



BALOCHISTAN
Secretary of Agriculture
Balochistan Chairs Key...

Page No 5



NATIONAL
PTI Moves to Appoint Mehmood Khan
Achakzai as Opposition Leader...

Page No 3



INTERNATIONAL
Modi, Trump have 'incredible
friendship', says new envoy

Page No 8



SPORT
Varioawa
wins
Dakar
eighth
stage,
Al-
Attiyah
retains
overall
lead

Page No 7



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QUETTA VOICE



Pakistani Students and Pilgrims Return from Iran as Repatriation Continues

News Desk:

The process of bringing back Pakistani students and pilgrims stranded in Iran is ongoing amid the country's current situation.

According to FIA sources,

around 200 Pakistani nationals have returned to Pakistan over the past two days via the Gabd-Rimdan border, which connects Gwadar with Iran.

Deputy Commissioner Gwadar Naqibullah Kakar said that the repatriation of Pakistani citizens is continuing in view of the prevailing conditions in Iran.

He confirmed that 51 male and female students arrived in Pakistan from Iran on Monday alone.

The deputy commissioner further stated that more than 125 Pakistani students have so far returned to the country through the Gabd-Rimdan border.

He added that the district administration has made special arrangements for returning students, including facilities for food, accommodation, and onward travel.

Naqibullah Kakar also said that, given the current circumstances,

the Pakistan Embassy in Iran and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have put in place special measures to facilitate the safe return of Pakistani students and other citizens.

"I am saying with utmost responsibility that no other species was removed," he asserted, about the claims of other species besides the paper mulberry being cut.

In its Facebook post, WWF-Pakistan noted: "Urban trees play a critical role in soil stability, climate regulation, and biodiversity support."

"Any tree removal must follow evidence-based planning, legal compliance, and clear restoration commitments to ensure long-term ecological balance," it demanded.

Polio sample from North Waziristan tests positive, taking 2025's tally to 31

NEWS DESK:

The tally of polio cases for 2025 reached 31 on Tuesday after a sample collected last year in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's North Waziristan district tested positive. Pakistan's Polio Eradication Programme said in a statement that the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad, had found the case of wild poliovirus type-1 (WPV1) in North Waziristan. "This is the fifth case reported from North Waziristan in 2025, bringing the total number of polio cases in Pakistan for the past year to 31," it said. Meanwhile, an official from the NIH said that the sample included in the list for 2025 as the sample was collected last year.

"It takes up to three weeks to confirm that a child has been affected. There are some more samples in the pipeline and in case of confirmation, the tally for 2025 may further increase," he said. He added that wild poliovirus was detected in a four-month-old girl from Union Council Spinwam-2 in North Waziristan.

Federal-Provincial Coordination on Balochistan Reviewed in Islamabad Meeting

News Desk:

Key issues concerning Balochistan, including security, development planning, and public welfare, were discussed during a high-level meeting held at the Parliament House on Tuesday.

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti met Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadig with Deputy Prime Minister and Federal Minister Ishaq Dar and Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandekhai also in attendance.

The chief minister briefed the participants on the prevailing law and order situation in the province, ongoing and proposed welfare schemes, development priorities, and the importance of effective coordination between the federation and the province. He emphasized that sustained progress, social har-

mony, and public well-being in Balochistan depend on strong institutional cooperation.

Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadig highlighted the need to focus on the rights of women and youth, social uplift, and human resource development in the province.

He said Balochistan is vital to Pakistan's overall growth

and stressed that resolving the province's challenges remains a key priority of the government.

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar said the federal government is committed to the swift, transparent, and efficient implementation of projects in infrastructure, education, and healthcare in Balochistan.

He reiterated that the welfare and development of the province's people are being treated as a national priority and assured continued support to the provincial government.

The meeting agreed that coordinated efforts by parliament, the federal government, and the provincial administration would help en-

sure long-term development, economic stability, and social progress in Balochistan.

The speaker noted that Balochistan holds a special place for him and assured that all possible resources would be mobilized to address the province's issues. Participants also acknowledged the role of security forces and law enforcement agencies in maintaining peace and stability in the province, appreciating their professionalism and sacrifices.

The speaker's efforts to strengthen links between federal and provincial democratic institutions were also commended.

The meeting concluded with a consensus to further deepen federal-provincial cooperation, maintain close coordination on shared development objectives, and continue collaboration on public welfare initiatives.



QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Balochistan's Historic Shift to Merit-Based Government Jobs: Ending Corruption and Empowering Youth



Editorial:

In a province long plagued by nepotism and job-selling scandals, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has taken a bold and uncompromising stand. He has declared zero tolerance for corruption, favoritism, and the sale of government posts — and he is backing his words with action.

The announcement of filling 111 Finance Department vacancies through a fully online, transparent, and 100% merit-based recruitment process marks a genuine turning point for transparent governance in Balochistan.

For the first time in the province's history, candidates will apply and be tested entirely online.

Qualifications will be verified instantly, and successful applicants will receive appointment letters within an hour. This fast, fair system eliminates middlemen,

backdoor deals, and bribery — the very things that have robbed deserving young people of opportunities for decades.

