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Email address: quettavoice@gmail.com

Website: www.quettavoice.com

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QUETTA VOICE



Police arrest leaders as govt employees' protest intensifies in Quetta

QUETTA:

Tensions in Quetta escalated on Wednesday as police continued a crackdown on government employees on the second day of protests led by the Balochistan Grand Alliance, resulting in the arrest of several leaders and dozens of employees.

Among those arrested were Grand Alliance head Professor Abdul Qudus Kakar, Dr. Muhammad Akram Wardag, Khadim Bugti, Haji Yunus Kakar, Qaim Khan Kakar, Rahmatullah Zehri, and members of the alliance's organising and core committees, along with a large number of government employees.

Clashes broke out at Manan Chowk, where protesters and police faced off in a tense standoff. A significant number of female employees were also present. Sources said government employees gathered at the site strongly resisted the arrests.

Police attempted to disperse the protesters using baton charges and other measures, leaving several people injured. The protest is centred on the non-payment of the Disparity Reduction Allowance, demands for equal pay, and other long-standing grievances.

The Grand Alliance had earlier announced a "jail bharo" movement, a pen-down strike and the closure of government offices across Balochistan. These actions have now intensified, with protesters accusing police of using unnecessary force to suppress what they described as a peaceful demonstration, including against women employees. An eyewitness said, "Hundreds of employees, including women, were peacefully seated at Manan Chowk, but the police suddenly launched an operation."

Videos from the scene showed a highly tense situation during the arrests, as protesters continued chanting slogans. Grand Alliance leaders condemned the crackdown, calling it "a misuse of state power by the government."

Board of Peace: Why Pakistan's Role Matters for Gaza and Regional Peace

WEB DESK:

As global concern over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza continues to grow, the proposed Board of Peace (BoP) is emerging as a serious international effort to push for a lasting political solution. Backed by several influential countries, including many Muslim nations such as Turkey and the UAE, the initiative aims to bring collective pressure and diplomacy to end the violence and restore stability in the region.

At its core, the Board of Peace seeks a resolution to the Gaza crisis in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions. Its goals include an immediate and permanent ceasefire, the reconstruction of Gaza, and long-

term peace that guarantees the rights of the Palestinian people, including statehood and the right to self-determination. Regional security and stability remain central to this vision.

Why Pakistan's Participation Is Important

Pakistan's possible inclusion in the Board of Peace is being widely welcomed as both historic and necessary.

Diplomats and analysts see it as recognition of Pakistan's growing diplomatic weight and moral standing in global affairs, particularly at a time when the world is deeply polarized and conflict-driven.

Unlike many countries, Pakistan does not have rigid bloc politics. It maintains balanced re-

lations with major global powers, including the United States, China, and Russia, while preserving strategic autonomy.

This unique positioning gives Pakistan the ability to act as a bridge for dialogue in an increasingly divided world.

Pakistan's foreign policy has also remained consistent on the issue. Its stance on Palestine is clear and unchanged: support for an independent Palestinian state and the right of self-determination. Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in accordance with UN resolutions. Similarly, Pakistan continues to advocate for the peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute through a fair and impartial plebiscite. This principled approach strengthens Pakistan's credibility in peace-building initiatives like the Board of Peace.

From Neutrality to Meaningful Engagement

In today's rapidly shifting geopolitical environment, many experts argue that staying on the sidelines is no longer a neutral choice. For a leading country of the Muslim world with proven diplomatic and military capacity, active engagement is crucial. Pakistan's long-standing commitment to UN peacekeeping missions reflects its commitment to peace through action, not just statements. Some voices have attempted to draw comparisons with the "One Belt, One Road" and other international frameworks. However, officials have clarified that Pakistan's approach to global engagements is guided strictly by

national interest, UN mandates, and public consensus. Any such comparisons, they argue, are misplaced.

A Strategic and Moral Responsibility

As global power dynamics continue to shift, Pakistan's role in the Board of Peace is increasingly viewed as a strategic necessity rather than an option. Participation would not only reinforce Pakistan's position as a moral and respected contributor to UN peacekeeping missions but also underline its broader role as a responsible and constructive actor in ensuring regional and global stability. For Pakistan, joining the Board of Peace is not just a strategic and peaceful choice—it is a matter of right and history—using diplomacy, credibility, and balance to help shape a more peaceful future for Gaza and the wider region.

30 bodies recovered from single shop following deadly fire at Karachi's Gul Plaza

NEWS DESK:

In a harrowing development, at least 30 bodies were recovered from a gutted shop as rescuers combed through the wreckage of Karachi's Gul Plaza on Wednesday.

Karachi South Deputy Inspector General Syed Asad Raza told Dawn that the remains of 30 humans had been recovered from a shop called "Duba Crocker" located on the magazine floor.

He said the team worked day and night to recover the bodies, increasing the toll from 28 to 31. He added that with the discovery of the bodies from the gutted shop, the death toll was estimated to have risen to 61.

However, he cautioned that a final conclusion about the death toll could only be reached after receiving the DNA reports.

He said the tally of bodies of those missing as well as the shopkeepers had already indicated the possibility of there being a large number of people at the shop.

Raza said that as per the last contact with the victims.

CM Balochistan, PM's Polio Focal Person Review Polio Eradication Strategy

News Desk:

Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti, on Tuesday met Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio, Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq, to review ongoing polio eradication efforts and discuss measures to further strengthen routine immunization across the province.

The meeting was attended by National Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Coordinator Anwar-ul-Haq and Provincial EOC Coordinator Inam-ul-Haq. Detailed discussions were held on enhancing the effectiveness of polio vaccination campaigns, improving coordination among concerned departments, and addressing operational challenges, particularly in remote and high-risk districts of Balochistan.

Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq appreciated the Government of Balochistan for its continued commitment to polio eradication and child immunization. She said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti, the province has shown improved



planning, better field coordination, and encouraging progress in vaccination coverage.

