of inflationary pressure that had stemmed from post-flood supply impact.

The ECC approved a total of Rs12bn for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Achievement Programme schemes — codenamed for parliamentarians' constituency schemes — under three different heads. The government had allocated Rs70bn in the current year budget for parliamentarians' schemes and about Rs25bn has already been authorised for disbursement in the first four months.

The fresh approvals take the total authorisations to Rs77bn, more than half

the total allocation, the luckiest area in the development budget.

An official statement said the supplementary grant of Rs6.358bn was approved to Power Division for execution of SDGs schemes in Punjab, Islamabad Capital Territory, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The ECC also approved another supplementary grant of Rs40 million of SDGs under the defence sector, an official statement said.

The meeting also approved Rs5.2bn supplementary grant to Ministry of Housing and Works for Pakistan Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (PIDCL) — a replacement for Pakistan Works Department (PWD) — for execution of development schemes in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The meeting also approved disbursement of a supplementary grant of Rs200bn for timely payments critical for power sector's liquidity out of Rs400bn budgeted funds for lump sum payment of subsidies, other than tariff differential subsidies. This will be treated as government of Pakistan equity investment in



Distribution Companies (Discos) to address cash flow constraints in the power sector.

The government has allocated about Rs1.036 trillion for power sector subsidies which include about Rs495bn for tariff differential subsidies to Discos and K-Electric, Rs400bn lump sum subsidy payments as liquidity injection, Rs50bn for guaranteed

payments to Chinese power producers and Rs95bn for other producers.

The ECC also approved, on the proposal of the Power Division, a revision and readjustment of the eligibility criteria for funding under the Prime Minister's Fan Replacement Programme to ensure efficient implementation of the scheme and to further promote

energy efficiency and reduction in electricity consumption. Earlier, the eligible consumers should not have delayed more than two monthly bills in 24 months which has now been increased to four months out of 24 months.

The committee approved additional funds amounting to Rs5.76bn proposed by the Federal Education and Profes-

sional Training Division for establishment of Danish Schools in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan, as well as for implementation of the Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Programme through NAVTTC.

However, the committee advised the division to explore public-private partnership mod-

els to enhance sustainability, noting that continued reliance on regular government funding may be challenging in the future. On the request of Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination, the ECC approved an amount of Rs1.70m for the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation's budget for FY26.

The ministry was

directed to prepare a comprehensive business plan clearly outlining PTDC's proposed role, governance framework, staffing requirements and alignment with the national tourism strategy, particularly in view of ongoing consultancy studies and international investment initiatives.

The ECC also approved payment of Rs4.775bn to 945 deserving families of missing persons, as identified by the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances to address "humanitarian concerns", the ministry of finance said.

The disbursement will be made under the supervision of the Commission.

The Committee approved Rs79m for annual maintenance of helicopters of Frontier Corps Balochistan (North), Quetta, and another Technical Supply-military Grant of Rs1.821m for repair and maintenance of helicopters of Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) during 2025-26.

A Rs2.5bn grant was also approved for construction of 104 additional family suites for parliamentarians including their servant quarters.

## Pakistan targets January for inaugural panda bond tranche, says finance ministry

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan is targeting January to issue its first panda bond tranche, part of a planned programme of up to \$1 billion, the Ministry of Finance said on Friday, as Islamabad seeks to diversify funding sources and tap China's onshore debt market.

The inaugural issuance is expected to raise the equivalent of about \$250 million, with further tranches to follow under a phased programme once regulatory approvals are completed, the ministry said after Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb chaired a review meeting on the plan.

Approvals from multilateral partners have already been secured, and final clearances from Chinese regulators are expected by early January, the statement said.

The panda bond programme, denominated in yuan and sold on China's domestic market, is part of Pakistan's broader debt management strategy as it works to stabilise its

economy under a \$7 billion International Monetary Fund programme.

Pricing for the inaugural bond will be determined closer to the launch once all regulatory requirements are completed, the ministry said.

The finance ministry said engagement with Chinese institutions and investors had been constructive, reflecting improving confidence in Pakistan's macroeconomic outlook following recent policy reforms.