This merit-based recruitment drive in Balochistan is more than administrative reform; it is a lifeline for the province's educated youth.

By ensuring government jobs go to qualified candidates rather than relatives or those who can pay, the initiative restores hope and dignity.

As Chief Minister Bugti has promised, the model will soon extend to all departments, creating a culture where talents, not connections, succeed.

The broader impact on Balochistan's development and stability could be profound.

Transparent hiring means better-qualified civil servants, leading to more efficient public services, reduced wast-

age of funds, and faster implementation of development projects.

When resources reach the people instead of corrupt pockets, education, health services improve — laying the foundation for sustained economic growth.

Equally important, fair job opportunities address a major source of youth frustration in the province. Giving young Baloch the chance to serve their homeland on merit can reduce alienation and contribute to lasting peace.

Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti's focus on merit, technology-driven transparency, and accountability offers real hope. If these anti-corruption reforms in Balochistan are implemented with consistency, they can transform governance, unlock the potential of the province's youth, and set a powerful example for the rest of Pakistan.

The Strain on Quetta's Roads

By Amir Hamza
Editor:

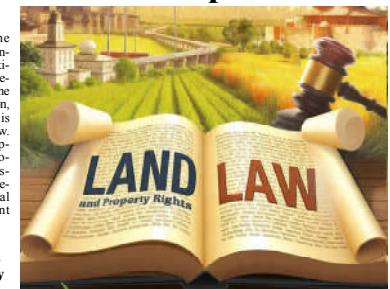
Land is one of the most valuable and contested assets in Pakistan. The legal framework that governs the ownership, possession, and transfer of land is known as Land Law. It ensures that property rights are protected and that disputes over land are resolved through legal and transparent means.

Historical Background of Land Law in Pakistan

The foundation of land laws in Pakistan was laid during the British colonial era through legislation such as the Land Revenue Act and Registration Act.

After independence in 1947, these laws continued to guide Pakistan's land management system.

Today, major statutes like the West Pakistan



Land Revenue Act, 1967, and the Transfer of Property Act, 1882, form the cornerstone of the ownership and property transfer in the country.

Land Record Management and Reforms

Traditionally, the Pawiari system has been responsible for maintaining land

records across Pakistan. However, it has often been criticized for corruption, manipulation, and lack of transparency. In recent years, the government has initiated significant reforms through the Punjab Land Records Authority (PLRA) and other provincial projects to digitize land records and reduce human in-

terference in property registration and ownership verification.

Challenges in Pakistan's Land System

Pakistan continues to face issues like illegal possession (land grabby), forged documents, and slow judicial processes. These problems create un-

certainty for investors and ordinary citizens alike.

To overcome these challenges, there is a strong need for comprehensive digital record-keeping, specialized land tribunals, and public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about their property rights.

Land law is not just a legal framework; it is the foundation of economic stability and social justice in Pakistan. A fair, transparent, and efficient land management system encourages investment, infrastructure development, and public trust in state institutions. Strengthening land laws and ensuring their effective implementation are vital steps toward achieving legal certainty and sustainable growth in Pakistan.

The Author is a

Student of LLB (7th Semester).

Quetta's Traffic Chaos: Urgent Reforms Needed to Fix the Crisis

Zarghoon Road, where vehicles move at a snail's pace during peak hours.

With no alternative routes or bypasses, all traffic is forced to travel through these roads, causing massive delays. Key intersections, including Balochistan University Chowk, Mezan Chowk, and Prince Road, frequently experience severe traffic jams.

The Surge of Non-Custom Paid (NCP) and Registered Vehicles

The unchecked influx of non-custom paid (NCP) and unregistered vehicles has compounded the traffic crisis. Key roads, such as Jinnah Road, Sarabia Bazaar, and Masjid Road, have been blocked by illegal encroachments, unregulated parking, and an ever-increasing number of vehicles. Without a smart road network, these roads remain gridlocked, affecting daily life and economic activity.

Major Traffic Challenges in Quetta

Several factors contribute to Quetta's traffic congestion on Key Roads.

Traffic congestion is worst in commercial hubs such as Liaquat Bazaar, Masjid Road, Jinnah Road, and

partment, 2024).

Despite periodic crackdowns, including the 2023 seizure of 115 NCP vehicles worth Rs 982 million (ARY News, 2023), enforcement efforts have failed to stem the tide. Quetta's traffic police estimate that 40% of vehicles in the city are non-custom paid (NCP, Think Transportation, 2023), worsening congestion and lawlessness on the roads.

Lack of Proper Public Transport

Unlike other major cities in Pakistan, Quetta lacks an organized public transport system. With no buses or mass transit options, residents rely on rickshaws, motorcycles, and private cars, further clogging the roads. Over 50,000 rickshaws operate within the city, creating a safety hazard in already packed areas like Masjid Road and Liaquat Bazaar (Traffic Survey: Quetta Smart and Safe City, 2023).

Although the gov-

ernment has revisited the Quetta Mass Transit

Project,

financial constraints have delayed its execution, leaving residents without an efficient alternative to private transport.

