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QUETTA VOICE



Photo by Manan Mandokhail: A view of Hana Lake after heavy snowfall.

Record Snowfall in Quetta Turns City into White Carpet

Syed Ali Shah:

Record snowfall in Quetta transformed the provincial capital into a stunning white carpet, as thick snow covered roads, rooftops, parks, and open spaces, drawing visitors from other provinces, particularly Sindh, to witness and enjoy the rare winter scenery.

Residents and tourists flocked to popular hill destinations including Ziarat, Hanna Urak, and nearby areas, where families and young people were seen taking photographs, playing in the snow, and enjoying the cold weather amid scenic surroundings.

Many visitors described the snowfall as a refreshing escape from routine life.

"I have never seen Quetta this beautiful.

The snow-covered mountains and roads look magical," said Ayesha Khan, a visitor from Karachi, while enjoying snowfall at Hanna Urak.

Local residents also welcomed the lively atmosphere despite freezing temperatures. "Snowfall slows daily life, but it also brings happiness.

Seeing tourists from other provinces enjoying Quetta feels encouraging," said Muhammad Aslam, a shopkeeper in the city.

Tourist activity increased significantly in Ziarat, where pine-covered hills and roads turned completely white, creating scenes similar to

Pakistan's northern tourist destinations.

Hotel owners, tea stalls, and roadside vendors reported a noticeable increase in visitors.

However, record snowfall across Balochistan disrupted normal life, blocking major highways and leaving travelers stranded in several districts.

The Quetta-Ziarat Road was closed due to heavy snowfall, while traffic on several key routes came to a standstill, causing serious difficulties for passengers traveling through mountainous areas. Adviser to the Chief Minister for Political and Media Affairs Shahid Rind said the Provincial Disaster Management Authority Balochistan launched large-

scale rescue operations to assist stranded travelers and ensure public safety during severe weather conditions.

According to officials, hundreds of people, including women, children, and elderly passengers, were safely rescued. Close coordination between PDMA and allied departments helped prevent any loss of life despite prolonged snowfall and road closures.

Authorities confirmed that continuous clearance and rescue operations were carried out on the Quetta-Ziarat Road until all stranded vehicles and passengers were safely assisted.

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti praised the PDMA and field teams for

their dedication and professionalism under extreme weather conditions, announcing certificates of appreciation for officers and personnel involved in the rescue efforts.

Meanwhile, the National Highway Authority, in coordination with PDMA, initiated measures to restore traffic flow at critical locations including Lakpass, Khojak, and other key mountain passes.

The snowfall caused a sharp drop in temperatures across the province, intensifying public hardship. The situation was further worsened by ongoing gas load-shedding, particularly in remote and snow-affected areas, where residents continue to endure harsh winter conditions.

CM Balochistan Praises CTD Operation in Pishin

News Desk:

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has lauded the timely and effective operation conducted by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in Pishin district, stating that law enforcement agencies are carrying out their responsibilities with professionalism and firm resolve to ensure peace and stability across the province.

In a statement, the chief minister paid tribute to the bravery and dedication of CTD personnel who were injured during the exchange of fire, and extended his best wishes for their early recovery.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that CTD Balochistan and police personnel remain on the front lines of the fight against terrorism and are taking every possible step to safeguard the lives and property of citizens.

He noted that the recovery of a rocket launcher, submachine guns, and explosive material during the operation clearly indicated that the terrorists were involved in efforts to undermine peace and had links with banned outfits.

The chief minister reiterated that the provincial government considers peace its highest priority and has issued clear directives to law enforcement agencies to continue indiscriminate action under a zero-tolerance policy against terrorism.

He expressed satisfaction that the operation was carried out while maintaining the writ of the state and ensuring the protection of the civilian population. Mir Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that there is no room in Balochistan for terrorists, their facilitators, or their networks, adding that counter-terrorism operations will continue with full force until sustainable peace is achieved. He said all attempts to destabilize the province will be thwarted with the support of the public.

He further stressed that the protection of the lives and property of the people of Balochistan remains the government's foremost and non-negotiable responsibility.

Punjab CM gives 30 days for installing fire hydrants in commercial, high-rise buildings across province

NEWS DESK:

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Tuesday instructed deputy commissioners (DCs) to ensure the installation of fire hydrants in all commercial and high-rise buildings across the province within 30 days.

She issued these directives at a provincial cabinet meeting in Lahore — which was broadcast live on television — three days after a fire at a hotel in the provincial capital's Gulberg area claimed three lives. Seven people sustained burn injuries in the incident, while 275 staff members and guests were safely evacuated from the hotel. Following the incident, Maryam also directed the DCs — who attended the cabinet meeting — to ensure that all under-construction buildings had fire safety systems installed before work was completed.

"Make sure that all the safety equipment is functional as well," she emphasized.

The chief minister further instructed that the prices of fire

Heavy Snowfall: Army Rescues Stranded People, Restores Roads in Balochistan and KP

News Desk:

Quetta/Peshawar: In view of severe snowfall across various areas of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Pakistan Army has launched timely and effective rescue and relief operations. Despite extremely harsh weather conditions, Pakistan Army personnel remain actively engaged in providing relief to affected populations.

Control centers have been established in Hoshi, Ziarat, Bolan, Zhob, Qila Saifullah, Khojak, Top, Lak Pass, Dukki, Kolpur, and Muslim Bagh to coordinate rescue efforts during the ongoing snow emergency.

Pakistan Army troops and rescue teams are evacuating stranded local residents and tourists from snowbound areas. Rescued individuals are being provided with food, medical assistance, and other essential supplies.

The Pakistan Army reaffirmed its readiness to provide continuous relief to the public during severe weather emergencies.

Meanwhile, in District Kurram, heavy rainfall and un-



precedented snowfall prompted large-scale relief and rescue operations by security forces. An immediate emergency response was initiated to assist the local population and restore ground connectivity.

Using heavy machinery and manpower effectively, all affected roads were fully cleared and re-

opened. The restoration of key land routes ensured the resumption of essential supply chains, enabling access to food markets and healthcare facilities for local residents. Pakistan Army personnel cleared snow from highways and safely relocated stranded passengers and vehicles to secure locations. As a result of these

professional and coordinated efforts, critical road networks were restored, significantly easing public hardship. Despite extreme weather and challenging terrain, Pakistan Army officers and soldiers are personally supervising relief operations on the ground. In Tirah Valley, troops continue rescue activities despite intense

snowfall, prioritizing civilian safety. Local residents have widely appreciated the timely response and dedicated efforts of the security forces. The Pakistan Army remains steadfast in its commitment to safeguarding lives and property and providing immediate assistance during natural disasters and emergencies.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Balochistan's Climate Fund – A Lifeline Against Growing Disasters



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

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

communities, and deepens poverty.

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

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

The Battle Cannot Be Fought Alone

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

and environmental governance, should be a top priority.

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

Balochistan has shown leadership by creating this Climate Fund.

The next step is to ensure that it does not become another underutilized policy initiative. Effective monitoring, independent political involvement will be key to making it a success.

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

Balochistan's Education Crisis: Beyond Numbers and Empty Promises

Syed Ali Shah Analysis:
The Balochistan government's claim that around 45,000 children have returned to schools is being pre-

mismanagement, and hollow commitments by successive provincial governments.

For years, education in Balochistan has been treated more as

open skies or abandon education altogether. Shelterless schools are not an exception but a norm across vast parts of the province.

Equally alarming

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

The return of

government is serious about change, it must move beyond statements and statistics. Massive investment in school infrastructure, transparent teacher



sented as a major breakthrough in addressing the province's deep-rooted education crisis.

While any increase in enrollment deserves acknowledgment, 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,

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, forcing children to study under

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

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

Reviewing recruitment processes is

45,000 children to 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

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.

Artificial Intelligence Just Taking Baby Steps

Syed Muhammad Qaseem:

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

Every invention had various positive and negative impacts on human civilization. According to Google's CEO, Sundar Pichai "AI will have a more profound impact on human beings than fire, electricity, and the internet". This innovation also has both positive and negative impacts on human beings. If it is left unchecked it will have adverse impacts on human creativity, the job market, and the flow of information. However, the positive use of AI will bring major advancements in medical science, education, agriculture, etc. In the following paragraphs, the impacts of AI on humans are described.

Negative Impacts of AI:

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

Deep Fakes Through Generative AI:

In the age of information technology,

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

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

AI's use in War:

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

for the balance of power. Hence, like nuclear weapons, AI will further worsen security dilemmas if used for the purpose of war.

AI is a Major Threat to Human Creativity

Creativity is a unique characteristic of human beings due to which they bring development, prosperity, modernization, and enliven in their lives.

Man-made intelligence is growing so

all these tasks. Due to the lazy and comfort-seeking nature of human beings, now they mostly rely on AI to perform these tasks. With the passage of time AI is learning more skills and human's reliance on AI is further increasing. This increase in reliance on AI will cause the death of creativity in humans.