Preparatory work has already begun for subsequent tranches within the planned \$1bn

panda bond programme. Moody's raised its long-term foreign-currency issuer rating to Caa1 with a stable outlook in August 2025, citing an improving external position supported by reforms and IMF support.

S&P Global Ratings upgraded Pakistan to B+ with a stable outlook in July 2025. Pakistan has relied heavily on bilateral and multilateral financing, including short-term funding from Middle Eastern banks, but is now looking to broaden its investor base through markets such as China's onshore bond market.



**NEWS DESK:** The World Bank is pushing Pakistan to develop a road map for gas-sector reforms to unbundle the public utilities aimed at bringing efficiency, controlling losses and curbing circular debt.

The bank also wants the government to develop a comprehensive road map for gas-sector reforms, including measures aimed at improving the performance and efficiency as well as unbundling of Sui companies.

At present, two public gas utilities — Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) and Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) — are catering to needs of consumers across the country. Owing to a wide network, they have not been able to curb losses, resulting in the accumulation of circular debt, which has now reached Rs2.6 trillion.

The planned new measures in the gas sector will help to reduce the debt. Earlier, the power sector faced a circular debt of Rs2.6 trillion for years that impacted the performance

of energy chain.

World Bank Country Director for Pakistan Bolormaa Ambagazhar, during a meeting with Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik on Thursday, noted that the bank was already working closely with the ministry to develop a comprehensive road map for gas-sector reforms, including measures aimed at improving the performance and efficiency as well as unbundling of Sui companies.

The government plans the restructuring of gas utilities through amendments to the existing pricing formula based on a guaranteed asset-based return and through price revision every quarter. The unbundling of utilities has been on the government's agenda for over a decade, but it has not been able to execute the plan so far.

Efforts to split the gas utilities started in 2010 to bring efficiency and improve their performance. Thus far, no tangible outcome has emerged because of in-

consistent policies in the wake of change in governments.

The government had tasked the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) with undertaking a study to amend the gas pricing formula. In this regard, the regulator has hired the services of a consultant, which is scheduled to complete its report by the end of December.

In the meeting with the World Bank country director, Ali Pervaiz Malik discussed ongoing and future reforms in Pakistan's energy sector, with a particular focus on gas-sector sustainability.



Ambagazhar appreciated the Petroleum Division for successfully resolving the longstanding liquefied natural gas (LNG) surplus issue. She noted that addressing the LNG challenge was not an easy task and commended the minister for taking a keen interest in ensuring the sustainability of the gas sector.

World Bank's continued support to the Petroleum Division for advancing gas-sector reforms and expressed willingness to collaborate in implementing reforms in the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) sector and the capacity building of Ogra.

The minister appreciated that instead of international partners such as the World Bank was highly valuable in shaping effective and sustainable policy reforms. He reiterated the government's strong commitment to ensuring long-term sustainability of the gas sector through structural and institutional reforms.



## World Bank urges Pakistan to reform gas sector, split utilities for debt control

## Chaman Chamber seeks incentives for industries

**NEWS DESK:** The Chaman Chamber of Commerce has sought assistance of the federal government for developing infrastructure in the region's industrial zone and incentives for industrial units along the border similar to those offered to the Special Economic Zones to boost the country's exports.

It has also urged the government to provide assistance in building roads and electricity, gas and digital connectivity for the investors willing to pour capital into the industrial zone. Other proposals include the reduction in taxes and relaxation in import duty on machinery to attract manufacturing units to Chaman.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar held a meeting with representatives of the Chaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Thursday to discuss the challenges faced by local businesses and small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The meeting was attended by additional secretaries of the Ministry of Industries and Smeda CEO Nadia J Seth. Detailed discussions were held on the challenges and the need for targeted federal support.

Representatives of the Chaman Chamber highlighted that with a population of nearly one million and its strategic importance due to commerce, transportation and cross-border trade, Chaman had the potential to emerge as a major SME hub. It called for including the Chaman Industrial Zone in all federal industrial schemes and support programmes.