She stressed that close co-

operation between federal and provincial authorities remains crucial to achieving the shared goal of a polio-free Pakistan.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti reiterated that polio eradication is a top national and provincial priority.

He said the Balochistan government is fully committed to protecting children from preventable diseases through effective vaccination drives. He emphasized comprehensive measures, including security arrangements, monitoring mechanisms, public awareness initiatives, and health system support, are being implemented to ensure the success of polio campaigns.

The chief minister also emphasized the importance of strengthening routine immunization to build a sustainable public health system.

He reaffirmed that the provincial government will utilize all available resources to ensure that every child in Balochistan has access to life-saving vaccines and to move decisively towards a polio-free future.

Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakesh Odish Khan also attended the meeting and briefed participants on provincial initiatives, progress in routine immunization, inter-agency coordination, and administrative measures supporting public health and polio eradication efforts.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Balochistan High Court Opens the Doors of Justice Wider Than Ever Before

Editorial:

The Balochistan High Court's latest initiative — introducing a dedicated WhatsApp number and email address for public complaints — marks a significant shift toward openness, accessibility, and public empowerment within the judicial system.

This is not just a procedural reform; it is an invitation for citizens to engage directly with the judiciary in ways that were previously difficult, time-consuming, and often intimidating.

For decades, obtaining certified copies of court judgments was a frustrating ordeal for clients and even for experienced lawyers.

Long queues, procedural delays, and administrative hurdles made the process difficult, especially for people from rural districts of the province. With digital communication now formally integrated, citizens, litigants, and counsel will be able



to request and access judgment copies far more easily.

This single step reduces barriers that have existed for years and enables justice to be done, but also seen to be done.

Equally important is the ability for citizens to file complaints directly against lower judiciary officials or court staff if they face misconduct, delays, or unfair treatment.

Many people lacked the courage, resources, or channels to raise such concerns.

This mechanism now provides them a safe and accessible option, reinforcing the idea that justice is a right, not a privilege.

A few days back Balochistan High Court deserves recognition for taking a forward-looking approach to judicial transparency. By embracing technology, the court has empowered the public, made justice more approachable for millions. This is a good step — one that brings the judiciary closer to the people it serves.

Forced Marriage in Islam: A Clear Violation of Women's Rights and Human Dignity

By Musavir

Durrani:

Forced marriage remains one of the most damaging cultural practices in the Muslim world today. Despite being justified in the name of honor, tradition, or family unity, Islam itself strictly forbids forcing any woman, or man, into a marriage they do not want. Islamic teachings make consent the

core of marriage, while coercion makes a marriage batil (invalid).

The Qur'an Clearly Forbids Forced Marriages. Allah states in Surah An-Nisa: "O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will."

(Qur'an 4:19) This verse was revealed to abolish the jahiliyyah practice of controlling or forcing women into marriages.

Islam replaced oppression with dignity, choice, and responsibility. Prophetic Example: Forced Marriages Declared Invalid. A woman once came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) complaining that her father had married her without her permission. The Prophet (PBUH) gave her the full right to reject or accept the marriage, proving that consent is mandatory.

Hadith: Refer-

ences: Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 5138. Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1419.

These narrations all confirm that the prophet (PBUH) allowed the woman to refuse her forced marriage.

One narration even states that she chose to remain married but wanted to teach women that fathers

have no right to force their daughters.

Parents Can Advise, But They Cannot Force.

Islam highly respects parents, but it does not give them the right. They can guide, suggest, and advise.

but they have absolutely no power to force their child into marrying someone. Even if parents think they

know what is best, they cannot override the choice of their daughter or son. The final decision always

belongs to the person getting married.

Statements such as: "If you don't marry this one, who will marry you?", "You have no choice," "Do it for family honor," "You must obey your parents."

These are pure emotional manipulation, and Islam does not allow it. Emotional or Psychological Abuse is Also Haram. Forced marriage is not only when

parents force their children to marry someone.

Allah gave women this right, and no one can take it away".

The village named Jacobabad was founded by General John Jacob in 1847. The population of Jacobabad District is 1,00,06,297 according to the 2017 census. Density consumed 370/km²(970/sq) with 126 degree of Tehsils. 98% of the population speak Sindhi while 3% are native Balochi speakers.

Historical Background: The old name of Jacobabad was Khanghar in 1847 by General John Jacob later on when he died

in 1851, the name was changed to Jacobabad.

Jacobabad is a

small town in Sindh, Pakistan. It is located in the north of Sindh, by the provincial boundary with Balochistan. Its headquarter is the town of Jacobabad which was

Withering Public Institutions

Asghar Harif:

The beleaguered public offices have come under a new wave of employee associations broadening the turf war. The new rallying point is to assert the right for the coveted packages in wages given to the provincial secretariat. Guided by the tools employed by secretariat employees to secure bloated wages in comparison with the attached departments, the number of associations has multiplied and the pre-existing ones have coalesced into a broader alliance.

They have further asserted to arrogate the positions of head of attached departments claimed by provincial secretariat employees.

A few days back Balochistan Secretariat employees Asso- ciation announced its withdrawal from a grand alliance of other employees' associations. The alliance was formed to put pressure on the government for demands they all shared, which included the rise in pay and allowances and to address the discrepancies.

A growing number of employees adding public grievances.

A large group of number of employee associations, in the name of their welfare, underscores the growing pressure of forming pressure groups to protect



spheres of influence. Taking a cue from the past, the growing trend will bring serious challenges to the traditional institutional framework adding to public grievances.

One of the phenomena, engendered by growing pressure groups in the public, is the rise in pay and allowances and to address the discrepancies.

A department created for the general public of the provincial government has turned into a service provider for employees only. A department created for the service of the general public has turned into a service provider for their respective employees. All the offices at district and provincial levels have more affairs related to employees than that of the ones for whose

welfare the same are created. The resources placed at the disposal of these institutions with the aim to alleviate the issues of citizens, are arrogated to themselves and have turned into a bone of contention for members of the institutions. Speaking of personal experience of a department, with district and divisional level offices, it has been more than 90% of the correspondence made with that office was related to the personal affairs of the employees working in that department. It is the case with every public sector institution. Their raison d'être is service unto self.

