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Meritocracy to drive good governance in Balochistan: Bugti Balochistan Cabinet approves health insurance, electric bikes schemes

CM expresses gratitude to PM Shehbaz for initiating major communication and education projects in Balochistan

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, approved several landmark initiatives aimed at strengthening the province's economic, social, and administrative systems.

In its 21st meeting of the provincial cabinet held on Friday at the Chief Minister's Secretariat has taken key decisions included the launch of a comprehensive health insurance scheme for government employees and an electric bikes scheme for the general public.

To provide relief to the public, the cabinet approved the launch of an Electric Bikes Scheme. Under the scheme, students, working women, and government employees will be provided electric bikes at a 30 percent subsidy, while ordinary citizens will also

be able to avail the facility on easy installment plans.

The cabinet agreed that the scheme would be implemented through bank financing to ensure maximum public participation.

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The cabinet noted that approximately 250,000 government employees in Balochistan incur annual

medical expenses of Rs. 6 to 7 billion.

In view of this, the cabinet approved the introduction of a comprehensive health insurance scheme for government employees to ensure a transparent, efficient, and sustainable healthcare system.

Approval was also granted for the audit of advance medical payments

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QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti presides over the meeting of Provincial Cabinet.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif presiding over a meeting on Federal Government's Ramzan Package.

Pakistan-China iron brotherhood grows ever stronger: Ishaq

BEIJING (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said that over the past 75 years, Pakistan and China have firmly upheld a tradition of mutual respect, trust, and cooperation, and that despite changing global circumstances, the 'iron-clad friendship' between the two countries has continued to deepen.

In a recent interview with People's Daily Online, he noted that 2026 will mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China.

Ishaq Dar said that the two countries have always strongly supported each other on core interests and major issues, while steadily implementing the important consensus reached by the leadership of both sides through close cooperation in areas including the economy and industrial development.

He added that in the new era, efforts are being

accelerated to build a China-Pakistan community with a shared future.

According to Ishaq Dar, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is entering a new phase of high-quality development, and both sides are placing special emphasis on building a "corridor of people's well-being."

He said that agriculture is one of the cornerstone industries of Pakistan's economy, and in recent years, companies from both countries have achieved positive results through cooperation in crops such as chili peppers, rapeseed (mustard/canola), and sesame. Meanwhile, many Pakistani agricultural products have gained access to the Chinese market.

He noted that these developments are significant for enabling Pakistani farmers to integrate into regional value chains and increase their incomes.

He said that the opposition should play its role in the Parliament adding that the Prime Minister wants a model of good governance in the country.

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Govt ready to hold talks with opposition

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhary, while terming dialogue another name for democracy, said on Thursday that the government is ready to hold talks with the opposition on all matters.

Tariq Fazal Chaudhary said that the Prime Minister has invited the opposition for negotiations for five times. He added that dialogue is the solution to every issue and urged PTI to remove the confusion within its ranks.

He pointed out that there appear to be conflicting views within PTI regarding talks with the government. Tariq Fazal Chaudhary said the opposition could also use the office of the Speaker of the National Assembly to initiate dialogue with the government.

He said that the opposition should play its role in the Parliament adding that the Prime Minister wants a model of good governance in the country.

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Provinces must unite for national stability, emphasizes CM Bugti

Independent Report

KARACHI: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has underlined that political consensus among Pakistan's provinces forms the bedrock of national stability. He stated that building mutual trust, maintaining ongoing dialogue, and adopting a unified strategy are essential to create a resilient, prosperous, and stable Pakistan. According to CM Bugti, collaboration between provinces not only

reinforces the federation but also fosters economic growth, social equity, and public welfare.

The remarks were made during a high-level meeting with Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah at the Chief Minister House in Karachi. Leaders held comprehensive discussions on the country's po-

litical, economic, and social landscape, as well as matters of inter-provincial interest.

The meeting was attended by Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi, and Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Faisal Rathore. Senior Pakistani People's Party figures Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Nayyar Hussain Bukhari, Qamar Zaman Kaira, and Rana Farooq also participated.