The chamber emphasised the urgent need for setting up vocational and technical training centres to produce skilled manpower. Proposals were shared for establishing a government-supported Common Facility Centre to enable industries to utilise shared machinery as well as creation of an Export Facilitation Desk. Support for the de-



velopment of agro-processing and cold chain industries was also sought to strengthen local value chains and enhance export potential. On the occasion, Haroon Akhtar highlighted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision of promoting and empowering SMEs and his directive to facilitate and lift every small enterprise across the country.

He acknowledged the vital role of the Chaman Chamber in

cross-border trade and assured businessmen that the chamber would be included in all relevant development programmes and committees.

The PM aide announced that, with support from the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Smeda) and the Pakistan Industrial Technical Assistance Centre (Pitac), a technical and vocational training centre would be established in Chaman. He noted that

a Common Facility Centre at the Chaman border would significantly benefit the SMEs operating in the region.

Haroon Akhtar added that the government was already working on agro-processing and cold chain development and Chaman would be included in those initiatives. Emphasising Smeda's critical role, he directed the organisation to facilitate the Chaman Chamber and ensure tangible results.

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan and China advanced discussions on a major maritime industrial project at Port Qasim, as a five-member delegation from China's Shandong Xinxu Group met Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Chaudhry to review plans for an Integrated Maritime Industrial Complex (IMIC), Associated Press of Pakistan reported.

The proposed project, valued between \$1.1 billion and \$2.2 billion, aims to revitalise Pakistan's maritime and heavy industrial base. The delegation was led by Shandong Xinxu Group chairman Hou Jian.

According to the statement, the IMIC is expected to focus on three key components: the revival of the Iron Ore and Coal Berth jetties — commonly known as the steel jetties — the establishment of shipbuilding and shiprepairing facilities, and the setting up of a modern steel inte-

grated port operations.

The steel jetties, originally intended to serve Pakistan Steel Mills, is capable of handling bulk iron ore and coal shipments.

It can accommodate vessels ranging between 55,000 and 75,000 deadweight tonnes and is linked to the mill through a conveyor system stretching between 4.5km and 8km, connecting stockyards and blast furnaces. Chaudhry welcomed the group's interest and directed the delegation to submit an unsolicited proposal detailing a comprehensive roadmap for the project. He asked for clearly defined concepts, implementation timelines, and technical, financial and environmental feasibility assessments.

The proposal, once submitted, will be reviewed by a joint committee comprising officials from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and the Shandong Xinxu Group, led by Additional

Secretary Umar Zafar Sheikh.

The minister said the project must align with Pakistan's broader industrial and sustainability priorities, highlighting employment generation, value addition, and environmentally responsible practices as key goals.

The IMIC concept was first introduced by Chaudhry in November 2025 at a Port Qasim Authority event marking the port's recognition as one of the world's most improved container terminals.

Branded as the "Steel-to-Green Sea" initiative, it seeks to link ship recycling with domestic steel production to reduce reliance on imported steel and promote the use of recyclable materials. If approved, the complex would rank among Pakistan's largest recent industrial investments, strengthening Port Qasim's role as a regional hub for heavy manufacturing and maritime logistics.

## Australia's Head slams unbeaten 142 to crush England's Ashes hopes

**NEWS DESK:** Danger man Travis Head crunched his fourth century in as many Tests at Adelaide Oval Friday as Australia built a 356-run lead over England to stand on the brink of retaining the Ashes.

The hosts were 271-4 at stumps on day three of the third Test with Head on 142 and first-innings century-maker Alex Carey not out 52, taking the five-match series out of England's reach.

England must win after crashing inside two days at the first Test in Perth and inside four in Brisbane, both by eight wickets.

But it appears to be an impossible task with the highest run chase at the ground 316 by Australia against England in 1902. Head's crucial ton, his 11th, came off a composed 146 balls

although he almost didn't get there, dropped on 99 by Harry Brook as impatience got the better of him.

He has now scored a century in four consecutive Tests on his home ground, following 140 against India last year and 119 and 175 against the West Indies.

Australia suffered an early setback in a tense 20 minutes before lunch after England were all out for 286 on the back of Ben Stokes' gritty 83 in response to Australia's first innings 371.

Bryson Carse trapped Jake Weatherall lbw for one and he walked without reviewing after the umpire lifted his finger, although replays showed the ball was pitching outside leg stump.



