



BALUCHISTAN
Quetta Welcomes First Winter Rain as Cold...
Page No 5



NATIONAL
NAB begins probes into Rs40bn Pakistan Railways land cases
Page No 3



INTERNATIONAL
US intercepts oil tanker off Venezuelan coast...
Page No 8



SPORT
Meeting summoned after Pakistan kabaddi player represents India...
Page No 7

First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan

Editor: Asim Khan.

QUETTA VOICE

Rs. 10.00 Vol. VII: No: 89

Email address: dquettavoice@gmail.com
Website: www.quettavoice.com

Monday 22, December, 2025



Machinery Moved At The Khojak Top To Remove Snow

Season's First Snowfall Blankets Kojak Top, Bringing Relief Across Balochistan

Sardar Muhammad Khondai:
CHAMAN: The first snowfall of the season has been recorded on the Kojak Top mountains near Chaman, covering the extended Kojak range, Kan Mehtarzai, and nearby high-altitude areas. The fresh spell of snow, accompanied by widespread rain, has continued across several districts of

Balochistan for the past two days. Authorities confirmed that the Quetta-Chaman Highway remains fully operational for all types of traffic. This has been made possible due to timely coordination between the district administration, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), and the National Highway Authority (NHA). In other snow-affected regions, relevant departments and local administrations are actively engaged in clearing main roads to ensure smooth movement and prevent disruptions. Beyond its immediate weather impact, the snowfall has sparked optimism among local communities. Many residents believe that this early snow and rainfall may help reduce the effects of prolonged drought-like conditions and contribute, even modestly, to mitigating the im-

acts of climate change and global warming in the province. Particularly relieved are farmers and the growers' community, who have faced water shortages and declining agricultural output in recent years. The precipitation is expected to improve soil moisture, recharge groundwater levels, and benefit upcoming crops and orchards. Residents across the region expressed satisfaction over the changing weather, hoping it signals a healthier winter season ahead. While authorities remain alert to any potential challenges posed by continued snowfall, the overall mood remains positive, with many viewing the weather shift as a much-needed blessing for Balochistan's fragile environment and agriculture-dependent economy.

Imran calls for protest after yet another verdict

NEWS DESK:

As a court sentenced him to jail in the Foshakhana-II case, former prime minister Imran Khan on Saturday issued a call for a nationwide protest besides announcing his intention to challenge the verdict in the Islamabad High Court. The PTI chief does not have access to his social media handles in jail. "I have sent a message to [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister] Sohail Afridi to prepare for the street movement. The entire nation will have to rise for its rights," he said as per the account of the conversation between the PTI leader and his lawyer posted on X. He said his sentence in this case did not come as a surprise, but he had asked his legal team to move the high court against the decision. "Like the baseless decisions and sentences of the last three years, the Foshakhana-II decision is also nothing new to me. This decision was given in haste by the judge without any evidence and without fulfilling the legal requirements," he said, adding that his legal team was "not even heard". The PTI chief said it was inevitable for the Insaf Lawyers Forum and the legal community to "come to the front foot" for the supremacy of law and the restoration of the Constitution. He said that without justice, economic development was not possible. The PTI, in a statement, called the sentence "blatantly unconstitutional, illegal, malicious and the worst form of political revenge and a textbook case of victimisation". The PTI leaders alleged that the conviction was merely an attempt to extend the incarceration of Imran Khan and provide temporary relief to a "petrified ruling clique". They stated that the rule of law had been buried in Pakistan, with political revenge being systematically carried out through a "subservient" judiciary. Addressing a press conference alongside PTI senior leader Asad Qaiser, PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja stated that the PTI founder had a meeting with his lead counsel, Barrister Salman Salfar, in the courtroom and conveyed a message to the nation. He made his position absolutely clear, stating, "I am standing firm and resolute and will not seek an apology from anyone, come what may."

Militants attack police vehicle near Afghan refugee camp in Bannu

NEWS DESK:

Militants attacked a police vehicle near an Afghan refugee camp on Kohat Road in Bannu on Saturday, prompting authorities to order the evacuation of the settlement on security grounds. Police said the attack occurred when Deputy Superintendent Police Mufeez Khan was travelling from Township to Danel. According to officials, attackers hiding near the camp opened fire on his vehicle in what they described as a planned ambush. Police personnel returned fire, forcing the attackers to flee. The police vehicle sustained partial damage, but no casualties were reported. Following the attack, police cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to trace the suspects. District Police Officer Yaser Afridi said the camp had repeatedly been used by militants as cover for attacks on security forces. He said Afghan refugees residing there had already been given time to return to Afghanistan, and many families had done so.

TTP formations infiltrating into Pakistan mostly comprise Afghans: CDF Field Marshal Asim Munir

NEWS DESK:

Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir has said that formations of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban (TTP) infiltrating into Pakistan mostly comprised Afghans. "In the TTP formations coming [into Pakistan], 70 per cent are Afghans," he said. The defence forces' chief made this statement at the National Ulama Conference held in Islamabad on December 10. However, details of the Field Marshal's address at the conference were scant thus far and clips of his speech from the event were broadcast on television today. Islamabad has repeatedly urged Kabul to put an end to the use of Afghan soil by terrorists for carrying out attacks in Pakistan. Kabul, however, denies the allegation. Turning his attention to the matter at the conference, CDF Munir questioned: "Is Afghanistan not spilling the blood of our Pakistani children?" He recalled that the Afghan



Taliban had been told to choose between Pakistan and the TTP. "We felt it," he commented. India launched a series of strikes in the early hours of May 7 across Pakistan, an act which led to the worst between the old foes in decades. Both sides used fighter jets, missiles, artillery and drones during the four-day conflict, killing dozens of people, before agreeing to a ceasefire. The confrontation followed an attack on tourists in occupied Kashmir's Pahalgam on April 22,

which resulted in the death of 26 people. While New Delhi blamed Islamabad for the attack without evidence, Pakistan denied involvement, with the foreign ministry questioning the credibility of India's account of the events and saying it was "replete with fabrications". The Field Marshal also stated that there were 57 Islamic countries in the world, and among them, "God gave us the honour of being the protectors of Haramain Sharifain (a reference to Makkah and Madinah)". He also drew parallels between Pakistan and the Islamic State established in Saudi Arabia 1,400 years ago. "Both are founded for the same reason [...], were founded in the same month, the Ramadan, and their establishment involved the element of migration." The CDF further said that no one could order jihad in an Islamic state other than the state itself. "No one can issue a fatwa for jihad without the order and permission and will of those vested with the authority," he said during the conference.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Balochistan's Climate Fund – A Lifeline Against Growing Disasters



Editorial:

Balochistan has taken a historic and timely step by establishing its first-ever Climate Fund, a move that signals the province's recognition of the existential threat posed by global warming and climate change. In his recent meeting with British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti rightly underscored the urgency of mobilizing resources to safeguard the communities from natural calamities that are growing in frequency and intensity.

Floods In Bannar

The tragic flash floods in the Bannar area of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa this month, which claimed precious human lives, are a grim reminder that Pakistan's extreme vulnerability. The province sits on a fragile ecological and seismic zone — prone not only to floods but also to recurring droughts, earthquakes, and the looming threat of desertification. Each disaster further strains an already fragile infrastructure, displaces

communities, and deepens poverty.

Stop Deforestation

The Climate Fund, if implemented transparently and effectively, has the potential to become a lifeline for millions.

It can provide the financial base for disaster preparedness, early warning systems, reforestation, water management, and community resilience projects. Equally important, it can build trust between the government and people by showing that saved resources — like the Rs. 14 billion curialed from non-developmental expenditures — are being invested in protecting lives and livelihoods.

The Fight Cannot Be Fought Alone

However, climate change is not a battle that Balochistan can fight alone. Partnerships with international organizations, such as the United Kingdom, are essential in bringing technical expertise, innovative solutions, and funding support. Training local institutions, particularly in areas like disaster management

and environmental governance, should be a top priority.

The provincial government's commitment to reforms in governance, education, and healthcare is commendable, but the climate emergency must remain at the center of its development agenda. Without climate resilience, all other reforms risk being washed away by the next flood or crippled by the next drought.

Balochistan has shown leadership by creating this Climate Fund. The next step is to ensure that it does not become another underutilized policy initiative. Effective monitoring, independent community involvement will be key to making it a success.

In the face of global warming, every delay carries a cost in human lives and economic stability. The Chief Minister must now take all possible steps to translate the promise of the Climate Fund into tangible protections for the people of Balochistan.

Multivariate Aspects of Climate Change in Pakistan

Syed Mansoor Ahmed

Climate change steams unbeatable challenges in the future. According to the World Bank report, Pakistan stands 6th in affect of climate change. The awful and deadly floods of 2010, and 2011, extremely dry weather in a rainy area, and fluctuation in actual cli-

pendant on water flow from the Indus river.

Glacial flood outbreak also poses a serious threat to the country's climate in the Karakoram range. The sole aim was reaching and understanding the possible nodes of surge-type glaciers, which are characterized by unsteady movements and frequent frontal

tify the future threats of climate change in the center of freshwater. The lake flooding displaced more than 6,000 people from upstream villages and inundated over 19 kilometers of the Karakoram Highway.

Recently, global warming and subsequent climate change have increased the constant state of fear

hand, 36 glaciers build ice barriers in the running rivers due to frontal advance, near to the densely populated areas of the Karakoram region. By constant observation of the prevailing and growing threat of climate change, it is ailing the endless future threat only due to the GLOFs. For instance, the Indus

river (OBOR) by giving with a potential corridor through the Karakoram Highway from Khunjerab to the seaport at Gawadar in Balochistan (CPEC) on the Indian Ocean. Therefore, the smooth running of the traffic on the roads is the keynote for progressive economic development. While the ice barriers in rivers due



mate pattern is alarming and despairing signs among all the dwellers of the town.