Encroachments and Illegal

Parking Worsen Congestion

Unauthorized stalls and illegal parking occupy nearly 30% of road space in busy commercial zones such as Prince Road and Sarabia Bazaar (Think Transportation, 2023).

Street vendors set up shop on sidewalks, forcing pedestrians onto the roads, while shopkeepers extend their stalls into public spaces, further restricting traffic flow.

Deteriorating Road Conditions

Over 60% of Quetta's roads are in poor condition, with deep holes, cracks, and poor drainage systems (INRIX, 2024). Roads such as Jinnah Road, Sarabia Road,

Neither Capitalism nor Communism

Aziz ur Rehman Agha
The Cold War may have ended, but the ideological clash between Capitalism and Communism continues to shape global politics, economics, and international relations. Even today, global alliances reflect these old ideological divisions.

However, both Capitalist and Communist systems have failed to meet the political and socio-economic needs effectively. One system suppresses personal freedom; the other deepens inequality. Both carry serious structural flaws that make them unsuitable for modern societies.

This calls for a new, balanced approach — one found in the Islamic socio-economic and political philosophy, which follows a middle path between the two extremes.

The Flaws of Communism

Communism lies at one extreme of the ideological spectrum. It suppresses individual freedoms such as speech, press, and trade.

Historical examples from Maoist China during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) show how intellectual expression was crushed — books and music not aligned with party ideology were banned, and private thoughts were st�roed. Similarly, in the USSR, any deviation from party thought was treated as a crime.

NEITHER CAPITALISM NOR COMMUNISM

THE ISLAMIC MIDDLE PATH

Economically, Communism eliminates private property and discourages entrepreneurship. Without personal incentives, individuals lose motivation to innovate and work for economic growth. As a result, this system ham-

pers development and limits prosperity. The severe restrictions on basic rights and freedoms make Communism unsustainable in modern states.

The Problems with Capitalism

On the other end

lies Capitalism, which has enabled just 1% of the world's population to control more wealth than the remaining 99% combined.

This system inherently promotes economic inequality, empowering elite indus-

tries.

Furthermore,

Capitalism's obsession

with rapid industrialization and profit maximization has led to environmental destruction, resource depletion, and climate change.

It prioritizes wealth accumulation over sustainability. These internal contradictions —

growing inequality, moral decay, and ecological harm — make Capitalism an unfit model for an equitable, sustainable future.

The Islamic Socio-

Economic Philosophy: A

Balanced Approach

Both Capitalism and

Communism fail because they represent extremes — one suffocates freedom, the other breeds inequality. Islam, however, offers a balanced socio-economic philosophy that harmonizes justice, freedom, and social welfare.

The Islamic eco-

nomic system allows pri-

ate ownership and busi-

ness freedom, but regu-

lates them through moral

and spiritual checks. The obligation of Zakat (charity) redistributes wealth, preventing concentration in the hands of a few.

Meanwhile, the principles of Riba (usury) ensure financial fairness and discourages exploitation. Together, these principles foster economic justice, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

Conclusion

Neither Capitalism

nor Communism pro-

vides a complete solu-

tion to humanity's politi-

cal and economic chal-

lenges. By contrast, in-

herent flaws — one cur-

tails human freedom, the other destroys social

equity.

The Islamic socio-

economic model, how-

ever, offers a well-de-

veloped middle path — balancing individual rights with collective welfare. With its emphasis on justice, equality, and moral responsibility, Islam provides the most feasible and humane political and economic philosophy for the modern world.



Consensus on matters of national security need of the hour, DG ISPR says

NEWS DESK: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has stated that consensus on matters of national security and narrative is the need of the hour, Radio Pakistan reported on Tuesday.

According to the report, he made the remarks as a delegation of the National Paghani-Azam Committee (NPAC) led by its Chairman Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, met with the DG ISPR in Rawalpindi.

"Speaking on the occasion, the DG ISPR emphasised that consensus and consensus on matters of national security and narrative were the need of the hour," it said.

He said a comprehensive discussion was held on internal security challenges in the context of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan and Tehreek-i-Taliban Afghanistan, which further strengthened the shared stance of all stakeholders, it said.

Reiterating Islamabad's principled position on Kashmir and Gaza, DG ISPR

said supporting oppressed peoples is Pakistan's moral responsibility," it added.

He stressed that public awareness and a true narrative were decisive tools in countering the enemy's psychological warfare, the report said.

Terming the meeting as highly productive, the DG ISPR expressed hope for further progress in building trust and mutual cooperation in the days ahead, it said.

Meanwhile, the NPAC delegation expressed unwavering solidarity with Pakistan's armed forces and reaffirmed their commitment to counter anti-state narratives and hostile propaganda, it said.

Assuring full cooperation in promoting the national narrative, the committee strongly condemned FITNA at Kharwari as well as the Afghan Taliban, stressing that terrorism had no justification under any circumstances, the report said.

The committee also announced plans to disseminate the message of Islamic unity, social harmony and constitutional equality across the country.

3 women suffocate in Rawalpindi due to gas leak from geyser: police

NEWS DESK: Three women died due to a gas leak at an apartment in Rawalpindi on Tuesday.

Initially, Rescue 1122 spokesperson Usman Gujjar had told Dawn that the incident was an explosion caused by a gas leak.