Sindh provincial ministers Sharjeel Inam Memon, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjari, Jam Khan Shoro, Saeed Ghani, and Karachai Mayor Murtaza Wahab were

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New transparent system replaces decades of corrupt practices in Ramazan Package: PM

Directs all relevant institutions to develop an even more effective and beneficial relief package for upcoming holy month

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said the federal government had established a transparent system to provide subsidized essential food items to the underprivileged during Ramazan, replacing a decades-old corrupt system of financial irregularities and mismanagement in utility stores.

He directed all relevant institutions to develop an even more effective and beneficial relief package for the upcoming holy month.

The prime minister was chairing a review meeting on the proposed Ramazan package and third-party validation of

last year's package.

During the meeting, he praised all relevant institutions and ministries on the report by a reputable audit firm regarding the transparency of last year's Ramazan package.

He noted that deserving individuals were deprived of their rights due to corruption in utility stores.

Financial support and social well-being for the poor and the middle class are among the top priorities of the government, the prime minister said directing that subsidy amounts for the Ramazan package

respect was not compromised.

He said that providing subsidy amounts to the public through digital wallets will also prove to be a milestone in achieving a cashless economy. "The inclusion of the State Bank of Pakistan in the distribution of the Ramazan package will promote a cashless economy."

He stressed all relevant ministries and institutions to ensure maximizing the scope and inclusion of the underprivileged in receiving subsidies.

He also directed to present a comprehensive strategy and recommenda

Continued on page 2



KARACHI: Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah hosted a lunch in honour of Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani at CM House Karachi. PMAJK, Governors KP, Punjab, CM Balochistan, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, former PM, Qamar Zaman Kaira, Mayor Karachi, Provincial Ministers and notable politicians were also present.

Mehmood Achakzai faults PTI discipline for Imran's jailing

LAHORE (INP): Mahmood Khan Achakzai, head of Tehreek-e-Tahaffuz-e-Ain Pakistan (TTAP), strongly criticised state conduct, saying that while Pakistan was described as a "fortress of Islam," Islam itself appeared to have been imprisoned within it.

Addressing the Awan-e-Adl gathering in Lahore on Friday, he condemned violence against women and children and denounced the use of live ammunition against protesters at D-Chowk.

He also rebuked police actions, alleging mistreatment of detainees, and questioned claims of Pakistan being an Islamic state under such circumstances.

Speaking about political unity, Achakzai says he has not come to Lahore to abuse other political parties but to stand with the oppressed. He stated that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) enjoyed unpre-

cedented public support, yet its founding leader remains behind bars due to a lack of discipline within the party.

Political movements required organisation and discipline to succeed.

Referring to recent protests, he noted that despite the presence of MNAs and MPAs, no loudspeakers were used, highlighting organisational weaknesses.

Addressing the gathering, Allama Raja Nasir said Allah had granted human beings the right to freedom, which was also guaranteed in the Constitution of Pakistan, but an oppressive regime had undermined the justice system, people's right to defence and public mandate through unconstitutional amendments.

DPM Dar to attend OIC FMs' session in Jeddah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister (DPM/FM) Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar will depart on Friday night for Saudi Arabia to attend an Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), scheduled to be held in Jeddah on January 10. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the extraordinary session has been convened to discuss the implications of Israel's recognition.

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Fawad urges Nawaz to play role in resolving political turmoil in country

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former federal minister Fawad Chaudhary on Friday urged Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) president and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif to play a role in resolving political turmoil in the country.

Talking to media after appearing in an anti-terrorism court, he emphasised

the need for political negotiations to address the ongoing instability in Pakistan. He noted that the country's political tensions have reached a critical point, with the opposition failing to engage constructively.

Fawad Chaudhary stressed that the real heirs

Continued on page 2

Atta Tarar slams PTI's 'soft corner' for outlawed TTP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Friday strongly condemned the "soft corner" shown by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for Fitna al Khawarij, regretting their outright reluctance in denouncing the outlawed group's hostility towards the state and its people.

