



**BALUCHISTAN**  
Polio Campaign Review Meeting Held in Loralai...

Page No 5



**NATIONAL**  
PTI pushes back against criticism of party leadership, policies

Page No 3

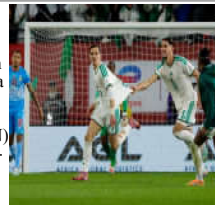


**INTERNATIONAL**  
Azerbaijan will not send troops to Gaza

Page No 8

**SPORT**  
Algeria Through to Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) Quarter-Finals

Page No 7



First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan

Editor: Asim Khan.

# QUETTA VOICE

Rs. 10.00 Vol. VII: No. 103

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

Thursday 08, January, 2026



## Modern Policing Training for Former Levies Is No Longer Optional — It Is Urgent

**Syed Ali Shah Analysis:**

Balochistan's decision to train 772 former Levies personnel under the Balochistan Police is not merely an administrative reform — it is a historic correction. For more than a century, security in large parts of the province relied on a tribal policing system introduced by Sir Robert Sandeman nearly 142 years ago — effectively one and a half centuries back. That system was designed around tribal customs, collective responsibility, and informal

dispute resolution, not contemporary law enforcement. While the Levies force earned respect within local communities, it was never equipped — nor trained — for the complexities of today's crime, terrorism, digital threats, and urban policing. Many of these officers have never undergone structured, professional police training. Expecting them to perform modern policing duties without proper preparation is unfair to them — and unsafe for the public.

This is why the ongoing program at Police Training

College Quetta is critically important. It must go beyond parade drills and weapons handling. The former Levies personnel need comprehensive training in investigation standards, human rights, evidence preservation, intelligence-led policing, community engagement, and the ethical use of authority.

Equally important is training in First Information Reports (FIRs), complaint handling, victim support, and documentation — the backbone of justice. Without accuracy at the first point of contact, the en-

tire legal chain collapses.

Upgraded hostels, mess facilities, sports grounds, and structured welfare support are welcome steps. A secure, dignified environment produces confident officers — and confident officers make better policing decisions. However, modernization must remain continuous, not symbolic.

Training must be supported with modern equipment, digital crime management tools, body cameras, forensic support, and performance accountability.

Most importantly, officers

should learn that policing today is not simply force — it is law, service, and trust.

Balochistan stands at a turning point. Transforming former Levies into professional, community-oriented police officers can rebuild public confidence, improve crime prevention, and strengthen rule of law across the province. But success depends on sustained investment and a mindset shift — from tribal guardianship to professional policing. Reform is never easy.

But in this case, it is necessary — and long overdue.

### Five-stakeholder dialogue proposal meets scepticism amid political deadlock

**NEWS DESK:**

With Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) stepping up preparations for a street movement and the establishment maintaining a firm stance against the opposition party, Pakistan's political landscape remains fraught with uncertainty and deepening mistrust.

Against this backdrop, a senior minister in the PML-N government has once again floated the idea of a high-level dialogue involving the country's principal power centres, an idea that has surfaced before but never progressed beyond rhetoric.

Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah recently outlined what he described as a meeting of the country's five key stakeholders.

According to Sanaullah, two of these are Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, while the third is President Asif Ali Zardari.

The fourth, he said, is incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan, adding that "everyone knows who the fifth is", a remark widely interpreted as a reference to the military leadership.

In effect, Sanaullah's remarks amounted to a call for dialogue between Pakistan's political leadership and the establishment. However, analysts note that identifying stakeholders is far easier than persuading them to sit across the table.

Previous attempts at arranging such high-level engagements have failed, prompting scepticism over whether the latest proposal represents anything more than a political soundbite.

Former PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry dismissed the feasibility of the proposal under prevailing conditions.

"It is not possible in the current political climate," he said, arguing that the real obstacle lies in the unwillingness of both the government and the establishment to engage in genuine dialogue.

His remarks underscored the depth of mistrust that continues to paralyse political engagement.

Senior journalist and political analyst Mazhar Abbas echoed that assessment, saying that Sanaullah's proposal lacked practical substance. "Rana Sanaullah's proposal lacks practical follow-through," Abbas said, stressing that the responsibility for initiating dialogue rests with the government. He argued that confidence-building measures.

### Blast damages railway track in Nasirabad, Balochistan

**NEWS DESK:**

A railway track near the national highway in the Notal area of Nasirabad in Balochistan was targeted by unknown individuals with explosive material.

The explosion occurred when no train was passing through the area. Although the explosion partially damaged part of the track, no loss of life or property was reported, police sources said. The sound of the blast was reportedly heard from a long distance. A heavy contingent of police and security forces immediately reached the site after the incident, sealing off the area and launching a search operation to trace the suspects.

Train movement was temporarily suspended due to a portion of the track being damaged. However, railway authorities immediately began repair work to mend the affected section.

Authorities stated that investigations into the incident are ongoing and the perpetrators will be brought to justice. Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, has also taken notice of the incident and sought a report.

## Rickshaw Burnt in Protest: CM Bugti Assures Support, Suspends Officer

**Syed Ali Shah:**

**QUETTA:** In a rare public gesture of compassion, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti met rickshaw driver Abdul Nabi Mengal, hugged him, and announced financial assistance for the purchase of a new rickshaw — after the driver set his vehicle on fire in despair over alleged mistreatment by a traffic police officer. The emotional meeting came after the incident on Airport Road in Quetta, where Abdul Nabi — reportedly under severe stress — burned his rickshaw in protest. The act followed what he described as harsh and disrespectful behavior by a traffic officer.

According to the Chief Minister's Office, Sarfraz Bugti immediately ordered the suspension of the officer involved and directed a transparent inquiry into the incident. He said misuse of authority and misconduct toward citizens would not be tolerated under any circumstances. Bugti reassured the driver that the provincial government stands with working-class citizens, especially those struggling to earn daily liveli-



hoods. "Police officers are meant to serve the people and protect their dignity. Any officer who deviates from these duties will face strict action," he said.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister embraced Abdul Nabi, consoled him, and symbolically kissed his forehead — signaling support and empathy. He also

approved immediate financial assistance to help the driver recover his livelihood by purchasing a new rickshaw. Bugti emphasized that the government is committed

to preventing such incidents in the future and will take effective measures to ensure accountability and respectful policing across the province.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

## Balochistan Government Abolishes Levies Force After 142 Years: Historic Merger with Police Sparks Debate

**Editorial:** In a landmark administrative reform, the Government of Balochistan has abolished the historic Levies Force after 142 years, merging it into the Balochistan Police. The decision, approved by the Balochistan Cabinet, aims to modernize the province's law enforcement system and enhance its law and order capacity — but it has also sparked reservations among Levies personnel and opposition from several political parties.

A Force Rooted in History The Levies Force of Balochistan was established in 1883 by Sir Robert Sandeman, the British political agent and administrator of the region. The force's core responsibilities included maintaining law and order, protecting vital installations, and collecting taxes and livestock revenue in tribal areas.

The Levies Force of Balochistan was established in 1883 by Sir Robert Sandeman, the British political agent and administrator of the region. The force's core responsibilities included maintaining law and order, protecting vital installations, and collecting taxes and livestock revenue in tribal areas.

Previous Reforms and Political Reversals The merger of the Levies Force into the police is not unprecedented. During the tenure of General Pervez Musharraf, the force was initially merged with the police under then-Chief Minister Jam Muhammad Yousaf. However, the move was reversed in

2008 by Nawab Aslam Raisani of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), restoring the Levies to their traditional structure.

Now, more than a decade later, the Balochistan Assembly has again legislated to merge the Levies with the police, signaling the government's intent to build a unified, modern, and well-equipped law enforcement system in the province.

Government's Stance: Modernization and Uniformity The provincial government describes the decision as part of a larger strategy to ensure professional policing, better coordination, and modern security management.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti stated that integrating the Levies with the police will enhance counterterrorism capacity, digital monitoring, and operational effectiveness. "This merger will help establish one uniform policing system in Balochistan. The government will provide modern equipment and training to all personnel to effectively deal with terrorism and extremism," the Chief Minister said. Officials emphasize that the reform will strengthen institutional structure, reduce duplication, and ensure better governance in remote and conflict-prone districts. Reservation and Political Opposition However, the decision has not been met with universal approval. Levies personnel across several districts have expressed strong reservations, arguing that the

merger undermines their historical role, tribal identity, and trust-based relationship with local communities.

A number of political parties in Balochistan have also opposed the move, describing it as a "hasty and non-consultative decision." They claim that the Levies Force has historically played a crucial role in maintaining peace in tribal areas where the police system remains ineffective.

Critics argue that merging a tribal community-based security structure into a centralized police institution could disrupt local dynamics and alienate the public. Some parties have demanded a parliamentary review of the cabinet's decision before full implementation.

A Divisive but Defining Reform Despite the opposition, the Balochistan Government remains firm on its stance, describing the merger as a step toward institutional modernization, national integration, and professional law enforcement. Supporters of the decision believe it will bring uniformity, transparency, and accountability across all districts, enabling the province to better combat militancy and improve coordination with federal security agencies such as the Frontier Corps (FC) and Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD).

The coming months will reveal whether this bold reform strengthens Balochistan's security apparatus or fuels administrative and political friction within the province.

These functions are not peripheral; they are central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to estimates from the United Nations and development partners, Pakistan

## A Billion Dollar, Million Jobs Opportunity : Why Pakistan Must Recognize NGOs as an Economic Industry

By Gul Hassan Durrani

Pakistan today faces a convergence of serious challenges: rising unemployment, fiscal pressure, climate vulnerability, and widening social inequalities. While the state continues to pursue foreign investment in traditional sectors such as energy, mining, and infrastructure, a powerful and already existing engine of inclusive growth remains largely overlooked—the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and social development sector.

Globally, NGOs are no longer perceived merely as charitable entities. In advanced economies and developing countries alike, they function as professional service providers, innovation hubs, and major employers in education, healthcare, humanitarian response, climate adaptation, and social protection. If properly recognized and regulated, Pakistan's NGO sector alone has the potential to attract over one billion dollars annually in foreign funding and generate more than one million jobs nationwide, with transformative implications for underserved regions such as Balochistan.

In Pakistan, NGOs play a critical role in complementing government services, particularly in remote and marginalized areas where state capacity is limited.

They operate schools, health facilities, vocational training centers, disaster response systems, and climate resilience programs.

Through social mobilization, community engagement, and awareness raising, NGOs enhance ownership of public initiatives, strengthen accountability, and ensure sustainability at the grassroots level.

These functions are not peripheral; they are central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to estimates from the United Nations and development partners, Pakistan



receives more than USD 1 billion annually in foreign NGO assistance, making the sector a significant contributor to the national economy. Beyond funding inflows, NGOs are major employers. They provide direct jobs to teachers, doctors, nurses, field mobilizers, researchers, data analysts, engineers, and climate specialists, while indirectly supporting local suppliers, trainers, and entrepreneurs.

In low-employment provinces such as Balochistan, this job creation potential is especially critical. Pakistan's development landscape already offers strong examples of NGO impact. Organizations such as the Edhi Foundation operate the world's largest volunteer ambulance network, while the Indus Hospital and Health Network delivers high-quality healthcare free of cost.

The Akhuwat Foundation has empowered millions through interest-free microfinance. Rural Support Programs including NRSF, BRSP, PRSP, SRSP, and KRSP have transformed livelihoods through community-driven development. Advocacy and governance institutions such as Transparency International Pakistan,

CPDI, SPO, and ROZAN have strengthened democracy, accountability, and civic engagement. Women- and youth-focused organizations, including Today's Woman Organization (TWO) and the Christian Study Centre, have promoted peacebuilding, inclusion, and social cohesion.