However, Intiaz Nazi, a sub-inspector at Rawalpindi police station, said that the women suffocated because of a gas leak from an instant geyser.

Meanwhile, a Rescue 1122 statement, which confirmed the cause of death, said a woman found unconscious at the scene had been taken to a hospital where she was being provided medical assistance.

According to Rescue 1122, the ages of the deceased women were 45, 60 and 70 years, while the one who lost consciousness was 23 years old.

The statement said the incident occurred in Bahria Town Phase VII, and two emergency vehicles as well as five rescue personnel were sent.

FCC takes up first case at new premises

NEWS DESK: The Federal Constitutional Court finally settled into its newly renovated building on Constitution Avenue on Monday, where FCC chief Justice Aminuddin Khan presided over a bench to resume hearing challenges to the imposition of the 10 per cent tax inside the refurbished Court Room No. 1.

Before the hearing, Justice Aminuddin Khan inaugurated the new court premises in a ceremony attended by Justices Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, Aamir Farooq, Ali

to the site, following which a search and rescue operation was initiated.

It further stated that Rawalpindi District Emergency Officer Engineer Sabighatullah pointed to a "significant increase" in gas leak incidents due to the increased use of stoves and stoves at homes and stoves during the winter season.

Rescue 1122 said most of these incidents were a consequence of "minor negligence", adding that they turn on/off if they turn any electricity switch on or off if they smell gas, nor light a match in such a situation. Instead, open windows.

Addressing a press conference in Karachi, Memon expressed his view that the PTI "did not care for the respect they had shown to us" during the visit.

He also claimed that the PTI had not engaged in any speech or action that disrupted daily life and puts the safety of the delegation at risk.

Addressing the events that transpired during the KPM's visit, Memon said that the Sindh government was in touch with representatives from the KPM government, and the two had "chalked out" the schedule for the visit. Memon maintained that the PTI "violated every commitment they made earlier".

The FCC has a total sanctioned strength of 13 judges. Soon after its establishment, the FCC was shifted to the High Court, a senior lawyer expressed disappointment over the temporary basis, though it was originally envisaged that the new FCC would be in the building.

housed in the building designated for the Federal Shariat Court (FSC).

The FCC had to move to the IHC after FSC judges resisted the plan and denied access to their office.

Courtroom No. 1 has been completely renovated with new furniture and replaced the older seating, along with the installation of a modern audio system and lighting.

The FCC has a total sanctioned strength of 13 judges. Soon after its establishment, the FCC was shifted to the High Court, a senior lawyer expressed disappointment over the temporary basis, though it was originally envisaged that the new FCC would be in the building.

PTI Moves to Appoint Mehmood Khan Achakzai as Opposition Leader in National Assembly

Dawood Ahmed, News Desk: ISLAMABAD:

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has formally nominated Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PAMP) Chairman Mehmood Khan Achakzai for the post of Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, party sources confirmed on Tuesday.

Minister of State for Interior Gohar Ali Khan said the nomination papers have been submitted to National Assembly Speaker, making that the second time the party has nominated Khan Achakzai's name for the influential parliamentary role.

The development comes after National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq rejected the request

for the appointment of Khan Achakzai as opposition leader, a position that remained vacant for nearly five months. The slot fell

empty following the disappearance of PTI leader Omar Ayub August 2025. According to the written request submitted to Speaker on August 12, opposition members expressed confidence in Khan Achakzai's leadership and parliamentary experience.

The document emphasized that Khan Achakzai has the

qualification of Rule 59 of the National Assembly's Rules of Procedure, which states that the opposition leader must be chosen from among members who enjoy the support of a majority on the opposition benches.

The document emphasized that Khan Achakzai has the

backing of most opposition lawmakers, making a majority of 130 votes

available for the constitutional office. It also highlighted that the timely appointment of an opposition leader is crucial for ensuring effective parliamentary oversight and

strengthening democratic processes.

Opposition members urged Speaker to complete the necessary formalities in line with parliamentary rules and past traditions, and to announce Khan Achakzai's appointment at the earliest.



Pakistan seeks out-of-court settlement to scrap IP pipeline

NEWS DESK: Pakistan has conveyed to Iran its intention to shelf the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project, and is seeking an out-of-court settlement framework, while also offering to revive the project if a waiver from United States sanctions can be secured, sources said on Monday.

The IP gas pipeline project has remained stalled since 2014 due to US sanctions against Iran, which have imposed extensive制裁 of more than a decade. Iran has also initiated legal proceedings over Pakistan's failure to execute the project and has filed a suit in the International Court of Justice.

According to the sources, Iran has agreed to extend the gas sale agreement for another 10 years in an effort to develop the project in the future.

Both sides have been engaged in backdoor diplomacy, and the issue was also raised with

high-profile dignitaries visiting Islamabad.

Discussions with various government officials indicated that Pakistan had already informed Iran of its desire to scrap the project due to the development of the TAPI pipeline in Turkmenistan.

Washington's sanctions against Iran and Pakistan are also facing lower domestic gas demand, while

Qatar is scheduled to supply 24 LNG cargoes in 2026. "For now, Pakistan does not need additional gas because of low demand," an official said, adding that IP gas prices were also higher than prevailing LNG prices in the country.