It gave England a glimmer of hope, but after the break Head slammed the door shut, cutting and chopping boundaries to let and that has gone wide-ups and downs," said the Dutchman.

Usman Khawaja, who hit a defiant 82 in the first innings after his last-minute call-up

for the ill Steve Smith, was a perfect foil for the more aggressive Head.

But on 40 he was undone by the spin of Will Lacks, caught behind, and Cameron Green followed soon

after for seven, edging Tongue to Brook.

After getting through the nervous 90s, Head finally brought up his century with a four off Joe Root, taking off his helmet and kissing the

turf before pumping his fists.

While not in the same vein as his match-winning 69-ball century in Perth, it was a critical knock, supported by Carey and aided by Stokes not bowling after his exploits with the bat.

Gutsy Stokes

After a woeful batting display on Thursday, Stokes and Jofra Archer kept England's dreams alive with a stirring 106-run ninth-wicket stand.

They resumed at 213-8 in muggy conditions with Stokes not out 45 and Archer on 30. Stokes, who suffered leg cramps and dehydration during his gutsy rearguard action in sweltering 40 Celsius heat on Thursday, brought up his slowest ever 50 in Tests, off 159 balls.

He kept plugging

away but finally fell when Mitchell Starc took the new ball and bowled him, with Stokes one of the few players who showed the fight he had demanded before the game.

Archer was another, ably helping his captain.

The fast bowler was the last man out when caught by Labuschagne off Scott Boland for 51 — his highest Test score and a maiden half-century.

Boland ended with 3-45 while Pat Cummins took 3-69 in his first Test since July.

England's woes began when openers Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett, along with the under-performing Ollie Pope, departed in a 15-ball blitz on Thursday at the hands of Cummins and Nathan Lyon.

## Liverpool have 'moved on' from Salah furore

**NEWS DESK:** Amel Slot said Liverpool have "moved on" from the furore caused by Mohamed Salah's explosive outburst at being dropped and are showing signs of growing into the side he wants to see.

The Reds begin what could be up to a month without Salah, who is representing Egypt at the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), away at Tottenham on Saturday.

After a run of nine defeats in 12 games, Slot has steadied the ship in a five-game unbeaten run, during which Salah did not start a single game.

"Actions speak louder than words. We moved on," Slot told reporters on Friday, referring to his decision to bring Salah on as a substitute in last week's victory over Brighton.

"Now he's at the AFCON playing big games for himself and the country. All the focus for him is over there and there should not be any distraction of me saying anything because we moved on after the Leeds interview and he played against Brighton."

Despite a difficult second season for Slot in England, Liverpool sit



seventh in the Premier League and would move into the top four with victory against struggling Spurs.

The English champions transformed their squad over the summer transfer window, spending nearly £450 million (\$602 million) to bring in Alexander Isak, Florian Wirtz, Hugo Ekitike, Jeremie Frimpong and Miles Keizer.

Apart from the impressive Ekitike, all the new signings have struggled and Slot conceded he had been over how long it would take

for his new-look squad to perform consistently.

"I think we are getting closer and closer to the team I want us to be and that has gone wide-ups and downs," said the Dutchman.

"But for me that makes complete sense because all the changes we've made during the summer and we made them on purely defensive because we thought we needed to."

"If I'm completely honest, maybe I didn't expect it to take maybe as long as it did, but looking back on it now, I think

I've been too positive because if you go with a new group where not all of them are completely ready to play every single game, 90 minutes in this intensity, you have to adapt."

"Sometimes he can play, then he cannot play. So it takes maybe a bit of time, and we've been very unlucky."

Joe Gomez and Cody Gakpo will miss the trip to Tottenham due to injury, but Slot is hopeful that Dominik Szoboszlai will be fit to start. Frimpong returns after a two-month absence.

## World Cup towers packed 2026 calendar

**NEWS DESK:** The biggest soccer World Cup in history, co-hosted by Mexico, Canada and the United States, is set to outshine all other events on a 2026 sports calendar that is bursting at the seams.

The year kicks off with a winter sports bonanza in February and March with the Milano Cortina Olympics and Paralympics that put the spotlight on hosts Italy with its long winter sports tradition.