Addressing a press conference alongside veteran politician Zahid Khan, the minister said the PTI leaders absolutely faltered when questioned by the media about the proscribed organization.

Tarar said the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are brave and courageous, but unfortunately ruled by those who have "myopic

mindset" with their "regrettable conduct".

During a visit to Lahore, their leaders stooped very low and resorted to use derogatory language against the women leaders of Punjab.

What is the role of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in the province, he asked, adding whether they were only supposed to

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Governor Balochistan calls for people-centered politics to strengthen National Unity

Independent Report

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhai has underscored that politics must function as a social responsibility focused on improving citizens' lives, raising awareness, and eliminating superstitions and misconceptions. He made these remarks while meeting delegations from various districts at the Governor House in Quetta.

He stressed that politics aimed at serving the public is a vital tool for fostering national unity and protecting the rights and empowerment of the people.

Governor Mandokhai highlighted that elected representatives have a responsibility to unite communities rather than create divisions and to advocate for the voiceless and marginalized segments of society.

KP CM announces PTI rally at Mazar-e-Quaid on Sunday

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Sohail Afridi has announced that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) will hold a massive public rally at Mazar-e-Quaid in Karachi on Sunday (January 11). The rally is part of the party's street movement ahead of the protest call scheduled for February 8. In a statement issued on Friday, CM Sohail Afridi said the rally would begin at 4:30pm. He added that his visit to Sindh aims to take the message of jailed PTI founder Imran Khan to every part of the province. He also called on the people of Sindh to fully support PTI's street movement, claiming the gathering would be the biggest rally Karachi has ever seen. CM Afridi who was due to depart for Karachi from Islamabad Airport.

The Governor further emphasized that human dignity is closely linked to access to basic services and essential facilities. He assured that measures are in place to ensure the timely completion of ongoing development projects so that their benefits reach citizens without delay.

He added that serving humanity is the highest form of public service, and that demonstrating a commitment to community welfare forms the foundation of a healthy and progressive society.

Reflecting on his political career, Governor Mandokhai noted that collaboration without discrimination has been key to his approach, stressing that promoting awareness of rights and responsibilities is essential for long-term social harmony and collective progress.

Speaking about politics and its role in strengthening National Unity, Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhai has underscored that politics must function as a social responsibility focused on improving citizens' lives, raising awareness, and eliminating superstitions and misconceptions. He made these remarks while meeting delegations from various districts at the Governor House in Quetta.

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HBL PSL grows bigger after successful auction, welcomes two new franchises

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced the successful conclusion of the HBL PSL Teams Auction 2026 for induction of two new franchises, marking a significant milestone in the continued growth and evolution of the league. As a result of the auction process, Team 7 has been awarded to Hyderabad, while Team 8 will represent Sialkot, officially expanding the HBL PSL to eight teams, said a press release.

The auction attracted strong interest from prospective investors, with nine bidders participating in the Live Auction at Jinnah Convention Centre, Islamabad, reflecting the growing commercial

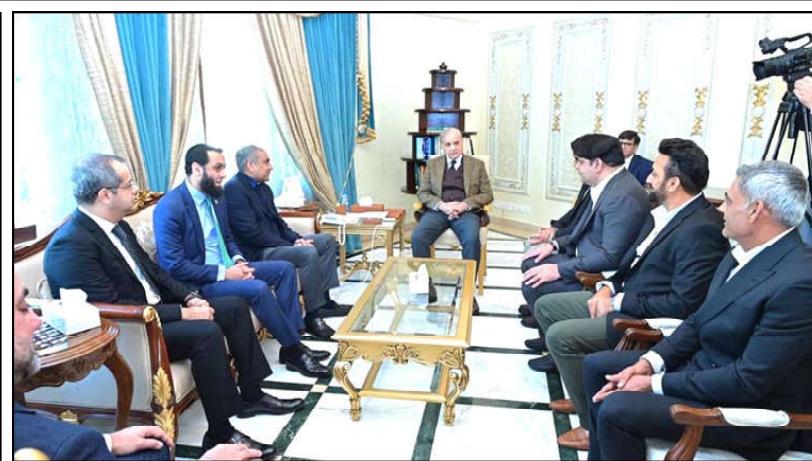
strength, global appeal, and long-term sustainability of the HBL PSL. The induction of Hyderabad & Sialkot Teams further strengthens the league's national footprint and underscores PCB's commitment to inclusivity, regional representation, and fan engagement across Pakistan.