Pakistan is also facing another demand, but Pakistan is unlikely to shelf the project due to US sanctions and weak domestic demand.

Iran maintained that it is exploring the option of the pipeline, while Pakistan has yet to begin construction on its side. Officials said Iran remains willing to extend the gas sale agreement and another deal, but Pakistan is unlikely to shelf the project due to US sanctions and weak domestic demand.

PTI violated commitments made in preparation for KP CM's Sindh visit, says Sharjeel Memon

NEWS DESK: Sindh Senator Sharjeel Memon has alleged the PTI for not honouring commitments made in preparation for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi's recent Sindh visit.

Memon's comments come a day after the KP CM concluded his visit to the province.

On Monday, the chief minister visited the treatment of him and his entourage in Karachi, saying that the provincial government had "desecrated" the honorable Sindh ajrak and topi.

The incident comes two days after an explosion in Islamabad on Sunday claimed the lives of eight people, including a number of police who were injured in the explosion, which officials said seemed to have been caused by a gas cylinder.

Addressing a press conference in Karachi, Memon expressed his view that the PTI "did not care for the respect they had shown to us" during the visit.

He also claimed that the PTI had not engaged in any speech or action that disrupted daily life and puts the safety of the delegation at risk.

Addressing the events that transpired during the KPM's visit, Memon said that the Sindh government was in touch with representatives from the KPM government, and the two had "chalked out" the schedule for the visit. Memon maintained that the PTI "violated every commitment they made earlier".

There was a threat alert issued as well by security institutions, we did not disclose it to the public," he added.

The Sindh government further told the media, "Security plans are pre-decided before such events [...] to prevent any unfortunate incidents."

"When they went to Hyderabad, they took an unapproved route on their way back to Karachi," he added.

Afzali's claims of his convoy being forced to take such a route due to roadblocks.

The minister detailed that the PTI del-

Nasir Hussain Shah assured the delegation of the route of the Hyderabad Bridge, but he urged them "not to engage in anything that disrupts daily life and puts the safety of the delegation at risk".

Memon asserted that the PTI had not engaged in any speech or action that disrupted daily life and puts the safety of the delegation at risk.

On Afridi's planned meeting with Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah, which was said to have been scheduled for January 12 but did not take place, Memon claimed that the KP CM House decided the meeting's time by themselves, without consulting the other side.

However, as CM Murad had other important meetings already scheduled, it was confirmed that the KP CM House that Memon could meet wherever Afridi wished to "if there were any important issues to discuss".

When asked about the PTI to hold a rally at Bagh-i-Jinnah.

He further asserted that "a 'wheel-and-spoke' will be held on February 8, when asked about the KP CM's reported remarks to "bring the entire country to a halt" as part of the PTI's protest plan.

What do you think the Sindh government is going to do if you get another 100 hours? What benefit will we get out of this meeting?" the minister questioned.

"If our behaviour had been similar to that of the past, we would not have welcomed them at all," Memon added.

"You (PTI) were planning to cause mischief," he added. "I told them that 'please do not do what has already been approved'." the senior minister said.

Memon asserted that the Sindh government had not committed to the PTI's full assurances, and facilitated them, but they took "unfair advantage" of it.

He further asserted that "a 'wheel-and-spoke' will be held on February 8, when asked about the KP CM's reported remarks to "bring the entire country to a halt" as part of the PTI's protest plan.



Work on ML-I project to commence from Karachi Port in July this year: Abbasi

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi has announced that work on the Main Line-I (ML-I) project will commence from Karachi Port in July 2026.

During his visit to

Karachi and a meeting with Chairman Karachi Port Trust (KPT), Rear Admiral (R) Shahid Ahmed, the minister said that a joint strategy has been finalized to enhance the port's logistics and cargo handling perfor-

mance. Both sides agreed to strengthen the railway system to ensure efficient transport of cargo movement from rail to rail in order to improve efficiency and reduce logistics costs.

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets a delegation from Ericsson led by President Patrick Johansson.

The minister out-

lined major reform initiatives in the cargo trans-

port sector, stressing that serious efforts are made to ensure smooth and frequent movement from road to rail in order to improve efficiency and reduce logistics costs.

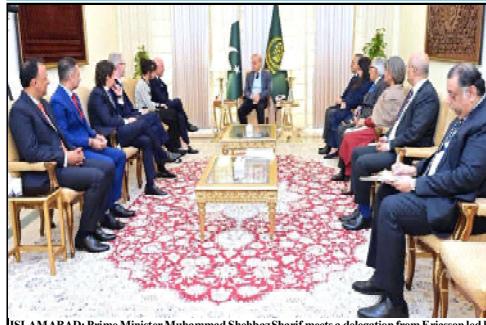
He said Pakistan Railways would significantly expand its cargo handling capacity in the coming months. As part of this initiative, the railway infrastructure connected to Karachi Port will be modernized to facilitate faster and smoother cargo movement. The minister outlined major reform initiatives in the cargo trans-

port sector, stressing that serious efforts are made to ensure smooth and frequent movement from road to rail in order to improve efficiency and reduce logistics costs.