AI and Job Market:

AI is coming to take your job". This news was seen on

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

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

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

Boosting Agriculture Through AI:

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

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

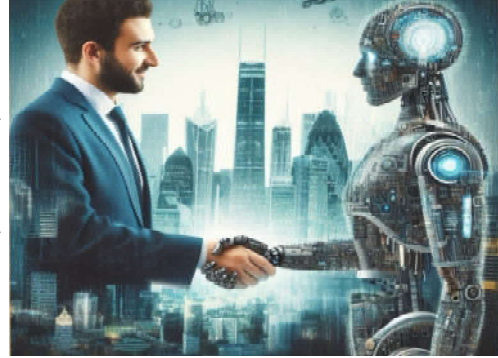
Recommendations for the Pakistani Government

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

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

Conclusion

In conclusion, AI nevertheless advantageous, poses a grave threat to human civilization. If AI is left unchecked, it can spread misinformation through deep fakes, worsen the status quo of security dilemmas, cause the death of human creativity, and take jobs. So, all countries should sit on a single platform and form laws to control the development and introduction of AI tools in public space. In addition, AI companies should include a watermark to the content generated through AI to cope with misinformation. In the end, AI will be more hazardous if it gets consciousness and moves physically freely without being dependant on humans.



rapidly that it has posed a grave threat to the mankind. With only a few clicks and in some seconds, an AI program can write a book, a novel, a poem, an assignment and an article. Furthermore, it can sing a song, draw a painting, solve a problem, and make a prediction. On the other side, it takes much effort and time for a human to do

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

code and find errors in it. To sum up, AI has much potential to replace the human workforce.

Positive Impacts of AI:

Along with negative impacts, AI can also be advantageous for humans if used for welfare purposes. In the following paragraphs, some advantages of AI are described if AI is used

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

Prediction Based on Provided Data:

Humans remain



Federal Constitutional Court upholds super tax

NEWS DESK: Accepting the authority of Parliament to legislate on imposing taxes, the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) on Tuesday upheld the vices of the super tax, which means that Section 4-B of the Income Tax Ordinance (ITO) will remain in force.

A three-member bench, headed by FCC Chief Justice Aminuddin Khan and also including Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, announced the ruling in the anticipated short order.

The short order was announced in the afternoon after a brief hearing in the morning, when the FCC reserved its ruling with an observation that the verdict would be issued today. The detailed judgment will follow later.

The FCC had taken up 225 connected matters, including 71 intra-court appeals (ICAs) that were transferred to it after the passage of the 27th Constitutional Amendment.

The tax was initially imposed by the

PML-N government in 2015 as a one-time measure under a money bill, with the stated purpose of rehabilitating areas affected during Operation Zarb-i-Azab against terrorists.

It applies to wealthy individuals, associations of persons and companies earning above Rs500 million. It levies a tax rate of 4 per cent on the income of banking companies and 3 per cent on other sectors, aimed at funding the rehabilitation of "temporarily displaced persons" as per Section 4-B of ITO.

Subsequently, different appeals were instituted against the judgments of the Sindh, Lahore and Islamabad high courts regarding the levy of super tax through Section 4-B.

On Tuesday, the FCC rejected earlier high court rulings that had declared the super tax "discriminatory" and declared that the levy was validly imposed.

It also observed that Section 4-B (super tax for rehabilitation

Sindh cabinet approves compensation package for families of Gul Plaza victims

NEWS DESK: The Sindh Cabinet on Tuesday approved the relief and rehabilitation package — announced last week — for the families of the victims of the Gul Plaza inferno in Karachi, which includes Rs10 million as financial compensation.

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah had earlier announced the compensation on January 19.

The deadly inferno, which erupted on the night of January 17 at the mall and took nearly two days to be fully extinguished, has claimed at least 73 lives and left over 1,100 shops in ruins.

After nine days of scouring through the rubble to locate remains of the dead and missing, the search operation concluded on Sunday.

According to a press release issued by the Chief Minister's House today, during the meeting, the cabinet expressed grief over the loss of lives in the Gul Plaza tragedy and approved Rs10m for the families of the deceased, along with the

Rs10m "interest-free loans" for shopkeepers affected by the devastating blaze.

The chief minister held that "there can be no compromise on human life. Relief, justice, and prevention must go hand in hand."

In addition, Rs500,000 per shopkeeper will be provided as immediate subsistence support to cover household and utility expenses," the statement added.

During the cabinet meeting, Sindh CM also directed that "alternative commercial spaces be provided within two months to enable shopkeepers to resume their businesses."

The provincial cabinet also approved the constitution of a high-level subcommittee — including ministers Sharjeel Inam Memon, Nasir Hussain Shah, Saeed Ghani, and Ziaul Hassan Janjani — whose responsibility will be to review the inquiry committee's report on the incident.

"No negligence will be overlooked. Those found responsible will be held ac-

No question of military operation in Tirah, govt says

NEWS DESK: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on Tuesday that there was no question of a military operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Tirah Valley, whose residents have been vacating their houses in recent days amid concerns about a military action against terrorists.

Asif made these remarks during a press conference in Islamabad, where he was flanked by Information Minister Attaulah Tarar and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Information and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Affairs Ikhtiar Wali Khan.

The press conference was held two days after the federal and provincial governments traded barbs over who would lead the evacuation process.

The evacuations, which were carried out in line with a plan agreed upon by all stakeholders — including local elders, the provincial government and the military — seem to have become a bone of contention after the displaced populace found themselves stranded in cold weather under open skies, with



mismanagement by the authorities only adding to their troubles.

At the outset of the press conference, he said members of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan had been residing in Tirah with their families. "They are around 400-500 in number," he said.

The defence minister further stated that the provincial government had approved a package of Rs4 billion for the people of Tirah Valley, who were to migrate. "The armed forces deployed in that area have nothing to do with it. This is an arrange-

ment between the jirga and the provincial government, and as a result of that, this notification was issued," he added.

On Sunday, a statement by the information ministry also referred to the same notification by the KP Relief, Rehabilitation and Resettlement department for the release of funds, reportedly Rs4 billion, for the anticipated temporary and voluntary movement of the population from certain localities of Tirah (Bagh). These funds were seemingly re-

quired for relief-related arrangements for those leaving Tirah.

The statement also asserted that the armed forces of the federal government had not issued any orders for the "depopulation" of Tirah.

It claimed that the federal government and the armed forces did not ask anyone to leave their homes for an operation, adding that intelligence-based operations (IBOs) being conducted by the forces in the area did not require "de-population or migration".

During the press conference, Asif also said that a military opera-

tion in the area had been carried out years ago. "And it was strategically decided then that IBOs are way more effective than operations; the collateral damage is way less. So, the armed forces have not carried out an operation since years in favour of the IBOs," he said.

The minister added, "This is why this practice has been ongoing there for many years, and that is why there is no question of any operation there."

Moreover, the minister continued, migration in the valley was a routine practice. He also criticised the KP government's performance, highlighting a lack of hospitals, schools and police stations in the valley. "Even though, it had been agreed between the provincial government and the jirga that hospitals, police stations and girls' schools will be established there," The minister claimed that there was a "complete absence of civilian law enforcement agencies" in Tirah. "There is no police station there," he added.

President okays seven bills, heads to United Arab Emirates (UAE)



NEWS DESK: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday gave assent to the seven bills passed by parliament, including some controversial bills, turning them into laws, before leaving for the United Arab Emirates on an official tour.

Last month, the president had returned the bills unsigned when they were passed by the Senate and the National Assembly.

According to the Presidency, the approved legislation includes The National Tariff Commission Bill, 2026; the Export Development Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2026; the Transfer of Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2026; the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2026; the Daanish Schools Authority Bill, 2026; Domestic Violence Bill, 2026; and the Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

Although the domestic violence bill was introduced by a law-maker from his own party, MNA Sharmila Faruqi, the president refused to sign it in December apparently considering the objections raised by the Jamaat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F). Similarly, the human rights bill was also opposed by the JUI-F.

About the Daanish

schools bill, the PPP was

of the opinion that education was a provincial subject and the centre should not lay a network of Daanish schools across the country.

The PML-N addressed the PPP concern before tabling the bill in the joint session.

After signing the seven bills, President Zardari, accompanied by a high-level delegation,

left for the UAE on an official visit from Jan 26 to Jan 29.

During the visit, the president would hold high-level meetings with the UAE's leadership to review the full spectrum of bilateral ties, especially in the domains of trade and economic partnership, defence and security, and people-to-people ties.

The discussions would also focus on regional and international issues of mutual interest, the Foreign Office spokesperson said.

"The visit of the President is a direct consequence of the recent visit of the President of the UAE to Pakistan, reflects the deep brotherly ties between the two nations and reaffirms commitment to transforming the bond of friendship between Pakistan and the UAE into a mutually rewarding partnership," he added.

PTI says Imran suffering from eye ailment that could lead to permanent damage if not treated promptly

NEWS DESK: The PTI on Tuesday again raised concerns about the health of incarcerated party founder Imran Khan, saying it had learned through credible reports that the ex-prime minister was suffering from an ailment that could cause permanent damage to his eyesight if not treated promptly.

In a statement released on the social media platform X, the party demanded that Imran be allowed an "unrestricted meeting" with his family and associates. It also demanded that he be allowed medical treatment at a hospital of his own choice.

The statement said the party had learnt through credible media reports that Imran had been diagnosed with central retinal vein occlusion in his right eye, "resulting in a dangerous blockage in the retinal vein".

"According to medical experts who reportedly checked him in jail, this is an extremely sensitive and serious medical condition which, if not treated promptly and properly, carries a high risk of permanent damage to his eyesight," the party said.

"Despite this, the jail administration is stubbornly insisting that the treatment be carried out inside the jail, while the attending specialist doctor has clearly stated that such treatment is not possible in jail and that it requires an open theatre and specialised medical facilities,"



the party said, adding that this "reckless attitude" put Imran's vision and his overall health in grave danger.

It said that Imran was last granted access to his personal physician in October 2024, who had not been allowed to examine him since then, despite order issued by the Islamabad High Court.

