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QUETTA VOICE

A Step Forward, But Transparency Must Become the Rule in Balochistan

Syed Ali Shah Analysis:

The recent initiatives taken by the Government of Balochistan toward transparency and reform are a positive step. Whether in climate governance, environmental planning, or administrative decision-making, the intent to move away from opaque practices sends a positive signal to a province long plagued by mistrust and institutional weakness.

Acknowledging challenges openly and taking the first steps to address them is not easy—especially in a region facing climate vulnerability, limited resources, and decades of governance deficit. Efforts such as climate planning, public engagement, and an emphasis on accountability reflect a growing recognition that business as usual is no longer sustainable.

However, appreciation must be accompanied by honesty. While these measures mark progress, a great deal still needs to be done to ensure true



transparency and merit-based decision-making, particularly in the appointment of public ser-

vants across Balochistan.

For years, public perception has been shaped by alle-

iated youth who seek fair opportunities to serve.

If transparency is to become more than a slogan, it must be institutionalized across all departments, not limited to selected areas. Appointments, promotions, postings, and policy decisions should be governed by clear rules, digital systems, and independent oversight. Only then can merit truly replace influence.

Good governance is not built overnight. It is a continuous process that requires political will, administrative reform, and public vigilance. Balochistan stands at a critical point where small but sincere steps must now evolve into systemic change.

The people of the province do not expect perfection, but they do expect fairness. Strengthening transparency and merit in public service appointments will not only improve governance but also restore confidence in the state itself.

This is the path toward a stronger, more credible, and more hopeful Balochistan.

نوچوانوں کی باختیاری روشن کل کی آبیاری

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100% میراث
اور شفاقت کے ساتھ

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کرنے والے کامپیوٹر اور ٹبلٹ کا مستہماں کا اجراء

- نیمرت کی تحقیقی بالادی
- خفاف اور منصفانہ اخراجی اعلیٰ
- تمام امیدواروں کو سماں میتوں
- جدید نیکائی کا مہر استھماں

سرکاری اسامیوں پر سو فیصد میراث اور
بیبریلیس بنیادوں پر آن لذن بھرتیوں کا انگاز
ویکیل اصلاحات کا خفاف نکام --- آگے بڑھا بلوچستان



محکمہ اصلاحات حکومت بلوچستان

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gations of favoritism, political influence, and non-merit appointments. These practices have not only weakened institutions but also eroded public trust and discouraged capable,



Police force indispensable for ensuring internal security and rule of law: CDF Asim Munir

NEWS DESK:

Chief of Defence Force (CDF) and Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir emphasised that a strong, professional, and people-centric police force is indispensable for ensuring internal security and the rule of law, according to an Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) statement issued on Tuesday.

The chief made these remarks during a visit to the National Police Academy in Islamabad, where he addressed senior police officials, and interacted with officers of the Police Service of Pakistan. CDF Munir also acknowledged the supreme sacrifices rendered by police personnel in the face of terrorism, crime and internal security challenges, it stated.

"The field marshal was 'briefed' on the School for High-Impact Elite Law Enforcement Development (SHEILD), as well as training programs and initiatives aimed at capacity building and modernisation of the police."

that the duty of the police to enforce law and order is a sacred trust and that the armed forces will always stand fully with the brave and proud police personnel of Pakistan," said the statement.

The senior police leadership, on the occasion, reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening policing standards, enhancing professional capacity and advancing necessary institutional reforms to meet contemporary security challenges, it said.

The statement further said the field marshal was "briefed" on the School for High-Impact Elite Law Enforcement Development (SHEILD), as well as training programs and initiatives aimed at capacity building and modernisation of the police."

total role of the police as the first line of defence in safeguarding the lives, property, and honour of citizens."

During the visit, CDF Munir also laid a wreath at the Police Martyrs' Monument and offered prayers for martyrs, "paying solemn tribute to the Shuhada of the Police who laid down their lives in the line of duty while safeguarding peace, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring public safety across the country".