Climate Change and Agriculture in Pakistan

In addition, Pakistan is a semi-arid country. The focal and persistent source of water is from the snow-covered Himalayan and the Karakoram in the Northern Areas, Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, and the Sutlej rivers flow through this area. Within the water calculus, the country's entire agriculture is de-

advances of glaciers. As a result, it causes natural hazards by obstructing river channels, forming ice-dammed lakes, which will ultimately cause GLOFs and pose threats downstream of the water. After meaningful analysis, it revealed that a surge between 1998 and 2002 generated 6

Damages by Climate Change:

GLOFs. Meanwhile, rigorous critical exploration of the Attabadd Lake of Hunza Valley in Gilgit-Baltistan is the distinctive event to jus-

and the risk of massive outburst flooding in the respective mountainous region. The comprehensive field evidence, local testimonies by the natives, modern applications of remote sensing, and cross-correlation feature-tracking techniques provides the improved understanding of glacier surges and ice-dam formation disclosed the scale fu-

Glaciers in Pakistan:

ture threat. It is also noted, historically, in the Karakoram Range 39 glaciers are responsible for ice-dam formation. On the other

frontal advance could inundate the blacktops of the Karakoram Highway. The dislocation and dissolution of roads will give birth to never-ending challenges due to the factor of GLOFs. In the same run, these lakes and GLOFs attracted media, political, and scientific attention because of the repeated outburst of floods. So, it needs the heart blood as well as collective effective efforts to bring down the scale of the future threat without causing infinite miseries.

The ice-dam formation due to the factor of GLOFs will slow down the water flowing pace downstream. And could raise a deep impasse among the units for water distribution formula. In the end, it will ultimately surface the challenge of food insecurity in Pakistan.

The Karakoram Range, more importantly, is the home of the anticipating One Belt One Road Initia-

tion. The writer is the participating One Belt One Road Initia-

tion. The writer is the participating One Belt One Road Initia-

tion. The writer is the participating One Belt One Road Initia-

tion. The writer is the participating One Belt One Road Initia-

Artificial Intelligence Just Taking Baby Steps

Syed Muhammad Qasem

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence in computer systems. In simple words, AI enables machines to perform tasks that require human intelligence. These tasks can be learning from past experiences, solving problems, and making predictions based on provided data. Until now, AI has just started taking baby steps but it is growing at a much rapid rate.

Every invention had various positive and negative impacts on human civilization. According to Google's CEO, Sundar Pichai "AI will have a more profound impact on human beings than fire, electricity, and the internet". This innovation also has both positive and negative impacts on human beings.

If it is left unchecked it will have adverse impacts on human creativity, the job market, and the flow of information. However, the positive use of AI will bring major advancements in medical science, education, agriculture, etc. In the following paragraphs, the impacts of AI on humans are described.

Negative Impacts of AI:

AI is a technological tool and its use can be both positive and negative, although it is in the hands of human beings on how to use it. Following are some negative impacts of AI on humans.

Deep Fakes Through Generative AI:

In the age of information technology,

misinformation is a major issue. The introduction of generative AI into public space has further worsened the predicament of information flow. Through generative AI, deep fakes are generated. These deep fakes are difficult to judge, as original or fake, for a person who has no knowledge of AI. The deep fakes can be an image, a video, or a voice note. Recently, in Slovakia's 2023 elections, a fake voice of a party's leader and a journalist was shared on social media, in which they were talking about purchasing votes from the poor population. This voice badly reduced the vote bank of that party during elections.

Another example of the deep fakes that created uncertainty was pictures of the former US president, Donald Trump's arrest, which provoked his supporter's sentiments against the state. Furthermore, it can generate AI's left unchecked, bad actors in society will use it for their own purposes and spread wrong information.

AI's use in War:

Using AI for the purpose of AI will have a grave threat to the creativity of God's humankind. With only a few clicks and in some seconds, an AI program can write a book, a novel, a poem, an assignment and an article. Furthermore, it can sing a song, draw a painting, solve a problem, and make a prediction. On the other side, it takes much effort and time for a human to do

many news platforms when ChatGPT was launched in Nov 2022. As stated earlier, AI is efficient and less time-consuming in performing a task. Therefore, it has made millions of people jobless in almost every field, whether they are hotel waiters, software engineers and content writers etc. AI-driven cars neither cross the speed limit

nor have sleep problems, consequently, companies are manufacturing AI-driven cars to avoid road accidents. Journalists and content writers demand huge salaries for their work, while ChatGPT is a free AI app that can do the same tasks freely and quickly. More interestingly, AI will replace its own founders (Software Engineers) who developed AI, as Alcan write

positively. AI can Revolutionize the Medical Field AI along with synthetic biology can transform the world shaped until now. AI and synthetic biology can eradicate debilitating diseases, and find treatments for pandemics, thus providing health benefits. AI has also made a lot of achievements in the field of surgery. Last year, an AI robot performed a successful egg surgery in which

AI can Revolutionize the Medical Field AI along with synthetic biology can transform the world shaped until now. AI and synthetic biology can eradicate debilitating diseases, and find treatments for pandemics, thus providing health benefits. AI has also made a lot of achievements in the field of surgery. Last year, an AI robot performed a successful egg surgery in which



the inner layer of an egg was stitched. Additionally, an AI Chatbot can also prescribe medicines and treatment for a disease based on the provided symptoms. In the coming years, AI will further advance itself in the medical field and people will take numerous benefits from it.

Prediction Based on Provided Data: Humans remain

curious to predict things or the outcome of events. If data is fed to an AI, it can find patterns in that data, and based on these patterns it can give predictions. For example, AI can predict election results, market demand for a product, predict weather etc. In the US 2020 presidential elections, an AI model was trained to predict the outcome of elections. Tweets and Facebook posts were fed to the model from which AI separated positive and negative sentiments about former US President Trump and current US President Joe Biden. Based on the high number of positive sentiments, the AI model predicted that Trump would win the elections, and he won. So, humans can take advantage of this feature of AI and reap its benefits.

Boosting Agriculture Through AI:

Pakistan is an agriculture-based country, and enhancing the agriculture sector will boost the country's economic performance. AI can increase agricultural production by predicting the best time to cultivate and harvest a crop. It is also capable of identifying soil conditions, plant diseases, weather forecasts, and when plants need to be irrigated. Moreover, an AI-driven platform can analyze the market's supply and demand chain. AI will be efficient in saving the loss of water during irrigation. Secondly, it will provide a suitable environment for the plants to grow through maintaining soil fertility and water

needs. To sum up, equipping agriculture with AI systems will boost agricultural production and prevent heavy water losses.

Recommendations for the Pakistani Government:

The world has entered into the race of AI development. Fortunately, Pakistan has a huge human resource, but making them skilled in the field of AI is a hard task to do. All provincial governments should include AI in the school curriculum.

There should be an AI portal for students, from where they can get updates about AI developments around the globe and jobs announced by the government. Furthermore, universities must be directed to increase practical work in AI rather than theoretical.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, AI nevertheless advantageous, poses a grave threat to human civilization. If AI is left unchecked, it can spread misinformation through deep fakes, worsen the status quo of security dilemmas, cause the death of human creativity, and take jobs. So, all countries should sit on a single platform and form laws to control the development and introduction of AI tools in public space. In addition, AI companies should include a watermark to the content generated through AI to cope with misinformation. In the end, AI will be more hazardous if it gets consciousness and moves physically through maintaining dependant on humans.

Humans remain



NAB begins probes into Rs40bn Pakistan Railways land cases

NEWS DESK: Pakistan Railways has referred cases involving alleged fraud and illegal occupation of hundreds of acres of railway land, valued at over Rs40 billion, to the National Accountability Bureau.

Railway sources said preliminary investigations against officials and private firms were initiated but could not be concluded. Following approval from Federal Minister for Railways, Hanif Abbasi, the cases were formally referred to NAB, which has since initiated inquiries based on records provided by the Ministry of Railways. NAB sources confirmed that formal investigations have commenced after receiving official requests and documentation from Pakistan Railways. A committee constituted by the Ministry of Railways will assist NAB by providing relevant records, technical input and legal support during the inquiry.

The cases referred to NAB include alleged irregularities involving leasing of railway land to Royal Palm Country Club, with outstanding dues exceeding Rs216.2 million. A warehouse lease and office occupation on two acres near Mardan Railway Station, involving suspected losses of over Rs25 million.

Use of 42 acres of railway land in Karachi Ghot, with alleged losses exceeding Rs203 million.

Leasing of land to HTCL in Chaman and Quetta and the alleged illegal occupation of commercial railway property amounting to over Rs3.1 billion.

Leasing of 18 acres in Lahore's Trust Hospital Shalimar area, valued at over Rs3.1 billion.

Outsourcing payments exceeding Rs257.2 million to Four Brothers Company under the Pak Business Train scheme.

Investigations are under way with support from a four-member committee formed by the Ministry of Railways. The committee comprises General Manager Infrastructure M. Hafizullah as focal person and chair, Director General Property and Land Shahid Abbas Malik, Super Chief Commercial Manager Tariq Anwar, and Legal Advisor Salman Kazmi.

Railway officials said the cases involving alleged fraud and illegal occupation had remained pending for years. During a recent high-level meeting, the minister was briefed in detail and subsequently authorised referring the cases to NAB, directing that the process be conducted in a transparent manner.

Over 1,300 security personnel deployed in Rawalpindi ahead of potential PTI protests

NEWS DESK: More than 1,300 police officers and security personnel have been deployed across Rawalpindi to maintain law and order ahead of a possible Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf protest and a Jamaat-e-Islami gathering at Liaquat Bagh, officials said.

Officials said the deployment includes two superintendents of police, seven deputy superintendents of police, 29 inspectors and station house officers, 92 upper subordinates and 340 constables.

In addition, seven sections of Elite Force commandos, 22 Rapid Emergency and Security Operations personnel, and 400 members of the Anti-Riots Management Wing have been deployed. Police have also established 32 pickets, each supervised by an upper subordinate, while Elite Force commandos are conducting patrols. Personnel have been equipped with anti-riot gear, including rubber bullets and tear gas launchers.