This is a blatant violation of court orders and a gross breach of fundamental human rights. Moreover, a petition regarding Imran Khan's regular medical check-ups has been pending since August 2025, which is being deliberately ignored. The government's conduct clearly demonstrates that, in its obsession with political vendetta, it is willing to gamble with the life and health of a prisoner," the party said.

It demanded that Imran be immediately allowed an unrestricted meeting with his family and close associates so that the "public may be reassured about his condition".

"We also demand that he be allowed with

out delay to Shaikat Khanum Hospital or to any other reputable hospital of his own choice, where he will receive proper treatment under the supervision of qualified specialists with full medical facilities. We strongly appeal to the judiciary to treat this as a matter of health and human life, not politics, and to ensure that no negligence or delay is allowed in his medical care," it said.

The statement said that if there was permanent damage to Imran's eyesight, the government and the Adiala jail administration would be responsible as they were "obstructing his treatment despite clear medical advice and court orders".

PTI MNAs filed fresh plea for meeting

Imran

Separately, PTI MNA arrives at the IHC to file a fresh petition seeking permission to meet Imran. PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, along with MNAs Ali Muhammad Khan, Sherjeel Inam, Akram Raja, Amir Dogar, Ali Asghar Khan and Shahzada Gustasp among others, appeared at the IHC court premises and completed the biometric verification to submit their application.

Speaking to the media outside the IHC, Gohar said that Tuesday was the designated day for meetings with Imran. He said that the party leadership had approached the IHC chief justice multiple times but had not been granted a meeting.

He added that a letter signed by PTI MNAs was being submitted to the IHC chief justice, requesting that meetings with the PTI founder and

Bushra Bibi be scheduled in accordance with the law and court orders. The PTI chairman also expressed concern over the health of both Imran and his wife, Bushra Bibi, stressing that meeting a prisoner was a fundamental legal right and should not be politicised.

Gohar reiterated that PTI's mandate had been "robbed" and reiterated the opposition's nationwide protest call for February 8, including a wheel-jam and shutter-down strike, calling on shopkeepers and transporters to participate.

PTI Secretary General Raja said that the youth's right to vote had been snatched. He called for a peaceful protest and expressed concern over reports that Imran was suffering from an eye problem. He added that the party would raise these concerns with the IHC chief justice.

Separately, Additional District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka extended interim bail to Imran in five additional cases related to May 9 and to Bushra Bibi in a fake receipts case related to the Toshakhana.

The PTI founder could not be presented before the court, either physically or via video link, due to which arguments could not be concluded. The court ordered that he be presented at the next hearing and extended interim bail until February 6.

Punjab CM approves setting up of Stroke Management Centres in all districts

LAHORE (INP) Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved the establishment of Stroke Management Centres in every district of the province to ensure timely and effective treatment for

stroke patients. The chief minister has given in-principle approval for the deployment of neurologists and paediatric neurologists at all DHO hospitals. In addition, one doctor and one nurse from each district

will be provided three months of specialised stroke management training on an urgent basis. Maryam Nawaz also directed the immediate launch of a telemedicine project for stroke patients, enabling

doctors at district hospitals to seek instant guidance from specialists and consultants via telephone for emergency treatment. The chief minister ordered the initiation of a nurses' training programme for

stroke management centres and the launch of a public awareness campaign on stroke prevention and timely treatment. She stressed the critical importance of "golden hours" in stroke care and said she would

personally lead the awareness campaign. She further announced that stroke management centres will also be established in every children's hospital across Punjab, adding that no patient should be

forced to travel to major cities for treatment. During a special meeting, PIMS neurologist Dr Qasim Bashir briefed the chief minister on the stroke management programme, highlighting that one in four people

over the age of 25 is at risk of stroke. He emphasised that awareness and training for pre-hospital, hospital, and post-hospital stroke care are essential to reduce mortality and long-term disability.



Islamabad: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Chinese Brands lead Pakistan's Mobile Manufacturing to 30.2M Units

ISLAMABAD (INP) Pakistan's local mobile phone manufacturing and assembling sector continued its rapid expansion in 2025, while commercially imported handsets dropped sharply. Gwadar Pro reported quoting new data released by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA).

The regulator's latest Mobile Device Manufacturing indicators show that local assembly and manufacturing reached 30.21 million units in 2025, compared with just 2.37 million commercially imported phones, underscoring a decisive shift toward domestic production.

The PTA's data suggests that Pakistan's handset ecosystem has undergone a structural transformation over the past decade.

Local manufacturing rose from just 0.29 million units in 2016 to 17.72 million in 2017, 5.2 million in 2018, and 11.74 million in 2019,

before accelerating to 13.05 million in 2020 and 24.66 million in 2021. Output remained above 21 million units in both 2022 and 2023, surged to a record 31.38 million in 2024, and eased slightly to 30.21 million in 2025, while commercial imports collapsed from more than 21 million units in 2016 to near historic lows in recent years.

The figures mark another milestone for Pakistan's import-substitution drive. As recently as 2020, commercial imports stood at more than 24 million units, while local manufacturing was limited to about 13 million. By 2021, domestic output had overtaken imports, and the gap widened steadily since then.

The trend reflects the combined impact of PTA's Mobile Device Manufacturing (MDM) regulations, tighter controls under the Device Identification Registration and

Blocking System (DIRBS), and incentives aimed at encouraging global brands to assemble devices locally.

Chinese brands dominate Pakistan's locally manufactured handset market. PTA's latest "Top 10 Brands" charts show Transion Holdings' Infinix leading local production in 2025 with about 3.65 million units, followed closely by Vivo at roughly 2.8 million units, while other Chinese-backed brands such as itel, Tecno and Xiaomi's Redmi line also feature prominently among the top assembled devices.

Collectively, Chinese manufacturers account for a substantial share of Pakistan's locally produced smartphones, highlighting their central role in the country's handset value chain. PTA data shows the growing presence of Chinese brands has helped expand affordable smartphone

access while strengthening Pakistan's industrial base.

The momentum is also reflected in PTA's Annual Report, which is based on data available up to June, notes that by 2025 more than 95% of mobile devices used on Pakistani networks were locally manufactured, including 68% of all smartphones, a dramatic shift from reliance on imports just a few years ago.

The report adds that dozens of manufacturing authorizations have been issued to domestic and international players, positioning Pakistan as an emerging regional hub for handset assembly.

Beyond reducing pressure on foreign exchange reserves, the transition has supported job creation and technology transfer, while helping formalize the mobile market through tighter compliance and registration frameworks, according to Gwadar Pro.

Chinese tech delegation explores investment in Pakistan's AI industry

ISLAMABAD (INP) A two-member Chinese technology delegation from the Leviathan Group, specializing in big data centers, advanced digital solutions, smart technologies and emerging IT platforms called on Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

During the meeting, the delegation explored investment and cooperation opportunities in Pakistan's growing information technology sector, with a particular focus on artificial intelligence (AI).

The delegation comprised Sun MingQian, Chief Executive Officer of Leviathan Technologies, and Mei

Dinglin, Senior Representative of the Group.

According to Gwadar Pro, Khalid Taimur Akram, Adviser to the Chairman of HRL Group, told Gwadar Pro that Leviathan Group has expressed strong interest in investing in Pakistan's AI industry.

He said the company views Pakistan as a strategic destination due to its skilled IT workforce, expanding startup ecosystem, and the government's emphasis on digital transformation.

According to Akram, Leviathan Group is exploring opportunities to establish AI-driven data centres and research and development facilities in collabo-

ration with Pakistani public and private sector partners.

"The group is keen on long-term engagement and is evaluating investment models that support technology transfer,

local capacity building and skills development in advanced digital technologies," he said, adding that potential areas of cooperation include artificial intelligence applications in smart cities, e-governance, fintech, healthcare, agriculture and industrial automation.

During the meeting, the Chinese delegation discussed prospects for long-term partnerships, joint ventures and technology transfer, high-

lighting Pakistan's evolving digital ecosystem as a key driver of interest.

Welcoming the delegation, Shaza Fatima Khawaja reaffirmed the government's commitment to attracting foreign investment in the technology sector.

She highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen digital infrastructure, improve regulatory frameworks and create a business-friendly environment for international technology companies.

The minister also underscored Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's "Digital Nation Pakistan" vision to position the country as a regional hub for IT services and

Civil servants not bound to obey illegal orders: SC

ISLAMABAD (INP) Supreme Court Justice Hashim Kakar remarked on Tuesday in the OGDCL recruitment case that if the prime minister issues illegal orders, civil servants are not bound to comply with them.

A three-member bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Justice Hashim Kakar, heard the case regarding illegal recruitments in OGDCL (Oil and Gas Development Corporation Limited). The court directed the lawyers to come prepared for the case.

The counsel for NAB (National Accountability Bureau) submitted that the former minister Anwar Saifullah had asked the Chairman of OGDCL to issue appointment letters. According to him, the recruitment process should have been carried out through advertisements.

Justice Kakar remarked that this is not a monarchy where orders are simply issued, adding that there is overstaffing in every government institution. Justice Salahuddin Panwar said that the public asks ministers

for jobs.

The NAB counsel submitted that the minister's principal staff officer had written that there was parliamentary pressure regarding the jobs.

The counsel stated that if civil servants refuse to follow such orders, they may face serious consequences when Justice Kakar remarked that they were not bound to obey illegal orders by prime minister.

The NAB's representative added that PIA had to be privatized due to overstaffing. Justice Ishtiaq

Ibrahim remarked that those recruitments were made at a time when the accountability commission law did not exist.

Justice Ibrahim said that the federal minister has already served his sentence. Justice Kakar remarked that a stain of conviction still remains and questioned whether it was not enough that the minister had already completed his sentence.