Despite these contributions, the NGO sector continues to face systemic challenges. The regulatory environment is fragmented and opaque, involving multiple federal, provincial, and district authorities. Lengthy registration and renewal processes, overlapping mandates of regulators, arbitrary NOC requirements, and sudden funding suspensions discourage legitimate organizations and deter investment. Law-abiding NGOs are often treated with suspicion rather than as development partners. Financial sustainability is another major constraint. Most Pakistani NGOs remain heavily dependent on short-term foreign funding, leaving them vulnerable to policy shifts and donor fatigue. Local philanthropy mechanisms remain underdeveloped, corporate social responsibility spending is inconsistent, and NGO endowment models are

rarely supported. This structure limits long-term planning, professionalization, and employment growth. To unlock the sector's full potential, Pakistan must adopt a reform-oriented, industry-based approach. First, the government should establish a One-Window Digital NGO Authority, such as a National NGO Regulatory Authority (NNRA), with online registration, reporting, and renewal systems.

Time-bound approvals, automatic renewals for compliant organizations, harmonized laws, and risk-based oversight would reduce bureaucratic friction while strengthening transparency and accountability. Second, financial sustainability must be addressed. The government should expand tax incentives for individual and corporate donations, mandate CSR spending for large corporations, and establish federal and provincial NGO endowment funds. NGOs should be allowed to adopt social enterprise models, generating a portion of their income through training institutes, micro-services in health and education, and impact products. In parallel, Government-

NGO Service Contracts should be introduced, where NGOs deliver verified outcomes in education, health, nutrition, and climate services, and are compensated accordingly.

Third, a clear categorization framework is essential. NGOs should be classified as international, national, provincial, and local organizations, with proportional compliance requirements and funding thresholds. Such categorization would improve regulation, prevent monopolies, enable grassroots organizations to access funding directly, and support evidence-based planning by federal and provincial governments.

Public trust and transparency must also be strengthened. Mandatory disclosure of audits, governance structures, and project outcomes through a national online portal would allow citizens and donors to distinguish credible organizations from weak ones. Investment in digital transformation—mobile monitoring, shared service centers, and national impact data systems—would significantly improve efficiency and performance, especially for community-based NGOs.

Ultimately, strengthening Pakistan's NGO sector is not charity; it is sound economic and social policy. Development challenges today are too complex for any single actor to address alone. A tri-sector partnership model—combining public financing, private sector expertise, and NGO implementation—offers the most effective path forward.

If treated as a regulated, professional, and growth-oriented industry, Pakistan's NGO sector can become a billion-dollar contributor to the economy, a major source of employment, and a cornerstone of inclusive development. For Pakistan, and especially for Balochistan, this opportunity can no longer be ignored.

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

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

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

The challenges of poverty alleviation, malnutrition, stunted growth, inadequate sanitation, and unemployment are pervasive across South Asia and Africa. Collaborative efforts between these regions, bolstered by partnerships



with nations like China, hold promise in addressing these issues.

However, reliance on the failing

neoliberal order is futile; instead, a paradigm shift towards sustainable solutions is imperative.

In Pakistan, the

establishment of robust local governance structures with financial decentralization is imperative.

Political elites pos-

sess a window of opportunity to empower local bodies and enact pro-poor policies.

The Chinese model serves as a

beacon of inspiration, demonstrating the efficacy of such strategies when implemented effectively.

Regional connec-

tivity, underpinned by a long-term vision, emerges as a viable solution. It necessitates moving beyond the romanticized no-

tions of democracy and socialism towards pragmatic approaches that address our unique challenges. Special economic zones,

coupled with initiatives for youth development and the expansion of remittances, offer short-term relief while perpetuating reforms to broaden the tax base and reduce dependency on electoral politics.

South Asia, in particular, requires a concerted effort towards regional connectivity, resource exploration, harnessing youth potential, and fostering transparent governance free from corruption. The path forward does not demand extraordinary intellect but rather sincere leadership committed to implementing existing solutions.

The concept of Basic Democracy warrants reevaluation, with a focus on strengthening local bodies to eradicate poverty and pursue enduring prosperity through perpetual reforms.

It is incumbent upon all stakeholders responsible for the nation's development to prioritize this agenda and steer Pakistan towards a brighter future.





## HESCO employees stage protest against privatisation

**NEWS DESK:** Employees of Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO) boycotted work on Tuesday in a preemptive protest against the proposed privatisation of electricity distribution companies, including HESCO. The call was made by the All Pakistan WAPDA Hydro and Electric Workers Union, which has given the government January 16 deadline to address their demands. Failure to do so, the union warned, could trigger protests across the country.

Hundreds of employees gathered at the union's labour hall at Haider Chowk and, led by CBA Union Central President Abdul Latif Nizamani

## KP CM calls for 'policy shift', urges consultation with province on counter-terrorism measures

**NEWS DESK:** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Wednesday sought a "policy shift" and urged the inclusion of the provincial government in counter-terror policy-making.

Federal authorities have criticised the PTI-led KP government for failing to ensure security in the province, with KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi saying that the party was in disarray and unable to achieve any of its policy goals.

In a speech at Peshawar University's convocation ceremony, the CM said that the people of KP had warned the Centre about the resurgence of terrorism in the province, but were brushed off as propaganda.

"We would issue warnings that they (terrorists) were in the mountains and they were coming, that they had reached our markets and homes," CM Afridi said. "We were told that we are spreading propaganda."

He highlighted that if there was going to be a military operation, then the people of KP needed to be taken into confidence and made part of the policy process.

"There needs to be a policy shift, but not behind closed

doors," he explained. "If policy needs to be formed after consulting KP's government, people and stakeholders."

"A clear policy formed in this manner will play a role in lasting and enduring peace; a decision made behind closed doors will leave our people suffering, as they have for the past 17 years."

The CM noted that the KP government and the Centre had "different intentions", adding, "If they wanted to eradicate terrorism, then they would have sat with us and formed a policy."

"We came out of our homes, so they committed that they would give Rs400,000 to people whose homes have been lost to terrorism," he said. "Imagine hearing that after sacrificing so much. They still have not received that money."

Highlighting the impact of military operations, CM Afridi noted that families would lose breadwinners in collateral damage or terrorist attacks, causing them to suffer economically. According to the Annual Security Report 2025 from the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), comparative data for 2024 and 2025 reveal a sharp escalation

in terrorism and counter-terrorism-linked violence nationwide, with fatalities rising from 2,555 in 2024 to 3,417 in 2025, marking an increase of 862 deaths, or a roughly 34 per cent year-on-year surge in violence.

Per the report, "the most significant surge in violence was recorded in KP, where the fatalities rose from 1,620 in 2024 to 2,331 in 2025, an absolute increase of 711 deaths, accounting for over 82pc of the net national rise and marking almost a 44pc year-on-year surge in violence in the province."

Meanwhile, on January 2, KP Inspector General of Police Zulfiqar Hameed said police thwarted hundreds of terrorism-related incidents, particularly in southern and merged tribal districts, while police personnel risked their lives but stood firm against the enemy.

Last year, the police neutralised 459 terrorists in several engagements and arrested over 1,300 militants, including 29 with head money, in 3,277 intelligence-based operations across the province.

The police said a large quantity of hand grenades, explosives, pistols, various weapons and ammunition was recovered.

## PTI pushes back against criticism of party leadership, policies

**NEWS DESK:** The PTI has pushed back against criticism of its party leadership and policies, terming such remarks "regrettable".

In a statement posted on the social media platform X late on Tuesday, the party referred to the military spokesperson's latest press conference.

It said that it was "regrettable" that the party's leadership and an elected provincial government were subjected to such criticism.

The PTI maintained that consistent criticism "not only escalates political temperatures but also raises questions about the balance of the state apparatus."

The party said that terminating opposition to military operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where it is in power, as support for terrorists was contrary to ground realities.

It recalled that a peace jirga was organised by the provincial government on Nov 12, 2025, where participants "unanimously resolved that a military operation is not a sustainable solution to any problem, and a comprehensive, consensus-based, and inclusive na-



tional policy is indispensable for lasting peace". It also took offence at the statement that terrorists do not target the PTI.

This is completely contrary to ground realities," it said, adding that raising such questions would only add to the grief of the martyrs, the injured and the affected families.

The party maintained that the impression the PTI was safe from terrorism reflected "a disregard for facts and is unfortunate".

The PTI noted that the several state departments in the past had issued threat alerts for the party founder Imran Khan and other leaders

be a fight, and they will get their just deserts," he warned. As per the Surrender Policy for Dacoits in Katcha Area of Sukkur and Larkana Divisions, approved by the Sindh cabinet in October 2025, surrendering does not mean pardon or immunity. All surrendering individuals shall face the prevailing law of the land, officials told Dawn, though voluntary surrender is encouraged as a mitigating factor in sentencing by courts.

The Sindh home minister appreciated the Punjab government for its support in a recent "successful" operation wherein a no-go Katcha area was vacated.

Responding to a question about whether the army's help will be sought, Lanjar said, "The Sindh police is capable and the Rangers are with us in this, so I do not think we will need the army in our internal matters since August 7."

The minister further asserted that the re-

quired modern equipment will be provided to the personnel. When a reporter mentioned that the operation employed drones, Lanjar said, "I do not think drones have reached them. Action is definitely being taken against their facilitators, too."

On the possibility of a joint operation carried out by the Sindh and Punjab police, Lanjar said he has directed the Sindh inspector general to speak with his Punjab counterpart and the Bahawalpur regional police officer regarding the matter. "This will surely happen only after a joint effort," he stressed, noting that the area of Machka extends into Punjab. "I have strong hopes that we will wipe out these dacoits," Lanjar said.

Asked about tribal disputes, the Sindh minister said this matter was also discussed in today's meeting, and they had made the relevant contacts regarding the Jatoi-Mahar clash as well. Although the Katcha areas extend to many districts of the central and southern Sindh, the districts such as Kashmore, Ghotki, Shikarpur and Jacobabad are particularly notorious for high prevalence of crimes like dacoity, kidnap for ransom and tribal conflicts.

On December 16, around 25 dacoits had attacked a bus near the Sindh-Punjab border and kidnapped 20 passengers after injuring the driver.

The opposition and the PTI have played a responsible role on every platform and shown cooperation with the government," it said. KP CM calls for 'policy shift' in combating terrorism.

Meanwhile, KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, in a statement posted on X, said that opposition to a potential military operation in the province was not limited to the PTI. He stressed that "all political and religious parties of KP, as well as individuals from different schools of thought, were in agreement that military operations are not a long-term solution". "The issue is not merely that the state is not serious about combating terrorism; the problem also lies in decisions being made without taking into confidence the ground realities, elected representatives, local population, and the provincial government," he said.

Asked about tribal disputes, the Sindh minister said this matter was also discussed in today's meeting, and they had made the relevant contacts regarding the Jatoi-Mahar clash as well. Although the Katcha areas extend to many districts of the central and southern Sindh, the districts such as Kashmore, Ghotki, Shikarpur and Jacobabad are particularly notorious for high prevalence of crimes like dacoity, kidnap for ransom and tribal conflicts.

On December 16, around 25 dacoits had attacked a bus near the Sindh-Punjab border and kidnapped 20 passengers after injuring the driver.

The opposition and the PTI have played a responsible role on every platform and shown cooperation with the government," it said. KP CM calls for 'policy shift' in combating terrorism.