The resistance to change has not only left the public sector unworkable, the private sector has overtaken it in the market. When private sector services are required from the market, the public sector functions are found totally clueless about the trend in the market.

The element of power among employees' associations also include larger size; the larger the size, the more nuisance value to keep the opponent at bay.

At the provincial secretariat with the aim to enlarge its own size, decades-old clerical staff positions are exponentially expanded leading to a 'one size fits all' structure. Despite its organization, every field turning into a mess, the public sector is stuck in an old management model. The information technology development has turned the

public sector structure into an obsolete entity.

The manpower and the machine have found no compatibility.

The only change in the last 75 years is that

number of positions has shifted from one service group to another. Mutual bargaining among the service groups is termed reforms in the system. A third-body assessment guided only by the public sector has never taken place.

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change has not only left the public sector unworkable, the private sector has overtaken it in the market. When private sector services are required from the market, the public sector functions are found totally clueless about the trend in the market.

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The author is a former Secretary of Tourism Balochistan Government.

Jacobabad, One of the hottest cities on earth



Aqsa Arshad, Jacobabad District is a district in the province of Sindh, Pakistan. It is located in the north of Sindh, by the provincial boundary with Balochistan. Its headquarter is the town of Jacobabad which was

founded by General John Jacob in 1847. The population of Jacobabad District is 1,00,06,297 according to the 2017 census. Density consumed 370/km²(970/sq) with 126 degree of Tehsils. 98% of the population speak Sindhi while 3% are native Balochi speakers.

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named Jacobabad in 1851 for Victoria Clock Tower in remembrance of John Jacob situated in the heart of the city.

Geographical Conditions: Jacobabad is

located in its consistently high temperature recorded in Pakistan, 126 degrees Fahrenheit (52 degrees centigrade). The region is rich in rice and grain cultivation.

The flora of Jacobabad consists of shrubs (cono, carpus) small plants not many trees, and fauna cows, buffaloes, camels, etc.

The traditional functions arranged every year in February in which camel fight

and cattle show is the most favorites for the visitors.

Economic Contribution: Endowed with coastal access, Sindh is a major center of economic activity in

Pakistan and has a highly diversified economy ranging from heavy industry and finance centered in and around Karachi to a substantial agricultural base along the Indus.

Manufacturing includes cement, fertilizers, cement, plastics, and various other goods. Sindh is Pakistan's most natural gas-producing province.

Agriculture is very important in Sindh with cotton, rice, wheat, sugar cane, bananas, and manages as the most important crops. The village is well organized having Shaheed Benazir Bhutto park which is a famous picnic point.

Coming up over all the exploring the city Jacobabad the Government should take step towards environmental issues by banning rice and other various factories open in main city region which is contributing a lot to air pollution.

The District head should plant more trees in the city to overcome such environmental issues Jacobabad will be an attractive place for visitors.

The author is studying at the Department of Environmental Sciences at Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University Quetta. She can be contacted at aqsa1367@gmail.com

Concerns raised in Senate over massive tree felling in Islamabad

NEWS DESK: The controversy surrounding the recent massive tree cutting in the federal capital echoed in the Senate on Tuesday, two days ahead of a meeting of the Senate standing committee on environment with the issue on top of its agenda.

Raising a Point of Order in the Senate, Barrister Syed Zafar expressed grave concern over the large-scale cutting of trees in Islamabad, warning that the unchecked cutting of green cover posed a threat to future generations.

He said that trees are the primary source of oxygen, which is essential for life and form part of the natural habitat of man right to a clean and healthy environment.

He cautioned that continued deforestation in the federal capital had irreversible consequences for climate resilience, air quality, and public health.

Recently, trees were cut down in Shapoorian forest at a massive level under contesting view, as CDA says only paper mulberry trees were removed while citizens say trees of other species were also cut down. In addition to Shapoorian forest, trees were cut down in H-8 area during construction of a road for a housing society (w/o public hearing and EIA).

Barrister Zafar rejected the explanation offered by the government that mulberry trees were being cut to address allergy-related concerns. Trees had already been removed long ago and could not justify the current mass cutting of grown trees.

He stated that upon examining satellite imagery and Google maps, it was clearly visible that once-green areas of Islamabad had been stripped of their tree cover, lending credence to concern that these could be checked through it.

ing schemes and commercial interests.

Calling the situation alarming and unacceptable, Barrister Zafar demanded that the government take action and present a detailed and transparent report before the Senate, explaining who authorised the cutting, which areas were affected, and for what purpose.

He stressed that parliament must be taken into confidence on an issue of such critical environmental and climate importance.

Minister for parliamentary affairs Dr Iariq Fazal Chaudhry, in his response, claimed that the green texture of the federal capital was not disturbed, noting that only paper mulberry trees had been cut, which carried serious health hazards.

He stated that the facts, which he would present before the House, could be checked through the Google imagery and analysis of trees in the fadly one or two years could be checked through it.

Water supply restored to Karachi's District West, Keamari after new control gate installed

NEWS DESK: Water supply to Karachi's District West and Keamari was restored on Wednesday after the installation of a new control gate on the Hub Canal Reservoir channel.

The project marks a step toward strengthening and modernising the city's water distribution system, said a press release from the Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KWSC). The development work was carried out in accordance with KWSC Chief Executive Officer Ahmed Ali Siddiqui.

The press release added that teams operated continuously to ensure the project was completed on schedule and with minimal disruption to residents. It said that the timely completion reflected the technical expertise and coordination of field teams, engineers and support staff involved in the project.

It added that the project would contribute



to long-term water supply and sustainability for Karachi's broader water infrastructure. Similar development initiatives aimed at improving basic civic services will continue in the future, the press release added.