The army's media wing stated that CDF Munir was received with a guard of honour on arrival at the academy and was received by the commandant. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry were also present during the visit. Last week, Naqvi visited the National Police Academy and reviewed the ongoing renovation. He also gave necessary instructions to the commandant.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Balochistan's Education Crisis: Beyond Numbers and Empty Promises



Editorial:

The Balochistan government's claim that around 45,000 children have returned to schools is being presented as a major breakthrough in addressing the province's deep-rooted education crisis. While any increase in enrollment deserves acknowledgement, this figure pales in comparison to the magnitude of the challenge. More than 3.1 million children in Balochistan remain out of school, a reality that exposes decades of neglect, mismanagement, and hollow commitments by successive provincial governments.

For years, education in Balochistan has been treated more as a slogan than a serious policy priority. Governments have consistently paid lip service to the issue, announcing plans, committees, and reforms that rarely translate into

meaningful change on the ground. The result is a broken system where thousands of schools remain without proper buildings, and children study under open skies or abandon education altogether.

Shelterless schools are not an exception but a norm across vast parts of the province.

Equally alarming is the issue of so-called "ghost teachers" and ineffective staffing.

Despite repeated claims of success under the School Based Recruitment (SBR) system, absenteeism, political interference, and lack of accountability continue to cripple public education.

Reviewing recruitment processes is important, but without strict monitoring and enforcement, such reviews risk becoming yet another bureaucratic exercise.

The return of

45,000 children schools should not be used to mask the harsh truth: millions are still deprived of their fundamental right to education. Poverty, insecurity, poor infrastructure, and weak governance continue to push children out of classrooms and into labor, vulnerability, and hopelessness.

If the Balochistan government is serious about change, it must move beyond statements and statistics. Massive investment in school infrastructure, transparent teacher management, community-based enrollment drives, and sustained political will are essential.

Without tangible action, promises will remain empty, and another generation of Balochistan's children will be left behind. Education cannot survive on rhetoric alone; it demands urgent, honest, and decisive action. School supplies

in the global battle against climate change, 2017, Turbat recorded a scorching 53.5°C (128.3°F), setting a record for Pakistan. Unfortunately, forecasts suggest that temperatures will continue to rise.

However, the climate challenges in Balochistan extend beyond relentless heat waves. The province grapples with devastating monsoon rains and floods, both of which wreak havoc on homes and infrastructure. The floods of 2010 and 2022 left nearly 4 million people displaced, disrupting lives and triggering food shortages and price spikes due to their impact on the agriculture sector.

The 2022 flood in Balochistan underscores the looming climate change threat

The 2022 flood underscored the looming threat of climate

change over Balochistan. Driven by intensified and increasingly frequent monsoon rains, the full extent of the damage is yet to be comprehended. However, it exposed the province's vulnerability and highlighted the urgent need for effective management strategies.

Balochistan's annual rainfall of just 200 mm barely meets the needs of its parched population. This water scarcity adversely affects food production, access to drinking water, and livestock numbers, exacerbated by climate change. The severe droughts of 1997-2003 and 2014-2017 forced migrations to water-rich areas.

CC affects economy

Climate change also decimated the region's economy

through the loss of livestock. Between 2010 and 2022, over 1.5 million livestock were lost, costing over \$1 billion and displacing over 100,000 people, particularly in districts like Quetta, Pishin, Turbat, Paigur, and Khuzdar.

However, the Balochistan government must not accept this grim fate. It requires comprehensive strategies tailored to its unique challenges. The provincial government must implement robust climate change policies, emphasizing water resource management and disaster preparedness. Learning from the tragic dam collapses of 2022, preventive measures, such as effective water reservoirs and early warning systems, are imperative. Spreading awareness about climate change and promoting sustainable agricultural practices are

equally crucial.

Tree plantations could mitigate sweltering temperatures

In a province where tree planting could mitigate sweltering temperatures and climate change impacts, government initiatives should engage younger generations in reforestation drives. Achieving a resilient future necessitates a collaborative effort involving government, local communities, civil society, and the commercial sector. Balochistan's path towards resilience begins with a symphony of collective action.

By addressing these critical issues, Balochistan can better adapt to the challenges posed by climate change, ensuring a more secure and sustainable future for its residents.

Quetta City, Proposed Master Plan

Abdul Latif Kakar : QUETTA: The mountain-ringed, Quetta city needs a comprehensive master plan to ensure the solution of problems faced by citizens and address the mega question of climate change.