Pickets have been set up at key locations, including Liaquat Bagh, Fawara Chowk, Mandi Mor, Carriage Factory, Committee Chowk, Chandni Chowk, both sides of Faizabad, Sadiqabad, Metro Station Saddar, 22 Number Chungi, Chohar Chowk and MH Chowk.

Special pickets have also been established on routes and access points leading to Adiala Jail, as well as at Chak Beli Mor, Thallian Interchange, Chakri Interchange and Jorian.

Officials said personnel have been instructed to remain vigilant, with additional police personnel on standby at the security division and at each police station to respond promptly to any emergency.

City Police Officer Khalid Hamdani is overseeing command and control, with overall supervision by Senior Superintendent of Police Malik Tariq Mehmod.

The deployment comes amid heightened political tensions following the sentencing of former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi to 17 years' imprisonment in the Toshakhana-II case.

PTI leaders have voiced support for the party's founder and criticised the verdict. Party secretary general Salman Akram Raja said on Saturday that Khan had urged supporters to prepare for a street movement.

Over 1,300 officers and security personnel have been deployed across Rawalpindi to maintain law and order ahead of a possible PTI protest and a Jamaat-e-Islami gathering at Liaquat Bagh.

The deployment includes two superintendents of police (SPs), seven deputy superintendents of police (DSPs), 29 inspectors and station house officers (SHOs), 92 upper subordinates, and 340 constables. Seven sections of Elite Force commandos, 22 Rapid Emergency and Security Operations (RESO) personnel, and 400 personnel from the Anti-Riots Management Wing have also been deployed.

32 pickets have also been established, each supervised by an upper subordinate, with Elite

Force commandos conducting patrols. The force is equipped with anti-riot kits, including rubber bullets, tear gas shells, and batons.

Pickets have been set up at locations including Liaquat Bagh, Fawara Chowk, Mandi Mor, Carriage Factory, Committee Chowk, Chandni Chowk, both sides of Faizabad, Sadiqabad, Metro Station Saddar, 22 Number Chungi, Chohar Chowk, and MH Chowk.

Special pickets have been established on routes and gates leading to Adiala Jail, as well as at Chak Beli Mor, Thallian Interchange, Chakri Interchange, and Jorian. Security personnel have been instructed to remain vigilant, with additional police personnel on standby at the security division and at each police station to respond promptly to any emergency.

City Police Officer Khalid Hamdani is handling command and control responsibilities, with overall supervision by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Malik Tariq Mehmod.

The deployment comes amid heightened political tensions following the sentencing of former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi to 17 years' imprisonment in the Toshakhana-II case.

PTI leaders have voiced support for the party's founder, vowing action against the verdict they have deemed baseless. Salman Akram Raja, PTI's Secretary General, relayed on Saturday that Khan has called on his supporters to prepare for a street movement.

Senate panel moves to curb judicial intervention in parliamentary affairs

NEWS DESK: In a move billed by its sponsors as reaffirming parliament's supremacy, a process has been initiated to amend a Senate rule to limit the scope for high courts to intervene in parliamentary affairs.

Amid opposition from the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, the Senate Standing Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges has approved an amendment to Rule 166(5) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate. Backers say the change will leave no legal room for the judiciary to interfere in parliamentary matters by relying on the rule in its present form.

The proposed amendment, spearheaded by former deputy chairman Saleem Mandiwalla and signed by around three dozen lawmakers, expands the definition of public petitions that can be taken up by Senate committees.

It states that a public petition, submitted by a citizen or a group of citizens in the prescribed form under Rule 277, may be presented on "any matter of public importance", including grievances arising from systemic concern, regulatory oversight and/or the protection of rights.

Proposed rule change seeks to shield upper house committees from stay orders issued by the courts, after consideration, the committee may issue: (a) observations or recommendations for systemic or regulatory improvements; and (b) a facilitative guidance for resolution of the grievance and take necessary steps for disposal of the matter in accordance with relevant law.

A proviso proposed to be added to the rule gives the Senate chairman broad discretion over whether a petition proceeds. It reads: "Provided that, notwithstanding anything contained in this rule, the Chairman Senate may, at his sole discretion, review, admit, pend, discontinue with or decline to proceed with any petition, if in his opinion such action is necessary in the interest of propriety, parliamentary discipline, or to prevent frivolous, vexatious or otherwise inappropriate proceedings."

Rule 166(5) in its current form states: "Provided that, notwithstanding anything contained in this rule, the Chairman Senate may, at his sole discretion, review, admit, pend, discontinue with or decline to proceed with any petition, if in his opinion such action is necessary in the interest of propriety, parliamentary discipline, or to prevent frivolous, vexatious or otherwise inappropriate proceedings."

The ministry said that despite constitutional devolution, the federal government continues to invest in provincial welfare and development and it gave Rs15 billion K-P over the past 15 years from the federal PSDP for development projects of a provincial nature.

However, the ministry said that K-P was less than what the federal government gave to Sindh and Punjab from the PSDP, mostly because of its political compulsions.

Through the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), an amount of Rs481.4 billion has been spent in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa since 2016 to 2025, providing critical social protection to vulnerable households, it added.

The official statement added that the Ministry of Finance remained fully committed to equitable resource distribution, fiscal federalism, and sustained support for Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, ensuring that provincial needs, particularly those arising from security challenges, displacement, and administrative integration, are addressed in a timely and responsible manner.

Additional Federal Support beyond NFC was transferred to K-P in addition to its share in NFC. Following the merger of former FATA into K-P after the 7th NFC Award, and in absence of a revised NFC formula, the federal government has been financing the expenditures of the newly merged districts from its own NFC share, said the ministry.

For the 11th NFC, the Centre has also constituted committees that would try to reach a consensus on multiple issues including allocating K-P's share for over 5 million merged population and looking into straight transfers etc.

The finance ministry said that from July 2010 to November 2025, an amount of Rs5.9 trillion has been transferred to K-P as its share of the divisible pool.

It said that during the same period, Rs705 billion has been provided to K-P on account of the war on terror, reflecting federal recognition of the province's sacrifices and responsibilities.

An additional over Rs17 billion has been provided to K-P over the years to support Internally Displaced Persons, which were affected by the war against terrorism, according to the ministry.

For the 11th NFC, the Centre has also con-



stituted committees that would try to reach a consensus on multiple issues including allocating K-P's share for over 5 million merged population and looking into straight transfers etc.

The finance ministry said that from July 2010 to November 2025, an amount of Rs5.9 trillion has been transferred to K-P as its share of the divisible pool.

It said that during the same period, Rs705 billion has been provided to K-P on account of the war on terror, reflecting federal recognition of the province's sacrifices and responsibilities.

An additional over Rs17 billion has been provided to K-P over the years to support Internally Displaced Persons, which were affected by the war against terrorism, according to the ministry.

For the 11th NFC, the Centre has also con-

Centre denies outstanding dues to K-P as NFC award politics heats up

NEWS DESK: As the National Finance Commission award politics heats up, the federal government on Saturday said that it has disbursed Rs7.8 trillion to Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in the past 15 years, including Rs1.4 trillion over and above the NFC share.

There are no outstanding liabilities of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government towards the Centre and the Ministry of Finance.

The federal government releases provincial NFC shares on a fortnightly basis, and no outstanding liabilities exist in this regard," said the ministry a day after Chief Minister Sohail Afridi demanded immediate release of all the outstanding dues.

The fiscal dispute between the Centre and the provincial government is mostly related to the spending on the newly merged districts, which is outside the purview of the NFC until the over 5 million population of these districts is treated as part of the NFC during the ongoing discussions under the 11th Commission.

The K-P has been claiming that the Centre owes it from over Rs850 billion to over Rs1.3 trillion on account of a 4% increase in population after the merger in 2018.

But the finance ministry said that it has been regularly paying over Rs1.4 trillion since the outstanding dues to the provincial government, which amounted to Rs7.8 trillion since 2010 when the 7th NFC became operational.

The ministry said that an amount of Rs46.5 billion was released to the government of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa on December 17, underscoring the federal government's adherence to timely disbursement commitments.

The Ministry of Finance reaffirms the federal government's continued commitment to ensuring timely, transparent, and sustained financial transfers to the Province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) in accordance with the NFC Award and beyond, reflecting the federation's resolve to support provincial development, fiscal stability, and post-conflict rehabilitation. It added.

Under the 7th NFC award, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's share was determined at 14.62% of the provincial share in the divisible pool.

In recognition of the extraordinary burden borne by the province during the war on terror, an additional 1% of the undivided divisible pool was allocated exclusively to K-P.

Although the 7th

Public petitions may be presented on any matter connected with the business pending before the House or a Committee, or any matter of general public interest which is primarily the concern of the Government, provided that it is not one which falls within the cognisance of a court of law or tribunal, and it shall not directly relate to a matter pending before any court or other authority performing judicial or quasi-judicial functions."

The ministry proposed retaining the latter portion of the original rule as a second proviso, but the committee rejected the suggestion.

During the meeting, held with Senator Syed Waqar Maqsood in the chair, Mr Mandiwalla raised concerns over what he described as judicial interference in committee proceedings. He emphasised courts had no authority to interfere in parliamentary affairs.

The ministry proposed retaining the latter portion of the original rule as a second proviso, but the committee rejected the suggestion.

During the meeting, held with Senator Syed Waqar Maqsood in the chair, Mr Mandiwalla raised concerns over what he described as judicial interference in committee proceedings. He emphasised courts had no authority to interfere in parliamentary affairs.

The ministry said that despite constitutional devolution, the federal government continues to invest in provincial welfare and development and it gave Rs15 billion K-P over the past 15 years from the federal PSDP for development projects of a provincial nature.

However, the ministry said that K-P was less than what the federal government gave to Sindh and Punjab from the PSDP, mostly because of its political compulsions.