The successful return of veteran Lindsey Vonn, who at the age of 41 became the oldest winner of a World Cup race earlier in December, is a timely boost for the February 6-22 Games. The Paralympics will be held from March 6-15.

The T20 men's cricket World Cup in India and Sri Lanka will run almost simultaneously with the Winter Games but the focus will shift quickly back to soccer and the World Cup playoffs in March.

They will offer the final six spots for the June 11-July 19 tournament that will have a total of 48 participating nations, an increase from 32, with 104 matches culminating in the New Jersey final.

Among the countries still battling for a



slot are four-time world champions Italy, who failed to qualify for the last two editions in 2018 and 2022, as well as Ukraine, Sweden, Bolivia, Wales, Iraq and Jamaica among others.

Huge demand for tickets

World governing body FIFA last week received five million requests for World Cup tickets in the first 24 hours of the latest sales phases despite an outcry from fan groups about high prices for the tournament. Fans from more than 200 countries and territories applied via FIFA.com for seats.

In the first quarter of 2026, a decision is also expected from the International Olympic Com-

mittee regarding the eligibility of transgender athletes in international competitions, with the Olympic body determined to have a universal rule in place, as it has said, to protect the female sports category.

For the next six to eight weeks, all sports from Formula One to the Jannik Sinner-Carl Sastre tennis rivalry and the Tour de France will struggle to command their usual attention as the World Cup is expected to domi-

nate sports and politics headlines, with U.S. President Donald Trump a strong supporter of the tournament. Four days after the World Cup final, the Commonwealth Games kick off in Glasgow on July 23 with a scaled-down event that has been plagued by problems in recent years, leaving its relevance and future unclear.

Glasgow stepped in at short notice after the Australian state of Victoria pulled out of hosting the event in 2023.

**NEWS DESK:** Mattia Binotto expects Audi to show they mean business in Formula One next season, even if they do not spring any surprises.

The former Ferrari boss, now leader of what was Sauber and will from January race as Audi's works team, is following a long-term plan that the German manufacturer hopes will tee up a title challenge in 2030.

Sauber already established themselves this season as regular points contenders, even if they finished ninth out of 10.

Confidence has grown under new principal Jonathan Wheatley, a winner recruited from Red Bull to run the team trackside, and the points tally of 70 was their most since 2012 and a massive improvement on the meagre four of 2024 and 16 of 2023.

German veteran Nico Hulkenberg's first career podium, a surprise third place at Silverstone in July, added to the optimism.

NEW ENGINE AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY

The Audi engine being built in Germany remains an unknown quantity but Binotto told Reuters he remained

confident and committed for the future.

"I think, as a project, we are going in the right path, the right direction and some credibility," he said.

"I can see the dynamic, how much the dynamic has changed."

Audi's step has not always been so assured, with the early phase marked by internal upheaval and lingering doubts about the manufacturer's true commitment.

Senior team management was replaced, with former boss Andreas Seidl and Audi management representative Oliver Hoffmann both leaving in July last

year when Binotto arrived. On the engine side, chief executive Adam Baker left in May.

On the plus side, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) acquired a significant minority stake in the team a year ago and Revolut was announced as the future title sponsor last July.

Audi will launch a new race livery with some fanfare in Berlin on January 20.

Binotto said the uncertainty about the team's future had been swept away by the scale of the new investment. "For the employees, that's pretty clear. We are expanding, we are investing in the long term. Those facts are bringing a lot of credibility to-

ward the project for the employees."

There is no doubt that Audi is fully committed.

"The investments that we are doing currently with Audi, all of them are long-term projects because they are investments that we will see the return on them, in terms of performance, maybe in three or four years' time."

Binotto said talk of Audi being more competitive than expected in 2026, when the sport undergoes possibly its biggest ever technical overhaul, was too optimistic.

"I think we need patience, we are still in that building phase," he said.

## MotoGP's sprint format has paid off



**NEWS DESK:** MotoGP's sprint format is no longer an experiment but its Chief Sporting Officer Carlos Ezpeleta knows it remains one of the championship's most contentious talking points, even as TV audiences soared this season to watch the shorter format.

Introduced in the 2023 season, the half-length races have turbocharged television audiences with a viewership increase of 26% on Saturdays while overall TV audiences are up 9%, according to figures published by MotoGP.