Through the proposed plan, scarce resources would be transparently and rationally utilized to make it a better living city in the country.

For the first in the history of the province, the Urban Planning Department (UPD) under the leadership of chief minister Balochistan, Jam Kamal Khan has started the preparation of the master plan.

Geographical location, looming threat of natural calamities including earthquakes, drought, and floods, the need for making a comprehensive master plan for Quetta city is growing. Rather, it is now indispensable to make this plan, before it is already late.

Geography and

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

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



At the margin of the valley near foot hills, the soil consists of sandy loam, mixed with pebbles and rock fragments and is suitable for vegetation. In the Hanna val-

ley, the greater part of the valley floor is covered by barren rock boulders of low re-

lief and dry mala bed. The soil is restricted to the narrow banks and low ter-

races along the main stream. However, the nature of the soil in Beli-

is silty clay which is not suitable for cultivation. Similarly, the

transportation, mass transit, and city traffic management and monitoring system, housing commercial, and industrial use, and the existing condition of buildings and housing schemes should be thoroughly reviewed.

To be precise,

the city needs a master

plan on an emergency

basis to address the

looming threat of cli-

mate change and

natural disasters.

Chiltan surface has soils that are predominantly gravelly loams.

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

Soil erosion

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

The stream erosion takes place in the piedmont plain along the banks and beds of streams.

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

This all requires a review of the existing plans and documents and preparation of the digitized base map of Quetta with a protocol for its updating.

A review of existing policies, procedures, plans studies conducted by donor agencies, and other relevant data. Current and future population trends need to be reviewed.

Transportation, mass transit, and city traffic management and monitoring system, housing commercial, and industrial use, and the existing condition of buildings and housing schemes should be thoroughly reviewed.

To be precise, the city needs a master plan on an emergency basis to address the looming threat of climate change and natural disasters.



IHC reinstates bail, right to defence for Imaan, Hadi in social media posts case

NEWS DESK: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday reinstated the bail of lawyer and activist Imaan Mazari-Hazir and her husband, Hadi Ali Chatha, in a controversial social media posts case, after it was cancelled by a session court on January 15.

In the case registered under the Registration of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 (Peca), the two have been accused of inciting divisions on linguistic grounds through social media posts and creating a situation that the armed forces were engaged in terror within the country.

On January 17, Mazari and Chatha challenged the cancellation of the bail in the IHC, arguing that the trial court had unlawfully curtailed their right of defence, issued arrest warrants without fulfilling mandatory legal

requirements, and ordered judicial custody along with virtual production. During today's hearing, the IHC judge reinstated the bail from earlier, suspending the trial date to January 26.

He maintained that "if there were any

misdoings on my client's part, the judge should demonstrate that."

"The judge is holding hearings every 15 minutes," he said.

Earlier on the same day, Judge Majoka had expressed displeasure at the court's decision that had not yet been arrested during a hearing.

He directed the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency to file a complaint against the accused for a one-day protective bail, directing them to appear at court by 11am.

Gul Plaza tragedy triggers governance debate in National Assembly

NEWS DESK: The Gul Plaza dominated debate in the National Assembly on Tuesday, with MQM-P leader Farooq Sattar describing the blaze as a "cowardly attack" on the Sindh government and city authorities of negligence and a delayed response.

He said Karachi's residents had the right to expect better from provincial and federal governments over where the city stood in their list of priorities.

The fire that broke out in the Gul Plaza last night killed at least 28 people, while dozens still remain unaccounted for.

Tempers flared in the House as MQM-P members took up agenda papers and demanded that routine business be suspended to focus solely on the Karachi tragedy.

Law Minister Azam

Nazir later moved

a motion to defer the remaining agenda, which was approved by Deputy Speaker Ghulam Mustafa Shah.

For the past decades

of neglect, Karachi

critically short

of firefighting resources

arguing that the city was

Plea seeks FIR against Indian woman Sarabjit Kaur

NEWS DESK: A petition has been filed before the Lahore Sessions Court seeking the registration of a case against Indian national Sarabjit Kaur for allegedly misusing her visa and violating Pakistani laws.

The application was submitted by the former chairman of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Mahinder Pall Singh, through his lawyer, Advocate Ali Khan Gezai. According to the petition, Kaur entered Pakistan on a religious pilgrimage (yatra) visa but is alleged to have breached the visa conditions.