Later, the counsel requested the court to dismiss the revision petition and uphold the original verdict.

Section 144 imposed in Lahore to ensure celebration of traditional Basant festival

LAHORE (INP) Local administration has imposed section 144 to ensure celebration of traditional Basant Festival without any untoward incident.

The kites with pictures of holy books, religious places, and any other prohibited items will be prohibited to keep religious and social harmony and maintain law and order during the festival, according to the government order.

The kites with the flag of a country, or a political party, will also be banned under the law. The authorities have also banned preparation, buying, selling and using kites carrying religious or political prints for 30 days under section 144.

During Basant using single or multicolor kites without any picture will be permissible under the law. Preparation of illegal kites, their storage, sale or use has been declared as a punishable offence. According to sources, there were apprehensions that the

miscreants could use religious and political symbols during the Basant festival.

The section 144 has come into effect forthwith and the law enforcement agencies have been directed to take action under the law.

The government of Punjab has given conditional permission to celebrate a secured Basant festival from February 06 to 08.

Deputy Commissioner Lahore has issued the Basant 2026 notification under the Punjab Kite-Flying Act 2025, recently passed by the Punjab Assembly.

The authorities have also planned various safety measures including installing safety nets and wire-protection systems on main roads to prevent accidents. Officials earlier said that the Basant festival will be allowed only under strict safety compliance to ensure a safe, festive atmosphere for Lahore's residents.

PMD forecasts more rain, snowfall in upper regions

ISLAMABAD (INP) The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast cloudy weather with intermittent rain, wind, and thunderstorms, along with snowfall over hilly areas, across several parts of the country during next 24 hours.

According to the PMD, rain-wind and thunderstorm with snowfall over hills is expected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir. Tourists have been advised to remain cautious and avoid unnecessary travel during the forecast period.

In Islamabad, cloudy weather with intermittent rain and wind-thunderstorms is expected.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, widespread snowfall over hills is likely, with heavy rain and moderate to heavy snow expected in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kalam, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Mansehra, and Abbottabad.

In Punjab, rain-wind and thunderstorm is forecast for Rawalpindi, Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Narowal, Jhelum, Chakwal, Attock, and surrounding areas, while Murree and Galliat may receive rain along with moderate to heavy snowfall. Most parts of Sindh are expected to remain cold and dry.



ISLAMABAD: Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani meeting Pir of Lauri Sharif, Pir Muhammad Sadiq Qureshi.

Fresh spell of rain in upper regions of Mansehra district continues

MANSEHRA (INP) A fresh spell of rain in the plain areas and intermittent snowfall in the upper regions of Mansehra district has continued since late last night, severely affecting normal life across the mountainous areas. According to officials, the mountains of Kaghan Valley, Siran Valley and Konsh Valley have been covered with a thick white blanket of snow. Heavy snowfall is ongoing at major tourist destinations including Shogran, Kaghan and Narain, where accumulation has increased significantly during the current spell.

In Shogran, more than one additional foot of snow has fallen during the latest snowfall, raising the total snow depth to over three feet. Kaghan Bazaar has also received nearly one and a half feet of snow, leading to disruption of routine activities and restricting the movement of residents who have largely remained confined to their homes due to severe cold and slippery conditions.

Snowfall has also caused the closure of several link roads in Siran Valley and

Konsh Valley. Areas including Chattr Plain, Battal, Jabbori, Sachan and Nawazabad have been cut off after heavy snow blocked access routes, creating difficulties for commuters and local communities. In Kaghan Valley, machinery of the Kaghan Development Authority (KDA) has been deployed to clear snow from Shogran Road and other important link roads to restore connectivity. On the instructions of Director General KDA, Rehmat Ali, staff along with heavy machinery have been stationed at sensitive points along the Kaghan Highway to provide guidance and assistance to both local residents and tourists. Meanwhile, the district administration has issued an advisory urging tourists and local residents in Kaghan Valley to avoid unnecessary travel in view of the prevailing weather conditions and the risk of further snowfall. Authorities have assured that the situation is being closely monitored and snow clearance and relief operations will continue as weather permits.



ISLAMABAD: A four member delegation of Transparency International headed by its Chair Mr. Francois Valerian held a meeting with Chairman NAB Lt Gen (R) Nazir Ahmed at NAB (HQ).

DIG Sibi Range Barkat Hussain Khoso Visits Kohlu on Two-Day Tour, Reviews Law and Order Situation

KOHLU: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, Sibi Range, Barkat Hussain Khoso arrived in Kohlu on a two-day official visit, where he was given a warm welcome by Superintendent of Police (SP) Kohlu Muhammad Tayyab Iqbal.

A smartly turned-out police contingent presented a guard of honour on his arrival. DIG Barkat Hussain Khoso chaired an important law and order meeting at the SP Office Kohlu.

During the meeting, SP Muhammad Tayyab Iqbal gave a detailed briefing on the overall security situation of the district. Senior officials from the Intelligence Bureau (IB), Counter Terror-



ism Department (CTD) and other relevant departments were also present, where a comprehensive review of the district's security and policing arrangements was conducted.

Later, the DIG visited Police Lines, Shaheed Muhammad Aslam, where he laid floral wreaths at the Martyrs' Memorial to

pay tribute to police martyrs. SP Kohlu Muhammad Tayyab Iqbal and DSP Sher Muhammad Marri gave the DIG a detailed tour of the police lines, including vehicles, weapons, residential barracks and offices, and provided a comprehensive briefing.

Addressing police

personnel who were recently merged into the police force, DIG Barkat Hussain Khoso said that Kohlu Police will be further organized and strengthened on professional lines to ensure the protection of life and property of the citizens.

He acknowledged that officers and personnel of the former

Levies Force in Kohlu played a key role in restoring peace and order, and assured that all available resources would be utilized to maintain their morale.

The DIG emphasized that with the abolition of

A and B areas, restoration of peace and effective policing has become the top priority.

He stated that sustainable peace is not possible without restoring public trust and harmony between police and the community.

At the end of the ceremony, DSP Sher Muhammad Marri presented a traditional Balochi staff and cap to DIG Barkat Hussain Khoso as a token of respect.

Historic Decision: Women Police Officers Appointed to Key Positions in Naseerabad Range

QUETTA: Dr. Rababah Khan Baloch, the Advisor to the Chief Minister of Balochistan on Women's Development, expressed great pleasure and satisfaction over the historic decision to appoint women police officers to key positions in all districts of the Naseerabad Range. In a statement, Dr. Rababah Khan Baloch welcomed this decision, describing it as a major milestone in the empowerment of women in Balochistan's police force.

The decision to appoint women officers to crucial roles, such as Complaint Officers, Assistant Clerks, and Computer Operators in various police stations is seen as a testament to the provincial government's complete trust in women's abilities. Dr. Rababah emphasized that these appointments will create a safer, more dignified, and trust-filled environment for both female officers and citizens seeking assistance.

Highlighting the significance of this development, Dr. Rababah stated that women police officers will now be able to address issues such as domestic violence and general public concerns in a more sensitive and effective manner.

This, she added, would make it easier for female citizens to seek justice and support. Dr. Rababah also noted that this decision clearly demonstrates that the potential of Balochistan's daughters is not confined to the four walls of their homes. She expressed confidence that these women officers, in their uniforms, will work alongside their male counterparts to maintain law and order.

Deputy Commissioner Musa Khel Meets District Chairman to Discuss Ongoing Development Projects



MUSA KHEL: A key meeting was held today between Deputy Commissioner (DC) Musa Khel, Abdul Razzaq Khajak, and District Chairman Alam Khan Musa Khel, with Assistant Commissioner Najibullah Kakar also in attendance.

The discussion primarily focused on the ongoing development projects in the district and strategies for improving the quality of work. District Chairman Alam Khan emphasized the need for

a structured approach to ensure better quality and oversight of all ongoing development schemes. He stressed the importance of regular supervision to maintain high standards and suggested taking immediate actions for improving public health, sanitation, and the provision of clean drinking water.

In the meeting, the Chairman also highlighted the necessity for all district department heads to maintain consistent attendance

to align with the provincial government's vision of providing justice and essential services directly to the people's doorstep. Responding to the concerns, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq Khajak assured the District Chairman that the vision of the government of Balochistan would be followed and implemented rigorously. He confirmed that there would be no compromise on the quality of development work or the wel-

fare of the public. The District Chairman expressed his gratitude to the Deputy Commissioner and extended his best wishes for continued collaboration towards the district's progress. Musa Khel, Deputy Commissioner, District Chairman, development projects, Balochistan government, public services, clean drinking water, sanitation, district administration, Abdul Razzaq Khajak, Alam Khan Musa Khel.

Commissioner Kalat Division Emphasizes Tree Plantation Campaign and Environmental Protection in Khuzdar

KHUZDAR: Dr. Tufail Baloch, Commissioner of Kalat Division, has called for ensuring the provision of an adequate number of saplings in proportion to the area and population during the upcoming tree plantation campaign. He made this statement during his visit to the Forestry Department's nursery in Sun, Khuzdar, accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Khuzdar, Abdul Razzaq Soofi.

During the visit, District Forest Officer Khuzdar, Owais Akbar Zehri, gave a detailed briefing on the different species of plants, their numbers, and their care at the nursery. The meeting was attended by forestry department officials and staff.



Dr. Tufail Baloch inspected the arrangements at the nursery and instructed that the number of saplings be increased to ensure the area and population ratio is met during the upcoming plantation drive. He emphasized that effective preparation is essential to make the tree plantation campaign a success. The Commissioner stressed the im-

portance of tree planting, noting that trees play a critical role in restoring environmental balance, combating global warming, balancing the earth's temperature, improving rainfall systems, and mitigating the damage caused by natural disasters.