Moreover, the 22-round season brought

3.6 million fans to race tracks, breaking nine attendance records as MotoGP celebrated one of its most memorable seasons yet when Ducati's Marc Marquez returned to the summit with his seventh crown.

To the outsider, it looks like a win-win: more races, more viewers, more money. To the riders, however, 22 Grand Prix races and 22 sprints is a different proposition that results in a much heavier workload.

Formula One has sprint races only at select circuits and no more than six a season, but Ezpeleta left little room

for ambiguity about its future as MotoGP tries to strike a balance between sporting tradition and accessibility for new audiences.

"We think having the same format every weekend is really crucial to our sport, especially in a phase where we're so focused on capturing new fans," Ezpeleta told Reuters.

"Having a sport that's easy to understand, that's the same every weekend... The same points are on the table every weekend. It gives that consistency of a world championship and we think that's very important."

Ezpeleta's defence of sprints comes despite persistent concerns from riders over the dilution of the traditional Sunday Grand Prix and injury risk with fewer practice sessions.

But Ezpeleta rejected the idea that sprints undermine MotoGP's marquee Sunday races.

"I don't see that, the points difference is so big," he said. "It was always going to take some time for the riders and teams to get their head around the format of the weekend, where you want to push and where you want to be more passive."

## In meeting with Australian envoy, PM Shehbaz condemns 'cowardly terror attack' at Bondi Beach

**NEWS DESK:** In a meeting with Australian High Commissioner Tim Kane on Friday in Islamabad, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed his condemnation of the tragic shooting at Bondi Beach in Sydney last week and condemned the attack.

Fifteen people were killed, and dozens were wounded last Sunday in Bondi after two gunmen opened fire at people celebrating Hanukkah, the Jewish festival of lights.

The PM-N posted on social media that the newly appointed high commissioner of Australia called on Shehbaz at the PM's House today. It added that he conveyed deepest condolences over the tragic loss of innocent lives in the terrorist shooting incident at Bondi Beach, saying that Pakistan unequivocally condemned the cowardly act of terrorism.

While reaffirming Pakistan's solidarity with Australia in its hour of grief, it said, PM Shehbaz emphasised that terrorism had no religion and it must be condemned in all forms and manifestations.

He added that collective action was required to eradicate this menace.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Special Assistant to the

Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi and the foreign secretary were also present during the meeting.

The prime minister also elicited the high commissioner on his appointment and expressed confidence that his tenure would further strengthen the long-standing and friendly relations between Pakistan and Australia, the statement said.

The premier welcomed the positive tra-

jectory of Pakistan-Australia relations and underscored the need for expanding bilateral trade and investment.

He highlighted the agriculture and livestock sector as a promising area for enhanced cooperation, the statement said.

PM Shehbaz welcomed Australian interest in the mining and minerals sector, citing Reko Diq as a "shining example of the enormous potential of this sector in Pakistan".

He also lauded the valuable contribution of the "vibrant" Pakistani diaspora in Australia, saying that it served as a vital bridge between the two nations, according to the statement.

He noted that both Pakistan and Australia enjoyed strong people-to-people linkages and cultural ties, underpinned by their shared passion for cricket, the statement added.

"During the meeting, PM Shehbaz conveyed his warm regards and greetings for the Australian leadership, and said that he looked forward to working with them to build stronger ties between the two countries," said the statement.

Ambassador Kane thanked the prime minister for the warm welcome and expressed

Australia's desire to work towards further enhancing bilateral relations "across all areas of mutual interest".

## US Homeland Security chief pauses green card lottery programme, says it was used by Brown University shooting suspect

**NEWS DESK:** US Homeland Security chief Kristi Noem ordered the suspension of the diversity visa lottery programme on Thursday after saying it was used by the suspect in a mass shooting at Brown University.

"The Brown University shooter, Claudio Manuel Neves Valente, entered the United States through the diversity lottery immigrant visa programme (DVI) in 2017 and was granted a green card," Noem wrote on social media.

"At president Trump's direction, I am immediately directing US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to pause the DVI programme to ensure no more Americans are harmed by this disastrous programme," she said.