Singh had previously filed a petition in the Lahore High Court seeking Kaur's deportation.

The 48-year-old, who travelled to Pakistan under the same name Sarabjit Kaur, arrived on November 4 as part of an Indian pilgrim group attending the birth anniversary celebrations of

in court today. During yesterday's hearing at the IHC, Murtaza informed the court that his clients' bail had twice been cancelled. "Now an order has been issued to arrest them," he said.

He maintained that "if there were any

misdoings on my client's part, the judge should demonstrate that."

"The judge is holding hearings every 15 minutes," he said.

Earlier on the same day, Judge Majoka had expressed displeasure at the court's decision that had not yet been arrested during a hearing.

He directed the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency to file a complaint against the accused for a one-day protective bail, directing them to appear at court by 11am.

NEWS DESK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said Pakistan was "forced" to halt all trade with Afghanistan due to Kabul's inaction against terrorist operations.

The Pak-Afghan border has been closed for trade since mid-October 2025, when border clashes erupted.

Stressing that counter-terrorism mechanisms failed to produce a workable solution despite mediation by Turkey and Qatar,

he called it unfortunate that the past and the incumbent Afghan governments "did not cherish the hospitality" offered by Pakistan.

The premier added that the border was closed for the four million Afghan refugees in the country and had to use its own resources.

He said that Pakistan did not favour the Afghan people but fulfilled its responsibilities.

"But the way they are paying us back is very upsetting," he said.

"Unfortunately, they did not have been there, but forced us," the premier said while addressing a national workshop event.

This time, it must be decided whether Afghanistan wants to live peacefully or not [...].

They are our brothers and sisters. If the government does not have an interest in this (peace with Pakistan), they should at least have mercy on its people and not oppress them," he said.

"Rest assured, we will keep trying our best," the prime minister added.

While trade data showed that the order to close the border was issued by the government far earlier than Pakistan, exporters and the business community have raised concerns over the losses being faced by them.

It is our neighbouring country; we have to live forever

what is good for Afghanistan is good for Pakistan, and vice versa," the prime minister remarked.

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Supreme Court (SC) acquits man after 15 years in murder case

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan has acquitted a man after 15 years in a murder case arising from a dispute over Rs2,500, ordering his immediate release.

The verdict was announced before a three-judge bench of Justice Hashim Khan Kakar, Justice Salahuddin Panhwar, and Justice Ishaq Ibrahim. In its detailed

judgment, the court observed that the presence of bullet holes at the crime scene was doubtful, noting that the incident allegedly occurred in complete darkness and no source of light

was mentioned in the record. The Supreme Court ruled that the incident did not occur in the manner described by the prosecution and termed the case mysterious in nature.

Referring to the statement of the investigating officer, the court noted that the fatal shot was not fired by Naemt Arshad but by Shehzad Ali. The recovered pis-

tol from Shehzad Ali was found to match the shell recovered from the crime scene. The court further observed that Shehzad Ali had already been acquitted by the trial court, and neither the state nor

the complainant challenged that acquittal. The court also remarked that the prosecution's failure to present key witnesses before the court created serious doubts about its

case. According to the case, the incident took place on March 14, 2011, in Sahiwal, where Muhammad Anwar was shot dead at a cloth shop.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addressing National Workshop on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

China leads Pakistan's FDI inflows in first half of FY2026

ISLAMABAD (INP): China remained Pakistan's largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) during the first half of the current fiscal year, Gwadar Port reported on Tuesday quoting data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

Net FDI from China reached \$422.9 million during July-December F22, up 25 percent from more than half of Pakistan's total net FDI of \$808.1 million for the six-month period.

Gross inflows from China reached \$557.4 million, while outflows totaled \$160.5 million, leaving Beijing significantly ahead of all other partner countries.

Overall, Pakistan received \$1.1 billion in net FDI gross inflows from all partners during the period, against outflows of \$1.01 billion.

The resulting net FDI of \$1.1 billion represents a 43.2% increase compared to the \$1.42 billion recorded during the same period in F2025.