Meanwhile, KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, in a statement posted on X, said that opposition to a potential military operation in the province was not limited to the PTI. He stressed that "all political and religious parties of KP, as well as individuals from different schools of thought, were in agreement that military operations are not a long-term solution". "The issue is not merely that the state is not serious about combating terrorism; the problem also lies in decisions being made without taking into confidence the ground realities, elected representatives, local population, and the provincial government," he said.

Asked about tribal disputes, the Sindh minister said this matter was also discussed in today's meeting, and they had made the relevant contacts regarding the Jatoi-Mahar clash as well. Although the Katcha areas extend to many districts of the central and southern Sindh, the districts such as Kashmore, Ghotki, Shikarpur and Jacobabad are particularly notorious for high prevalence of crimes like dacoity, kidnap for ransom and tribal conflicts.

On December 16, around 25 dacoits had attacked a bus near the Sindh-Punjab border and kidnapped 20 passengers after injuring the driver.

The opposition and the PTI have played a responsible role on every platform and shown cooperation with the government," it said. KP CM calls for 'policy shift' in combating terrorism.

Meanwhile, KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, in a statement posted on X, said that opposition to a potential military operation in the province was not limited to the PTI. He stressed that "all political and religious parties of KP, as well as individuals from different schools of thought, were in agreement that military operations are not a long-term solution". "The issue is not merely that the state is not serious about combating terrorism; the problem also lies in decisions being made without taking into confidence the ground realities, elected representatives, local population, and the provincial government," he said.

Asked about tribal disputes, the Sindh minister said this matter was also discussed in today's meeting, and they had made the relevant contacts regarding the Jatoi-Mahar clash as well. Although the Katcha areas extend to many districts of the central and southern Sindh, the districts such as Kashmore, Ghotki, Shikarpur and Jacobabad are particularly notorious for high prevalence of crimes like dacoity, kidnap for ransom and tribal conflicts.

On December 16, around 25 dacoits had attacked a bus near the Sindh-Punjab border and kidnapped 20 passengers after injuring the driver.

The opposition and the PTI have played a responsible role on every platform and shown cooperation with the government," it said. KP CM calls for 'policy shift' in combating terrorism.

Meanwhile, KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, in a statement posted on X, said that opposition to a potential military operation in the province was not limited to the PTI. He stressed that "all political and religious parties of KP, as well as individuals from different schools of thought, were in agreement that military operations are not a long-term solution". "The issue is not merely that the state is not serious about combating terrorism; the problem also lies in decisions being made without taking into confidence the ground realities, elected representatives, local population, and the provincial government," he said.

Asked about tribal disputes, the Sindh minister said this matter was also discussed in today's meeting, and they had made the relevant contacts regarding the Jatoi-Mahar clash as well. Although the Katcha areas extend to many districts of the central and southern Sindh, the districts such as Kashmore, Ghotki, Shikarpur and Jacobabad are particularly notorious for high prevalence of crimes like dacoity, kidnap for ransom and tribal conflicts.

On December 16, around 25 dacoits had attacked a bus near the Sindh-Punjab border and kidnapped 20 passengers after injuring the driver.

The opposition and the PTI have played a responsible role on every platform and shown cooperation with the government," it said. KP CM calls for 'policy shift' in combating terrorism.

Meanwhile, KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, in a statement posted on X, said that opposition to a potential military operation in the province was not limited to the PTI. He stressed that "all political and religious parties of KP, as well as individuals from different schools of thought, were in agreement that military operations are not a long-term solution". "The issue is not merely that the state is not serious about combating terrorism; the problem also lies in decisions being made without taking into confidence the ground realities, elected representatives, local population, and the provincial government," he said.

## Sindh home minister announces 'massive operation' against Katcha area dacoits

**NEWS DESK:** Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar on Wednesday announced a "massive" operation against dacoits in the Katcha areas of the province.

Speaking to reporters in Sukkur, Lanjar said a meeting was held wherein it was decided that "we are definitely heading towards a massive operation".

"We will use whatever resources we have, with specific targets and take ruthless action against the infamous dacoits that pose a social media," he added.

Asked when the operation against the riverine dacoits was expected to begin, the minister replied, "You may consider that the operation has begun from today".

Lanjar said dacoits would be "given a chance" to surrender before the courts. "But the absconders or criminals who consider themselves big champions, strict action will be taken against them, there will

be a fight, and they will get their just deserts," he warned. As per the Surrender Policy for Dacoits in Katcha Area of Sukkur and Larkana Divisions, approved by the Sindh cabinet in October 2025, surrendering does not mean pardon or immunity. All surrendering individuals shall face the prevailing law of the land, officials told Dawn, though voluntary surrender is encouraged as a mitigating factor in sentencing by courts.

The Sindh home minister appreciated the Punjab government for its support in a recent "successful" operation wherein a no-go Katcha area was vacated.

Responding to a question about whether the army's help will be sought, Lanjar said, "The Sindh police is capable and the Rangers are with us in this, so I do not think we will need the army in our internal matters since August 7."

The minister further asserted that the re-

quired modern equipment will be provided to the personnel. When a reporter mentioned that the operation employed drones, Lanjar said, "I do not think drones have reached them. Action is definitely being taken against their facilitators, too."

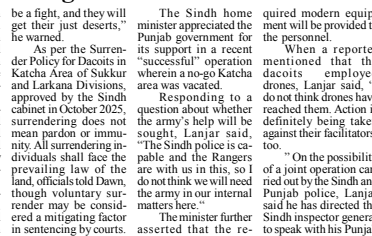
On the possibility of a joint operation carried out by the Sindh and Punjab police, Lanjar said he has directed the Sindh inspector general to speak with his Punjab counterpart and the Bahawalpur regional police officer regarding the matter. "This will surely happen only after a joint effort," he stressed, noting that the area of Machka extends into Punjab. "I have strong hopes that we will wipe out these dacoits," Lanjar said.

Asked about tribal disputes, the Sindh minister said this matter was also discussed in today's meeting, and they had made the relevant contacts regarding the Jatoi-Mahar clash as well. Although the Katcha areas extend to many districts of the central and southern Sindh, the districts such as Kashmore, Ghotki, Shikarpur and Jacobabad are particularly notorious for high prevalence of crimes like dacoity, kidnap for ransom and tribal conflicts.

On December 16, around 25 dacoits had attacked a bus near the Sindh-Punjab border and kidnapped 20 passengers after injuring the driver.

The opposition and the PTI have played a responsible role on every platform and shown cooperation with the government," it said. KP CM calls for 'policy shift' in combating terrorism.

Meanwhile, KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, in a statement posted on X, said that opposition to a potential military operation in the province was not limited to the PTI. He stressed that "all political and religious parties of KP, as well as individuals from different schools of thought, were in agreement that military operations are not a long-term solution". "The issue is not merely that the state is not serious about combating terrorism; the problem also lies in decisions being made without taking into confidence the ground realities, elected representatives, local population, and the provincial government," he said.



Politicos urge govt-opposition talks, seek release of political workers as 'confidence-building measure'

**NEWS DESK:** A group of former PTI leaders and others on Wednesday proposed that the government and the opposition

hold talks to reduce tensions and suggested that political prisoners be released as part of "confidence-building measures".

They made proposals in a formal statement issued at the conclusion of Wednesday's conference in Islamabad, organised under the banner of the recently formed National Dialogue Committee (NDC). Ex-PTI leaders—including Fawad Chaudhry, former Sindh governor Imran Ismail, Dr Shahzad Waseem, and Mahmood Moulvi — are leading the initiative.

The meeting agreed to the proposal to initiate a fruitful negotiation process and declared that, in this regard, the government and the opposition should form separate committees comprising their respective representatives, between which the dialogue process should be initiated," the statement read.

The NDC proposed that President Asif Ali Zardari, PML-N President Nawaz Sharif, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif represent the ruling coalition in the talks. On the PTI side, it said: "After the announcement of the government's committee, in consultation with the

opposition leadership in jail, will announce the names for the opposition committee."

While the NDC also extended a special invitation to Ichrack-i-Tahafuz-i-Ayin-i-Pakistan (TIAP), the opposition alliance reportedly refused to attend.

The NDC leaders also suggested that "comprehensive, concrete and practical steps be taken immediately for dialogue and confidence-building at the national level."

These included the immediate release of "political workers" who were behind bars and quashing of cases against them.

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Imran Ismail, among others, attend a conference in Islamabad on Jan 7, 2026. — via author

workers, including PTI founder Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi and PTI leader Yasmin Rashid, be released immediately and provided medical facilities.

"Restrictions on political activities should be lifted. Complete freedom of political activities should be ensured within the framework of the Constitution and law," read another suggestion.

The NDC also called for the appointment of opposition leaders in the National Assembly and Senate — posts that have been vacant since August 7. "The government and opposition forces should not use the Pakistan armed forces for their politics and should not spread negative propaganda," the statement added.

It further said that

the media should be ended and restrictions imposed on anchors should be lifted."

The moot also expressed concern over the "political unrest in the country, the economic difficulties facing the country and its people, restrictions on political activities and the media, and the challenge of terrorism".

As per the statement, the meeting appreciated the NDC's efforts of "playing the role of a bridge between the government and the opposition", stressing the "importance of promoting unity and solidarity in the country and reducing political tensions".

The meeting "paid tribute to the sacrifices against terrorism of all security forces, including Pakistan's armed forces, police and Rang-

ers, and prayed for the alleviation of the martyrs' suffering for justice for the entire nation."

The meeting also reiterated its demand for sovereignty, security, dignity and justice in the state-

ment and

the media should be ended and restrictions imposed on anchors should be lifted."

The moot also expressed concern over the "political unrest in the country, the economic difficulties facing the country and its people, restrictions on political activities and the media, and the challenge of terrorism".

As per the statement, the meeting appreciated the NDC's efforts of "playing the role of a bridge between the government and the opposition", stressing the "importance of promoting unity and solidarity in the country and reducing political tensions".

The meeting "paid tribute to the sacrifices against terrorism of all security forces, including Pakistan's armed forces, police and Rang-

ers, and prayed for the alleviation of the martyrs' suffering for justice for the entire nation."

The meeting also reiterated its demand for sovereignty, security, dignity and justice in the state-

ment and

the media should be ended and restrictions imposed on anchors should be lifted."

The moot also expressed concern over the "political unrest in the country, the economic difficulties facing the country and its people, restrictions on political activities and the media, and the challenge of terrorism".

As per the statement, the meeting appreciated the NDC's efforts of "playing the role of a bridge between the government and the opposition", stressing the "importance of promoting unity and solidarity in the country and reducing political tensions".

The meeting "paid tribute to the sacrifices against terrorism of all security forces, including Pakistan's armed forces, police and Rang-

ers, and prayed for the alleviation of the martyrs' suffering for justice for the entire nation."

The meeting also reiterated its demand for sovereignty, security, dignity and justice in the state-



## Maryam Nawaz invites DAMAC Group for investment in Punjab

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has formally invited the globally renowned DAMAC Group to explore investment opportunities in Punjab.

The invitation was

extended during a meeting with the chief minister and a high-level DAMAC Group delegation led by CEO Amira Hussain Sajwani and Managing Director Ali Hussain Sajwani.

During the meeting, both sides agreed to accelerate the process of tokenisation of government assets and commercial assets and discussed strategic investment opportunities across various sectors.

A proposal for the pilot tokenisation of commercial assets in Nawaz Sharif IT City was also reviewed. The

DAMAC Group delegation showed strong interest in investing in Punjab. Expressing satisfaction over Punjab's adoption of emerging technologies and digital assets, the chief minister said the province

was being developed as Pakistan's gateway for foreign direct investment in digital assets and advanced technologies. Maryam Nawaz Sharif highlighted that Punjab accounts for 65 per cent of Pakistan's IT

exports and is the country's largest IT and digital economy. She noted that more than 25,000 IT graduates enter the market every year, strengthening the workforce, while cities including Lahore,

Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Multan and Gujranwala are rapidly emerging as vibrant technology hubs. She added that the government aims to position Pakistan as a global centre for IT and digital innovation.