In the first round of the Auction, the base price for the seventh team was set at PKR 110 crore and after a fierce round of bidding US-based FKS Group led by Mr Fawad Sarwar made the winning bid worth PKR 1,750,00,000 and chose Hyderabad out of the six available city names.

The second round saw the base price of the eighth team set to PKR 170 crore,

which led to deep interest from the investors as there were two calls for strategic timeout. In the end OZ Group led by Mr Hamza Majeed snapped the eighth team for PKR 1,850,00,000 and chose Sialkot as their team.

Congratulating the successful bidders, PCB Chairman, Mohsin Naqvi, welcomed the new franchise owners into the HBL PSL family. "The expansion of the HBL Pakistan Super League with the addition of Hyderabad and Sialkot is a landmark moment for Pakistan cricket. We warmly welcome the new franchise owners and look forward to their contribution in strengthening the league.



ISLAMABAD: Representatives of the firms which acquired two new teams of Pakistan Super League meet with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Int'l firms' participation in PSL teams' auction to promote foreign investment in country: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday welcomed the participation of international firms in the auction for the two new franchises of the Pakistan Super League (PSL), stating that it would help promote foreign investment in the country.

He said overseas Pakistanis were playing a critical role in the nation's development. The prime minister was speaking to representatives of the two firms that won the franchise bids.

Hamza Majeed of the OZ Developers and Fawad Sarwar of the Southeast Asian holding company FKS attended the meeting.

He extended congratulations to the representatives of the Sialkot and Hyderabad teams and conveyed his best wishes for their future.

The prime minister also congratulated Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board, Mohsin Raza Naqvi, and his team for ensuring a successful and transparent auction.

"The entire auction

process for the new PSL teams was broadcast live on television, which reflects transparency," the prime minister remarked, adding that the new teams would prove to be a breath of fresh air.

He noted that the active participation of national and international firms in the bidding demonstrated the PSL's growing popularity at the global level.

The meeting was also attended by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Information Minister Attaullah Tarar.

Rana applauds Muslim Hands in London

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan on Friday lauded the humanitarian work of Muslim Hands' Open Kitchen in Hounslow during his official UK visit.

Chief PMYP said the initiative is strengthening Pakistan's global image by promoting compassion, community service and youth leadership through direct engagement with volunteers, institutions and the Pakistani diaspora.

Rana Mashhood visited the Muslim Hands Open Kitchen as part of his meetings with British institutions, Pakistani organisations and youth communities to promote humanitarian cooperation, youth empowerment, innovation and positive international partnerships, said a



QUETTA: Construction underway for new gas pipelines on Samungli Road in Quetta.

New transparent..

Continued from page 1

viduals, and from March 2026, all subsidy amounts will be distributed digitally through these SIMs.

It was further told in the meeting that the third-party validation of the Ramazan package did not identify any financial corruption or serious administrative mismanagement.

The prime minister issued special directives to all relevant institutions and ministries to formulate a comprehensive strategy through mutual coordination and cooperation for the proposed packages for the upcoming Ramazan and Eid.

He further directed that special measures be taken to ensure transparency in the disbursement of subsidy amounts and the Ramazan package.

Fawad urges..

Continued from page 1

of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are currently imprisoned, while "guest actors" in the party—those not genuinely invested in the political cause—are refusing to participate in talks.

He criticised the government for granting too much leeway to these actors, many of whom are also traveling abroad, rather than focusing on resolving the nation's political crisis.

In his statement, Chaudhry called on the government to release political prisoners, including prominent PTI figures like Bushra Bibi and Dr. Yasmeen Rashid, to ease political pressure.