He said Pakistan Railways plans to operate four freight trains daily within the next five months, a step forward in promoting rail-based cargo trans-

portation. Admiral (R) Shahid Ahmed reaffirmed that bulk cargo transportation would be prioritized through rail, and said that KPT would upgrade its internal railway tracks to support enhanced freight operations.

Chairman KPT Rear



Govt, opposition reach consensus on appointing new opposition leader in NA

ISLAMABAD (INP): The government and opposition have reached a consensus on appointing a new opposition leader following the disqualification of PTI's One-time leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly.

According to sources, Achakzai will be the sole candidate of the unitary opposition. NA Speaker Sardar Shahzad Sadiq assured that Achakzai will be appointed as the Leader of the Opposition after completing the required legal formalities.

Sources said the NA speaker will fulfill all procedural requirements before issuing the notification for the appointment.

Earlier, a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) delegation met speaker of the National Assembly and formally submitted the nomination of Achakzai for the position.

According to a

spokesperson, Achakzai will be the sole candidate of the unitary opposition. NA Speaker Sardar Shahzad Sadiq assured that Achakzai will be appointed as the Leader of the Opposition after completing the required legal formalities.

Speaking to the media, Achakzai said that the unitary opposition leader will be made by Thursday. He said the speaker holds the authority to issue the notification at any time, adding that the opposition leader will be appointed in the National Assembly, the appointment in the Senate will also follow.

He further said that there is no formal date set, and that the party's founder was, and will remain its chairman. He added that no political committee can alter PTI founder Imran Khan's decisions.

Heavy fog forces closure of several motorway sections

LAHORE (INP): Heavy fog in plain areas of Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on night of Tuesday forced closure of several motorway sections after visibility dropped, Dunya News reported. According to the Motorway Police spokesperson, Motorway M1 from Peshawar to Burhan, Motorway M2 from Lahore to Islamabad, Motorway M3 from Faizpur to Jaranwala, Motorway M4 from Lahore to Sambrial have been closed for all kind of traffic.

Motorway Police spokesperson said the closures were necessary to protect lives and property amid hazardous weather conditions. Authorities

have warned that lane violations during fog can lead to serious accidents, urging drivers to strictly follow traffic rules. Motorists have been advised to use fog lights, reduce speed, and maintain a safe distance from vehicles ahead while driving. Citizens planning to travel have been instructed to pre-plan their journeys. The police further advised the public to avoid unnecessary travel and contact the Motorway helpline 130 for guidance or assistance during fog-related disruptions. Motorway Police said that monitoring teams are deployed on major routes to ensure safety and manage traffic flow under weather conditions. Authorities

have warned that lane violations during fog can lead to serious accidents, urging drivers to strictly follow traffic rules. Motorists have been advised to use fog lights, reduce speed, and maintain a safe distance from vehicles ahead while driving. Citizens planning to travel have been instructed to pre-plan their journeys. The police further advised the public to avoid unnecessary travel and contact the Motorway helpline 130 for guidance or assistance during fog-related disruptions. Motorway Police said that monitoring teams are deployed on major routes to ensure safety and manage traffic flow under weather conditions. Authorities

Ten key sectors open for investment at Pak-China Agriculture Conference

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has intensified efforts to draw Chinese investment into its agriculture sector ahead of the Pak-China Agriculture Investment Conference 2026, as authorities prioritize investment-ready and commercially viable projects over policy discussions.

Officials at the Ministry of National Food Security & Research (MNSFR) say the conference, scheduled for January 19-20 in Islamabad, is focused on presenting Chinese investors with concrete opportunities across ten priority agricultural sectors identified for their strong growth potential, scalability, and alignment with Chinese market demand.

According to a Gwadar Pro's report, these sectors include agri-chemicals and farm inputs; agri-technology and precision agriculture; food solutions; food processing and value addition; the meat and poultry industry; dairy inputs and processed dairy products; fruit and vegetables cold-chain transportation, processing, and preservation; animal feed and related value chains; fisheries and aquaculture; and food processing, packaging materials and equipment.

In the run-up to the conference, MNSFR has held a series of online orientation sessions to brief Chinese investors

on these priority sectors and the investment-ready projects within them. The sessions, organized in collaboration with Pakistan's diplomatic missions in China, were aimed at familiarizing Chinese business firms, companies, and investors with joint venture opportunities, technology partnerships, and commercially-viable proposals to be showcased at the conference.

According to ministry officials, the conference, organized after Chinese investors a curated pipeline of bankable projects spanning modern farming, value-added agribusiness, processing, storage, logistics, and technology-driven agricultural solutions. The focus remains

on ventures with clear implementation plans and the potential to move swiftly toward execution.

As part of the preparation, MNSFR evaluated dozens of proposals submitted by Pakistan's private companies through a dedicated agriculture investment portal. The evaluation process assessed commercial, feasibility, scalability, technology integration, and prospects for joint ventures with Chinese firms. Officials said the prioritized projects will undergo targeted business-to-business engagements during the conference, with the aim of finalizing memorandums of understanding, joint ventures, and direct investment commitments.