The country also recorded the substantial

negative portfolio investment flows of \$600.6 million. When combined with FDI, the total foreign investment for the period stood at \$207.4 million. The monthly performance of December was particularly strained; while China invested a net \$114.1 million, massive outflows in other sectors pushed Pakistan's overall net FDI into negative territory at \$134.7 million.

This was a sharp reversal from the \$182.4 million in net inflows recorded in December 2024. In the July-December F22, China was a major vehicle for Chinese outbound investment, emerged as a notable contributor with a net investment of \$163.8 million, up from \$14.7 million in the same period in F2025.

Other significant investors included the United Arab Emirates (\$12.2 million) and Switzerland (\$106.4 million). The United Kingdom and the United States remained modest, while several advanced economies recorded net outflows.

Pakistan, IDB sign three loan agreements worth \$603m

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) signed three loan agreements worth a total of \$603 million on Tuesday.

The agreements were signed by the Vice President of the Islamic Development Bank and the Secretary of the Economic Affairs Division, in the presence of Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahsan Khan Chema, Federal Minister Syed Imran Ahmed Shah, and other senior officials. The Islamic Development Bank will

provide \$475 million in financial assistance for the M-6 Sukkur to Hyderabad Motorway project. This motorway forms a key section of the proposed Peshawar to Karachi motorway.

Additionally, Pakistan signed an agreement with the IDB to launch a poverty alleviation programme for families affected by floods.

The programme's total cost is \$1.342 million, with the IDB contributing \$118.4 million. The project will be implemented across 25 districts of the country.

For a separate initiative in Azad Kashmir aimed at out-of-school children, the Islamic Development Bank will provide \$10 million in funding.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan government to seek roll over a \$3 billion loan from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the State Bank of Pakistan being used for the balance of payment, sources said.

Officials said that a \$1 billion tranche will mature on January 17, while another \$1 billion to mature on January 23. The next \$1 billion is expected to mature in July this year.

maturity dates.

Sources in the

Ministry of Finance

have said that the

ministry has completed

its working and the

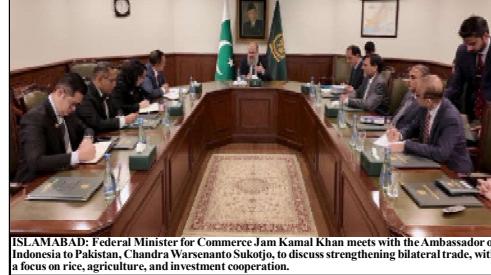
PM will soon request

to the UAE authorities

for rollover of US\$ 3

billion. The Gulf country has deposited total US\$ 3 billion in the State Bank of Pakistan being used for the balance of payment, sources said.

Officials said that a \$1 billion tranche will mature on January 17, while another \$1 billion to mature on January 23. The next \$1 billion is expected to mature in July this year.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan meets with the Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan, Chandra Warsenanto Sulkojo, to discuss strengthening bilateral trade, with a focus on rice, agriculture, and investment cooperation.

PMD predicts cold, dry weather for most parts of country

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) predicted cold and dry weather for most parts of the country during next 24 hours, while cold conditions are likely in hilly areas.

However, cloudy weather, light rain and light snowfall is expected at isolated places in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. Moderate to dense fog is likely to develop over plain areas of Punjab and upper Sindh during night and morning hours.

Purly cloudy and cold weather is expected in Islamabad and surrounding areas. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, cold and dry weather is likely over most districts; however, cloudy conditions with light rain and cold fall are likely in northern parts of the province. Very cold and cloudy weather is expected in Kashmir, while light rain with light snowfall may occur at isolated places in Gilgit-Baltistan.

In Balochistan, cold and dry weather is expected across most districts, while moderate to dense fog is likely in northern parts of the province. Very cold and cloudy weather is expected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while light rain with light snowfall may occur at isolated places in Gilgit-Baltistan.

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cloudy conditions with light rain and light snowfall are expected in Chitral, Swat, Dir, Kohistan, Abbottabad, Kalam and surrounding areas.

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Punjab claims supply of 0.85m metric tonnes of wheat to provinces

NEWS DESK: The Punjab government claims to have supplied 850,000 metric tonnes of wheat to other provinces, of which a major chunk has been provided to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Punjab Director Food Amjad Hafeez says transportation of wheat is being carried out through a transparent permit system and the total estimated inter-provincial movement of wheat from Punjab stands between 1.4 and 1.5 million metric tonnes, while more than 700,000 metric tonnes have been supplied to Islamabad alone.