According to the Associated Press, the diversity visa programme makes up to

50,000 green cards available each year by lottery to people from countries that are little represented in the US, many of them in Africa. The lottery was created by Congress, and the move is almost certain to invite legal challenges, AP reported.

Officials said earlier that the suspect was dead as investigators said that Valente took his own life and investigators believe he acted alone.

He had been a PhD student in physics who was familiar with the building where the shooting took place, officials said.

Providence police Chief Oscar Perez and Rhode Island Attorney General Peter Neronha, speaking at a Thursday night press conference, said that Valente took his own life and investigators believe he acted alone.

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## Bangladesh rocked by unrest after death of student leader

**NEWS DESK:** Police and paramilitary troops fanned out across Dhaka and other cities in Bangladesh on Friday after violent protests overnight over the death of a popular youth leader, with concerns of further unrest ahead of national elections in which he was due to run.

Streets were calm in the morning, but residents in the Muslim-majority South Asian nation said they were worried there could be fresh violence after Friday prayers later in the day.

Sharif Osman Hadi, 32, was a spokesperson for the Inquilab Manchha, or Platform for Revolution, and participated in the student-led protests that overthrew the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last year.

He was shot in the head by masked assailants in Dhaka last Friday while launching his campaign for the elections.

Hadi was initially treated at a local hospital before being flown to Singapore for advanced medical care, where he died after spending six days on life support.

Hadi was an outspoken critic of India, and Inquilab Manchha describes itself on its website as a revolutionary cultural platform inspired by the spirit of uprising.

In Dhaka, videos circulating on social media showed mobs vandalising the offices of the country's largest daily newspaper, Prothom Alo, as well as The Daily Star, on Thursday night.

The demonstrations were marked by emotionally charged slogans invoking Hadi's name, with protesters vowing to continue their

movement and demanding swift justice.

Several areas remained tense, with additional police and paramilitary forces deployed to prevent further violence.

The fire service said the blaze at The Daily Star was under control. Troops were deployed to the scene, and firefighters rescued journalists trapped inside the building.

Chief adviser of the interim government, Muhammad Yunus, issued a statement from his office condemning the arson and urging citizens to resist mob violence.

"This is a critical moment in our nation's history when we are making a historic democratic transition," he was quoted as saying. "We cannot and must not allow it to be derailed by those few who thrive on chaos and reject peace."

Yunus added that the upcoming elections were "inescapable" from Hadi's dreams and that honouring his sacrifice would require restraint, responsibility and a

commitment against hatred. "To the journalists of The Daily Star, Prothom Alo and New Age: we stand with you. We are deeply sorry for the terror and violence you have endured," the statement read.

"The nation has witnessed your courage and tolerance in the face of terror. Attacks on journalists are attacks on truth itself. We promise you full justice."

The statement also condemned the lynching of a Hindu man in Mymensingh, vowing that there would be "no space for such violence in new Bangladesh".

Pressure on the government Bangladesh has been governed by an interim administration led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus since August 2024, after Hasina fled to India following a student-led uprising.

The government has been grappling with fresh protests over delayed reforms, and warnings of unrest by Hasina's party, the Awami League, which has been barred from the vote. The elections are

scheduled for February 12.

In a televised address to the nation following Hadi's death, Yunus said: "His passing represents an irreplaceable loss to the nation's political and democratic sphere."

Urging citizens to remain calm, Yunus said the government was committed to ensuring a transparent investigation and bringing all those responsible to justice.

He also appealed for restraint, warning that violence would only undermine the country's path toward a credible election.

The interim administration has declared Saturday a day of state mourning in honour of Hadi, with national flags to be flown at half-mast and special prayers planned across the country. The home of the country's first president, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of Hasina, was vandalised and set on fire once again, after having been attacked twice previously in February and August last year.



## Unite State (US) sanctions two more ICC judges over Israel probe

**NEWS DESK:** The United States on Thursday imposed sanctions on two more judges of the International Criminal Court after they rejected an attempt by Israel to end a war crimes probe in Gaza.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who had already ordered sanctions on judges and prosecutors in the case, explicitly linked the new measures to a vote Monday in which the two judges sided with the majority and upheld arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defense minister Yoav Gallant.