Through the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), an amount of Rs481.4 billion has been spent in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa since 2016 to 2025, providing critical social protection to vulnerable households, it added.

The official statement added that the Ministry of Finance remained fully committed to equitable resource distribution, fiscal federalism, and sustained support for Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, ensuring that provincial needs, particularly those arising from security challenges, displacement, and administrative integration, are addressed in a timely and responsible manner.

Additional Federal Support beyond NFC was transferred to K-P in addition to its share in NFC. Following the merger of former FATA into K-P after the 7th NFC Award, and in absence of a revised NFC formula, the federal government has been financing the expenditures of the newly merged districts from its own NFC share, said the ministry.

For the 11th NFC, the Centre has also con-

stituted committees that would try to reach a consensus on multiple issues including allocating K-P's share for over 5 million merged population and looking into straight transfers etc.

The finance ministry said that from July 2010 to November 2025, an amount of Rs5.9 trillion has been transferred to K-P as its share of the divisible pool.

It said that during the same period, Rs705 billion has been provided to K-P on account of the war on terror, reflecting federal recognition of the province's sacrifices and responsibilities.

An additional over Rs17 billion has been provided to K-P over the years to support Internally Displaced Persons, which were affected by the war against terrorism, according to the ministry.

For the 11th NFC, the Centre has also con-

stituted committees that would try to reach a consensus on multiple issues including allocating K-P's share for over 5 million merged population and looking into straight transfers etc.

The finance ministry said that from July 2010 to November 2025, an amount of Rs5.9 trillion has been transferred to K-P as its share of the divisible pool.

Karachi experiences foggy morning, 'very unhealthy' air, flight disruptions

NEWS DESK: As fog engulfed several areas of Karachi on Sunday morning and the city exported "very unhealthy" weather conditions, flight disruptions and one road accident death were reported.

Low visibility due to fog was reported from Super Highway, Surjani Town, Gulistan-e-Iqbal, I.I. Chundrigar Road, Clifton and Defence.

Updates on the Karachi airports website showed that multiple flights were cancelled or delayed in the morning.

Pakistan Airport Authority spokesperson Saifullah Khan confirmed in a statement that six international flights scheduled to land in Karachi had to be diverted due to fog.

The statement said that the diversion was a usual safety measure taken due to reduced visibility. It added that Pegasus Airlines, Eithad Airways, Flydubai and Gulf Air flights had been diverted to Muscat. Moreover, a Pakistan International Airlines flight that had departed from Medina, too, had to be diverted to Muscat.

Similarly, Fly Jinnah arriving from Jeddah was diverted to Islamabad.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), shallow fog also engulfed the Rahim Yar Khan-Karachi Highway and Karachi-Lasbella Highway between 8am and

11am. Updates on air quality monitoring platform IQAIR around 11:30am showed that air quality was "very unhealthy" in the city with an AQI reading of 282.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a measure of the concentration of various pollutants in the air, such as fine particu-

late matter (PM2.5), coarse particulate matter (PM10) and nitrogen dioxide (NO2), and ozone (O3). Any AQI reading above 150 is considered "unhealthy" and above 200 is considered "very unhealthy".

Police, meanwhile, reported the death of a motorcyclist in an accident, attributing it to hazy weather conditions, among other factors. South Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Asad Raza told Dawn that the incident occurred on Clifton Bridge due to "smog, slippery roads and speeding".

As his motorcycle slipped, he died on the spot, the DIG said, adding that his body was first taken to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre and later handed over to his heirs.

710 Women University students receive CM laptops

MULTAN (INP): As many as 710 students of Women University Multan (WUM) were awarded laptops in recognition of their outstanding academic performance, under the Chief Minister's Laptop Scheme.

According to a university spokesperson Anam Zahra, the laptops were distributed to meritorious students to support their education and

research activities. A formal ceremony was held for this purpose, organized by the scheme's focal person, Dr. Madiha Akram. The distribution process was completed in an organized, transparent, and smooth manner.

Vice Chancellor Women University Multan, Professor Dr. Kulsom Paracha, said the Chief Minister's Laptop Scheme is a commendable initiative to align students with modern educational and research needs. She emphasized that the scheme was entirely merit-based and transparent, and effective planning ensured uninterrupted distribution.

The Vice Chancellor advised students to use the laptops positively for education, research, and enhancement of digital skills. Dr. Madiha Akram

termed the scheme a revolutionary step toward the promotion of higher education. Students said the laptops would significantly help them in studies, research.



BAGHDAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and his Iraqi counterpart, Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid, at the Guard of Honor during the official welcoming ceremony at Baghdad Palace.

KP govt working on emerging technologies to promote value addition to natural resources: CM Afridi

PESHAWAR, Dec 20 (INP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi Saturday said that provincial government was working on emerging technologies of biomedicine and advanced materials to promote value addition to natural resources through technology.

He expressed these views as a chief guest in High-Tech and Product Development Exhibition that was organized under science agenda of KP government in Peshawar. Various high tech projects by provincial government were showcased in the exhibition.

The exhibition featured a range of innovative products including artificial skin for burn care, locally developed PCR diagnostic kits for Hepatitis B and C, HIV and other diseases, an e-rickshaw project, use of liquid oxygen in mining, e-surgical instruments and an e-study card system for students.

Addressing the exhibition, the CM said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government was working on various emerging technologies to use technology for value addition to natural resources and to accelerate economic growth.

He added that the provincial government

was committed to fostering innovation-driven development and self-reliance and added that the products on display were a practical manifestation of this commitment.

During the exhibition, detailed briefings were given on the manufacturing process and key features of the showcased products.

It was informed that the development of artificial skin and tissues has been carried out with the collaboration of Pak-Austria Fachhochschule University Haripur.

This is Pakistan's first artificial skin project and its local production would ensure timely and affordable treatment for burn patients.

Similarly, it was briefed that the PCR diagnostic kits project had been assigned to Khyber Medical University which was expected to reduce diagnostic costs by 30 to 40 percent.

The project aims to develop real-time PCR diagnostic kits for five deadly viruses which will reduce reliance on imported kits, save foreign exchange and enable faster testing.

Moreover, the project would strengthen the country's capacity to provide affordable, reliable and locally manufactured molecular diagnostic solutions.

Water flow stabilizes in River Chenab after touching record low

PESHAWAR (INP): The water level in the River Chenab at Marala has risen following a marked reduction witnessed at the site between December 10 and December 16.

During the aforementioned period, the water level at the site was at its lowest in the last 10 years.

Pakistan has said that India first emptied the Baghar Dam and attempted to undermine the Indus Waters Treaty in a systemic manner.

The foreign minister said "We witnessed a violation of international law... But what we are witnessing now is material breaches by India that strike at the heart of the Indus Waters Treaty with escalating consequences both for regional stability and sanctity of international law."

On Thursday, the Pakistan Foreign Office said it had sought a clarification from India via a letter over a sudden variation in the Chenab River's water flow.

Ishaq Dar said that

Pakistan would not compromise on its water rights as Indian actions posed a serious threat to peace and stability in South Asia, besides being a threat to Pakistan's food security.

Ishaq Dar held an urgent briefing for foreign diplomats in Islamabad, during which the Foreign Minister maintained that India had consistently attempted to undermine the Indus Waters Treaty in a systemic manner.

Later, the country also took up the matter with India's Indus Water Commissioner.

However, on December 17, water level in the river began to rise again and on December 19, it became normal.

According to the Punjab Irrigation Department, presently the flow of water in the river is between 4,505 cuses and 6,494 cuses, and there will be a close monitoring of the water level in future.

On Friday, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar had said that attempts by India to weaponize water threatened peace and stability in South Asia, besides being a threat to Pakistan's food security.

Ishaq Dar held an urgent briefing for foreign diplomats in Islamabad, during which the Foreign Minister maintained that India had consistently attempted to undermine the Indus Waters Treaty in a systemic manner.

The foreign minister said "We witnessed a violation of international law... But what we are witnessing now is material breaches by India that strike at the heart of the Indus Waters Treaty with escalating consequences both for regional stability and sanctity of international law."

On Thursday, the Pakistan Foreign Office said it had sought a clarification from India via a letter over a sudden variation in the Chenab River's water flow.

Ishaq Dar said that

Aseefa Bhutto inaugurates free cardiac hospital in Shaheed Benazirabad

NAWABSHAH (INP): First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari on Sunday inaugurated a new cardiac hospital in Shaheed Benazirabad, marking a major step toward strengthening public healthcare and expanding access to free treatment for heart diseases in Sindh.

The new facility, operated under the Sindh Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases, has been relocated from Peoples Medical University Hospital, Nawabshah, to a dedicated site, significantly enhancing its capacity and range of services.

The hospital comprises 55 beds and is equipped with modern cardiac emergency facilities.

Under the initiative, patients will receive free primary angioplasty services as well as paediatric cardiac care. Authorities said stroke intervention services would also be introduced in the future to further expand specialised treatment options.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari said the SICVD has emerged as the world's largest free cardiac healthcare network.

She said institutions like SICVD have become a lifeline for underprivileged and marginalised segments of society by providing quality healthcare without financial burden.

A dignified ceremony was held at the state-of-the-art hospital would ensure dignified, timely and completely free treatment for patients, and expressed gratitude to charitable organisations for their support in establishing the facility.

Rescue 1122 pays glowing tribute to fire fighters of Gakhar Plaza

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Punjab Emergency Service (Rescue 1122) Rawalpindi commemorated the great sacrifices of 13 heroes of the nation, who lost their lives during Gakhar Plaza Fire Fighting & Rescue operation on 20th December, 2008.

Of these 13 firefighters, 04 belonged to Rescue 1122 Rawalpindi, 06 to Pakistan Ordnance Factories Wah Cantt, 02 to Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority and 01 belong to the City District Fire Brigade Rawalpindi.