Siddiqui and KWSC Chief Operating Officer Engineer Asadullah Khan also noted that the primary objective of the project was to enhance efficiency and fairness

in water distribution across different parts of the city.

Karachi has been trapped in a water crisis for nearly twenty years yet the much-awaited K-IV mega water supply project remains stalled due to delays, funding constraints, and a lack of coordination between the federal and Sindh governments.

The project, which promises an additional 260 million gallons of water per day for Karachi, has four major components. Three are currently under construction, while work on the fourth has not begun. Although 2027 has been set as the latest deadline for K-IV to reach Karachi's households, internal assessments suggest that without urgency from both governments, completion could be delayed to 2030.

Despite chronic water and sewerage challenges that continued to plague the country's financial hub throughout 2025, KWSC claimed several achievements during 2025.

On December 31, a one-year performance report was released, listing achievements including the completion of the Hub Canal after several decades, substantial progress on the mega project of the new Hub Canal, and the installation of additional pumps at key pumping stations.

NA passes bill seeking amendments to Elections Act for secrecy of parliamentarians' assets

NEWS DESK: The National Assembly (NA) passed on Wednesday the Elections Amendment Bill, 2026, seeking secrecy of parliamentarians' assets, amid opposition by the PTI.

Under Section 137 of the Elections Act, all members of the NA, Senate, and provincial assemblies are required to submit to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) "within one year before Dec 31 each year, a statement of their assets and liabilities, including those of their spouses and dependent children."

Section 138 of the Elections Act requires that the declaration be made in the official gazette.

The bill passed by the NA today proposes an amendment to Section 138 of the Elections Act, seeking to insert a proviso stating: "Provided that the member of the assembly concerned or, as the case may be, the chairman of the Senate may, on an application made by a member for reasons to be recorded in writing, the court also

allow him (Raja) a meeting with the court until the meeting is held, how will the case proceed against me?"

Justice Tahir maintained that an order will be issued regarding the meeting. "The case will only move forward if I allow him (Raja) a meeting with the court until the case is heard in the court," Justice Tahir said.

Justice Tahir continued, "The hearing will be continued, the court also allowed the response submitted by PTA to the petition." Justice Tahir maintained that an order will be issued regarding the meeting.

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After members from PML-N and PTI joined hands to oppose the move tabled by PPP legislators Shazia Mari and Syed Naveed Qamar.

At the same time, however, only the PTI opposed it.

During today's NA session, Standing Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Chairperson Rana Idrat Sharif Khan presented the bill to the Senate on the proposed legislation, following which it was taken up for consideration by the House and eventually passed.

The bill needs the Senate's assent and the president's approval before it becomes law.

January 21 Observed as Basant Bagh Martyrs' Day in Kashmir

NEWS DESK:ians who had gathered at Basant Bagh for a peaceful protest.

The demonstrators were raising concerns over human rights violations, house raids, arbitrary arrests, and civilians. He stated that the protesters moved towards Gawkadal Bridge, where they were met with tear gas, resulting in the killing of dozens of people and injuries to hundreds.

He added that,

Lahore again emerges as most polluted city in the world

NEWS DESK: Lahore has again emerged as the most polluted city in the world with its air quality being classed as "hazardous" according to air quality monitoring platform IQAir.

Over the past few years, air pollution has become one of the most pressing public health and environmental crises facing Pakistan. Various cities of the country, most notably Lahore, deal with smog, especially in the winter months. The phenomenon is attributed mainly to industrial emissions, vehicular pollution, stubble burning, and air movement.

At the same time,

Lahore's air quality index (AQI) had soared to 507

— well into the "hazard-

ous" bracket (301+). Karachi ranked sixth on the list of most polluted cities in the world on Wednesday morning, with an air quality index (AQI) of 452, while Lahore ranked at 179, according to the IQAir website.

On Tuesday, the platform issued an air quality alert for Pakistan as major cities experienced "unhealthy" to "hazardous" levels of air pollution, posing serious health risks to children and the elderly.

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On Tuesday, the platform issued an air quality alert for Pakistan as major cities experienced "unhealthy" to "hazardous" levels of air pollution, posing serious health risks to children and the elderly.

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UNHCR Hands Over 48 Solar-Powered Public Facilities Worth PKR 1 Billion to Government of Balochistan

News Desk

Quetta, Jan 22: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has officially handed over 48 solarized public facilities worth approximately PKR 1 billion (USD\$3.5 million) to the Government of Balochistan, marking a major milestone in renewable energy, public service delivery, and climate-resilient development in Pakistan.

The initiative provides clean, reliable, and cost-effective solar energy to essential public institutions, including schools, universities, health clinics, and technical training institutes, with a special focus on refugee-hosting districts of Balochistan. Implemented during 2020-21, the project addresses critical challenges such as power outages, unstable grid electricity, and high diesel fuel costs, which have long affected public service delivery in the province.

The project was supported by key international development partners, including Global Affairs Canada, Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), and the Kingdom of the



Netherlands. Among the flagship facilities solarized under the initiative is the Bolan Medical Complex, with additional support from UNHCR's private-sector partner, LONGi Green Energy

in Quetta and was attended by Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, UN Resident Coordinator Mohamed Yahya, UNHCR Representative in Pakistan Ms. Philippa Candler, Head of UNHCR Mr. Tesfaye Bekele, along with senior government and United Nations officials.

UNHCR Representative Ms. Philippa Candler underscored the importance of energy security in sustaining public services and institutional resilience.

Reliable energy is critical for vital public services that support both Afghan refugees and host communities. UNHCR remains committed to energy, protection, and inclusive access to services for all," she said. The solar-powered public facilities are expected to benefit nearly two million people annually, including students, teachers, healthcare workers, patients, refugees, and local host communities.

By transitioning critical public facilities to renewable solar power, the initiative ensures uninterrupted electricity supply, reduces dependence on the national grid, and significantly lowers operating operational and energy costs. These improvements are already strengthening the delivery of quality education and health services across Balochistan.