QUETTA: Children busy in filling their water pots from seriyab road tube well.

## Chinese solar power becomes must-have for Pakistani newlyweds

KARACHI (INP) Chinese solar power has become a must-have for Pakistani newlyweds, according to a China Economic Net's report.

At dawn, as the first rays of sunlight touch the rooftops of Karachi, 27-year-old Raza and his wife Mairan's home quietly comes to life.

Fifteen photovoltaic panels, a wedding gift from their parents installed on their roof, begin generating electricity, powering their daily routine long before the city fully wakes up.

Several major solar photovoltaic exhibitions are held in Karachi each year, making the city more receptive to solar energy than many other parts of Pakistan. A few months ago, the newlyweds' parents jointly invested approximately 800,000 Pakistani rupees to install a China-made solar power system in the couple's new home.

Now, the household relies on solar power during the day and switches to the national grid after sunset. Their monthly electricity bill has dropped from around 60,000 Pakistani rupees to just 24,000 Pa-

**Raza Rabbani urges Senate chairman, NA speaker to appoint opposition leaders**

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former Senate chairman Raza Rabbani has urged the Senate chairman and National Assembly speaker to move ahead with appointing leaders of the opposition in both houses of Parliament, warning that keeping these positions vacant marginalises dissenting voices.

The offices have remained unfilled since August last year, when then opposition leaders in the National Assembly and Senate — PTI's Omar Ayub and Shibli Faraz — were disqualified by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) after their convictions in cases linked to the May 9, 2023 riots.

Although the PTI has nominated Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai as opposition leader in the National Assembly and Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen's Allama Raja Nasir Abbas for the Senate, their appointments have yet to be officially notified.

In a statement issued on Monday, Rabbani said that "Parliament is incomplete", adding that "this exposes a contradiction in our democracy". He said that despite frequent claims about the supremacy of Parliament, there is little willingness to truly uphold it.

kistani rupees. The installation took only three days, yet it has significantly improved their quality of life.

Pakistan's electricity crisis — characterized by frequent load-shedding and high tariffs — has made stable power a luxury for many. However, with the growing availability of affordable and efficient Chinese solar solutions, clean energy is transitioning from a distant dream to an everyday reality.

Hibran Hussain, a Pakistani doctoral graduate currently employed at an intelligent industry company in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, is a friend of the couple and has previous experience in the photovoltaic industry. "As living standards improve, families own more elec-

trical appliances and demand a more stable power supply," Hussain said. "Solar systems not only provide clean energy but also save a significant amount on electricity costs in the long run."

"Before marriage, Raza lived in a house with only two air conditioners and limited appliances. After moving into their new home, the couple purchased a refrigerator, a washing machine, and an electric water pump."

Thanks to solar power, they no longer worry about electricity bills," Hussain said.

In Karachi today, more and more young couples are incorporating solar systems into their home planning," Hussain noted. Raza and Mairan's system is considered mid-range locally: 15 solar panels, each with a capacity of 585 watts, producing about 8 kilowatts per hour — sufficient for a small family's daily needs. Larger households often opt for systems of 10 kilowatts or more. "My own home in Karachi has a 10-kilowatt solar system," he added.

Once an out-of-reach clean technology, solar energy has become an accessible and integral part of everyday life for many Pakistanis.

As Chinese-made clean energy solutions become increasingly integrated into Pakistani households, a new mindset is emerging among young people: saving money to buy solar panels before purchasing a car.

WALK IN INTERVIEW									
The Government of Balochistan, Health Department invites suitable candidates for walk in interview against various positions of Newly Established Trauma Centre, Spiny Road, Quetta to be held in PMSB Spiny Road on date and time mentioned against each post as given below:									
S. No.	Nonresidential Post	Required Qualification & Experience	No. of Posts	Age	Wage	Date of Interview	Time		
1.	APSR Anesthetist	• FCPS MB	07	50 Years	12.01.2026	10.00 am			
2.	APSR Orthopaedic Surgeon	• FCPS MB	03	60 Years	12.01.2026				
3.	APSR Neurosurgeon	• FCPS MB	01	60 Years	12.01.2026				
4.	APSR Neuro Surgeon	• FCPS MB	05	60 Years	12.01.2026				
5.	APSR Pathologist	• FCPS MB/Path	03	60 Years	12.01.2026				
6.	APSR Radiologist	• FCPS	08	60 Years	12.01.2026				
7.	APSR Ophthalmologist	• FCPS	02	60 Years	12.01.2026				
8.	APSR Infectious Disease Specialist	• FCPS	02	60 Years	12.01.2026				
9.	APSR Cardiac Surgeon	• FCPS MB	01	60 Years	12.01.2026	12.00 noon			
10.	APSR Cardiothoracic Surgeon	• FCPS MB	01	60 Years	12.01.2026				
11.	APSR Pediatric Surgeon	• FCPS	01	60 Years	12.01.2026				
12.	APSR General Surgeon	• FCPS	04	60 Years	12.01.2026				
13.	APSR ENT Surgeon	• FCPS MB	01	60 Years	12.01.2026				
14.	APSR Civil Engineering	• FCPS MB	07	60 Years	12.01.2026	2.00 pm			
15.	APSR Physiotherapist	• FCPS MB	01	60 Years	12.01.2026				
16.	APSR Physican	• FCPS	01	60 Years	12.01.2026				
17.	APSR Linenist	• FCPS MB	01	60 Years	12.01.2026				
18.	APSR Radiobiologist	• FCPS MB	01	60 Years	12.01.2026				
19.	APSR Endocrinologist	• FCPS	01	60 Years	12.01.2026				
20.	APSR Therapist Surgeon	• FCPS MB	02	60 Years	12.01.2026				
21.	APSR Oral Maxillofacial Surgeon	• FCPS	04	60 Years	12.01.2026				
22.	APSR Emergency Medicine Specialist/Medical Officer (EMT)	• FCPS	01	60 Years	12.01.2026	10.00 am			
23.	Chief Medical Officer (CMO)	• MBBS	15	55 Years	12.01.2026	12.00 noon			
24.	Chief Medical Officer (CMO)	• MBBS	10	55 Years	12.01.2026				
25.	Medical Legal Officer (MLO)	• MBBS	03	60 Years	12.01.2026				
26.	Legal Medical Officer	• MBBS	20	45 Years	12.01.2026				
27.	Medical Officer	• MBBS	20	45 Years	12.01.2026	10.00 am			
28.	Dental Surgeon	• BDS	05	45 Years	12.01.2026	10.00 am			
29.	Physiotherapist	• DPT • Having Certificate of House Job Experience in the relevant Field will be preferred.	17	45 Years	12.01.2026	10.00 am			
30.	Pharmacist	• B.Pharm • Pharm D • H.C. recognized	20	45 Years	12.01.2026	10.00 am			

- The appointments will be on contract basis initially for a period of one (01) year extendable based on satisfactory performance.
- The employees will be offered lumpsum salary.
- Age of candidates will be calculated on the interview date.
- The appointment will be made on merit basis however, preference will be given to the local domicile candidate from Balochistan province.
- No TDA will be admissible for interview.
- The candidate already working in other organizations will provide a certificate to the effect that respective organization will release him/her in case of selection.
- Incomplete documents will not be entertained.
- Submission of false documents or concealment of any fact will lead to legal action and disqualification of the candidate.
- The selected candidates will not be allowed to claim for permanent employment/regularization beyond the contractual policy.
- The Health Department may cancel the complete recruitment process or increase/decrease the number of positions at any stage without any prior notice/intimation.
- The candidates must bring original documents at the time of walk-in interview.
- Eligible Candidates must submit two sets of attested copies of all educational credentials, professional, experience, local domicile certificates, CNIC, 4 Passport-size photos along with updated CV in time of interview.
- Candidates working in Government, Semi-Government and autonomous organization should apply through proper channel with NOC issued from the employer/parent organization.
- Note: Candidates who have already submitted applications under PMS No. 87479-68/2025 and participated in interview do not require to re-appear in the interview.

Section Officer (Admin.)  
Health Department  
P.O. No. 34/2025-01-2026  
C.O. No. 34/2025-01-2026

## Elevating Pakistan's agricultural exports: Closing the skills gap

ISLAMABAD (INP): Agriculture remains the backbone of Pakistan's economy, contributing more than one-fifth of national GDP and employing nearly half of the workforce.

Spanning the fertile Indus River plain, the country's diverse agro-climatic zones support the cultivation of more than 100 crops, including wheat, rice and cotton. Pakistan is also the world's third-largest producer of milk.

In horticulture, citrus, mangoes and apples form the core of its export portfolio, supplying climatic zones spanning the Middle East and China, says a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Wednesday.

Yet this critical sector is constrained by deep-rooted structural challenges. Low productivity, intensifying climate stress, fragile value

chains, limited mechanization and the slow uptake of modern technologies continue to weigh on growth.

As nearly 60 per cent of Pakistan's population is under the age of 30, turning this demographic dividend into a driver of agricultural modernization has become an urgent national imperative.

The widening skills gap has emerged as the most binding constraint on Pakistan's agricultural productivity.

Despite reforms, post-harvest losses are especially severe: manual harvesting leads to mechanical damage, optical sorting is rare, and storage infrastructure is underdeveloped. Pakistan's total cold storage capacity stands at only about 1.2 million tons, concentrated largely in major cities, with rural coverage below 5 per cent.

As a result, an estimated 30-40 per cent of fruits and vegetables are lost annually during storage and transport, with citrus losses reaching as high as 40 per cent.

Gaps in disease control and food safety management further restrict productivity and market access, as plant and animal diseases continue to pose systemic risks.

"Technical and vocational education and training is not a peripheral reform—it is central to Pakistan's national development,"

Planning Minister, Ahsan Iqbal said at the second Pakistan-China TVET Forum last month, where 21 MoUs were signed to advance joint programs in vocational education.

In 2025, Pakistan-China TVET cooperation accelerated.

As the CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools in the merged districts.

Initiatives in agriculture and livestock, forestry, sports, youth affairs, local government, relief, and ST&IT sectors have also been included.

The CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools in the merged districts.

Initiatives in agriculture and livestock, forestry, sports, youth affairs, local government, relief, and ST&IT sectors have also been included.

The CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools in the merged districts.

Initiatives in agriculture and livestock, forestry, sports, youth affairs, local government, relief, and ST&IT sectors have also been included.

The CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools in the merged districts.

Initiatives in agriculture and livestock, forestry, sports, youth affairs, local government, relief, and ST&IT sectors have also been included.

average—while advanced technologies such as precision agriculture and smart irrigation are adopted by fewer than 20 per cent of farms.

Weaknesses in processing and distribution further erode value. Food processing capacity remains limited, with most agricultural products marketed in raw or semi-processed form. In the fruit and vegetable sector, deep-processing rates remain below 10 per cent.

Post-harvest losses are especially severe: manual harvesting leads to mechanical damage, optical sorting is rare, and storage infrastructure is underdeveloped. Pakistan's total cold storage capacity stands at only about 1.2 million tons, concentrated largely in major cities, with rural coverage below 5 per cent.

As a result, an estimated 30-40 per cent of fruits and vegetables are lost annually during storage and transport, with citrus losses reaching as high as 40 per cent.

Gaps in disease control and food safety management further restrict productivity and market access, as plant and animal diseases continue to pose systemic risks.