The sacrifices of rescuers who embraced martyrdom in the Gakhar Plaza fire and other incidents were remembered with deep respect.

Speakers said that December 20 is observed as Rescue Martyrs' Day in remembrance of December 20, 2008.

Participants paid tribute at the Martyrs' Memorial by laying floral wreaths, presenting salutes, and offering special prayers for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks.

The ceremony was attended by Parliamentary Secretary Rescue 1122 Punjab Zia Ullah Shah, Director Rescue

Talal Chaudhry distributes 119 motorcycles among para-veterinary staff

FAISALABAD (INP): State Minister for Interior and Senator Talal Chaudhry distributed 119 motorcycles among para-veterinary staff of the livestock department had revamped field service delivery particularly in rural areas.

Addressing the ceremony, he said that the only measure of political and governance performance and public service, stressing that the government should be judged solely on the basis of its delivery.

He said that performance of the Punjab government was clearly superior to other provinces and this fact is also reflected in statistics as well as ground realities.

He said that budget of the livestock department had been increased manifold, adding that although all provinces had access to similar financial resources, yet Punjab had utilized these funds more effectively by prioritizing animal health, field staff facilitation, modern equipments and provision of motorcycles and this level of focus is unmatched elsewhere.

The state minister said that livestock holds exceptional importance in Punjab as it is not only a source of livelihood for rural population but also an asset and financial security for farmers.

He said that unlike other provinces, Punjab had given due attention to animal care and this fact is also reflected in statistics as well as ground realities.

He said that budget of the livestock department had been increased manifold, adding that although all provinces had access to similar financial resources, yet Punjab had utilized these funds more effectively by prioritizing animal health, field staff facilitation, modern equipments and provision of motorcycles and this level of focus is unmatched elsewhere.

The state minister said that livestock holds exceptional importance in Punjab as it is not only a source of livelihood for rural population but also an asset and financial security for farmers.

He said that unlike other provinces, Punjab had given due attention to animal care and this fact is also reflected in statistics as well as ground realities.

He said that budget of the livestock department had been increased manifold, adding that although all provinces had access to similar financial resources, yet Punjab had utilized these funds more effectively by prioritizing animal health, field staff facilitation, modern equipments and provision of motorcycles and this level of focus is unmatched elsewhere.

Nawaz, Talal Chaudhry said that she was personally overseeing key sectors and taking timely decisions wherever required, whether in public transport projects or welfare initiatives.

Referring to "Sutbra Punjab" programme, he said that the initiative had drawn attention even beyond Pakistan, noting that despite limited resources, visible cleanliness arrangements were present in villages across Punjab, reflecting effective governance.

He said that over the past two years, development work had been initiated or completed in every village of the province while most major projects were launched during the PML-N tenures.

He said that criticism and political rhetoric would continue, but the government remained focused on practical work and public welfare.

He said that the teams led by Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had consistently prioritized national and provincial development.

Addressing the para-veterinary staff, the state minister said that they were performing a noble duty by reaching every village to care for livestock, which plays a fundamental role in stabilizing the rural economy.

He said that livestock services would be further strengthened to ensure doorstep facilities for the farmers and livestock owners, with the aim of making Punjab a model province in the livestock sector.



SHAHEED BENAZIRABAD: First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari MNA, inaugurating the rehabilitation, improvement and expansion project of the road from Mehran Highway (Bandhli) to 60 mile 3-Chak Road (Karnal Mor).

Peace and Religious Harmony our shared duty in Faisalabad: Abid

FAISALABAD (INP): PML-N central leader Senator Abid Sher Ali said that the maintenance of law and order and promotion of religious harmony was a collective responsibility that required the collective effort of every citizen, community and school of thought.

He said that Faisalabad Peace Committee had consistently acted responsibly in challenging situations and safeguarded the city from unrest by promoting interfaith harmony.

Senator Abid Sher Ali said that such peace seminars conveyed a positive message to society and reminded people that despite differences, all citizens were united as one nation.

He emphasized that the responsibility for maintaining peace did not rest solely with the government or law enforcement agencies, but required the collective effort of every citizen, community and school of thought.

Speaking on the occasion, MPA Tahir Jameel said that the government was taking comprehensive measures across the province to ensure law and order, adding that bringing all schools of thought onto a single platform was need of the hour. Later, special prayers were offered for national security, peace and stability in addition to the progress and prosperity of Faisalabad.

Chief Organizer Sufi Mukhtar reaffirmed the committee's efforts to continue its efforts for promoting brotherhood, tolerance and peace in the city.

Members of Peace Committee, religious scholars from different schools of thought, civil society representatives and a large number of citizens attended the seminar.

LAHORE: Dr. Nasrum Iqbal MD FACP, Chairman APPNA Winter Meeting-2025, Dr. Zani Khan, Director, GEOPAK International Hospital and Syed Amir Raza, Project Director, APPNA called on the Acting President and Chairman Senate of Pakistan Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani at Lahore.

Quetta Welcomes First Winter Rain as Cold Intensifies Across Balochistan

Syed Ali Shah, News Desk:
QUETTA: After a long and difficult wait, Quetta and several other parts of Balochistan were finally blessed with the first rainfall of the winter season on Saturday, bringing relief and joy to residents while also intensifying cold weather conditions. The rain, which continued intermittently throughout the day, transformed the provincial capital's atmosphere. Families, young people, and tourists flocked to hotels, restaurants, food streets, and popular tourist spots to enjoy the pleasant weather and the long-awaited change in climate. Many described the rainfall as refreshing after weeks of dry and chilly conditions. "This rain feels like a blessing," said Ahmed Khan, a local



shopkeeper in Quetta. "We were waiting for it for a long time. The weather has become colder, but the freshness in the air is worth it." However, the rainfall also exposed ongoing civic issues. Residents across Quetta and other districts complained of low gas pressure and unannounced electricity load-shedding, which added to their hardships as temperatures dropped further. Many households struggled to keep warm due to the lack of gas for heating and cooking. "This is the same problem every winter," said Shazia Baloch, a resident of Satellite Town. "When the cold increases, gas pressure disappears and electricity goes out without any notice. It becomes very difficult for families, especially children and the elderly." In other parts of the province, including nearby districts, rain was reported throughout the day, helping settle dust and improving overall weather conditions. However, authorities advised citizens to take precautionary measures as colder nights are expected in the coming days. Despite the challenges, many residents remained upbeat. "Rain brings life and hope," said university student Mohammad Yousof. "Yes, there are problems, but this weather lifts our mood and brings people together." The first winter rain has not only marked the seasonal shift in Balochistan but has also highlighted the need for better planning to address energy shortages during extreme weather conditions.

Mama Qadeer Baloch Passes Away

NEWS DESK:
Mama Qadeer Baloch, a well-known campaigner for the rights of families of missing persons in Balochistan, passed away after battling prolonged illness. Born Abdul Qadeer Baloch, he spent much of his early life working in the banking sector, leading an ordinary and disciplined routine. Everything changed in 2009 when his son, Jalil Reki Baloch, went missing and was later found dead.



Voice for Baloch Missing Persons, he worked to bring attention, support, and dignity to those seeking answers. His prolonged protest outside the Quetta Press Club and his participation in a landmark march from Quetta to Islamabad in 2013 drew national and global focus to the issue. Known for his calm manner and humane approach, Mama Qadeer believed justice could only be pursued through law, dialogue, and peaceful struggle.

Cold Wave Alert: Temperatures to Drop Below Freezing in Balochistan

News Desk:
QUETTA: The Regional Meteorological Center (RMC) has issued a cold and dry weather advisory for the next few days, warning of below-freezing temperatures in several districts. According to the forecast, temperatures are expected to drop below 0°C in Kalat, Quetta, Mastung, Surab, Qila

Abdullah, Pishin, Qila Saifullah, and Ziarat, with a significant increase in cold intensity. On Sunday, northern and northwestern regions will experience cold and cloudy weather, with light rain and thunder expected in Kalat, Mastung, Quetta, Qila Abdullah, Qila Saifullah, Ziarat, Harnai, Pishin,

Musa Khel, and Mastung Surab. The advisory urges citizens to take precautions and remain cautious while traveling in hilly areas. Affected Districts: Kalat, Quetta

Temperature Records (past 24 hours): - Kalat: 29.0 mm rain", Pishin: 14.2 mm rain Ziarat: 12.75 mm rain"- Quetta: 3.0°C (lowest temperature)

Chief Minister (CM) Balochistan Congratulates Pakistan U-19 Team on Asia Cup Triumph Over India

News Desk:
QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has warmly congratulated Pakistan's Under-19 cricket team on their impressive and decisive victory against India in the final of the Under-19 Asia Cup. In his message, the chief minister praised the young national side for delivering an outstanding all-round performance in a high-pressure final. He said Pakistan's Under-19 team dominated the match with exceptional displays in both batting and bowling, clearly establishing their superiority over their rivals. He highlighted that the disciplined bowling attack dismantled the Indian batting lineup, while the batters played with



confidence and skill to turn the contest into a one-sided affair. Mir Sarfraz Bugti stated that the landmark triumph reflects the strong determination, hard work, discipline, and professional approach of Pakistan's emerging cricketers. He added that success is always achieved by teams and nations that compete with courage, self-belief, and a strong sense of national spirit. Extending his congratulations to the entire nation, the Under-19 players, coaching staff, and the Pakistan Cricket Board, the chief minister said the victory is a matter of great pride for Pakistan and a positive sign for the country's promising future in cricket.

Crackdown on Illegal Vehicles in Balochistan



News Desk:
QUETTA: Provincial Transport Secretary Muhammad Hayat Kakar and PTA Secretary Wahid Sharif Imrani directed a joint operation by PTA and Motorway Police against vehicles without valid fitness certificates, permits, and licenses. The operation targeted passenger coaches, trailers, and loading vehicles at Tor Nasir Cross, checking fitness certificates, documents, and permits. Many vehicles were found with fake fitness certificates and issued warnings. Authorities instructed vehicle owners to obtain genuine fitness certificates and implement the two-driver policy for passenger vehicles to ensure driver rest. Fitness certificates are mandatory, and fake ones won't be tolerated. Passenger coaches must have functional CCTV cameras and avoid speeding. The government aims to prevent accidents and ensure passenger safety through these measures.