During his visit to Karachi and a meeting with Chairman Karachi Port Trust (KPT), Rear Admiral (R) Shahid Ahmed, the minister said that a joint strategy has been finalized to enhance the port's logistics and cargo handling performance.

He said Pakistan Railways plans to significantly expand its cargo handling capacity.

ISLAMABAD: Japanese Ambassador, Akamatsu Shuichi and Secretary Economic Affairs, Muhammad Humair Karim, signing Grant-in-Aid Project between Pakistan and Japan. Japan has extended a grant aid of 2,910 million Japanese Yen to Pakistan for the Project for the Improvement of Child Health Care Facilities in South Punjab.

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ISLAMABAD (INP): The China-Pakistan Neurosurgery Forum was held at the Zhongshan (Central South) Hospital of Wuhan University, marking the second phase of the Luojia Medical International Forum hosted by the hospital.

The hybrid event brought together more than 35 medical scholars, hospital administrators and international students from both countries who engaged in substantive discussions both online and offline. China Daily reported on Monday.

The forum focused on deepening collaboration in clinical practice, joint medical training, scientific research and

advancing the vision of the China-Pakistan health corridor.

In his keynote speech, Dr. Muhammad Shahbaz, President of the China-Pakistan Health Corridor Opportunities, Challenges and Future Perspectives."

He provided an analysis of the healthcare development in Pakistan.

He outlined existing clinical capabilities, discussed challenges faced by local institutions and reaffirmed his strong commitment to fostering medical cooperation with Chinese medical counterparts.

Professor Niaz highlighted the need to expand training and research cooperation in China for Pakistani neurosurgeons, as well as to strengthen cooperative mechanisms for managing complex neurosurgical cases.

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Chairman KPT Rear

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PIA's revival set in motion with \$482 million privatisation deal

NEWS DESK: Arif Habib, chairman of investment firm that headed the consortium which secured a 75% majority stake in Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Ltd (PIACL) through a televised auction, said on December 23, 2025, outlined plans to revive the national carrier during a media briefing in Karachi.

The winning bid of Rs135 billion (approximately \$482 million) marked the first major privatisation of a state-owned enterprise in nearly two decades and underscored Pakistan's commitment to market-driven economic reforms supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The government will retain a 25% stake, with potential future discussions on its acquisition by the consortium or a strategic partner.

Habib said the airline's revival will require disciplined capital management and professional governance, reflecting a clear departure from the era of sovereign-backed operations. "PIA incurred losses of nearly Rs800 billion because previous management did not bother to hedge. They assumed money was going straight to government



coffers, so there was little incentive to manage risks from fluctuating oil prices or other external factors."

Under private ownership, he added, every financial decision carries direct consequences, making risk management, operational efficiency, and profitability essential.

The consortium's

ownership structure shows that Fauji Fertiliser Company Limited, a mining and diversified agricultural giant, holds 25% of the privatised stake. The Arif Habib Group, together with the Fauji Fertiliser consortium, will be the auctioneers; they will join that party," he said. "We told them that if they

wanted us to be the Imam of this prayer, they would need to offer a price of Rs135 billion," he said. His FFC's inclusion added financial heft and strategic credibility to the consortium.

The consortium plans to assume full operational control around April 2026 and commit to reinvesting ap-

proximately Rs125 billion from the bid proceeds into fleet replacement, capital management, and broader operational improvements. Habib said no layoffs were planned for at least one year, and current employees will be adjusted to the new dynamics, polish their

skills and align with a performance-oriented culture," he said.

Habib said the consortium's plans for keeping the airline operational despite years of systemic hurdles, including service challenges that drove millions of Pakistani travellers and members of the

diaspora toward competing airlines.

A central pillar of the turnaround strategy will be a renewed focus on high-value passenger segments, including Hajj and Umrah pilgrims travelling to Saudi Arabia and Pakistani living abroad.

These segments, numbering in the millions, were historically loyal to PIA but shifted to competing service standards as declined under state management. "We intend to regain their trust by restoring service quality, safety and reliability," Habib said.

Operational plans include a merit-based approach to workforce management. Employees' democratic competence and adaptability will be retained, while training and coaching programmes will be offered to those falling short of performance benchmarks. Fleet expansion is also a priority, with plans to raise the number of operational aircraft from the current 15 to 18 to 38 in the short term, including Airbus A320s, Boeing 777s and ATR aircraft.

Habib said safety would remain a top priority, with zero tolerance for violations of standard operating procedures.

Policies being evolved to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

NEWS DESK: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Hassan Akhtar Khan has said that supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through responsive policies and targeted facilitation will help the block growth, reduce the cost of debt, and create much-needed jobs.

During his visit to

Techno Auto Glass Ltd,

Suzuki Motor Company and Aisha Steel Mills in Bin Qasim Industrial Park on Monday, he expressed appreciation for the industrial infrastructure that is helping create

highly skilled, much-needed jobs in the manufacturing sector.

He pledged the government's support for the sector, especially through facilitating higher volumes of small cars for Pakistan's middle and lower-middle classes, currently most targeted.