"We will not tolerate ICC abuses of power that violate the sovereignty of the United States and Is-

rael and wrongly subject US and Israeli persons to the ICC's jurisdiction," Rubio said in a statement.

"We will continue to respond with significant and tangible consequences to the ICC's lawfare and overreach," he wrote.

It brings the number of ICC judges sanctioned by the Trump administration to at least eight, along with at least three prosecutors including chief prosecutor Karim Khan.

The Hague-based ICC responded that it "strongly rejects" the fresh sanctions.

The measures are "a flagrant attack against the independence of an impartial judicial institution," the ICC said in a statement.

Israel praised the US move. "Thank you, Secretary Rubio, for this moral clear stance," Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar wrote on X. The judges newly slapped with sanctions were Gocha Lordkipanidze, formerly Georgia's justice minister, and Erdena Baisuren Damdin of Mongolia.

The sanctions ban the judges from entering the United States and block property or financial transactions with them in the world's largest economy, Lordkipanidze was formerly an adjunct professor at Columbia University in New York, Monday's 44-page ruling upheld the decision to investigate alleged crimes committed by Israel in Gaza.

Netanyahu and Gallant both face accusations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Palestinian territory launched after the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas.

The latest action puts the United States in league with Russia, which last week sentenced ICC judge and prosecutor Khan in absentia.

The ICC had also issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin related to the invasion of Ukraine. The United States, Israel and Russia are among the countries that reject the ICC, which is backed by nearly all Western democracies.



## Qatar agrees to cancel 24 LNG cargoes as Pakistan reopens local gas wells

**NEWS DESK:** Qatar has agreed to cancel surplus Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) cargoes, prompting the federal government to reopen previously shut local gas wells from January 2026. Local gas from the closed fields is expected to start flowing into the system from January.

The gas fields were earlier shut down to manage surplus LNG cargoes. Government sources said Qatar has now agreed to cancel 24 LNG shipments for 2026, while the federal cabinet had previously approved the diversion of 45 LNG cargoes on December 12, citing declining domestic demand.

Ministry of Petroleum sources said the surplus cargoes had

previously forced the closure of local wells producing 200 million cubic feet per day (MMCFD). The LNG surplus resulted from reduced use of imported gas by the power sector, which would normally be fed into the pipeline system.

To prevent potential pipeline damage from unused LNG, the local fields were kept offline. In 2026, Pakistan plans to import 85 LNG cargoes from Qatar, down from the previously planned 120.

According to ministry officials said the cancellation of surplus cargoes would help meet the financial obligations of Sui compa-



ties, which total Rs20.1 billion.

Petroleum Ministry officials said the cancellation of surplus cargoes would help meet the financial obligations of Sui compa-

ties, which total Rs20.1 billion. The gas sector's circular debt currently totals Rs3.1 trillion, comprising Rs1.7 trillion in principal and

Rs1.4 trillion in interest. Authorities have prepared a six-year plan to manage this debt.

The plan, which includes three options, will be submitted to the

federal cabinet for approval. Proposed measures include a Rs5 petroleum levy and options for debt restructuring and interest relief for companies.

Reuters reported in November that Pakistan had reached an agreement with Italy's Eni to cancel 21 LNG cargoes under a long-term supply contract.

Talks with Qatar Amid rising renewable energy generation and lower industrial gas demand, Pakistan has taken steps to reduce its LNG purchases, resulting in a surplus of imported gas.

Eni signed a long-term LNG supply agreement with Pakistan LNG Limited in 2017 to deliver one cargo per month until 2032, retaining the option to redirect shipments elsewhere.

Sources told Reuters in November that Pakistan was also negotiating with Qatar

for gas supplies from the Gulf state, including options to defer some cargoes or resell them under existing contract provisions.

Pakistan's long-term LNG agreements with Qatar and Eni cover roughly 120 cargoes annually, averaging nine per month from two Qatari contracts and one from Eni. LNG imports have declined this year as power producers reduce gas consumption due to higher solar and hydropower generation.

Lower gas consumption by power plants and self-generating industrial facilities has led to a surplus, leaving the system substantially oversupplied for the first time in years.