One-Day Training Workshop Held at Govt. Atta Shad Degree College Turbat



Turbat: A one-day training workshop was organized by the Quality Enhancement Cell, University of Turbat, in collaboration with Divisional Monitoring Officer (DMO) Makran Professor Barkat Ismail, at Govt.

Atta Shad Degree College Turbat. The workshop aimed to enhance the quality of education in affiliated colleges and ensure BS and AD programs meet HEC standards and market needs. Resource person

Dr. Riaz Ahmed briefed participants on HEC's Program Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE) criteria and Self-Assessment Report (SAR) format. Participants praised the workshop and suggested future

programs. They discussed challenges facing colleges and offered valuable suggestions to achieve institutional goals. The event was appreciated by DMO and University representatives.

Deputy Commissioner Sibi Takes Notice of Firing Incident, Ensures Medical Aid for Injured Levy Official

News Desk:
SIBI: Deputy Commissioner Sibi, Major (R) Ilyas Kabzai, has taken notice of the firing incident between Levy Force and robbers on National Highway N-65 at Lumji. The injured Levy official was immediately shifted to DHQ Teaching Hospital Sibi and later referred to Sukkur for further treatment. DC Sibi visited the hospital, inquired about the injured



official's condition, and reviewed medical arrangements. The incident occurred when Tahsilidar Mir Zabar Domki and Levy Force were heading from Bakhtiarabad to Sibi, and robbers were looting passengers. Firing ensued, injuring a Levy official. Security has been tightened, and Levy Force is closely monitoring the situation.

World Bank approves \$700 million for Pakistan's economic stability

NEWS DESK: The World Bank has approved \$700 million in financing for Pakistan under a multi-year initiative aimed at supporting the country's macroeconomic stability and service delivery, it emerged on Saturday.

The lender said the funds will be released under the bank's Public Resources for Inclusive Development Multiphase Programmatic Approach (PRID-MPA), which could provide up to \$1.35 billion in total financing.

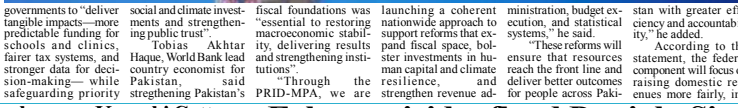
Of this amount, \$600m will go for federal programmes and \$100m will support a provincial programme in Sindh.

The approval follows a \$47.5m World Bank grant in August to improve primary education in Punjab.

A separate statement issued by the lender quoted Bolormaa Amgalbazar, the World Bank's country director for Pakistan,

saying, "Pakistan's path to inclusive, sustainable growth requires mobilising more domestic resources and ensuring they are used efficiently and transparently to deliver results for people."

She said that through the MPA, the bank was working with the federal and Sindh



Brokers suffer losses as Karachi Cotton Exchange building remains shut

NEWS DESK: The Karachi Cotton Association (KCA) failed to issue cotton spot rates for the fifth consecutive day on Friday as the historic Karachi Cotton Exchange (KCE) building remained sealed, with no alternative arrangement put in place.

The building, which has housed the exchange since 1936, was sealed last Friday by the Evacuee Property Trust Board (ETPB) with the assistance of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

A former KCA office-bearer told

Dawn that the ETPB had not held any talks with the association and that the current status of the building remained unclear. Attempts to contact KCA Chairman Khwaja Zubair were unsuccessful as his mobile phone remained switched off, while other office-bearers said they were unaware of any progress.

"We have only been allowed to enter the premises briefly to collect essential documents and items such as laptops from our offices," said a former office-bearer.

governments to "deliver tangible impacts—more predictable funding for schools and clinics, fairer tax systems, and stronger data for decision-making—while safeguarding priority

social and climate investments and strengthening public trust." Tobias Haque, World Bank lead country economist for Pakistan, said strengthening Pakistan's

Fake pesticides flood Punjab, Sindh: CCP

NEWS DESK: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has released its Competition Assessment Study on the Pesticide Sector in Pakistan, noting that counterfeit and adulterated pesticides are widespread in Punjab and Sindh, damaging crops, causing major financial losses to farmers, and distorting competition in the market.

The report reviews the structure, regulatory framework, and overall performance of the pesticide sector, highlighting significant gaps that undermine fair competition and quality assurance. It notes that despite a large and expanding agricultural market, Pakistan has no local pesticide manufacturing capacity and relies entirely on imports.

Weak enforcement, regulatory gaps, and complex approval procedures continue to create hurdles for legitimate businesses and expose farmers to low-quality products.

Dollar shortage continues as exchanges run dry

NEWS DESK: Despite authorities' best efforts, there is a dire shortage of dollars in the open market, and many currency exchanges are "only selling what they buy", causing consternation among those planning to travel abroad for the holidays, or in the new year.

Visits to multiple exchange outlets across different parts of the metropolis revealed that currency dealers are facing a dearth of greenbacks in their accounts. Some have stopped selling dollars altogether, while others are rationing their supply, only allowing customers to purchase up to \$100 at a time.

In addition, a small number of exchanges only have old-design dollar notes in stock. These are not of much use to travellers who wish to exchange greenbacks for the local currency of their destination.

As a result, a number of passengers have been forced to purchase exotic foreign currencies in Pakistan, leading to them getting a 'bad deal' in terms of the exchange rate.

One such passenger, who was travelling to Malaysia at the end of November, told Dawn that he was unable to buy dollars at the airport, which they hoped to exchange for ringgit in Kuala Lumpur. Just hours before their flight, they settled for an exorbitant exchange rate in the open market: Rs74.5 for a ringgit.

Strict regulatory measures compound the situation, exchanges are only selling what they buy.

According to them, they were worse off as the exchange rate should have been less than Rs70. Mid-market exchange rate (MMER) data available on Wise confirms this speculation for the given period, as it lists the MMER for a ringgit at roughly Rs68.

But the bank doesn't stop at travellers. In fact, another group of non-speculative buyers has been hit hard by the shortage: students. Dawn spoke to a Lahore resident who was unable to buy dollars even after visiting 11 different exchange companies to support their siblings' education expenses.

This shortage, some argue, can also be attributed to recent changes to SOPs surrounding the exchange of currencies. Biometric verification and the requirement of an original CNIC were

among the changes previously made. But recent changes include an SBP circular dated November 14, mandating exchange companies to issue cheques to customers wishing to buy dollars for deposit into their foreign currency accounts.

A more recent circular adds another layer of verification that is not easily accessible for women who wear facial recognition.

Even with these new SOPs, one exchange we spoke to was willing to accept a digital CNIC, after initially hesitating to sell even a single greenback. While three other exchanges that initially hesitated became willing to sell up

to \$100, provided an original CNIC was available.

In contrast, only five exchanges visited by Dawn, were willing to sell dollars without hesitation, whereas seven exchanges outright refused to sell dollars. An employee highlighted the shortage and the lack of customers willing to supply greenbacks to the open market.

Exchange Companies Association of Pakistan Chairman Malik Bostan acknowledged the difference in demand and supply, said that a currency was not available for deposit into their foreign currency accounts.

Impact of digital currencies

Despite shortage at the exchanges, dollars are still becoming more accessible than ever, through digital currencies pegged to the dollar, a type of transaction that is currently against SBP instructions for banks.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

launching a coherent nationwide approach to support reforms that expand fiscal space, bolster investments in human capital and climate resilience, and strengthen revenue administration, budget execution, and statistical systems," he said.

"These reforms will ensure that resources reach the front line and deliver better outcomes for people across Pakistan with greater efficiency and accountability," he added.

According to the statement, the federal component will focus on raising domestic revenue more fairly, im-

proving budget planning and execution, and strengthening data systems for evidence-based decisions.

Key actions include advancing tax policy and administration reforms; financing and scaling the Integrated Financial Management Information System and its linked e-procurement platform; undertaking targeted subsidy reforms; and strengthening the national statistical system led by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

In Sindh, the programme is expected to increase provincial revenues, enhance the speed and transparency of payments, and broaden the use of data to guide provincial decision-making, it said.

The programme will directly support the increase of public resources for inclusive development, including more equitable and responsive financing for primary healthcare facilities and more funding for schools, it added.

In November, an IMF-World Bank report, uploaded by the finance ministry, said the country's fragmented regulation, opaque budgeting and political capture are curbing investment and weakening revenue.

harmonising federal and provincial regulatory frameworks and simplifying and speeding up the Form-1 registration system. The commission urged the promotion of climate-appropriate and locally tested pesticide formulations and the strengthening of inspections and legal enforcement against counterfeit products.

The report further recommends upgrading provincial laboratories and improving technical staffing, supporting local manufacturing to reduce import depen-

dence, and helping agriculture graduates become licensed distributors. It also calls for aligning pesticide regulations with the Sustainable Development Goals on food security, health, and climate resilience.

The report concludes that stronger enforcement, improved coordination, and greater regulatory clarity will enhance competition in the pesticide market, reduce risks for farmers, and support Pakistan's broader agricultural and environmental objectives.

The report further recommends upgrading provincial laboratories and improving technical staffing, supporting local manufacturing to reduce import depen-

dent condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

facilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Pakistan Banks Association Secretary Mir Nejb Rahman said that "no bank can operationally engage with stablecoins or crypto rails.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the scope, financing and implementation strategy of the ML-I upgradation, according to a news release. Officials briefed the meeting that ML-I serves as the backbone of Pakistan Railways, fa-

ilitating nearly 80% of passenger traffic and around 90% of freight movement across the country.

In view of the current condition of railway infrastructure, participants underscored the urgent need to upgrade ML-I to ensure safe, efficient and reliable rail operations.