UN Resident Coordinator Mohamed Yahya praised the project's impact and acknowledged Pakistan's 45-year commitment to hosting Afghan refugees, emphasizing the need for sustained international support for both refugee and host communities.

National Commission for Child Rights Holds Provincial Consultation on Child Labor Monitoring in Private Sector



Quetta: The National Commission for Child Rights (NCRC), in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pakistan and with the support of the European Union, organized a provincial-level consultative meeting in Balochistan.

The meeting was part of the Huqooq-e-Pakistan Phase II project, which aims to strengthen the monitoring of child labor in the private sector.

Representatives from federal ministries, government agencies, chambers of commerce, civil society organizations, labor unions, and business associations participated in the meeting. Attendees thoroughly discussed the trends of child labor in the province, obstacles in the implementation of

laws, and the lack of institutional coordination.

They also presented future strategies for addressing this issue, aligning them with Pakistan's National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights and GSP+ commitments.

The discussion focused particularly on strengthening the monitoring of child labor in informal sectors, reforming legal obligations within private sector supply chains, and exploring social protection systems that could aid in the eradication of child labor.

This meeting is part of a series of national and provincial-level consultations, and the outcomes will contribute to the preparation of a national report on child labor and the Sustainable Development Goals

NCRC will combine provincial evidence and stakeholder input to draft actionable and evidence-based recommendations to enhance the effective enforcement of laws, hold businesses accountable, and strengthen institutional cooperation. In his address, Advocate Abdur Rehman, NCRC Consultant for Balochistan, emphasized that child labor is not only a violation of children's fundamental rights but also a governance challenge that highlights gaps in law enforcement, accountability, and social protection systems.

Eradicating child labor is not only Pakistan's international obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals

but also a moral and constitutional duty to protect our children.

UNDP Pakistan Consultant, Zainab Mustafa, highlighted the necessity of enhanced cooperation and coordination among stakeholders to address child labor violations effectively.

"We hope that this report will serve as a guiding document for all parties working in this sector," she stated.

The Ministry of Labor, civil society, and the private sector, reaffirming their resolve to protect children's rights and eliminate all forms of child labor in Pakistan.

Balochistan Government Rolls Out Comprehensive Investment Policy, Launches Business Facilitation Center in Quetta

Quetta: Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakesh Qadir Khan has said that the provincial government is moving forward with a comprehensive policy to promote investment and accelerate trade and business activities across Balochistan. He emphasized that innovation in all government sectors is essential for the economic development and improved governance.

He further stated that practical steps are being taken to digitize government and public services in order to enhance transparency, efficiency, and service delivery.

The Chief Secretary expressed these views while addressing the launch ceremony of the Business Facilitation Center (BFC), organized by the Balochistan Board of Investment (BoI) at the Skandari Jamali Auditorium.

The ceremony was attended by BoI Vice Chairman Bilal Khan Kakar, Chief Executive Officer Qaim Lashari, and

secretaries of provincial departments, and other senior officials.

Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan highlighted that unemployment remains the major challenge in Balochistan, and special emphasis is being placed on boosting investment and commercial activities to address this issue.

The Chief Secretary said that Balochistan offers vast opportunities for development in various fields, including agriculture, minerals and minerals, and called for enhanced efforts to promote investment in these areas. He described the shrimp farming project in Darm as an excellent example of how economic growth and diversification can be achieved.

Addressing the gathering, BoI Vice Chairman Bilal Khan Kakar said that in line with the vision of Chief Minister Balochistan

to further facilitate investors across the province, Terning the initiative as positive and commendable, he appreciated the efforts of the Balochistan Board of Investment.

The Chief Secretary said that Balochistan offers vast opportunities for development in various fields, including agriculture, minerals and minerals, and called for enhanced efforts to promote investment in these areas. He described the shrimp farming project in Darm as an excellent example of how economic growth and diversification can be achieved.

He also stressed that Business Facilitation Center offices should be extended to divisional headquarters

Over 8,000 unnecessary government vacancies abolished, CM Balochistan

Staff Reporter

Quetta, Jan 22: Chief Minister of Balochistan has stated that the province's annual budget of nearly Rs 1,000 billion reflects a harsh financial reality, with around 8,000 posts allocated to non-development expenditures. These expenses largely consist of salaries and pensions for nearly 250,000 government employees, leaving only Rs 200 billion available for the welfare and development of the province's 13 million people.

According to the CM, the province's budgeted financial structure has been difficult but necessary reform measures over the past two years. These include the closure of unnecessary government posts, or any form of blackmail will not deter the government from protecting the public interest. He made it clear

that no compromise will be made on the interests of the people of Balochistan, and that the drive for financial discipline, transparency, and development-oriented reforms will continue under all circumstances.

Loralai Municipality Launches Extensive Cleanliness Drive for a Cleaner City

LORALAI:

The Municipal Committee of Loralai has intensified its cleanliness efforts across the city with a series of comprehensive actions and a clear-cut strategy. Under the direction of Chief Officer, Mohibullah Baloch, the municipal cleaning staff has been actively working to maintain the current areas of the city, focusing on drains, streets, and public spaces.

According to reports, the cleaning teams use tractors, trailers, and other machinery to collect waste from various locations across the city.

The staff also carried out thorough cleaning of the Hazara Ajab Zone, Levis, Laleh Mohalla Junction, and cleaned large piles of garbage in Khaliz Zone, Sultan Tip Levis Zone, and Mohabba Zone.

Additionally, drains in Saleem Dada Complaint Zone, Hazara Mohalla, and Bara Zone, Muhammad Gali were fully cleaned.

Following the staff's prompt action in removing accumulated waste from various sites has significantly contributed to maintaining a clean and healthy environment for the residents of Loralai. Citizens have expressed their appreciation for the cleanliness drive, showing hope that the initiative will continue in the future.

Municipal Committee officials have assured the public that efforts to make the city cleaner, healthier, and more beautiful will continue.