Dr. Tufail also directed forestry officials to raise public awareness about tree planting and urged the inclusion of educational institutions, government departments, and local communities in the campaign. He expressed his commitment that the Government of Balochistan is taking significant steps for environmental protection, and the performance of the Forestry Department will be further enhanced in this regard.

Deputy Commissioner Ziarat Visits DHQ Hospital, Emphasizes on Ensuring Health Centers' Full Functionality

ZIARAT: In a surprise late-night visit to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital in Ziarat, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Qudus Achakzai conducted a thorough inspection of the healthcare facility's operations. He was accompanied by Assistant Commissioner Sajad-ur-Rehman Koro during the

visit, which aimed to ensure that health services in the region are fully operational. The Deputy Commissioner meticulously checked the attendance of doctors and paramedics, inspected the hospital wards, and evaluated the availability of medicines and essential facilities.

Furthermore, the Deputy Commissioner announced that surprise inspections of Basic Health Units (BHUs) in rural areas will be conducted regularly. Any cases of absenteeism or neglect will be dealt with sternly, with disciplinary actions for those responsible. In his concluding remarks, Deputy Commissioner Achakzai reiterated the district administration's commitment to resolving health center issues.

He emphasized that maintaining the operational status of health centers is the top priority of the district administration. Speaking to hospital staff, Deputy Commissioner Achakzai made it clear that the attendance of doctors and medical staff is non-negotiable. He stressed that absenteeism would not be tolerated under any circumstances and warned that strict action would be taken against any personnel found negligent in their duties.

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10	آب و برق	10	ب-10
11	آب و برق	11	ب-11
12	آب و برق	12	ب-12

TENDER NOTICE

THE BALOCHISTAN INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY & BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE QUETTA invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items: TSE-252601958442. Only electronic bid will be submitted. No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA-GOB. Tender Fee: 1,000 PKR.

1. Scope of Project: Bid Security: 2%

Procurement shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: (i) Assignment of Similar Nature and Complexity Worth PKR. 15,000,000 Million each in Previous 05 Years Accumulated Turn over of at least PKR. 10,000,000 Million (ii) Subsequent Previous Years Performance in Active Tax Payer List (BPPRA) Registration Certificate The bidding form must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Procurement of Procurement Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedures Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid in the form of Deposit at Call of 2% specified above in the name of the undersigned from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gov.pk. Issuance of tender documents: Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gov.pk. Last Date of bid submission: Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 12 February, 2026 10:30 AM through supplier dashboard. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at 1:30 PM at PPFPS System Address: Brewery Road, Quetta.

Phone no: 0919213092 Fax no: 091921394

Email: procure@bpps.gov.pk

Executive Director
BALOCHISTAN INSTITUTE OF
PSYCHIATRY & BEHAVIOURAL
SCIENCE QUETTA

Continuous Snowfall in Chaman: Road Clearance Operations Underway, DC Appeals for Caution

CHAMAN: The heavy snowfall that began last night continues to blanket the entire Chaman region, causing disruption in road traffic.

The district administration, PDMA, and NHA have been working tirelessly to clear the roads, particularly the Quetta-Chaman highway, including both sides of the Kordik Top.

The clearance operations are ongoing as teams utilize heavy machinery to restore normal traffic flow.

During the operation, the district administration and concerned agencies received praise for their quick and efficient work.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Chaman commended the officers and staff involved in the road clearance efforts, recognizing their dedication and hard work.

In a statement, the



DC emphasized that ensuring the safety and smooth movement of the public is the district administration's top priority.

He reassured the public that all available resources are being mobilized to restore essential services and maintain road safety during the adverse weather conditions.

In addition, DC Chaman appealed to the citizens to stay home and avoid unnecessary travel. He warned that the icy conditions on roads and mountains increase the risk of vehicles slipping, making travel hazardous.

The DC urged everyone to prioritize safety and refrain from non-essential travel until conditions improve. Chaman, snowfall, road clearance, Quetta-Chaman highway, PDMA, NHA, Kordik Top, road safety, district administration, DC Chaman, heavy machinery, traffic flow, winter weather, public safety.

PAKISTAN AIRPORTS AUTHORITY (PAA)

پاکستان ایئرپورٹس اتھارٹی

TENDER NOTICE

1. Bids are invited in accordance with PPA Rule No. 36(A) from eligible contractors/firms having experience/resources and valid registration with PEC (C-5 category) and FIR as per eligibility criteria mentioned in bidding documents for the following work:

S#	Name of Work	Estimated Money	Date and time of submission	Date and time of opening
01	INSTALLATION OF PARKING SHEDS AT DIFFERENT LOCATIONS OF NEW QUETTA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT QUETTA	Rs. 3,500,000/-	17th February, 2026 11:00 am	17th February, 2026 11:30 am

2. Bids must be submitted electronically as per conditions set out in Bidding documents and guidelines provided by PAA available on PAA E-BID System (http://procurement.paa.gov.pk) before closing time & date.

3. Tender submitted without required earnest money or whose earnest money is not received prior to closing time of bid will not be entertained. Earnest money should be in the shape of Pay order/Bank Draft of any schedule Bank drawn in favour of "CAA Works Unit (Makran Coastal Area)".

4. For Eligibility, firms must also have experience of having successfully executed (i) similar nature works (fabrication/shed sheds, etc.) or civil works amounting to Rs. 2 million or more during last 05 years.

5. PAA reserves all the rights to accept or reject any or all the tenders for sufficient and cogent reasons which will be communicated to bidder on request.

6. The bids of contractors having unsatisfactory performance/ delays in ongoing works will be liable to be rejected.

WARNING: Pay Order / Bank Drafts or any other financial instruments to be submitted by Bidders and Contractors as "Tender Cost, Earnest Money / Bid Security" shall be forfeited in full or in part (as determined by having bank / financial institution at any pre / post contract stage of the case, would call for liquidating and legal action on per law of the land".

DIVISIONAL ENGINEER E(S) CIVIL MAKRAK
NGAP Quetta
Address: Divisional Engr E(Civil), Makran Division, NGAP Quetta | Telephone: 065-300106 | PDDK01954/25

شماره 12

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PRO No. 3496/27-01-2026

PRO No. 3491/27-01-2026

PRO No. 3491/27-01-2026

Industry slams State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) 'penal' rate policy

NEWS DESK: While seeking a single-digit interest rate, businessmen have rejected the State Bank's decision to maintain interest rates at 10.50 per cent, terming it disappointing and counterproductive at a time when industrial revival and a boost in exports are the need of the hour.

The SBP's cautious approach is baffling, given the ground realities - with core inflation stabilised at around 5 per cent over the past many months and major economic indicators pointing to the need for growth. However, the status quo in interest rates at 10.5pc will continue to hamper the industry's access to finance, local businessmen said.

In contrast, Overseas Investors Chambers of Commerce and Industry Secretary General M. Abdul Aleem told Dawn that the State Bank's decision to retain the interest rate without a prudent reduction may have surprised many who were looking for a minor cut.

However, these decisions made on economic fundamentals, not on the wishes of some key stakeholders, he said, adding that the economy is doing reasonably well. Still, some challenges and opportunities may have led to no change in the decision.

"We support the State



Bank's decision," Aleem concluded.

Leaders criticise central bank for ignoring calls for a single-digit rate to revive economy.

Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) President Atif Ikram Sheikh stated that the business community had categorically demanded a substantive reduction of 350 basis points in order to bring the

policy rate down to 7pc to kickstart the economy immediately, as the industry is currently battling an existential crisis due to exorbitant energy tariffs and high borrowing costs.

Holding the interest rate would not help move the needle on the cost of doing business, he said, reiterating that the high cost of capital is the primary driver of industrial closures and the inability

of Pakistani exporters to compete globally.

If the monetary policy is not aggressively corrected in the following review to reach single digits, the target for export growth and industrial expansion for the fiscal year will remain elusive," Atif warned.

FPCCI Senior Vice President Saqib Fayaz Magoon said the

real interest rate in Pakistan remains unsustainably high compared to regional competitors.

Keeping the policy rate at double-digit levels is unjustified given that inflation has receded.

This State Bank's decision would continue to penalise the private sector, restricting access to finance for SMEs and hampering export com-

petitiveness. The SBP has missed a crucial opportunity to align monetary policy with the government's vision for industrial growth and export facilitation, he added.

President of the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), Muhammad Ikram Rajput, said in view of the inflation rate and declining exports, there was sufficient

room for at least a one-percentage-point reduction in the policy rate. Still, the central bank opted for an overly cautious approach.

The decision, he said, appeared to align more with expectations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) than domestic economic realities, he said, questioning the State Bank's projected economic growth forecast of 3.75-

4.75pc, terming it inconsistent with ground realities.

Mr Rajput stressed that sustainable economic growth is not possible without promoting industrialisation. A persistent increase in imports coupled with a decline in exports has put the survival of industries at risk.

President of the SITE Association of Industry (SAI), Ahmed Azeem Alvi, said the State Bank Governor himself has acknowledged that exports have declined while imports have risen. This clearly shows that keeping interest rates high has stalled economic progress.

He argued that this was the right time to take a chance and reduce the policy rate by at least one to 150bps.

Timely decisions could benefit businesses, boost exports, and support overall economic growth. Expressing regret, Mr Alvi noted that Pakistan had failed to learn from regional countries and had not capitalised on opportunities presented by global exhibitions.