The project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and strengthen Pakistan's logistics and trade capacity.

Hanif Abbasi described ML-I as a key project for the national economy, saying its modernisation would

play a vital role in promoting economic growth, improving regional connectivity and ensuring sustainable transport.

The ADB delegation reaffirmed its continued cooperation and confidence in the progress of the ML-I project and expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan Railways in its reform and modernisation efforts.

Both sides also agreed that the groundbreaking ceremony of the ML-I Karachi-to-Rohri section would be held in July 2026, marking a major milestone in the execution of the project.

Sameer Minhas' record ton powers Pakistan to 347-8 against India in U-19 Asia Cup final

NEWS DESK: Opener Sameer Minhas struck a sublime 172 — the highest individual score in an Under-19 Asia Cup final — as Pakistan posted a formidable 347 for eight in their 50 overs against India at the ICC Academy Ground on Sunday.

Sameer's commanding 113-ball knock, studded with 17 fours and nine sixes, laid the foundation for Pakistan's imposing total in the title clash.

Dominating the Indian attack from the outset, the right-hander ensured Pakistan made a strong recovery from their group-stage defeat to the same opponent and set up a daunting target in the high-pressure final.

After India captain Ayush Mhatre won the toss and chose to field, Pakistan suffered an early setback when Hamza Zahoor was caught at mid-off for 18 off Henil Patel.

Sameer, however, steadied the innings alongside Usman Khan, with the pair adding 92 for the second wicket. Usman made a composed 35 before being dismissed by Khilan Patel.

Unperturbed, Sameer shifted gears effortlessly. He raced to his half-century off just 29 balls and brought up his century in 71 deliveries, punishing anything loose with authority.

A crucial 137-run stand for the third wicket with Ahmed Hussain, who scored a patient 56 off 72 balls, propelled Pakistan past the 250-run mark and firmly into control.

Ahmed's dismissal — caught in the deep off Khilan Patel — briefly slowed the momentum, but Sameer continued his onslaught, crossing 150 with ease.

His remarkable



Sameer continued his onslaught, crossing 150 with ease. His remarkable

innings came to an end in the 43rd over when he misread a slower delivery from Deepesh Devendran and was caught at long-on, departing with Pakistan well placed at 302 for four.

Pakistan then endured a late stumble, losing five wickets for 45 runs in the final seven overs.

Captain Farhan Yousaf (19), Huzefa Ahsan (0), Mohammad Shayan (7) and Abdul Subhan (2) fell in quick succession. Devendran finished with three wickets, while Henil Patel claimed two.

Khilan Patel was the most economical of the Indian bowlers, returning figures of two for 44 from his 10 overs. Late contributions from Niqab Shafiq (12 not out) and Mohammad Sayyam (13 not out), the latter striking a six to close the innings, helped Pakistan push their total further. India's fielding proved costly, with several dropped chances allowing Minhas and others to capitalise.

Devendran ended with figures of three for 83 as the rest of the attack struggled on a surface that offered little assistance.

Pakistan's 347 is the highest total in a U-19 Asia Cup final, eclipsing previous records, and leaves India with a stiff challenge in the chase.

Sameer's record-breaking effort put Pakistan firmly on top at the halfway stage.

'Awesome' Australia dominate to win Ashes against 'hurting' England

NEWS DESK: Australia captain Pat Cummins said it felt "pretty awesome" Sunday after his dominant team won the third Test in Adelaide to wrap up the Ashes in just 11 days of play after some dogged resistance from England's tail briefly threatened a great escape.

England's last four wickets added 145 on the final day to be all out for 352 and lose by 82 runs after finally showing some fight in the series as they chased a record 435 to win.

Australia's Scott Boland removed last man Josh Tongue, caught by Marnus Labuschagne, to spark wild celebrations as the famous urn remained in Australian hands.

"It feels pretty awesome," said Australia captain Pat Cummins. "It wasn't easy today, but we got it done. The last two months have been a bit of a grind," he added.

"But it's all worth it for days like this. That's when we are at our best... it's good old-fashioned grind, and I love the toll from all the guys."

England had to win to keep the five-match series alive after being crushed by eight wickets inside two days at Perth and in four at Brisbane, with two more Tests still to play at Melbourne and Sydney.

Australia had one setback on Sunday when



they lost spin wizard Nathan Lyon, who damaged his hamstring fielding and hobbled off after saving a boundary.

But he was not needed as seamers Mitchell Starc, Cummins and Boland wrapped up the innings either side of lunch with the second new ball.

Lyon was sent for scans and later seen on crutches, potentially putting him out of the Melbourne Test, starting Friday, and Sydney on January 4.

"It doesn't look great. I don't know yet, but seeing someone on crutches doesn't really bode well for someone with a Test match a week away," said Cummins.

"It's going to be hard to replace him but we have some guys who have already had a taste of international cricket around the traps."

Cummins was playing his first Test since July after a long layoff with lower back issues and said he may well skip Melbourne as a precaution.

"We'll wait and see. So we'll work on it over the next couple days. I doubt I'll be playing Melbourne, and then we'll have a chat about Sydney."

England's demise in 11 days of play is the joint second quickest in more than a century, since the 1921 Ashes was completed in eight days with their "Bazball" style of ultra-attacking cricket exposed.

"That dream is now over, which is incredibly disappointing," said England skipper Ben Stokes.

"Everyone is hurting and quite emotional about it. It hurts, it sucks, but we ain't going to stop."

Stokes also took some positives from the way England battled, having demanded more fight leading into the match.

"That stuff I wanted to see, I've seen that this week. I think we can take a lot from this game," he said.

"We have got so much to play for, and we will be flying into these next two games."

England's capitulation over three Tests is a far cry from the pre-Ashes hype where they were touted as having their best chance in a generation to win a series in Australia.

And it made a mockery of former fast bowler Stuart Broad's claim that the hosts had their weakest side in 15 years, written off by others as a "Dad's Army".

Meeting summoned after Pakistan kabaddi player represents 'India' in Bahrain event



NEWS DESK: The Pakistan Kabaddi Federation (PKF) has convened an emergency meeting of its general council on Dec 27 to probe the participation of national player Ubaidullah Rajput in a private tournament in Bahrain, where he was seen wearing an Indian jersey and waving the Indian flag.

Videos and images of Ubaidullah, a prominent international kabaddi player, donning the Indian kit during the third GCC Kabaddi Cup, held on December 16 at the Gulf Air Club in Salmabad, went viral on social media, triggering widespread criticism.

In a statement, PKF secretary Rana Sarwar condemned the incident, stating that the event was privately organised and that teams were named after countries such as India, Pakistan, Canada and Iran. He said the squads largely comprised players of their respective origins, with Indian players forming the 'India' side.

Sarwar revealed that 16 Pakistani players travelled to Bahrain and participated in the event without obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the federation or the Pakistan Sports Board.

"No official Pakistan team was sent and no permission was granted," he said, adding that action would also be taken against those who falsely represented a 'Pakistan' team at the tournament.

PKF chairman Chaudhry Shafay Hussain has ordered a thorough inquiry and promised strict disciplinary action against those found responsible. Meanwhile, Ubaidullah issued a public apology on social media, claiming he was unaware that the private team he had been invited to join would be labelled as 'India'.

He maintained that it was a local annual cup and not an official India-Pakistan contest, and said he only realised how the match was being portrayed after hearing slogans from the crowd.

In a video statement, Ubaidullah said he requested the commentator to clarify that the match was a club-level event rather than a bilateral contest. He said he would not have participated had he known it would be projected as an India-Pakistan fixture.

Responding to the backlash, including accusations of treason, Ubaidullah appealed to the public not to brand him a traitor, reiterating his apology to the federation and those whose sentiments were hurt.

The federation emphasised that while players from different countries often feature together in club events, representing another country and displaying its flag was unacceptable, particularly under the prevailing circumstances.

Gill dropped, Kishan back for India's T20 World Cup title defence



NEWS DESK: Test and one-day captain Shubman Gill could not find a place in India's 15-member squad for next year's home Twenty20 World Cup, but stumper-batter Ishan Kishan returned to the side on Saturday.

Gill has gone 18 innings in T20 Internationals without a 50 and missed Friday's match against South Africa with a foot injury.

Sanju Samson has impressed in the limited opportunities and made a breezy 37 as Abhishek Sharma's opening partner replacing Gill in Ahmedabad.

Kishan was recalled after the stumper-batsman led Jharkhand's successful campaign in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, smashing a hundred in Friday's final against Haryana.

The same squad will play a five-match home T20 series against New Zealand next month. Jasprit Bumrah will lead India's pace attack that also contains left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh. Varun Chakaravarty will spearhead the spin department, which also includes left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

India will also expect Hardik Pandya, their premier seam-bowling all-rounder, to play a crucial role in their title defence in the tournament to be played between February 7 to March 8 across eight venues in India and Sri Lanka.

India squad: Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (wicketkeeper), Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel (vice captain), Rinku Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakaravarty, Washington Sundar, Ishan Kishan (wicketkeeper)

Pakistan looking for new wicketkeepers



NEWS DESK: Pakistan is currently searching for new options in the wicketkeeping department. Among the players under the selectors' consideration are Rohail Nazir, Karachi's Saad Baig, and Ghazi Ghori.

At present, Usman Khan has been keeping wickets in T20 matches. While his performance has been deemed satisfactory, the search for additional options continues. Rohail Nazir, who has represented Pakistan in three T20 internationals, along with Saad Baig and Ghazi Ghori, are on the selectors' radar.

The Pakistan cricket think tank is working toward preparing a backup pool of star players within the next six to seven months. Sources reveal that in the past, not enough focus was placed on building bench strength, which later caused problems.

When the supply of new talent slowed down, the seriousness of the issue became evident. Now, the goal is to have enough players in the system to form two to three competitive teams, so that if a player becomes unavailable due to injury or any other reason, a suitable replacement is readily available.