"Technical and vocational education and training is not a peripheral reform—it is central to Pakistan's national development,"

Planning Minister, Ahsan Iqbal said at the second Pakistan-China TVET Forum last month, where 21 MoUs were signed to advance joint programs in vocational education.

In 2025, Pakistan-China TVET cooperation accelerated.

As the CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools in the merged districts.

Initiatives in agriculture and livestock, forestry, sports, youth affairs, local government, relief, and ST&IT sectors have also been included.

The CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools in the merged districts.

Initiatives in agriculture and livestock, forestry, sports, youth affairs, local government, relief, and ST&IT sectors have also been included.

The CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools in the merged districts.

Initiatives in agriculture and livestock, forestry, sports, youth affairs, local government, relief, and ST&IT sectors have also been included.

The CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools in the merged districts.

Initiatives in agriculture and livestock, forestry, sports, youth affairs, local government, relief, and ST&IT sectors have also been included.

The CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools in the merged districts.

Initiatives in agriculture and livestock, forestry, sports, youth affairs, local government, relief, and ST&IT sectors have also been included.

## KP govt finalises development package for merged districts

PESHAWAR, Jan 07 (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi on Wednesday chaired a meeting to finalise a comprehensive development package for the merged districts.

According to the CM House spokesperson, the Rs1 trillion package, titled "Roshan Qabul" (Bright Tribes), will focus on investment across six thematic areas aimed at ensuring sustainable economic development of the merged districts. Addressing the meeting, the Chief Minister said the package prioritises infrastructure development, human resource capacity building, and employment generation.

He directed that the establishment of a Tribes Medical College, an Institute of Modern Sciences, and Digital

Cities be included in the package. He also ordered the establishment of District Headquarters (DHQ) and Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) hospitals in areas where such facilities are currently unavailable.

The CM further directed that one sports complex be established in each merged district and a sports ground in every tehsil.

He instructed that markets, as well as entry and exit points of the merged districts, be brought under the Safe City project, and that schools, health facilities, and markets be shifted to solar energy.

He also directed the establishment of orphanages and shelters in every tehsil, along with the setting up of Rescue 1122 stations across all tehsils in the merged districts.

The CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools in the merged districts.

Initiatives in agriculture and livestock, forestry, sports, youth affairs, local government, relief, and ST&IT sectors have also been included.

The CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools in the merged districts.

Initiatives in agriculture and livestock, forestry, sports, youth affairs, local government, relief, and ST&IT sectors have also been included.

The CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools in the merged districts.

Initiatives in agriculture and livestock, forestry, sports, youth affairs, local government, relief, and ST&IT sectors have also been included.

The CM emphasized increasing allocations for health and education, while also enhancing the share for ST&IT, irrigation, social welfare, sports, and energy sectors.

During the briefing, it was shared that the package includes investment in institutional capacity building, improved governance, and effective service delivery.

Inter-sectoral reforms for inclusive development and major investments in health and education sectors are key components of the initiative. According to the briefing, the package provides for the establishment of 1,245 new primary schools, the upgradation of 463 primary schools and 85 middle schools, and the rehabilitation of 175 primary schools, 240 middle schools, and 125 high schools



## Meeting Held to Review Performance and Future Development Plans of Shaheed Nawab Ghous Bakhsh Raisani Memorial Hospital, Mastung



QUETTA: A crucial meeting of the Board of Governors (BoG) of Shaheed Nawab Ghous Bakhsh Raisani Memorial Hospital, Mastung, was held today under the chairmanship of Provincial Health Minister, Mr. Muhammad Kahr. The meeting took place at the Civil Secretariat in Quetta and was attended by Member of Provincial Assembly, Nawab Muhammad Aslam Khan Raisani, Secretary Health Mujib-ur-Rehman Panjari, senior officials from relevant departments, and hospital administration. "Review of Hospital Performance and Services" The meeting thoroughly reviewed the overall performance of Shaheed Nawab Ghous Bakhsh Raisani Memorial Hospital, Mastung, including administrative and financial matters, the availability of

medical services, medicines, and medical equipment, as well as the deployment of doctors and paramedical staff. Key discussions included staff attendance, discipline, and the quality of services provided to patients. "Focus on Healthcare Reforms and Challenges" The meeting also delved into ongoing reforms at the hospital and addressed the challenges that are hindering its progress. Provincial Health Minister, Mr. Muhammad Kahr, emphasized the government's commitment to providing high-quality, timely, and modern healthcare services across the province. He reaffirmed that improving transparency, discipline, and service delivery in government hospitals is a top priority. "Development Plans for Hospital Expansion" During the meeting, future develop-

## Important DCC Meeting Held in Chaman Under the Chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner CHAMAN

CHAMAN: Significant meeting of the District Coordination Committee (DCC) was convened in Chaman under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Chaman, Habib Ahmad Bangulzai. The meeting was attended by various key officials, including the Headquarters Chaman Scouts, Commanding Officer 40 Frontier Force (FF) Chaman, SP Chaman, Commanding Officer ISI Chaman, IW Chaman, Commanding Officer CT Chaman, Commanding Officer MI 304 Chaman, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Chaman, Assistant Director IB Chaman, District Officer CTD Chaman, Circle Officer Special Branch Chaman, Anti-Narcotics Officer, and District IT Officer Chaman, along with heads of land departments and other relevant officials. The meeting discussed several critical issues, including the overall law and order situation in Chaman district, border security, crime prevention, intelligence sharing, public safety measures, administrative coordination, anti-narcotics efforts, and unexpected searches on border and Chaman's connecting roads. Special attention was given to curbing the cultivation of hemp and opium in the district. "Key Discussions and Decisions" During the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Habib Ahmad Bangulzai emphasized the importance of effective coordination be-

## District Recruitment Committee Meeting Held in Hub to Review Recruitment Process for Education Department

HUB: A meeting of the District Recruitment Committee was held in Hub to review the recruitment process for various contract-based vacancies in the Education Department under Phase III. The meeting was chaired by Deputy Commissioner Hub, Mr. Mohammad Rahim Ibrahim, and was attended by key officials, including the Divisional Director of Education, Kalat Division, Mr. Zakariya, District Education Officer Hub, Mr. Mohammad Rahim Baledi, and District Education Officer (Female), Mrs. Nasreen Iqbal. Key Discussions and Decisions. The meeting focused on the interviews for candidates applying for various contract-based positions in the Education Department. Additionally, the committee reviewed the objections raised during the recruitment process and thoroughly examined the relevant

records. Mr. Ismail Ibrahim emphasized the importance of ensuring merit and transparency in the recruitment process, in line with the Government of Balochistan's policies. The committee made on-the-spot decisions regarding the objections and instructed that the recruitment process be completed in a transparent manner, adhering to all rules and regulations. This initiative is part of ongoing efforts to ensure fairness and efficiency in the hiring process for critical educational positions in Hub, promoting better educational standards in the region. Hub, District Recruitment Committee, Education Department, recruitment process, contract-based vacancies, Balochistan government policy, transparency, merit, educational recruitment, District Education Officer, Balochistan.

## Polio Campaign Review Meeting Held in Loralai Under DC Miran Baloch's Leadership

LORALAI: A key meeting of the District Polio Eradication Committee (DPEC) was held today under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Loralai, Miran Baloch, at the DC Office in Loralai. The meeting reviewed preparations for the upcoming National Immunization Days (NID) and February's polio campaign, scheduled to start on February 2, 2026.

Present at the meeting were several officials, including District Health Officer Dr. Haleem, DSP Police Karim Mandokhail, Deputy District Health Officer Dr. Shahzaman, Stop Team Dr. Farhan Anjum, DSM PPHI

Farhan, District Polio Focal Person Mukhtar Ullah Jan Loni, CCO Hashim, and other relevant department officers. During the session, Dr. Farhan Anjum presented a detailed report to the Deputy Commissioner, which covered the target of vaccinating 65,000 children during the upcoming campaign, coverage by vaccination teams, field data received, and a review of areas that may face challenges.

Progress and Challenges in Polio Campaign "The Deputy Commissioner commended the team's efforts so far and emphasized the importance of improv-

ing both speed and quality of the campaign in the coming days to ensure that no child is left without the polio vaccine. He also directed the concerned authorities to take immediate action in low-coverage areas, organize special activities, provide all necessary support to vaccination teams, and ensure accurate daily reporting of progress.

Zero Tolerance for Negligence "The success of the polio campaign is our collective responsibility, as the future of our children depends on it," stated the Deputy Commissioner.

He stressed that any officer or staff member showing exemplary performance

will be highly encouraged. On the other hand, negligence, slowness, or carelessness would lead to strict actions, including dismissal. He emphasized that there would be no compromise on the polio eradication effort, and all relevant departments must work collaboratively and efficiently to make Naseerabad a polio-free district.

The Deputy Commissioner's clear directives highlighted the urgency and commitment required to achieve the goals of the polio eradication campaign and ensure that Loralai, and the broader district, remains free of polio.



### BEFORE THE JUDGE BANKING COURT QUETTA DISTRICT COURT/KACHEHRY SHARA-E-IQBAL QUETTA SUIT NO. 24/2026

Bank Alfalah Limited,  
M.A. Jinnah Road Quetta.

Plaintiff

#### VERSUS

1. Mst. Asma Bibi W/o Ghulam Mustafa.  
CNIC No: 54401-5297558-2.

Resident of: House No: 5-12/79, Gawalandi Chowk Mohallah Sirki Road, Quetta.

2. Ghulam Mustafa S/o Khalil Ahmed,  
CNIC No: 54400-7245184-5.

Resident of: House No: 5-12/79, Gawalandi Chowk Mohallah Sirki Road, Quetta.  
Loan #L12211800052.  
Contact No: 0331-1394051. Defendant

**SUIT FOR RECOVERY OF RS: 670,165/- BEARING LOAN A/C NO: L211800056/7PK45A1110924001007454968 ALONG WITH 20% LIQUIDATED DAMAGES AND COST OF FUNDS ETC. US 9 OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (RECOVERY OF FINANCES) ORDINANCE XLVI, 2001.**

### NOTICE UNDER FORM IV APPENDIX B OF C.P.C. 1908

Notice to: - The above noted defendant.

WHEREAS the plaintiff has instituted a suit against you under section 9(5) of the Banking Companies Ordinance XLVI of 2001 for RS: 670,165/- balance of principal & interest/mark up/rent due to him of which copy can be obtained from this court, on or, hereby summoned to obtain leave from the court within 30 (thirty) days, from the service hereof to appear and defend the suit, and within such time to cause an appearance to be entered for you.

In the default whereof the plaintiff will be entitled at any time after expiration of such 30 (thirty) days to obtain decree as prayed in the plaint.

Leave to appear may be obtained on an application to the court supported by an affidavit or declaration showing that there is defense to the suit on the merits, or, i.e. if, it is reasonable that you should be allowed to appear in the suit. Date of hearing is 16-02-2026.

GIVEN under my hand and seal of the court, this 7<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2026.

(SAIFULLAH KHAN)  
Registrar  
Banking Court Quetta

### BEFORE THE JUDGE BANKING COURT QUETTA DISTRICT COURT/KACHEHRY SHARA-E-IQBAL QUETTA SUIT NO. 22/2026

Askari Bank Limited,  
M.A. Jinnah Road Quetta.

Plaintiff

#### VERSUS

Muhammad Naeem S/o Kamal Khan.

Resident of: House No: 4/6, Near Special School Gurdatt Singh road Quetta.