He clarified that there were no restrictions on the movement of wheat within Punjab, and inter-district transportation was fully allowed without any quota or administrative barriers. He insisted that wherever a permit system was in place, it served only as a facilitative and monitoring mechanism to compile accurate data, discourage hoarding and profiteering, and support evidence-based



policy making.

"The system is not intended to disrupt trade or markets," he added.

He claimed that allegations regarding restrictions on wheat transportation were baseless and contrary to ground realities.

He said the government was utilising all available resources to ensure national food security and price stability.

PTI Kissan Wing rejects claim; says only smuggled staple reaches province. He, however, said measures were being taken to curb hoarding

and profiteering, while protecting the interests of farmers and consumers remained a top priority of the government. Meanwhile, PTI Punjab Kissan Wing general secretary MPA Ejaz Shafi has rejected the food director's claim that Punjab had given any wheat quota to the KP and only smuggled wheat reached the province.

He said the wheat price had risen to Rs 10,000 per 40kg and if Punjab had supplied wheat to KP and Sindh, the prices could have risen to Rs 10,000 per 40kg.

He lamented that hoarders, allegedly belonging to the incumbent government, had bought wheat from farmers at Rs 1,800 to Rs 2,000 per 40kg and hoarded the staple, now selling at more than the double prices in a matter of three to four months.

"The government pushed poor farmers against the wall during the harvesting season and now the poor are compelled to purchase flour and roti at higher rates," he said.

Pakistan, China set to ink MoUs in 10 agri-sectors

NEWS DESK: Pakistan and China are set to sign multiple memorandums of understanding (MoUs) for private-sector joint venture investments worth millions of dollars across 10 key sectors, including agri-business, which emerged from the Pakistan-China Agricultural Investment Conference held in Islamabad Monday.

Agri-sectors, in which agreements are expected to be signed, include agriculture, food processing, livestock, fisheries, agri-inputs, farm machinery, renewable energy, logistics, technology, and value-added exports.

The conference drew strong participation from the private sectors of both countries, with 90 Chinese and 191 companies from Pakistan in attendance, reflecting growing bilateral commercial interest.

Agriculture has been identified as a priority area of cooperation under the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The 10 priority sectors identified for in-

vestment include agro-chemicals and inputs, food processing and solutions, food production, value addition, meat and poultry, dairy inputs and processed products, fruit and vegetable-based food and related value chains, fisheries and aquaculture, cold chain and agricultural produce logistics, and food-grade packaging and processing.

Tanveer Hussain said the minister was fully committed to attracting Chinese investors, from facilitating regulatory processes to ensuring timely coordination with all relevant government departments and institutions.

He said the government's objective was not merely to attract investment, but to make Pakistan a destination for Chinese investors as prices could grow, innovate and succeed among other Pakistani partners.

Addressing the conference, Prime Minister Imran Khan said Pakistan, being a agricultural economy, had immense and largely untapped potential in agriculture and could transform the sector not in years, but in months by adopting modern technologies, improving productivity and strengthening cooperation with China.

He underlined the importance of developing what to grow and exposing the developing value chains, cold storage and warehousing, and promoting value addition to make Pakistani produce globally competitive.

Grid issues behind costly power: Nepra

NEWS DESK: Pakistan's national transmission system, one of the largest in the world, has suffered from a damaging mix of over-loading, underutilisation, creating operational constraints that undermine power supply and impose an unacceptable financial burden on consumers and the national economy, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has said.

In a detailed review of the national grid system, the regulator pointed out that the backbone of the transmission network between 500kV and 220kV lines

— remained "mostly overloaded" at the close of FY2024-25. It said the National Grid Company (NGC) faced critical overloads of its 500kV and 220kV network, particularly during summer peak demand.

"Many grid stations and power transformers are operating beyond 80 per cent of their rated capacity, risking equipment failure, voltage instability and outages," it said. In FY25, out of

192 transformers across 68 grid stations, 116 were overloaded beyond 80pc, it added.