Mr Hassan was briefed by industry representatives and Smeida Chief Executive Officer Nadeem Jahanir Seth on the progress of SME clusters to Pakistan's manufacturing and export sectors.

Around 75 companies in the automotive and automotive parts industry

operate in Bin Qasim and surrounding areas, providing employment to almost 10,000 people and producing high-quality local parts used in the automotive sector.

Mr Seth briefed the SAPM on ongoing initiatives to support SME

clusters and their efforts to improve access to finance, enhance technology, and expand market linkages.

The industry stakeholders

pledged to further

their localisation efforts to

reduce costs and trans-

fer skilled jobs to Pak-

istan, creating opportu-

nities for the young

population.

In its decision re-

leased on Monday,

Nepri pointed out that

the Power Division had stated that unit sales had

gone down from 113 bil-

lion kilowatt hours (kWh) in financial year

2023 to the projected 101

billion kWh in CY26, pri-

marily due to a mix

of solar net metering

and off-grid solar.

The capacity of net metering and off-grid solar has in-

creased to 6,539 mega-

watts and 12,629MW,

respectively, which

leaves an impact of

around Rs3.5/kWh on

grid rates.

The Ministry of Energy said the total revenue requirement of

ex-Wapda DISCOS for

CY26, as determined by Nepri, had decreased by Rs142 billion as compared to FY26, resulting in a reduction of Rs6.62/

billion for the calendar year.

Explaining the reason-

for the reduction,

Mr Hassan said the

reduction was due to

the change in busi-

ness mix as substan-

tially increased ex-

consumers increased

ex-consumers and

consumers increased

Modi, Trump have 'incredible friendship', says new envoy

NEWS DESK: US ambassador-designate Sergio Gómez said on Monday his mission in India is to strengthen ties between the "oldest and the largest democracies" and convey President Donald Trump's best wishes to "friend" Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He said that India and the US are discussing a trade deal and the first call between the negotiators will be made.

The trade discussion is a euphemism for Mr Trump as the envoy told the US Senate at his confirmation hearing that the president was "crystal clear" about stopping oil imports from Russia to India, The Hindu said.

Mr Gómez said that India will be invited to join as a full member of Pax Silica, a new US strategic initiative aimed at securing global silicon and high-technology supply chains.

The ambassador's



statement, made to hundreds of US embassy staffers in Delhi and Indian media, was unconventional as Mr Gómez has not yet presented his credentials.

According to diplomatic protocol, ambassadors are expected to make public appearances only after the

President Droupadi Murmu will accept the credentials later this week.

Mr Gómez said that the "friendship" be-

tween Mr Trump and

Mr Modi is "real"

and the US and India "are bound not just by shared interests, but by a relationship anchored at the highest levels.

Real friends can disagree, but always resolve their differences in the end."

"And while trade is very important for our relationship, we will

continue to work closely together on other important areas, such as security, counter-terrorism, energy, technology, education, and health," Mr Gómez added.

Earlier, he told the US Senate that Mr Trump was "crystal clear" that India would have to end all imports of Russian oil, which make up about 35 to 40 per cent of India's intake.

US Secretary of State Howard Lutnick also said that trade negotiations would be resolved "once" India stops buying the oil, suggesting this was a pre-condition for any deal. Scott Gómez, who hopes to be confirmed soon, added that India and the US are "not that far apart" from a deal on the 50pc tariffs that the US has imposed on India.

"I do think it will get resolved in the next few weeks," Mr Gómez said, also indicating that Mr Trump was committed to travelling to India to discuss the purchase of Russian oil, The Hindu said.

Nepal's youth scramble for poll jobs

NEWS DESK: Tens of thousands of young Nepalis have applied for temporary jobs policing upcoming elections, the first polls since a youth-led uprising spotlighted the Himalayan nation's economic woes.

Nepal estimated it suffered losses of about \$586 million and that nearly 15,000 people lost their jobs after protests toppled the government in September.

The youth-led demonstrations, initially triggered by an emergency over a brief government ban on social media, were fuelled by deeper frustration over corruption and economic hardship.

After a police crackdown killed young protesters, the riots spread and parliament was set ablaze, prompting the government's collapse. At least 77 people were killed.

More than 4,000 people applied for the temporary police jobs on Friday and Saturday. The first two days of applications, Nepal police spokesman Abinayaran Kafle said.

Sarika Karki, 20, said she was crossing her fingers to "earn some pocket money". "I am also Gen-Z, but I do not have a job," she told AFP in the capital Kathmandu on Sunday.

"I hope the election will go well, and I am able to help in my own way as a temporary police officer".

Nepal plans to fill 149,090 police posts ahead of the March polls, with each recruit paid roughly \$280 for 40 days.

"Sunday was a

public holiday but so many people, most of them youths, were queuing outside polling stations with great excitement," Kafle told AFP.

There were queues across all 77 districts to fill the application form on Monday, he said.

More than 839,000 Nepalis left the country of 30 million to work abroad last year, according to government data.

And 82 percent of the country's workforce is in informal employment, the

World Bank says.

The temporary officers will be tasked with managing queues at polling stations, carrying ballot boxes and other logistical duties.

Nepal's

police

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terms

of

size