Official Address: Designation: OG-1 Relationship Manager, Employee #1009055, Askari Bank Limited Jinnah Road Branch Quetta.  
CIF No: 000700586  
CNIC No: 56503-18532232-9.  
Cell No: 0343-2244744. Defendant

**SUIT FOR RECOVERY OF RS: 233,633/55/- BEARING ACCOUNT NO. (O/LD) 7005M10000061 (NEW) 730DM10000067 US 9 OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (RECOVERY OF FINANCES) ORDINANCE XLVI, 2001.**

### NOTICE UNDER FORM IV APPENDIX B OF C.P.C. 1908

Notice to: - The above noted defendant.

WHEREAS the plaintiff has instituted a suit against you under section 9(5) of the Banking Companies Ordinance XLVI of 2001 for RS: 233,633/55/- balance of principal & interest/mark up/rent due to him of which copy can be obtained from this court, on or, hereby summoned to obtain leave from the court within 30 (thirty) days, from the service hereof to appear and defend the suit, and within such time to cause an appearance to be entered for you.

In the default whereof the plaintiff will be entitled at any time after expiration of such 30 (thirty) days to obtain decree as prayed in the plaint.

Leave to appear may be obtained on an application to the court supported by an affidavit or declaration showing that there is defense to the suit on the merits, or, i.e. if, it is reasonable that you should be allowed to appear in the suit. Date of hearing is 10-02-2026.

GIVEN under my hand and seal of the court, this 5<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2026.

(SAIFULLAH KHAN)  
Registrar  
Banking Court Quetta

### BEFORE THE JUDGE BANKING COURT QUETTA DISTRICT COURT/KACHEHRY SHARA-E-IQBAL QUETTA SUIT NO. 23/2026

Bank Alfalah Limited,  
M.A. Jinnah Road Quetta.

Plaintiff

#### VERSUS

1. Omar Farooq S/o Muhammad Ismail.

Resident of: House No: 5-13/69, Muhallah Qawari Road, Gawalandi Quetta.

Business Address: C/o Abbasi Dairy Farm, Jan Muhammad Road, Quetta.

2. Ahmed Bilal S/o Muhammad Ismail.  
CNIC No: 54400-3179238-9.

Resident of: Quwari Road, Quetta.

3. Muhammad Ismail.  
CNIC No: 54400-5913532-3.

Resident of: Quwari Road, Quetta.

Loan #L12211800052.  
Contact No: 0300-0869580. Defendant

**SUIT FOR RECOVERY OF RS: 654,006/- BEARING LOAN A/C NO: L211800056/7PK4710949001007351869 ALONG WITH 20% LIQUIDATED DAMAGES AND COST OF FUNDS ETC. US 9 OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (RECOVERY OF FINANCES) ORDINANCE XLVI, 2001.**

### NOTICE UNDER FORM IV APPENDIX B OF C.P.C. 1908

Notice to: - The above noted defendant.

WHEREAS the plaintiff has instituted a suit against you under section 9(5) of the Banking Companies Ordinance XLVI of 2001 for RS: 654,006/- balance of principal & interest/mark up/rent due to him of which copy can be obtained from this court, on or, hereby summoned to obtain leave from the court within 30 (thirty) days, from the service hereof to appear and defend the suit, and within such time to cause an appearance to be entered for you.

In the default whereof the plaintiff will be entitled at any time after expiration of such 30 (thirty) days to obtain decree as prayed in the plaint.

Leave to appear may be obtained on an application to the court supported by an affidavit or declaration showing that there is defense to the suit on the merits, or, i.e. if, it is reasonable that you should be allowed to appear in the suit. Date of hearing is 16-02-2026.

GIVEN under my hand and seal of the court, this 5<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2026.

(SAIFULLAH KHAN)  
Registrar  
Banking Court Quetta

### BEFORE THE JUDGE BANKING COURT DERA ALLAH YAR SUIT NO. 1/2026

Bank Alfalah Limited,  
Sibi Branch.

Plaintiff

#### VERSUS

Zubair Ahmed S/o Nazeer Muhammad.

Resident of: 1. Sahbat Saray road, Muhallah Forest Colony Sibi.

2. Muhallah Koshi Villa Hujak, Post Office Hujak, Tetsil & District Sibi.

Office Address: Designation: Agriculture Credit Officer, ABL, Liaquat Bazar Sibi.

Loan# 4025810455295514.  
CNIC No: 55302-5863049-1.  
Cell No: 0333-7702493/0833-500002. Defendant

**SUIT FOR RECOVERY OF CREDIT CARD FACILITY RS: 226,534/74/- ALONG WITH SERVICE CHARGES, LIQUIDATED DAMAGES AND COST OF FUND ETC. US 9 OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (RECOVERY OF FINANCES) ORDINANCE XLVI, 2001.**

### NOTICE UNDER FORM IV APPENDIX B OF C.P.C. 1908

Notice to: - The above noted defendant.

WHEREAS the plaintiff has instituted a suit against you under section 9(5) of the Banking Companies Ordinance XLVI of 2001 for RS: 226,534/74/- balance of principal & interest/mark up/rent due to him of which copy can be obtained from this court, on or, hereby summoned to obtain leave from the court within 30 (thirty) days, from the service hereof to appear and defend the suit, and within such time to cause an appearance to be entered for you.

In the default whereof the plaintiff will be entitled at any time after expiration of such 30 (thirty) days to obtain decree as prayed in the plaint.

Leave to appear may be obtained on an application to the court supported by an affidavit or declaration showing that there is defense to the suit on the merits, or, i.e. if, it is reasonable that you should be allowed to appear in the suit. Date of hearing is 10-02-2026 at Dera Allah Yar.

GIVEN under my hand and seal of the court, this 7<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2026.

(SAIFULLAH KHAN)  
Registrar  
Banking Court Dera Allah Yar

## Damac delegation offers tech expertise to Pakistan in real-world assets, blockchain, AI

**NEWS DESK:** A delegation of the Damac Group on Wednesday offered technical expertise to Pakistan in real-world assets, blockchain and artificial intelligence (AI), the finance minister said.

A high-level delegation, including Damac Group Co-Managing Director Amira Hussain Saywani, is on a visit to Pakistan and has held multiple meetings. One Group Chairman Syed Zeeshan Shah led the delegation's meeting with Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb today.

"The visiting delegation expressed strong interest in partnering with the Government of Pakistan and offered technical expertise, advisory support and capacity building in areas such as tokenisation of real-world assets, blockchain-based platforms, AI-driven solutions and modern digital infrastructure," the finance ministry said.

It added that the meeting focused on emerging global trends in tokenisation, AI, blockchain and digital infrastructure, and the potential for collaboration



in support of Pakistan's ongoing financial sector reforms and digital transformation agenda. The delegation highlighted "global best practices and private-sector innovation that could support Pakistan

in enhancing transparency, efficiency, investor access and financial inclusion," while fully respecting the country's legal and regulatory framework. Aurangzeb welcomed the delegation's

interest and appreciated their willingness to engage constructively with Pakistan, his ministry said. "He underscored the government's commitment to responsible innovation, strong governance and regulatory

compliance, and noted that Pakistan is actively engaging credible international partners to evaluate new technologies that can strengthen its financial ecosystem." The minister stressed that any future collaboration would be

guided by "national priorities, transparency and applicable laws and policies". Saywani, who was part of the delegation, is also the co-founder and chief executive officer (CEO) of the Prypcoc company.

The team included Chief of Staff Alp Ozenalp, One Homes Chief Commercial Officer Aqib Hassan and Prypcoc General Manager Tokenisation Joseph El Amseh. The finance ministry statement noted that

the meeting took place amid Pakistan's recent initiatives to "explore responsible adoption of emerging financial technologies, including the government's efforts to assess compliant blockchain infrastructure for sovereign and real-world assets".

"Both sides noted that such technologies, if deployed prudently, can help deepen capital markets, attract international investment and support sustainable economic growth," the ministry said.

On December 18, Bilal bin Sagib, chairman of the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA), discussed issues related to digital asset adoption with State Bank of Pakistan Governor Jameel Ahmad. In August last year, the government officially established the Pakistan Digital Authority (PDA) as one of three bodies formed under the Digital Nation Bill.

The PDA will develop, implement and monitor the national digital master plan, as well as establish a monitoring and evaluation framework for digital transformation projects.

## Construction of container vessel for Pakistan National Shipping Corporation begins

**NEWS DESK:** Construction of a 1,100-20-foot equivalent unit (TEU) container vessel for the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) was launched on Tuesday, a move aimed at strengthening the country's maritime sector and reducing reliance on foreign shipping lines.

The steel-cutting ceremony was held at Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works (KSEW) and inaugurated by Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry. Senior officials from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs,

PNSC and KSEW were also present.

Addressing the ceremony, the minister described the project as a strategic milestone for the maritime industry, saying it reflected the government's commitment to revitalising the shipping and shipbuilding sectors in line with national economic priorities.

The 1,100-TEU vessel is being constructed using domestic resources and expertise, underscoring Pakistan's growing shipbuilding capacity to support the country's trade volume and economic growth.

strengthen maritime infrastructure and help cut dependence on foreign carriers.

Mr Chaudhry said the addition of the vessel to the PNSC fleet would help conserve foreign exchange by reducing freight payments abroad and enhance the corporation's capacity to support Pakistan's import-export trade.

Noting that nearly 95 per cent of the country's trade volume is transported by sea, the minister said a strong maritime sector was essential for economic stability and growth.



## Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) starts 1,100-TEU ship construction

**NEWS DESK:** Construction of a 1,100 twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEU) container vessel for the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) has been launched at Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works (KSEW), as the government seeks to strengthen the country's maritime capacity and reduce dependence on foreign carriers.

According to an official statement issued on Tuesday, the steel-cutting ceremony was inaugurated by Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry.

Addressing the ceremony, the minister said the project marked a strategic milestone for the maritime industry, saying it reflected the government's commitment to revitalising the shipping and ship-

building sectors and aligned with national economic priorities. He said the 1,100-TEU vessel was being constructed using domestic resources and expertise, reflecting the country's shipbuilding capabilities.

The minister noted that adding the 1,100-TEU ship to the PNSC fleet would help reduce freight payments to foreign shipping lines, thereby conserving for-

eign exchange, and would strengthen the corporation's ability to support Pakistan's import and export trade. He said nearly 95% of Pakistan's trade volume is transported by sea, underlining the importance of a functional maritime sector for economic stability and growth. Shipping and ship repair, he added, are central components of the National Maritime Policy.

## 220kV SEZ grid station energised in Sheikhupura

**NEWS DESK:** The National Grid Company of Pakistan (NGC), formerly the National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC), energised the 220kV Qaid-i-Azam Business Park Grid Station in Sheikhupura on Tuesday, achieving a major milestone in the expansion of the country's power transmission network.

The strategically important project has been completed to meet the electricity requirements of large-scale industrial consumers operating within the Sheikhupura Special Economic Zone (SEZ) business park.

Completed at a cost exceeding Rs4 billion and financed by the federal government under the Cash Deposit Loan (CDL) Facility, the project aims to ensure reliable power supply for uninterrupted industrial operations, business growth and economic development.

The NGC management congratulated the project team on successful energisation and appreciated their profes-

sionalism and technical expertise.

"The power infrastructure developed for the special economic zones plays a vital role in attracting investment and generating employment, and the business park grid station has been designed to support long-term industrial expansion and inclusive economic growth," said NGC Man-

aging Director Engr Altaf Hussain Malik, while speaking at the grid commissioning ceremony.

The newly energised grid station has a transformation capacity of 500MVA at 220/132kV level, supported by approximately four kilometres of 220kV transmission lines, interconnecting with the regional grid.