Pakistan Chemical and Dyes Merchants Association Chairman Salim Valimuddin said commercial importers warned that the move would further strain businesses and delay economic recovery.

Railways sets up one-window facility for investors

NEWS DESK: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi on Monday inaugurated a Business Facilitation Centre at Pakistan Railways Headquarters in Lahore, aimed at improving freight, logistics and commercial operations through a one-window facilitation mechanism.

According to an official statement, the minister said the centre had been established to ensure faster decision-making, greater convenience and enhanced transparency for investors and business entities engaging with Paki-

stan Railways. He said the initiative was designed to provide prompt guidance and swift handling of commercial matters related to freight, logistics and partnerships.

Abbasi said individuals and organisations conducting business with Pakistan Railways would be treated as business partners rather than clients. He added that visitors to the Business Facilitation Centre would be received without delay and assisted by a designated officer to avoid waiting time.

The minister said

the centre would function as a central point of contact for commercial engagement, freight operations and logistics-related coordination. He described the initiative as part of efforts to modernise business practices within Pakistan Railways and improve transparency in commercial decision-making.

Abbasi said the establishment of the centre was expected to contribute to increased revenue generation and strengthen private sector confidence in Pakistan Railways' commercial operations.



Rs15bn tax rebate splits rice exporters

NEWS DESK: At a time when rice exports are steadily declining, the Ministry of Commerce has allocated around Rs15 billion for a rebate scheme on local taxes and levies for rice exporters, raising concerns about a potential rise in domestic prices.

Exporters remain divided over the government's decision, which has been presented as a support measure for the sector. Several industry players, however, argue that the move fails to address the structural problems confronting rice exports and instead risks shifting the burden onto domestic consumers.

Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) Chairman Faisal Jahangir told Dawn that the Drawback on Local Taxes and Levies (DLTL) scheme would help lower export prices and improve Pakistan's ability to compete with global suppliers. He said Indian rice was currently being offered at significantly lower prices, making it difficult for Pakistani exporters to maintain their foothold in international markets.

Critics warn move could push up domestic

prices, benefit stockists.

Mr Jahangir said the rebate would help exporters maintain market share amid intense competition, adding that the support was intended to ease cost pressures faced by the industry. He rejected concerns that the scheme would push up domestic rice prices, maintaining that the rebate was designed to support exports rather than influence the local market.

According to a notification issued by the commerce ministry, exporters of basmati and

brown rice are eligible for a rebate of 9 per cent of the free-on-board (FOB) value, provided the export price is equal to or above \$750 per metric tonne. Other coarse rice qualifies for a lower rebate of 3pc of FOB value, but only where the export price remains below \$750 per tonne.

A Karachi-based rice exporter told Dawn that Pakistan's bureaucracy has a long history of repeating policy mistakes dating back to the 1960s, relying on short-term measures such as

rebates and subsidies to keep export sectors afloat.

He said these stop-gap incentives have failed to deliver sustained growth, leaving exports largely stagnant despite repeated fiscal support. By contrast, he said regional competitors such as China, India, Bangladesh and Vietnam have focused on structural reforms to improve productivity, logistics and cost efficiency, enabling their exporters to compete more effectively in global markets.



However, the broader le-

Sugarcane boom threatens cotton production

NEWS DESK: A record increase in sugarcane prices and incentives offered by sugar mill owners to growers has heightened fears of a further decline in cotton cultivation next year, even as environmental pollution caused by sugarcane farming continues to damage cotton quality.

Despite an unprecedented fall in overall cotton production, lint consumption - rather than production - has now emerged as a major challenge for the country, while India has surprisingly raised its cotton production target for the 2025-26 crop year.

Cotton Ginners Forum Chairman Ihsan-ul-Haq said that the persistent failure to enforce crop zoning laws across Pakistan has led to a steady expansion of sugarcane cultivation in traditional cotton zones over the past few years, along with the establishment of new sugar mills.

This trend, he said, has not only caused a record decline in cotton acreage and national output but has also adversely affected cotton quality due to environmental pollution linked with sugarcane farming.

As a result, export-oriented textile mills have become increasingly dependent on imported cotton.

He noted that despite national cotton production falling sharply from 14.8 million bales to around 5.5m bales, ginners are still struggling to sell their entire produce.

Mr Haq said sugar mill owners provide billions of rupees annually to sugarcane growers in the form of loans for fertilisers, pesticides and agricultural machin-

ery. This year, sugarcane prices have increased by at least 25 per cent, reaching Rs500 per 40kg, with further increases expected.

This has raised concerns that sugarcane cultivation will expand further in the 2026-27 cotton year, forcing textile mills to import even more cotton and increasing edible oil imports, costing the country billions of dollars in foreign exchange.

He stressed that strengthening the national economy requires

strict enforcement of crop zoning laws to improve both the quantity and quality of lint.

He also called for aligning electricity and gas tariffs, markup rates and taxes for the entire cotton industry with those of neighbouring countries, and for immediately reducing interference by various federal and provincial departments in industrial affairs.

Mr Haq pointed out that Pakistan is the only major cotton-producing country in the world

where national output is declining every year, causing the country to slip from fourth to fifth or sixth position among global cotton producers.

He said India had earlier set its cotton production target for the 2025-26 season at 30.9 million bales, which has now been increased to 31.7m bales. In contrast, Pakistan's federal government fixed a target of 10.18m (170 kg) for the current year, while actual production is expected to remain around 5.6m bales (160 kg).



KE exits Al Jomaih Power lawsuit

NEWS DESK: K-Electric (KE) Limited has disclosed that it is no longer a party to a key legal case following the withdrawal of claims by Al Jomaih Power Limited and other plaintiffs, and the dismissal of all related proceedings by a Karachi court. Despite this legal relief, the company remains unable to hold board elections due to continuing judicial restraints and a standing regulatory direction issued by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP).

In a material information disclosure submitted to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) and the SECP on January 26, 2026, KE stated that the senior civil judge, Karachi South, through an order dated January 23, 2026, allowed the withdrawal application filed by Al Jomaih Power Limited and other plaintiffs in Civil Suit No 1566 of 2025. Consequently, the suit against KE and all pending applications were dismissed as withdrawn and declared infructuous. The company confirmed that it now stands discharged from those proceedings. However, the broader le-



gal context remains complex. While Al Jomaih Power Limited withdrew its claims against IGCF SPV 21 Limited, Alvarez & Marsal, KES Power Limited and KE, the stay obtained by Al Jomaih continues to operate against the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), the SECP and the Power Division, keeping key regulatory aspects of the dispute alive.

The litigation had been closely watched due to its potential implications for governance and control at Pakistan's largest power distribution company.

However, legal experts caution that the development does not translate into immediate governance flexibility.

According to a legal expert familiar with the matter, K-Electric remains a party to a separate, similar case pending before the courts, in which it is expressly barred from making any changes to the composition of its Board of Directors. In addition, a direction issued by the SECP prohibiting any change in the board's composition remains in effect.

The SECP direction was issued on Novem-

ber 8, 2022, under Section 125 of the Securities Act, 2015, directing that the board's composition "shall not be changed whatsoever, till further orders of the Commission."

The restriction followed concerns over changes in indirect ownership and control, particularly involving KES Power Limited and the acquisition of controlling interests by Sage Venture Group.

As a result, board elections at KE are unlikely to take place anytime soon. KE did not respond by the time of filing.

White Winter Olympics beckons as snow falls in Italian Alps

NEWS DESK: Snow has fallen in the Italian Alps just in time for the start of the Winter Olympics, dispelling fears of artificially-covered tracks winding through lush green mountainsides.

From Bormio, home to the ski mountaineering races, to the Antholz valley where biathletes will tote their rifles, venues have seen intense snowfall less than two weeks before the opening ceremony on February 6, an expert said Monday.

"The snow has arrived," Italian meteorologist Mattia Gussoni told AFP, while pictures of the areas showed white mountain peaks, low-hanging snow clouds, and blanketed fields.

The Milan-Cortina Games, which run from February 6 to 22, will be scattered across the mountains of northern Italy, from alpine skiing in Cortina to freestyle skiing in Livigno.

These resorts —



most of which are within the soaring Dolomites — are perched between 1,200 and 1,800 metres (3940 feet and 5900 feet) above sea level, a height

which would traditionally guarantee snow. But with snow cover in the Italian Alps down by half in the past 100 years as the climate warms,

organisers feared spring-like conditions. In the coming days, especially from tomorrow evening, there will be new and heavy snowfall across

the Alps," said Gussoni. "This is excellent news ahead of the opening of the Olympics. At least there will be no shortage of snow at the start

of February," he said. This does not mean there will be no call for artificial snow for the Games, which is made using cannons and guns which spray

water into the cold air, turning it into fine snow. The international federations that govern skiing and biathlon both require organisers to have snow production

equipment on hand, should it be needed.

And the 2026 organising committee has said it plans to make 2.4 million cubic metres of artificial snow, which will require 948,000 cubic metres of water.

But the artificial snow planned will certainly use far less water than that required during the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, when 890,000 cubic metres was used for the alpine skiing site at Yanqing alone. A further 1.9 million cubic metres was needed for all other snow sports, according to Olympic statistics.

Gussoni said it was "a bit too early to say" though whether there would be further snowfall to ensure a white wonderland throughout the Games to the finish line.

"There are still too many weeks to go. The weather conditions are also forecast to be quite changeable during these weeks," he said.

Luke Ronchi appointed head coach of Islamabad United

NEWS DESK: Islamabad United are delighted to announce the appointment of Luke Ronchi as the team's new Head Coach, marking the return of one of the most influential and loved figures in PSL history.