They also urged citizens to cooperate with the administration to maintain the cleanliness of the city.



NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Executive Engineer Roads CWP&H Department District Dukh invites electronic bids for execution of following works for the Year 2026 based on Comptiles schedule rates 2023 on Percentage Rates.

Venue, The Office of the DC, District Dukh

| No. | Name of Work | Estimated Cost | Bid Security % | Bid submission / Tender opening Date |
|-----|---|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | CONSTRUCTION OF OPEN NALLA (KUND) STONE MASONRY FROM HAZARA MUHALLA TO MILLAT ABDULLAH MANDI VIA TABASKEH MANDI. | Rs 73,312,936 | 2% | 05/02/2026 |
| 2 | CONSTRUCTION OF OPEN NALLA STONE MASONRY FROM GANU KUND REMAINING PORTION OF OLD KORN SCHOOL T&B-23290148#0823. | Rs 50,103,206 | 2% | 05/02/2026 |
| 3 | CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK TOP ROAD FROM MULAK KARMOONI TO REMAINING PORTION OF OLD KORN SCHOOL INCLUDING DRAIN & SEWERAGE SYSTEM T&B-23290148#0823. | Rs 39,605,996 | 2% | 05/02/2026 |
| 4 | CONSTRUCTION OF BIT ROAD FROM KARHONI TO REMAINING PORTION LUMBERKOT INCLUDING DRAIN & SEWERAGE SYSTEM T&B-23290148#0823. | Rs 34,252,364 | 2% | 05/02/2026 |
| 5 | CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK TOP ROAD FROM KARHONI TO REMAINING PORTION OF OLD KORN SCHOOL INCLUDING DRAIN & SEWERAGE SYSTEM T&B-23290148#0823. | Rs 33,751,636 | 2% | 05/02/2026 |
| 6 | CONSTRUCTION OF BIT ROAD FROM MUNAWARABAD TO WESTERN BYPASS T&B-24,355,078 | Rs 24,355,078 | 2% | 04/02/2026 |
| 7 | CONSTRUCTION OF 2 NOS BOX CULVERTS AT CHOWKI DISTRICT DUKH T&B-13,000,040 | Rs 13,000,040 | 2% | 04/02/2026 |

All interested bidders must formally register with the BPFRA Electronic Public Procurement System (EPPS), where key eligibility criteria and complete tender documentation are available on the official website, www.bpfra.gov.pk. Proposals are to be submitted electronically via the EPPS portal no later than 10:00 AM, followed by an electronic tender opening at 11:00 AM on the same date. Subsequently, the tender opening will be conducted via video conference (VCFP) or telephone conference (TCP) in accordance with the BPFRA Rules, 2014. The bidders are required to specify the relevant TSE number on the bank's official letterhead; in addition all required stamp papers—must be delivered in hand copy to the designated address within one hour of the electronic bid opening. Bidders are advised to copy and paste the TSE number from the official letterhead. This procurement is conducted under the Executive Engineer Roads CWP&H Department Dukh.

For inquiries, please contact Elhassanbach@gov.pk.

Executive Engineer Roads CWP&H Department Dukh.

PRO No.3364/21-01/2026

Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) approves \$603m for three projects

NEWS DESK: The 300-kilometre-long M-6 Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway (M-6) worth \$1.7 billion on Tuesday got a boost after Pakistan and Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) entered into three financing agreements worth \$603 million.

The two sides formally signed three loan agreements totalling about \$603 million to finance the M-6 Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway Project, the Poverty Graduation of Extremely Poor and Flood-Affected Households Project (PGEP), and the Out-of-School Children project for Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

The project agreements were signed by IsDB Vice-President Dr Rami Ahmad and Economic Affairs Division Secretary Muhammed Humair Karim.

Under the agreements, IsDB will provide \$475m in financing for the M-6 Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway, a key link to the proposed Peshawar-Karachi Motorway.

Pakistan also signed an agreement with IsDB to launch the Poverty Graduation



of Extremely Poor and Flood-Affected Households (PGEP) project, a landmark initiative aimed at transitioning ultra-poor households from subsistence to cash assistance to sustainable livelihoods, resilience, and economic self-reliance. PGEP has a total

outlay of \$134.2m, of which IsDB will contribute \$118.4m.

Sukkur - Hyderabad Motorway gets \$475m financing

of which IsDB approved a \$475m loan in October 2025 for the M-6 motorway project to enhance Pakistan's transport infrastruc-

ture by improving connectivity along a key corridor.

The M-6 is the only missing segment in the north-south motorway network between Karachi to Peshawar.

The project is estimated to cost \$1.7bn with six lanes designed

for speeds up to 120km per hour. It will include 89 bridges, 15 interchanges, and 243 underpasses.

The M-6 is part of the broader East-West Alignment of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The project's con-

struction is expected to begin in April this year, and land acquisition is currently in the final stage.

The project has faced several delays and financing challenges. The project has increased from \$617m in 2018 to \$1.1bn in

2022 and now stands at \$1.7bn in 2025, mainly due to delays. The Saudi Fund for Development and the Asian Development Bank are the financiers of the project.

The \$1.18m second loan for PGEP will be implemented in 25 districts (20 selected

based on the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI2024) and the five most flood-affected districts from the 2022 and 2025 floods). The project aims to reach 160,866 households and create 100,000 employment opportunities through integrated asset transfers, interest-free loans, skills development, rainwater harvesting, climate-smart agriculture, and interventions by business service providers.

The PGEP reflects the Government's commitment to shifting from consumption-based safety nets to graduation-focused, resilience-based development aligned with national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals, an official statement said.

Furthermore, for the Out-of-School Children project in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, IsDB will provide \$10 million, which will help bring about 60,000 out-of-school children back into classrooms and support training for 4,000 teachers.

The vice-president stated that the bank was keen on expanding cooperation with Pakistan in areas of mutual interest.