According to sources, special attention is being given to developing Ali Raza's skills. The 17-year-old pacer has been advised to stay focused on his goals and not look back. Hopes are also pinned on Ahmad Daniyal.

Officials are reportedly very satisfied with the country's growing pool of spin talent. Abrar Ahmed and Sufiyan Mueem are performing well. The whole Saim Ayub has also been bowling effectively. The return of Shadab Khan is expected to further intensify competition for places.

The PCB also aims to strengthen the Pakistan Shaheens (A team). Coaches have been instructed to bring any promising talent they spot in Multan, Faisalabad, Peshawar, Abbottabad, or Muzaffarabad to the National Cricket Academy (NCA) for further development.

US intercepts oil tanker off Venezuelan coast, officials confirm

NEWS DESK: The United States has intercepted an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela in international waters, US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem confirmed Saturday, a move that comes just days after US President Donald Trump announced a "blockade" of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela.

It's the second time in recent weeks that the United States has gone after a tanker near Venezuela amid a large US military build-up in the region.

Noem confirmed the Coast Guard intercepted a tanker that was last docked in Venezuela.

"The United States will continue to pursue the illicit movement of sanctioned oil that is used to fund narcotics trafficking, terrorism in the region," she said in a statement posted to social media. "We will find you and we will stop you."

Three US officials earlier Saturday had told Reuters that the vessel had been intercepted.

The Coast Guard and Pentagon referred questions to the White House.

White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly said the tanker contained sanctioned oil.

"It was a falsely flagged vessel operating as part of the Venezuelan shadow fleet to traffic stolen oil and fund the narco-terrorist Maduro regime," she wrote on X.

Venezuela's oil ministry and state oil company PDVSA did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

The Venezuelan government called the tanker interception a "serious act of international piracy."

Venezuela "denounces and rejects the theft and hijacking of its private vessel transporting oil, as well as the forced disappearance of its crew, committed by military personnel of the United States of America in international waters," the statement said.

Caracas said the ac-



tion will be reported to the United Nations Security Council, other multilateral organizations and governments.

British maritime risk management company Vantage said the vessel was believed to be the Panama-flagged Centuries, which was intercepted east of Barbados in the Caribbean Sea.

Jeremy Paner, a partner at Washington, DC, law firm Hughes Hubbard and a former OFAC investigator, said the vessel has not been sanctioned by the US.

"The seizure of a vessel that is not sanctioned by the US marks a further increase in Trump's pressure on Venezuela," Paner said. "It also runs counter to Trump's statement that the US would impose a

blockade of all sanctioned oil tankers."

Trump on Tuesday said he was ordering "A TOTAL AND COMPLETE BLOCKADE OF ALL SANCTIONED OIL TANKERS going into and out of Venezuela."

In the days since US

forces seized a sanctioned oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela last week, there has been an effective embargo in place, with loaded vessels carrying millions of barrels of oil staying in Venezuelan waters rather than risk seizure. Since the first seizure, Venezuelan crude exports have fallen sharply.

While many vessels picking up oil in Venezuela are under sanctions, others transporting the country's oil and crude from Iran and Russia have not been sanctioned, and some companies, particularly the US Chevron, transport Venezuelan oil in their own authorized ships.

China is the biggest buyer of Venezuelan oil, which accounts for roughly 4% of its imports, with shipments in December on track to average more than 600,000 barrels per day, analysts have said.

For now, the oil market is well supplied and there are millions of barrels of oil on tankers off the coast of China waiting to offload. If the embargo stays in place for some time, then the loss of nearly a million barrels a day of crude supply is likely to push oil prices higher.

Since the US imposed energy sanctions on Venezuela in 2019, traders and refiners buying Venezuelan oil have resorted to a "shadow fleet" of tankers that disguise their location and to vessels sanctioned for transporting Iranian or Russian oil.

The dark or shadow fleet is considered exposed to possible punitive measures from the US, shipping analysts have said. Centuries, which loaded in Venezuela under the false name "Crag" and is part of the dark fleet, was carrying some 1.8 million barrels of Venezuelan Merly crude oil bound for China, according to internal documents from state oil company PDVSA, the oil's seller.

The vessel departed Venezuelan waters on Wednesday after being briefly escorted by the Venezuelan navy.

President Zardari reaches Baghdad on official visit, to hold bilateral meetings with Iraqi leadership

NEWS DESK: President Asif Ali Zardari has reached Iraq on an official visit, a post on the Presidency's X account said on Saturday night.

He was received by Iraq's Culture Minister Ahmed Fakhak Al-Badrani upon his arrival in Baghdad, the post said, adding that during his trip, the president would hold meetings with senior Iraqi leadership.

The meetings were expected to advance cooperation further strengthen Pakistan-Iraq ties, the post added.

Muhammad Mudassir Tipu posted on X that while en route from Islamabad to Baghdad, Zardari "conveyed a goodwill message to the Iranian leadership" as his aircraft entered Iranian airspace.

"It reaffirmed solidarity with Iran, emphasising mutual respect and stronger relations between the two historic neighbors," Tipu said.

He added: "The president's message coincides with the Iranian nation celebrating Yalda Night tomorrow — a civilisational tradition that brings hope,

Yalda Night defines our bilateral, social, and cultural affinities as well."

Previously, the Foreign Office had said in a statement that President Zardari would undertake an official visit to Iraq from December 20-24.

According to the statement, he was invited for the visit by his Iraqi counterpart, Abdul Latif Jamali Rashid.

It said that during his meetings with the Iraqi leadership, President Zardari would review bilateral relations between the two countries and explore ways to further enhance cooperation of religious tourism and economic collaboration," it said.



Separately, joy, and compassion amongst people and families. The spirit of

two countries and explore ways to further enhance cooperation of religious tourism and economic collaboration," it said.

Nine killed in mass shooting at tavern near Johannesburg

NEWS DESK: Nine people were killed and 10 others wounded when armed assailants opened fire at a licensed tavern near Johannesburg early Sunday, the South African Police Service said.

The shooting occurred shortly before 1am local time at a licensed tavern in Bekkersdal township, about 40 kilometres southwest of Johannesburg, police said in a statement.

According to investigators, around 12 suspects arrived in a white minibus and a silver sedan before opening fire on patrons inside the establishment.

Police said the attackers continued firing as they fled the scene.



The wounded were taken to nearby hospitals, while the motive behind the attack remains under investigation. The incident marks the second major mass shooting reported in South Africa this month. Earlier, 12 people were

killed in an attack on a hostel near Pretoria.

Bekkersdal is part of the Rand West City local municipality and has been described by local authorities as an area facing high unemployment and poverty following the decline of gold

Thousands mourn slain Bangladesh student leader

NEWS DESK: Massive crowds gathered in Bangladesh's capital on Saturday for the funeral of a slain student leader, held under tight security after two days of protests and violence.

Tens of thousands of people joined the funeral procession to pay their respects to Sharif Osman Hadi, a key figure in last year's pro-democracy uprising who was set to contest the general elections in February. He was shot by masked gunmen last week while leaving a mosque in Dhaka, and died in a hospital in Singapore on Thursday.

"You are in our hearts and you will remain in the heart of all Bangladeshis as long as the country exists," interim leader Muhammad Yunus said in an emotional speech in front of the parliament building, where funeral prayers were held. Police wearing body cameras were deployed in the area,



and flags were flown at half-mast to mark a day of state mourning.

Hadi's body was then buried at the central mosque of Dhaka University.

Hadi, 32, was an outspoken critic of India, where Bangladesh's ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina has taken refuge since fleeing Dhaka in the wake of the 2024 uprising. Iqbal Hossain Saikat, a gov-

ernment employee who travelled to the capital to attend the funeral, told AFP that he believed Hadi was killed because of his staunch opposition to India. "The millions of Bangladeshi people who love the land and its sovereign territory" will carry on Hadi's legacy, said Saikat, 34.

Hadi's death has triggered unrest, with protesters across the South Asian nation de-

PNS warship's commissioning ceremony held in Türkiye; Erdogan stresses need for enhanced cooperation in defence production

NEWS DESK: The commissioning ceremony of a Pakistan Navy Milgem class ship, PNS Khaibar, has been held at Istanbul Naval Shipyard, where Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan emphasised the need for enhanced mutual collaboration in the field of defence production between the two countries.

The warship is the second of four Milgem class corvettes, the contract for which was signed with ASFAT Inc, a Turkish state-owned defence contractor firm in 2018.

Under this contract, two ships were to be constructed in Türkiye and the re-

maining two ships in Pakistan.

"The commissioning of PNS Khaibar marks the completion of the construction of both ships in Türkiye," the military's media affairs wing said in a statement on Sunday.

President Erdogan was the chief guest on the occasion while Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf also attended the ceremony, it added.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement, Erdogan "termed the brotherly relations between Pakistan and Türkiye as exemplary" while addressing the ceremony.



"The president further emphasised the need for enhanced mutual collaboration in the field of defence production in the fu-

ture as well," the statement read.

It added that Ad-

miral Ashraf also addressed the ceremony, acknowledging "the commitment of M/ASFAT, Istanbul Naval Shipyard and the OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturer) involved in the planning, design and construction of PNS Milgem ships."

He also appreciated the deepening defence partnership between Pakistan and Türkiye and highlighted that bilateral engagements between the Pakistan Navy and Turkish Naval Forces (TNF) "not only contribute immensely towards strengthening Pakistan-Türkiye defence collaboration but also reflect our enduring and expanding partnership."

Following the ceremony, the ISPR statement said, Erdogan visited the ship, where he was presented with a guard of honour. He also interacted with the ship's crew.

The ISPR further stated that Admiral Ashraf exchanged views on maritime security in the region and discussed avenues for future PN-TNF joint initiatives.

"Pakistan Navy Milgem ships are the most technologically advanced surface platforms. These vessels are equipped with latest command and control systems integrated with modern weapons and advanced sensors," it added.