A fan favourite in Islamabad United colours, Ronchi's contribution to the HBL Pakistan Super League goes far beyond numbers. Widely recognised as one of the most impactful overseas players in HBLPSL history, his fearless batting, big-match temperament, and leadership presence helped define modern T20 intent in the league.

Ronchi played a central role in Islamabad United's most memorable campaigns, producing performances that have become part of HBLPSL folklore and creating a deep connection with the Islamabad United fanbase that has remained strong long after his playing days.

All Navi, Owner of Islamabad United, said: "Luke Ronchi is Islamabad United through and through, a true shero. He's one of the most iconic and impactful overseas players this league has ever seen, and his bond with Islamabad United is unique. As we say, once a shero always a shero."

"We are delighted that Ronchi became available this season. He understands our culture, our standards, and what it truly means to represent Islamabad

United. We're excited to welcome him back this time as Head Coach."

Luke Ronchi said: "Islamabad United has always felt like home to me. The bond I share with this team, the owners, the fans, and the entire ISLU family is something genuinely special. I've always carried that connection with pride."

"To return now as Head Coach is a huge honour. Islamabad United stands for fearless cricket, character, and a winning mindset. I'm excited to carry that legacy forward and help develop the next group of leaders and match-

winners for this great team."

Islamabad United have always believed in building more than just squads — the team has built leaders. Ronchi's appointment reflects that DNA, as another former Islamabad United player now taking on a leadership role, reinforcing the franchise's long-term commitment to developing leaders within the Islamabad United environment.

His transition from fan-favourite player to Head Coach is a statement of continuity — ensuring the values that shaped Islamabad United's identity continue

to drive the team forward into a new HBLPSL era.

In addition to his PSL pedigree, Ronchi brings valuable international coaching experience, having been part of New Zealand's coaching setup, where he worked within a high-performance environment and contributed to the development and success of New Zealand's national men's team.

His global exposure, combined with his deep understanding of the HBLPSL ecosystem, makes him ideally positioned to guide Islamabad United in the upcoming season.



Sinner powers on, Keys exits as heatwave hits Melbourne

NEWS DESK: One champion survived and another succumbed at the Australian Open on Monday as Jannik Sinner reached the quarter-finals after women's holder Madison Keys crashed out at the hands of friend Jessica Pegula as Melbourne braced for forecast 45C heat.

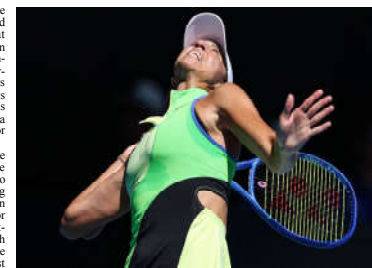
Sinner became the second Italian into the last eight after Lorenzo Musetti battled stifling conditions and beat an injury-hampered Taylor Fritz to set up a last-eight showdown with Novak Djokovic, while Iga Swiatek sent the last Australian out of the women's draw with a 6-0, 6-3 thumping of qualifier Maddison Inglis.

Two days after suffering dramatic cramps in a third round scare against Eliot Spanguly, Sinner rebounded with 6-1, 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) win over fellow Italian and close friend Luciano Darderi as the heat returned to Melbourne Park.

With the sun having retreated in the late afternoon, the double-defending champion was relieved to play in the shade at Margaret Court Arena on a day when temperatures reached 33C.

"It's definitely a bit different when there is no sun, even if it's quite warm outside still," said Sinner, who booked his ninth successive Grand Slam quarter-final.

It was difficult to put the match away, happy I closed it in three sets. So I felt quite good



out there physically. Everything was okay today."

Sinner sent down a bumper 19 aces in the match, and said his hard work had paid off.

"Still room to improve but happy how I have come back in the new season," he added. Sinner will next meet American eighth seed Ben Shelton, who stepped in for the absent Djokovic and over-

hauled 12th seed Casper Ruud 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 in the late match at Rod Laver Arena.

Shelton lost to Sinner in last year's semi-finals, one of a run of eight successive defeats to the Italian.

A year after hoisting the women's trophy with a brilliant win over Aryna Sabalenka, Keys' title defence ended with a 6-3, 6-4 loss to sixth seed Xinyu.

Good friends with Pegula, with whom she does a podcast "The

Player's Box", Keys promised to honour a pre-match wager by eating a cheese-smothered apple pie.

"A bet is a bet, so I'll do it. I hope it's less gross than I think it's going to be, but we will find out," said Keys, who described herself as proud despite defeat.

Pegula is chasing an elusive Grand Slam title aged 31, her best performance to date reaching the US Open final in 2024.

An erratic Keys made 27 unforced errors to Pegula's 17 and fired down six double faults as her title defence folded.

Pegula reached her fourth quarter-final at Melbourne Park and will meet Amanda Anisimova, who made it four US players in the women's final eight after beating China's Wang Xinyu.

Fourth seed Anisimova, beaten final-

ist at last year's US Open and Wimbledon, cooled herself off with bags of ice before taming Wang 7-6 (7/4), 6-4.

Second seed Swiatek will face former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina in the other quarter-final in the bottom half of the draw, the resurgent Kazakh having blitzed Elisaveta Mertens 6-1, 6-3.

Swiatek demolished home qualifier Inglis as she closes on a first Australian crown, having won all three of the other majors.

Inglis, ranked 168, was in the biggest match of her life after two-time Melbourne champion Naomi Osaka pulled out injured from their third-round meeting.

Just before the fourth round earned Inglis a life-changing A u s \$ 4 8 0 , 0 0 0 (US\$330,000) — she plans to buy a toaster and a kettle with the windfall.

Anger as branch of ICE to help with security at Winter Olympics

NEWS DESK: Reports had been circulating for days that the agency embroiled in an often brutal immigration crackdown in the United States could be involved in US security measures for the February 6-22 Games in northern Italy.

In a statement overnight to AFP, ICE said: "At the Olympics, ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) is supporting the US Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service and host nation to vet and mitigate risks from transnational criminal organisations."

"All security operations remain under Italian authority."

It's not known whether the HSI has in the past been involved in the Olympics, or whether this is a first.

According to the ICE website, the HSI investigates global threats, investigating the illegal movement of people, goods, money,



contraband, weapons and sensitive technology into, out of, and through the United States.

ICE made clear its operations in Italy were separate from the immigration crackdown, which is being carried out by the Enforcement and Removal Operations department.

"Obviously, ICE does not conduct immi-

gration enforcement operations in foreign countries," it said.

The protection of US citizens during Olympic Games overseas is led by the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service.

Yet the outrage over ICE immigration operations in the United States is shared among many in Italy, following the deaths of two civil-

ians during an immigration crackdown in Minneapolis.

The leftist mayor of Milan, which is hosting several Olympic events, said ICE was "not welcome". "This is a militia that kills... It's clear that they are not welcome in Milan, there's no doubt about it," Giuseppe Salattò told RTL 102.5 radio.

"Can't we just say no to (US President

Donald) Trump for once?"

Alessandro Zan, a member of the European Parliament for the centre-left Democratic Party, condemned it as "unacceptable".

"In Italy, we don't want those who trample on human rights and act outside of any democratic control," he wrote on X.

Monitoring Vance Italian authorities initially denied the presence of ICE and then sought to downplay any role, suggesting they would help only in security for the US delegation.

US Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio are attending the opening ceremony in Milan on February 6.

On Monday, the president of the northern Lombardy region, said their involvement would be limited to monitoring Vance and Rubio.

Don Bradman's 'Baggy Green' cap worn against India sells for record amount at auction



NEWS DESK: A "Baggy Green" cap worn by Don Bradman during a series against India in 1947-48 was sold for Australian \$460,000 (\$319,000) at a Gold Coast auction on Monday, fetching the highest price for a cap sported by the great Australian batsman.

Bradman had gifted it to Indian cricketer Sriranga Wasudev Sohoni, whose family preserved it for the last 75 years.

"That's over three generations under lock and key. If you were a family member, you were only allowed to look at it when you were 16 years old for five minutes," said Lee Haines, the chief operating officer of Lloyds Auctioneers and Valuers.

The cap was sold to an anonymous bidder and will be kept on display at an Australian museum, local media reported.

The cap, which has the names "DG Bradman" and "DW Sohoni" inscribed on the inside, is in good condition. Another cap worn by Bradman was sun-faded and insect-damaged when it fetched \$311,000 at auction in 2024. Widely regarded as the greatest batsman in history, Bradman played 52 tests with a batting average of 99.94, nearly 40 runs higher than any other player.

Sudanese army claims breaking long-running RSF siege

NEWS DESK: The Sudanese army said on Monday it had broken a long-running siege of Dilling in South Kordofan, where paramilitary forces had choked off access for more than a year and a half.

Since April 2023, Sudan has been engulfed in a conflict between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that has killed tens of thousands of people.

The war has also uprooted some 11 million people and triggered what the UN describes as the world's largest displacement and hunger crisis.

In its statement, the army said its forces "succeeded in opening the Dilling road after carrying out a successful military operation", claiming they had inflicted "heavy losses" on the RSF. The army's advance has secured its hold over both the northern and southern approaches to Dilling.