This configuration enhances system stability, improves voltage profiles and provides the resilience required to cater to heavy industrial loads and future demand.

The project is the first grid station in SEZ and will also reduce operational pressure on existing grid stations in Sheikhupura.

Kala Shah Kaku, Bandala (Faisalabad) and nearby industrial zones.

By improving power supply and reducing technical losses, the project is expected to enhance supply reliability for industrial consumers.

Resulting in reduced downtime, improved productivity and better cost efficiency.



## K-shaped recovery deepens wealth gap in Pakistan, leaving lower-income households behind

**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan's much-discussed economic stabilisation is masking a widening fault line: while wealthier households continue to accumulate assets and benefit from market rallies, the majority of Pakistanis are grappling with shrinking incomes, depleted savings and rising living costs.

Fresh data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), compiled by Optimus Capital Management, underscores that the country is firmly in the grip of a K-shaped recovery, where prosperity is flowing upward while financial stress deepens at the bottom.

The rich Pakistanis are becoming richer while the poor get poorer," said Maaz Azam, Research Head at Optimus Capital Management, while talking to The Express Tribune. Drawing on the latest Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES), Azam highlighted how average household incomes, expenditures and savings have evolved across income quintiles between FY2019 and FY2025. The

data, originally reported in rupees and converted into US dollars to remove inflation distortions, paints a sobering picture of declining real purchasing power for the "common man".

According to the survey, average monthly household earnings in dollar terms have fallen by 3.4% overall since FY2019. However, this headline figure conceals a stark divergence.

The bottom 20% of households saw their monthly income drop by nearly 12%, while the second quintile experienced a decline of over 7%.

In contrast, the top quintile recorded a 7% increase in earnings over the same period, reinforcing the notion that income growth has become increasingly concentrated among higher earners.

A similar pattern emerges on the spending side. While overall household expenditure rose modestly by 4%, this increase was entirely driven by upper-income groups.

The richest 20% of households expanded their spending by 13%, whereas the poorest quintile cut expenditure by more than 10%.

Middle-income households largely stagnated, reflecting a squeeze that has hollowed out the urban middle class. Perhaps the most alarming signal comes from household savings: implied savings across all income groups have collapsed by 66% since FY2019. For lower-income households, savings have been nearly wiped out, leaving little buffer against economic shocks.

Even the wealthiest quintile saw savings fall by more than 57%, suggesting that consumption is increasingly being financed by drawing down past reserves rather than by sustainable income growth.

"This data reflects the average Pakistani," Azam noted, pointing out that high-net-worth individuals do not typically participate in household surveys. "The very wealthy operate outside this dataset yet they are precisely the group benefiting most from asset price inflation."

To reinforce the

household-level findings, Optimus Capital also examined GDP per capita, a broad proxy for average income. In dollar terms, GDP per capita has declined sharply since its peak in FY2022. While projections suggest a gradual recovery, Pakistan is only expected to return to FY2017-18 income levels by FY2026, and to regain its FY2022 peak as late as 2029.

This implies several years of lost income growth for the average Pakistani.

The strain on household finances is also reshaping consumption patterns. In FY2025, essentials - food, housing, energy and transport - accounted for nearly 69% of household spending, up from 66.6% in FY2019. By contrast, spending on health and education fell by 19%, a particularly troubling trend given their role in long-term productivity and social mobility.

Discretionary spending also edged lower, underscoring how inflation has forced households into survival mode.



## Bethell slams maiden century to give England glimmer in final Ashes Test

**NEWS DESK:** Jacob Bethell fulfilled his rich potential with a chanceless maiden Test century Wednesday as England built a fragile 119-run second-innings lead with two wickets remaining to give themselves a glimmer of hope in the final Ashes Test.

At the end of day four at the Sydney Cricket Ground, England had reached 302-8 with Bethell imperious on 142 not out and number 10 Matthew Potts yet to score.

England are desperate for another morale-boosting win after victory in the previous Test at Melbourne. Australia lead 3-1 and have already retained the Ashes.

It was the 22-year-old Bethell who kept their faint hopes alive after Zak Crawley fell early and first-innings centurion Joe Root departed



he a p l y. He powered to his hundred off 162 balls by smashing a lofted drive over midwicket for four.

“It’s pretty special, it’s not really sunk in yet. I haven’t really had time to kind of reflect on it,” Bethell told reporters.

Bethell had his parents in the stands and raised his bat towards them as he passed the milestone.

“To do that and have the family there was very special,” said the left-hander.

“My dad was a cricketer so he knows how it feels to be out there batting, but I don’t think that stops him from getting any less nervous.”

It was not just Bethell’s maiden Test but the only one he has scored in red-ball cricket, with his previous best 96 against New Zealand.

Bethell was recalled for Melbourne to replace the underperforming Ollie Pope, scoring a gritty 40 in

“I certainly didn’t think I would (impact) with spin this game,” said Webster, who is more usually employed as a seamer, but returned figures of 3-51.

Webster believed the pitch had begun to turn. “There was a bit of wear and tear there from Stacey’s footmarks,” he said.

“And we managed to make the most of it in that session.”

“Need to be smart.” A mix-up saw Jamie Smith run out for 24 just as he and

Bethell were threatening to take the game away from Australia with a sixth-wicket partnership that had reached 45.

Ben Stokes then came in at number 26 and 4-6 after limping off with groin injury while bowling, but the captain lasted only five balls.

Australia were dismissed for 567 before lunch on the back of Travis Head’s 163 and 138 from skipper Steve Smith, a first-innings lead of 183 runs.

England needed a solid start, but chief tormentor Mitchell Starc once again conjured up a first-over breakthrough — his 29th wicket for the series.

“Need to be smart.” A mix-up saw Jamie Smith run out for 24 just as he and

inswinger was misjudged by Crawley who shouldered arms as it thudded into his pad and he was out lbw for one.

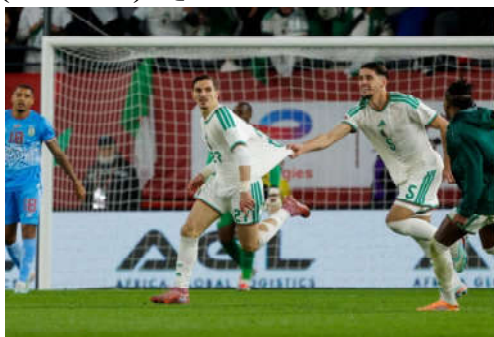
## Algeria Through to Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) Quarter-Finals

**NEWS DESK:** A thunderous strike by substitute Adil Houlbina deep in extra time settled a tense encounter as Algeria beat the Democratic Republic of Congo 1-0 in their Africa Cup of Nations last-16 tie on Tuesday.

The game at the Moulay El Hassan Stadium in Rabat was edged towards a penalty shoot-out when Houlbina, a forward who plays club football in Qatar, was released on the left in the 119th minute and advanced into the area before unleashing a vicious strike into the net. The moment of magic sparked wild celebrations within the ground, with the majority of the 18,837 fans in attendance backing Algeria.

The 2019 champions, who won all their group games, are looking like serious contenders to claim a third continental title but now face a fascinating quarter-final showdown with Victor Osimhen’s Nigeria in Marrakesh on Saturday.

Houlbina was an unlikely hero, making just his second cameo appearance off the bench at the tournament having been included in the squad after featuring for the Algerian team at the recent Arab Cup in Qatar. “I have always dreamed of playing for the national team. It is the ambition of every Al-



gerian to play for their country and do well,” said Houlbina, who was in tears at the end.

“I had my chance and scored and the most important thing is that we won and qualified for the next round.”

The outcome is a painful one for the Congolese, who came into the AFCON with big ambitions and had been hoping to set up another clash with Nigeria having defeated the Super Eagles on penalties in a World Cup qualifying play-off in November.

The Leopards will now at least be able to console themselves with the fact they have an intercontinental play-off to come in March, where a win against either New Caledonia or Jamaica will see them qualify for a first World Cup since 1974. “We are obviously disappointed with the outcome.”

I thought it was a top-level game between two really good sides,” said DR Congo coach Sebastian Desabre. “The players gave everything. We fought to the end but unfortunately it was not enough.”

Super sub Algeria, having already guaranteed a berth at the finals in North America, remain focused for now on going all the way in Morocco. The match itself, between two of the continent’s leading nations, had the makings of the tie of the round but never quite lived up to its billing.

There was a lack of quality in the final third from both sides despite all the attacking talent on the pitch, with neither captain Riyad Mahrez nor the thrilling Ibrahim Maza lasting 90 minutes for Vladimir Petkovic’s Algerian team. Burnley defender Axel Tuanzebe headed just wide from a corner for DR Congo and Maza fired narrowly past

the goal from the edge of the box at the other end in the first half. An Edo Kayembe shot fizzed in from range that forced a good save from Algeria goalkeeper Luca Zidane was the closest either team came in the second half as the match drifted to extra time.

Algeria had been the more consistently threatening team though, and began to turn the screw in the extra half-hour, with Congolese goalkeeper Lionel Mpass saving well from Fares Chaibi and Baghdad Bounedjah in quick succession in the 111th minute.

Algeria had been the more consistently threatening team though, and began to turn the screw in the extra half-hour, with Congolese goalkeeper Lionel Mpass saving well from Fares Chaibi and Baghdad Bounedjah in quick succession in the 111th minute.

## Rock climbing championship kicks off in Islamabad



**NEWS DESK:** The Alpine Club of Pakistan, in collaboration with the Interprovincial Coordination Division, has launched a thrilling rock climbing championship in Islamabad.

The event has drawn enthusiastic participants from across Pakistan, including Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir, and all provinces. What’s

striking is the remarkable turnout of both boys and girls showcasing exceptional endurance and skill.

The championship aims to promote rock climbing and mountaineering, encouraging youngsters to embrace challenges and develop resilience.

“We will create more opportunities for our talented youth,” said Maj General Rtd Irfan Chairman Alpine

club expressing enthusiasm for the event. “Kudos to General Irfan and the Alpine Club of Pakistan for collaborating with IBC Division to make this happen.”

Mohyuddin Wani Secretary IPC division The championship is a testament to Pakistan’s potential in adventure sports and a step towards promoting youth empowerment.

## Shadab returns as Pakistan win toss, opt to field in first T20I against Sri Lanka

**NEWS DESK:** All-rounder Shadab Khan returned to the Pakistan XI for the first time since June last year as captain Salman Ali Agha won the toss and decided to field first in the opening Twenty20 International of the three-match series against Sri Lanka in Dambulla on Wednesday.

Leg-spinner Shadab, who comes back after recovering from a shoulder injury — having impressed in the ongoing Big Bash League (BBL) in Australia — is part of a Pakistan team that is missing the likes of star players Babar Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf.

The trio, who are also featuring in the BBL, however, are likely to return for next month’s T20 World Cup with the current series serving as warm-up for both sides ahead of the showpiece, which is set to be co-hosted by

Sri Lanka along with India.

Pakistan, hence, will focus on testing their depth for the tournament they didn’t fare too well in its last edition. They have picked the likes of hard-hitting batter Abdul Samad and uncapped Khawaja Nafay.

Batter Usman Khan and spinner Usman Tariq have also made the cut following impressive shows in Pakistan’s previous assignment; a tri-series title at home — the tournament having involved Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe.

“They are the future of Pakistan, and hopefully they will come good.”

Shadab, meanwhile, after recovering from the injury, took seven wickets in six matches at 26.57 in the BBL and came in handy with the bat, scoring 104 runs across four innings.

“He came back from a long injury and he has done well in the

Big Bash,” Salman said, while adding that choosing from a range of all-rounders available in the squad was a “good headache”.