OGDCL makes another discovery in Kohat

NEWS DESK: The Oil and Gas Development Company (OGDCL) on Tuesday announced discovery of major oil and gas reserves in its first exploratory well in Kohat District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a statement, the OGDCL, which is the operator of the Nasir Exploration License, said it made a discovery in its exploratory well Baraigai X-01 (Slant) located in the Kohat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The discovery has been made over the Samana

9.480BOPD, about 14.5pc of Pakistan's

domestic crude oil production that currently stands at close to 66,000BOPD.

Baraigai X-01 (Slant) was spudded on December 30, 2024, as an exploratory well to evaluate the hydrocarbon potential of multiple formations, including Lockhart, Hangu, Lumshiwat, Samana, Shina, Samani, Shina, Shinwari, Datta, and Kingrial.

The well was successfully drilled to a total depth of 5,170 metres into the Kingrial Formation.

Islamic Development Bank to fund road, livelihood projects in AJK

NEWS DESK: Pakistan and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) on

Tuesday signed three loan agreements worth about \$603 million to finance the M-6 Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway.

Pakistan also signed an agreement to launch the Poverty Graduation of Extremely Poor and Flood-Affected Households (PGEP) project.

A landmark initiative aimed at transitioning the ultra-poor households from subsistence to cash assistance to sustainable livelihoods, resilience and economic self-reliance.

The project has a total outlay of \$134.2m, of which IsDB will contribute \$118.4m.

Motorway, a key link to the port city of Peshawar, is the only missing segment in the north-south motorway network between Karachi to Peshawar.

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Gold surges to Rs493,662 per tola

NEWS DESK: The yellow metal continued to shine in the world market, pushing domestic 10-gram and one-tola rates to a new all-time high of Rs493,662 and Rs493,662 on Tuesday, up by Rs3,686 and Rs4,300, respectively.

According to the rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association (APSGJA) based on interbank

exchange rates, the metal's rally has also been supported by expectations of US interest rate cuts, which reduce the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding gold.

President Aslam Shikarpuri said investors have intensified their purchases of gold worldwide, including in Pakistan, since US President Donald Trump announced tariffs on European countries.

He said gold jewellery buying in the country continues to get weaker with every fresh increase in local rates. "Families come to us to show for gold, polishing the pieces, and getting them ready for their daughters' wedding instead of purchasing pure gold jewellery," he said. Qasim claimed that gold in Pakistan is selling below cost by Rs30,000 per tola compared to Dubai rates.

PSX hits all-time high of 188,000 points on back of improved investor sentiment

NEWS DESK: The Paki-

stan Stock Exchange (PSX) stretched its positive momentum on Tues-

day, as the KSE-100 index rose by 86 points, or 0.46%, to close at an all-time high of 188,621.78 on the back of improved investor sentiment.

The market remained active throughout the session, supported by sustained buying interest. However, trading was marked by volatility, as the index closed in a range of 188,958.38 and a low of 187,192.02. Despite intermittent profit-taking, the index managed to hold gains in positive territory.

Market sentiment remained constructive, underpinned by easing geopolitical concerns, improved macroeconomic indicators, and expectations of a potential policy rate cut. Buying from local mutual funds, as reflected in recent flow data, played a key role in supporting the market's upward trend. Overall, investor participation stayed firm, with selective institutional interest helping

the market absorb deep

swings and close higher.

KTrade Securities

wrote in its market wrap

that the PSX extended its

run of gains in the

session.

Heavy stocks such as Engr Holdings, Pak-

istan Petroleum, Saqar

Engineering Oil and Gas

Development Company

and Pakistan State Oil

continued to add

points to the index.

Going forward, the market

remains sensitive to ex-

ternal developments,

and any renewed geo-

political escalation

could introduce near-

term volatility, KTrade predicted.

Overall trading vol-

ume increased to 1.225

million shares on

Monday's figure of

1.19b. Value of traded

shares stood at Rs63.8b.

Shares of 487 compa-

nies were traded. Of

340, 213 de-

clined and 134 un-

changed. Hassel Pe-

troleum was the volume

leader, with trading in

113m shares, rising Rs2.5

to close at Rs27.47.



Cannot be pressurised to play in India, says Bangladesh sports adviser

NEWS DESK: Bangladesh government's sports adviser Asif Nazul on Tuesday reiterated that under no condition would the national team travel to India for the T20 World Cup, despite an ultimatum from the International Cricket Council (ICC) to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on deciding its participation by January 21, the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency reported.

If BCB remains adamant on not traveling to India for the 20-team tournament, Scotland is likely to replace Bangladesh as per current ratings.

"I am not aware that Scotland will be included in our place," Asif told reporters.

"If the ICC bows to pressure from the Indian cricket board and tries to impose pressure on us by creating unreasonable conditions, we will not accept those conditions."

"In the past, there



are examples that Pakistan said that they will not travel to India and ICC agreed to that. We have decided to change the venue on logical ground and we cannot be pressurised to play in India by put-

ting illogical pressure." The standoff was triggered by the removal of Bangladesh's vice-captain Nurul Islam and his replacement by former Knight Riders' roster for this year's Indian Premier League on

Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) instructions for unspecified "development" as a result.

Citing security concerns and national pride, the BCB responded by announc-

ing its national team

won't travel to India for its group stage games in India and Malaysia.

BCB wants to play each of its four group-stage matches in Sri Lanka, where the mar-

que India-Pakistan clash will also be held as per the mutually agreed arrangement for ICC's semi-final 2026.

Bangladesh is currently placed in Group 'C' along with the West Indies, Italy, England and Nepal.

In its last meeting with ICC officials in Dhaka, the BCB had agreed to swap its opening positions with Ireland in Group 'B', which features tournament co-hosts Sri Lanka, the line.

Australia, Oman and Zimbabwe.

Such a move would allow Bangladesh to remain in Sri Lanka for entirety of its group-stage engagements.