The push around Dilling comes as the



army attempts to stem the RSF's advance across the wider Kordofan region. Backed by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu, the RSF shifted its focus

eastward after seizing the army's last stronghold in western Darfur last October. Since then, the paramilitary group has tightened its grip on West Kordofan, taken Heglig home to Sudan's

largest oil field and intensified its siege of famine-hit Kadugli, the capital of South Kordofan. Atrocities surged following the RSF's capture of El Fasher, with reports of mass killings,

abductions and widespread looting. The UN has warned that similar abuses could spread into Kordofan. More than 65,000 people have fled the Kordofan region since October, according to

the latest UN figures. A UN-backed assessment last year already confirmed famine in Kadugli, which has been under RSF siege for more than a year and a half. The assessment said conditions in Dilling

were likely similar, but security issues and a lack of access have prevented a formal declaration. Three million return home more than three million Sudanese people displaced by nearly

three years of war have returned home, the United Nations migration agency said on Monday, even as heavy fighting continues to tear through parts of the country.

Since April 2023, Sudan has been locked in a devastating war pitting the regular army against the RSF.

The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people and created what the UN describes as the world's largest displacement and hunger crisis. At its peak, the war had displaced around 14 million people both internally and across borders.

In a report released on Monday, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said an estimated 3.3 million displaced Sudanese had made their way back home by November of last year.

The rise in returns follows a sweeping offensive launched by the Sudanese army in late 2024 to retake central regions seized earlier in the conflict by the RSF.

World not ready for rise in extreme heat, scientists say

NEWS DESK: Nearly 3.8 billion people could face extreme heat by 2050 and while tropical countries will bear the brunt, cooler regions will also need to adapt, scientists said on Monday.

Demand for cooling will "drastically increase in giant countries like Brazil, Indonesia and Nigeria, where hundreds of millions of people lack air conditioning or other means of beating the heat."

But even a moderate increase in hotter days could have a "severe impact" in nations not used to such conditions like Canada, Russia and Finland, said scientists from the University of Oxford.

In a new study, they looked at different global warming scenarios to project how often people in future might experience temperatures considered uncomfortably hot or cold.

They found "that the population experiencing extreme heat conditions is projected to nearly double" by 2050 if global average temperatures rise 2C above preindustrial times.

But most of the impact would be felt this decade as the world fast approaches the 1.5C mark, the study's lead author Jesus Lizana said.

"The key takeaway from this is that the need for adaptation to extreme heat is more urgent than previously known," said

Lizana, an environmental scientist.

"New infrastructure, such as sustainable air conditioning or passive cooling, needs to be built out within the next few years to ensure people can cope with dangerous heat."

Prolonged exposure to extreme heat can overwhelm the body's natural cooling systems, causing symptoms ranging from dizziness and headaches to organ failure and death.

It is called a silent killer because most heat deaths occur gradually as high temperatures and other environmental factors work together to undermine the body's internal thermostat.

Climate change is

making heatwaves longer and stronger and access to cooling, especially air conditioning, will be vital in future. Dangerously underprepared

The study, published in the journal Nature Sustainability, projected that 3.79 billion people worldwide could be exposed to extreme heat by mid-century.

This would "drastically" increase energy demand for cooling in developing nations where the gravest health consequences would be felt. India, the Philippines and Bangladesh would be among biggest populations impacted.

The most significant change in "cooling degree days" tempera-

tures hot enough to require cooling, such as air conditioning or fans were projected in tropical or equatorial countries, particularly in Africa.

Central African Republic, Nigeria, South Sudan, Laos and Brazil saw the biggest rise in dangerously hot temperatures.

"Put simply, the most disadvantaged people are the ones who will have the brunt of this trend, our study shows for ever hotter days," climate scientist Radhika Khosla said.

But wealthier countries in traditionally cooler climates also "face a major problem even if many do not realise it yet," she added.



Azerbaijan arrests three over planned attack on foreign embassy in Baku

NEWS DESK: Authorities in Azerbaijan said on Tuesday they had arrested three individuals planning an attack on a foreign embassy in the capital, Baku, at the instructions of Islamic State Khurasan (ISIS-K), the Afghan offshoot of Islamic State.

In a statement, the State Security Service said the three men, whom it named, had conspired with members of ISIS-K, obtained weapons and planned to attack a foreign embassy before they were apprehended by security forces.

The statement did not name the foreign embassy. One of the men was born in 2000, and the other two in 2005.

Islamic State Khurasan (ISKAP), a secular country with a predominantly Muslim population, the majority of whom are Shiites. In its statement, Azerbaijani authorities said the suspects had been arrested on charges of "preparation for terrorism" on the basis of religious hostility.

They said the investigation was ongoing. In a separate case, an Azerbaijani court sentenced a man affiliated with ISIS-K to 13 years in prison on terrorism charges last October after finding him guilty of plotting an attack on a synagogue in Baku with a Molotov cocktail in December 2024.



trial Asia.

Azerbaijan, a South Caucasus country of some 10 million people bordering Russia and Iran, is a secular country with a predominantly Muslim population, the majority of whom are Shiites. In its statement, Azerbaijani authorities said the suspects had been arrested on charges of "preparation for terrorism" on the basis of religious hostility. They said the investigation

was ongoing. In a separate case, an Azerbaijani court sentenced a man affiliated with ISIS-K to 13 years in prison on terrorism charges last October after finding him guilty of plotting an attack on a synagogue in Baku with a Molotov cocktail in December 2024.

ISIS-K The ISKP/ISIS-K was officially formed in 2015 when breakaway militants

from the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Al Qaeda and former Taliban fighters from Afghanistan came together under Hafiz Saeed Khan, a Pakistani militant with ties to the TTP. The name "Khurasan" refers to a historical region that spans parts of Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia, reflecting the group's ambition to carve out a caliphate in the Afghan-Pakistan borderlands.

US deploys aircraft carrier as Iran warns against attack

NEWS DESK: A US naval strike group led by an aircraft carrier has deployed to Middle Eastern waters, the United States said on Monday, as Tehran warned it was ready to hit back at any American attack launched in response to a crackdown on anti-government protests.

A US-based rights group said on Monday that it had confirmed the deaths of nearly 6,000 people in the wave of protests suppressed by Iran's security forces, but emphasised the actual toll could be several times higher.

The protests started in late December, driven by economic grievances, but turned into a mass movement against the Islamic republic, with huge street demonstrations for several days from January 8.

But rights groups have accused authorities of quelling the movement with unprecedented violence,

shooting into crowds of protesters under the cover of an internet shutdown that has now lasted 18 days -- the longest Iran has ever imposed.

The clerical leadership took power after the 1979 Islamic revolution remains in place despite the protests, with many opponents of the system looking to outside intervention as the most likely driver of change.

The US President Donald Trump has previously threatened to step in, saying last week that Washington was sending a "massive fleet" to the region "just in case".

The deployment of the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group has arrived in the region, US Central Command said in a post on X, adding the ships were "currently deployed to the Middle East to promote regional security and stability."

The United States backed and briefly joined Israel's 12-day

war against Iran in June, and while Trump last week appeared to step back from his threats of new military intervention, he has never ruled the option out.

The Lincoln's strike group has arrived in the region, US Central Command said in a post on X, adding the ships were "currently deployed to the Middle East to promote regional security and stability."

The United States backed and briefly joined Israel's 12-day

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Extreme cold grips millions as US digs out of deadly snowstorm

NEWS DESK: Perilously cold temperatures threatened millions of Americans on Monday in the wake of a sprawling winter storm that left at least 23 people dead as it knocked out power and paralysed transportation.

A frigid, life-threatening Arctic air mass could delay recovery as municipalities from New Mexico to Maine tried to dig out following the storm, which dropped a vicious cocktail of heavy snow and wind, along with freezing rain and sleet.

Forecasters warned that much of the northern half of the country will see temperatures that are "continuously below freezing through February 1," and "record low temperatures to night across the South are particularly dangerous in the wake of the weekend winter storm with many still without power," the National Weather Service said in an X post.

While skies began clearing in parts the country, relentless snowfall in the north-east meant parts of Connecticut saw over 22 inches of snow, with more than 16 inches recorded in Boston, Massachusetts.

The storm was linked to at least 23 deaths, according to a compilation of state government and local media reports, with causes including hypothermia as well as acci-



dents related to traffic, sledding, ATVs and snowplows.

One man was found in the snow, unresponsive, with a shovel in his hand.

In New York City, eight more people were found dead amid plummeting temperatures and an investigation to determine the causes was underway. It was not known if all of these fatalities were storm-related.

Electricity began blinking back on across the south, but as of Monday evening, well over 550,000 customers remained without it, according to the tracking site Poweroutage.com.

Tennessee, Texas, Mississippi and Louisiana — southern states unaccustomed to intense winter weather — were especially impacted.

Approximately 190 million people in the United States were under some form of extreme cold alert, the National Weather Service (NWS) told AFP.

The Great Lakes region's residents woke up to extreme temperatures that could cause frostbite on exposed skin within minutes. In parts of Minnesota and Wisconsin, the NWS reported early Monday morning temperatures as low as -23F (-30.6C), with windchills exacerbating the bite.

Over the weekend, nearly half of the states in the contiguous US received at least a foot of snow (30.5 cm), and in many cases, far more. The NWS said New Mexico's Bonito Lake accumulated the highest US total over the weekend with 31 inches (79 cm).

Nashville Mayor

Freddie O'Connell told journalists that trees were continuing to fall under the weight of encrusted ice across the Tennessee capital city — sometimes knocking out power that had already been restored.

Nashville and other municipalities across the country were establishing emergency warming shelters.

NWS meteorologist Allison Santorelli told AFP this storm recovery was particularly arduous because so many states were impacted — meaning northern states with more winter supplies were unable to share their resources with less-prepared southern regions.

"A lot of those locations don't have the means or the resources to clean up after these events," she said.