During a breakdown, Nepra said 30 of 47 transformers at the 500/220kV level were overloaded beyond 80pc. In addition, 86 of 145 transformers at the 220/132kV level were overloaded beyond the same threshold.

Regions with notable overloading included Hyderabad, Larkana and Multan, with persistent constraints at key grids like Gatti, New Multan, Sarfaraz Nagar, Muzaaffargarh and Sheikhpura. "These limitations

have led to reliance on expensive generation in violation of economic merit order (EMO) and rising power costs due to debt," it said.

Ironically, most of these grid stations at Rawat, Sheikhpura, Gatti, Multan, Yousafwala, Jamshoro and Larkana had been in an overloaded condition since 2017-18 and onwards.

According to the review, these constraints had led to power evacuation from the 1,300MW Sahiwal coal-fired plant, over reliance on Attok, Halmore, Sappire and Liberty, limited transmission capacity in the

south-central corridor and aggravated bidirectional power flows in the network, it added.

The regulator called for fast-tracking the completion of critical transmission projects, upgrading existing sub-

stations with higher-capacity transformers and enhanced real-time grid monitoring to address persistent overloading in the transmission network.

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operational data to determine how long a transformer or circuit operated beyond its ratings.

The regulator warned that transmission system constraints significantly impact the overall efficiency, reliability and affordability of electricity supply.

When the transmission network lacks adequate capacity or flexibility, it restricts the flow of power from generation sources to demand centres.

"This leads to congestion, increased transmission losses and underutilisation of low-cost renewable generation, ultimately raising the overall cost of electricity," Nepra said.

"Transmission constraints not only raise reliability concerns for consumers but also lead to higher electricity tariffs."

This is primarily because, in the absence of adequate transmission capacity, the system must rely on expensive and less efficient power generation sources, even when cheaper alternatives are available but inaccessible," it explained.

OGDC announces fresh oil, gas discovery in K-P's Kohat district

NEWS DESK: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC) on Tuesday announced another oil and gas discovery at its exploratory well Barazai X-01 (Slant) in the Nasipa Block in Kohat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, underlining the area's growing importance for Pakistan's energy security.

The well, drilled to a depth of 5,170 metres, successfully tested the Samana Suk and Shinawari formations and is producing 3,100 barrels of oil per day and 8,150 cubic standard cubic feet of gas daily. OGDC said in a statement, the well flowed through a 32/64-inch choke at a wellhead pressure of 3,010 pounds per square inch gauge, confirming the commercial viability of the discovery. The discovery is OGDC's third discovery in just one month in the same region. Together, the three discoveries are producing 9,480 barrels of oil per day, accounting for about 14.5% of Pakistan's current do-

minestic crude oil production. Officials said the output is expected to help narrow the energy demand gap and reduce reliance on expensive oil imports.

The Barazai X-01 well was spudded December 30, 2024, as part of OGDC's broader effort to assess the hydrocarbon potential in the Nasipa Block. These include Lockhart, Hangu, Lumshiwali, Samana Suk, Shinawari, Datta and Kingriali, with earlier evaluations already leading to discov-

eries in the Kingriali and Datta formations.

OGDC operates the Nasipa Exploration License concession with a 65% working interest, while Pakistan Petroleum Limited and Government Holdings Private Limited are joint venture partners. The company said the discoveries would have a positive impact on Pakistan's national energy security. The continued success of exploration in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa comes as OGDC seeks to tap Pakistan's tight and shale gas resources,

including tensions with Iran, the brief conflict with India, and the broader Iran-Israel and US-Iran stand-off, which have made investors more cautious.

The fragile sentiment was particularly evident in December, when inflows amounted to \$322.5m from \$457.3m in the corresponding period last year.

Analysts attribute the sharp fall to heightened geopolitical risks,

including tensions with Iran, the brief conflict with India, and the broader Iran-Israel and US-Iran stand-off, which have made investors more cautious.

The fragile sentiment was particularly evident in December, when inflows amounted to \$322.5m from \$457.3m in the corresponding period last year.

Together, the two accounted for 73pc, or \$587m, of total FDI. Other notable inflows came from the United Arab Emirates (\$112m) and Switzerland (\$107m).

Officials have recently expressed optimism about potential exports of locally produced fighter jets to ease external liabilities, though no firm agreements have yet been finalised.