While the BCB considers it unsafe for its players to travel to India, the ICC's risk assessment report did not flag any specific or direct threat to the team's participation in the T20 World Cup.

The bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh have deteriorated in recent months, exacerbated by the reported killings of Hindus in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal and current Test skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto have cautioned against a very hard-line approach on the controversial subject, with both fearing that decisions taken today would have repercussions 10 years down the line.

Alcaraz, Sabalenka, Gauff surge into Australian Open third round

NEWS DESK: Top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz fended off a series of "bombs" before surging into the Australian Open third round on Wednesday, where he was joined by Aryna Sabalenka and Gauff.

Three-time finalist Daniil Medvedev also stayed alive, but needed four sets to beat his German opponent and track at a cooler and overcast Melbourne Park after days of hot weather.

Spanish superstar Alcaraz came through a tough first round 7-6(7) 6-3, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena against hard-hitting German Yannick Hanmann to take another step towards a career Grand Slam.

He was put through his paces by a player 12 years older before setting up a showdown with either France's Corentin Moutet or American Michael Zhao.

"To be honest, it was tougher than I thought at the beginning," said Alcaraz, who already has six major titles and has never gone past the last eight in Melbourne.

"I didn't feel the ball that good. You know, the ball was coming at a higher speed and backhand."

If the 22-year-old wins the Australia Open to complete the career Grand Slam of all four majors, he will be the youngest to do so, surpassing compatriot Rafael Nadal.

The unpredictable Medvedev, runner-up in

2021, 2022 and 2024, is back to keep his options in play this year and was on his best behaviour against Frenchman Quentin Halys.

He lost a tight first set but the result was never in doubt as he surged to the finish line 6-7(9/11), 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

"Near perfect."

Four-time major winner Sabalenka raced

5-0 clear of qualifier Bai Yuxuan, ranked a lowly 122, in a tight court before wobbling to give the Chinese player a glimmer of hope.

But the top seed

quickly snuffed it out in a race home 6-3, 6-1 and 6-3, 6-2.

Alexander Zverev

is in action in an evening

match against France's Alexandre Muller, the latest challenge in the German's decade-long quest for a first Grand

Slam title.

The world number

three, runner-up last

year to Jannik Sinner, dropped a set in his opening clash but said it was "good" to be stretching early in the tournament.

"Near perfect."

Four-time major

winner Sabalenka raced

5-0 clear of qualifier Bai

Yuxuan, ranked a lowly

122, in a tight court

before wobbling to

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Trump's plane returns to air base after 'minor' electrical issue: White House

NEWS DESK: US President Donald Trump's plane was forced to return to an air base late Tuesday due to a "minor electrical issue" shortly after departing for Switzerland, the White House said.

Air Force One returned to Joint Base Andrews out of an abundance of caution, Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said. It landed shortly after 0400 GMT.

Journalists traveling with Trump reported that lights in the cabin went out briefly after takeoff.

After returning to Andrews, Trump resumed his trip to the Davos forum early Wednesday.

Trump and his entourage changed planes at Joint Base Andrews and took off again shortly after



0500 GMT, about two-and-a-half hours after his initial

departure. With its classic blue and white livery, Air Force One

is arguably the world's most iconic plane and instantly

recognisable symbol of the US presidency.

Trump has long been unhappy with the current Air Force One jets - two highly customized Boeing 747-200B series aircraft that entered ser-

vice in 1990 under president George H.W. Bush. Last year, Trump said his administration was "looking at alternatives" to Boeing following delays in the delivery of two new 747-8 aircraft. People gather outside Air Force One on the tarmac after returning to Joint Base Andrews on January 20, 2026. — AFP

In May, Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth accepted a Boeing 747 that the Gulf emirate of Qatar offered to Trump for use as Air Force One.

The jet, worth hundreds of millions of dollars, has raised huge constitutional and ethical questions, as well as security concerns about using an aircraft donated by a foreign power for use as the ultra-sensitive presidential plane.

Japan court sentences ex-PM Abe's assassin to life in prison, NHK reports

NEWS DESK: A Japanese court on Wednesday sentenced a 45-year-old man to life imprisonment for fatally shooting former prime minister Shinzo Abe, public broadcaster NHK reported, in an incident that stunned the nation three and a half years ago.

Tetsuya Yamagami was arrested in the plot in July 2022 after fatally firing at Abe with a homemade gun while he was delivering a campaign speech in the western city of Nara. Abe, the country's longest-serving prime minister, was 67.

A guilty verdict was all but certain after Yamagami admitted to killing Abe, the first court hearing at the Nara District Court in October, and attention had been

on the severity of the sentence.

Prosecutors sought a life sentence last month, calling the act an "extremely grave incident" that is unprecedented in post-war history.

Although he was no longer Japan's leader at the time, Abe remained a powerful and influential force within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. His absence has left a vacuum within the party, which has since seen two leadership changes, by extension, a revolving door of prime ministers.

Abe himself served as prime minister for a total of 3,188 days over two separate terms, stepping down in September 2020, citing health reasons.

His protege Sanae Takaichi now leads Japan and the LDP but the party's grip on power has considerably diminished.

Abe's killing also brought to light a deep link between his party and the Unification Church, an organisation many consider a cult. An in-party investigation found that more than 100 lawmakers had dealings with the group, leading many voters to shun the LDP, which has ruled Japan for most of the past 30 years.

Media have quoted Yamagami as telling the court that he held a grudge against the Unification Church after his mother's large donation to it caused financial hardship for her family, and that he took out his

anger on Abe because the former prime minister had once sent a video message to an event held by a group affiliated with the church.

Founded in South Korea in 1954, the Unification Church is famous for its mass weddings and counts Japanese followers as a key source of income.

South Asian neighbours, meanwhile, argued that the family's misfortune caused by the donation to the Unification Church should be taken into consideration and that his prison term to 20 years at most.

While Abe was a divisive figure domestically, he was among the few global leaders to have a strong rapport with US President Donald Trump.

— AP

Photo: AP