Managing all those spinners and all those all-rounders, I know it’s going to be tough, but to be very honest it’s a luxury to have all-rounders who can bowl and bat in any kind of conditions and situations.”



## United States(US) secures \$2bn Venezuela oil deal after Maduro capture

**NEWS DESK:** Caracas and Washington have reached a deal to export up to \$2 billion worth of Venezuelan crude to the United States, US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday, a flagship negotiation that would divert supplies from China while helping Venezuela avoid deeper oil production cuts.

The agreement is a strong sign that the Venezuelan government is responding to Trump's demand that they open up to US oil companies or risk more military intervention.

Trump has said he wants interim President Delcy Rodriguez to give the US and private companies "total access" to Venezuela's oil industry. Venezuela has millions of barrels of oil loaded on tankers and in storage tanks that it has been unable to ship due to a blockade on exports imposed by Trump since mid-December.

The blockade was part of rising US pressure on the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro that cul-

minated in US forces capturing him this week-end.

Top Venezuelan officials have called Maduro's capture a kidnapping and accused the US of trying to steal the country's vast oil reserves. Venezuela will be turning over "between 30 and 50 million barrels of 'sanctioned oil'" to the US, Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

"This oil will be sold at its market price, and that money will be controlled by me, as President of the United States of America, to ensure it is used to benefit the people of Venezuela and the United States," he added. US Energy Secretary Chris Wright is expected to be executing the deal, Trump said, adding that the oil will be taken from ships and sent directly to US ports.

Supplying the trapped crude to the US could initially require re-allocating cargoes originally bound for China, two sources had told Reuters earlier on Tuesday. The Asian country



has been Venezuela's top buyer in the last decade and especially since the US imposed sanctions on companies involved in oil trade with Venezuela in 2020.

US crude prices fell more than 1.5% after Trump's announcement, with the agreement expected to increase the volume of Venezuelan oil exported to the US.

That flow of oil is currently controlled entirely by Chevron, PDVSA's main joint venture partner, under a US authorisation.

Chevron, which has been exporting between 100,000 and 150,000 barrels per day (bpd) of Venezuelan oil to the US, is the only company that has been loading and shipping crude without interruption from the South American country in recent weeks under the blockade.

It was not immediately clear if Venezuela would have any access to proceeds from the supply.

Sanctions mean PDVSA is excluded from the global financial system, its bank accounts are frozen and it is blocked from executing transactions in US dollars.

Venezuela has been selling its flagship crude grade, Merey, at around

\$22 per barrel below Brent for delivery at Venezuelan ports, giving a value for the deal at up to \$1.9 billion.

Rodriguez, sworn in as interim president on Monday, is herself under US sanctions imposed in 2018 for undermining democracy.

Talks involve possible auctions with US buyers.

Venezuelan and US officials this week discussed possible sales mechanisms, including auctions to allow interested US buyers to bid for cargoes, and issuing US licenses to PDVSA's business partners that could lead to supply contracts, two sources told Reuters.

Those licenses have in the past allowed PDVSA's joint venture partners and customers, including Chevron, India's Reliance, China National Petroleum Corporation and European Eni, and Repsol, to have access to Venezuelan oil to refine or to resell in third parties.

This week, some of those companies have

begun making preparations for receiving Venezuelan cargoes again, two separate sources said.

The US and Venezuela have also discussed if Venezuelan oil can be used in the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve in the future, one of the sources said.

Trump did not refer to this possibility. Increased oil flows would be 'great news' for US Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said on Tuesday that an increased flow of Venezuelan heavy oil to the US Gulf would be "great news" for job security, future gasoline prices in the US and for Venezuela.

"Venezuela has an opportunity now to actually have capital come in and rebuild their economy and take advantage," he told Fox News, when asked about talks between the governments on oil exports.

"With American technology, American partnership, Venezuela can be transformed."

## Hospital sources say 4 killed in airstrikes on Yemen; separatist leader flees

**NEWS DESK:** At least four civilians were killed in Saudi-led coalition strikes in Yemen on Wednesday, two hospital sources told AFP, as the force raided the home province of a separatist leader.

Yemen's coalition attacked the home province of a UAE-backed separatist leader on Wednesday after he was kicked out of the presidency and accused of "high treason" for attempting to secede.

More than 15 airstrikes hit Dhale, the home governorate of Aidaros Alzubidi, whose Southern Transitional Council (STC) grabbed swathes of territory last month before seeing the advance rolled back by the coalition and pro-Saudi forces.

"The initial toll

from the strikes on the province of al-Dhale is four civilian deaths and six wounded," medical sources at the Al-Nasr and Al-Tadamon hospitals in al-Dhale told AFP.

Alzubidi fled and mobilised "large forces" in Yemen's southwest, around Aden, after failing to attend talks in Riyadh, the coalition said.

Alzubidi "fled to an unknown location ... after he had distributed weapons and ammunition to dozens of elements inside Aden", coalition spokesperson Major General Turki al-Maliki said in a statement.

The coalition carried out new strikes to prevent Alzubidi from rolled back by the coalition and pro-Saudi forces, Alzubidi said, and extending it into Dhale governorate, he said.

Alzubidi had been due to travel to the Saudi capital of Riyadh on Tuesday for talks aimed at easing the clashes.

But his plane was delayed and he was not on board when it departed, the coalition said.

An STC official told AFP that Alzubidi decided not to fly to Saudi Arabia after receiving information that he would be asked to dissolve the group, which forms part of the Presidential Leadership Council.

The official said the delegation left for Riyadh without Alzubidi.

A later statement from the STC said they had lost contact with the delegation that travelled to Riyadh for talks,

and demanded Saudi authorities

"guarantee the safety of its delegation currently in Riyadh".

STC spokesman Anwar Al-Ismi told AFP that contact had been lost with the delegation that travelled to Riyadh during the night.

In a statement, the Presidential Leadership Council, which holds executive power and groups rival factions, announced Alzubidi's removal, accusing him of high treason.

It has been established that [Alzubidi] has abused the just cause of the South and exploited it to commit grave crimes against civilians in the southern governorates," it said.

More than 100 people have been killed in the airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition on the newly seized separatist positions in the southern governorates.



## Azerbaijan will not send troops to Gaza



**NEWS DESK:** Azerbaijan has no intention of sending its troops for peacekeeping operations outside its borders, including in Gaza, President Ilham Aliyev said on Monday.

Aliyev, interviewed by Azeri television channels, said Azerbaijan had been in consultation with the US administration about the operation of a peacekeeping force in Gaza.

We prepared a questionnaire and provided it to the American side. No participation in peacekeeping forces is envisaged," Aliyev said.

"I am not considering participation in hostilities outside Azerbaijan at all."

An Azeri government source had said in November that Azerbaijan would provide no troops for such an operation unless there was a complete halt to the "fighting in Gaza".

Foreign Press Association criticises Israel for maintaining ban on media's access to the Palestinian territory.

Meanwhile, an international media asso-

ciation criticised the Israeli government for maintaining its ban on unrestricted media access to Gaza, calling the move disappointing.

The Israeli government had told the country's top court in a submission last week that the ban should remain in place, citing "security risks" in the Gaza Strip.

The submission was in response to a petition filed by the Foreign Press Association (FPA), which represents hundreds of journalists in Israel and Palestinian territories. It sought immediate and unrestricted access for foreign journalists to Gaza Strip.

"The Foreign Press Association expresses its profound disappointment with the Israeli government's latest response to our appeal for full and free access to the Gaza Strip," the association said.

Instead of presenting a plan for allowing journalists into Gaza independently and letting us work alongside our brave Palestinian colleagues, the (Israeli) government has decided

once again to lock us out" despite the ceasefire in the territory, it added.

Since the outbreak of the Gaza conflict in Oct 2023, Israel has barred foreign journalists from independently entering the devastated territory.

Instead, Tel Aviv has allowed only a limited number of reporters to enter Gaza on a case-by-case basis, embedded with its military in the blockaded Palestinian territory.

The FPA filed its petition in 2024, after which Israel's supreme court granted the government several extensions to submit its response.

Last month, however, the court set Jan 4 as a final deadline for the government to present a plan for allowing media access to Gaza.

In its submission, the government maintained that the ban should remain in place.

"This is for security reasons, based on the position of the defence establishment, which maintains that a security risk associated with such entry still exists," the Is-

raeli government's submission said.

The government also said that the search for the remains of the last prisoner held in Gaza was ongoing, suggesting that allowing journalists in this stage could hinder the operation.

The remains of Ran Givli, whose body was taken to Gaza after he was killed during the Hamas raid on Oct 7, 2023, have still not been recovered despite the ceasefire.

The FPA said it planned to submit a "robust response" to the court, and expressed hope the "judges will put an end to this charade".

"The FPA is confident that the court will provide justice in light of the continuous infringement of the fundamental principles of freedom of speech, the public's right to know and free press," the association added.

Israel's supreme court is expected to issue a ruling on the matter, though it is unclear when a decision will be handed down.

## Lenovo unveils AI agent to bridge PCs, phones and wearables at CES

**NEWS DESK:** Lenovo, the world's top PC maker, unveiled its own AI assistant Tuesday at the CES tech show in Las Vegas, promising a tool that follows users seamlessly across laptops, smartphones and connected devices.

The Beijing-based company commanded 28 per cent of global PC market share in the third quarter of 2025, ahead of rivals HP at 21.5pc and Dell at 14.5pc, according to US research firm Gartner.

Lenovo's new artificial intelligence agent, dubbed Qira, is designed as an autonomous interface capable of performing tasks rather than simply generating content on demand, a move Lenovo hopes will showcase the breadth of its product portfolio.



Unlike rivals focused on single categories, Lenovo was the only major manufacturer whose offering spanned laptops, tablets and smartphones — under

its Motorola brand, acquired in 2014 — as well as servers and even supercomputers. The company also unveiled prototypes of connected glasses and an

AI-powered pendant, still in testing, that captures "important moments" with user consent by recording conversations, said Motorola's Angelina

Gomez. Codenamed the AI Perceptive Companion, the pendant features a microphone and camera and "sees what you see and hears what you hear," Lenovo vice president Luca Rossi told reporters.

An interaction with Qira can start via the pendant, continue on a smartphone and end on a laptop, with the agent retaining user context across devices.

It can summarise the highlights of a user's day, draft and send emails, or even select photos from archives to post on social media.

Lenovo stressed it is not positioning Qira as a rival to Microsoft's Copilot and announced the integration of Copilot into Motorola smartphones.

## Swiss officials admit bar inspection lapses

**NEWS DESK:** Swiss authorities admitted Tuesday that fire safety inspections had not been carried out for the past five years at a bar where 40 people died in a New Year blaze.

The bar owners, who are facing negligent manslaughter charges, meanwhile said they were "overwhelmed with grief" and would not seek to "evade" their responsibilities.

The inferno at the Le Constellation in the Alpine ski resort of Crans-Monts in Switzerland's southwestern Wallis region left 116 people wounded, of whom 83 are still in various hospitals. Most of those killed were teenagers.

Prosecutors believe the fire started when



people celebrating the New Year raised champagne bottles with sparklers attached, setting light to sound insulation foam on the ceiling in the bar's basement section.

Although inspections including fire safety were conducted in 2016, 2018 and 2019, "periodic inspections were not conducted between 2020 and 2025. We bitterly regret that," Crans-Monts mayor Nicolas

Feraud told a press conference. Relatives of the victims received the news "with dismay", Roman Jordan, a lawyer representing several families, told AFP.

And "we would have liked to hear an apology", he added.

By law, the municipal fire department should conduct annual inspections in establishments open to the public, Feraud said.