Furthermore, a Social Protection Wallet system is being implemented under the Benazir Income Support Programme, under which free SIMs are being distributed to eligible indi-



QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehrullah Badini presides over the District Education Group meeting.

Balochistan Cabinet..

Continued from page 1

overall development.

He highlighted that the Electric Bikes Scheme would provide affordable transport to people from all walks of life.

Sarfaraz Bugti said that the health insurance initiative would ensure better healthcare access for government employees.

The expanded Enterprises Development Program would guide more youth toward economic stability, he added.

CM Bugti stressed that public tax resources are a trust of the people, and their fair, transparent utilization is the government's foremost responsibility.

The Chief Minister reaffirmed that good governance is directly linked to meritocracy, and the provincial cabinet remains fully committed to strict implementation of merit-based policies across Balochistan, terming them crucial for the province's

Atta Tarar..

Continued from page 1

taut women leaders of other parties?

They became speechless when asked to comment on Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, he said citing example of the KP Information Minister who became speechless in response to a question during a TV show.

There is no doubt that the TTP carries out attacks on Pakistan under foreign funding, RAW, and Indian patronage, but no word of condemnation came from the KP government.

They were very fluent while taunting other party leaders, but they kept a complete mumb when the TTP was mentioned, he said, adding the PTI leader kept calling terrorists as martyrs, but never had the courage to say or write a single word for appreciation of a soldier of the Pakistan Army.

Referring to the Awami National Party, he said they had given exemplary sacrifices in the war against terrorism and has lifted the bodies of their loved ones. The Bilour family became a target of terrorism and their sacrifices are part of history, he added.

In contrast, the PTI holds a soft corner for terrorists, fearing that they might be attacked by any procuring agency of Pakistan. The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. The bidding firm must be completed at least one 01 public sector consultancy or donor funded project within the last three 03 years. The consultant must be a legally registered entity operating in Pakistan under the companies Act 2017 SECP Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. The FINANCIAL PROPOSALS shall be opened of those consultants whose technical proposal is considered and approved. The Selection of Consultants shall be made as per Evaluation Criteria method as mentioned in the 'Date Sheet' of this 'Request for Proposal' document. The incomplete request for proposal or received after due date mentioned above will not be considered. The RFP Documents can be downloaded from BPPRA Website (www.bppra.gov.pk). Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 26 January, 2026 till 02:30 PM Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 03:30 PM Address: Phone no: 0313714729 Email: manager.lim@bcl.com.pk

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules – 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 2 Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity Turn over of at least 32,000,000 PKR Amount in 3 Subsequent Previous Years Presence in Active Tax Payer List BRA Registration Certificate The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan PEC/PCAD Registration The firm must have completed at least one 01 public sector consultancy or donor funded project within the last three 03 years. The consultant must be a legally registered entity operating in Pakistan under the companies Act 2017 SECP Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. The FINANCIAL PROPOSALS shall be opened of those consultants whose technical proposal is considered and approved. The Selection of Consultants shall be made as per Evaluation Criteria method as mentioned in the 'Date Sheet' of this 'Request for Proposal' document. The incomplete request for proposal or received after due date mentioned above will not be considered. The RFP Documents can be downloaded from BPPRA Website (www.bppra.gov.pk). Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 26 January, 2026 till 02:30 PM Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 03:30 PM Address: Phone no: 0313714729 Email: manager.lim@bcl.com.pk

Chief Executive Officer
BALOCHISTAN ENERGY COMPANY LIMITED (BECL)

Chief Minister Bugti says: Balochistan Govt unveils employee health insurance and electric bike subsidy program

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Balochistan government is set to introduce a comprehensive health insurance scheme for approximately 250,000 provincial employees, Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti announced. Speaking on X, he highlighted that the government currently spends around 6 to 7 billion rupees annually on medical treatment for its employees, underscoring the need for a transparent

and sustainable system.

The new health insurance program, approved during a recent cabinet meeting, aims to provide efficient, high-quality medical care to government staff while ensuring accountability and long-term sustainability.

Alongside the health initiative, the cabinet also approved an Electric Bike Scheme to support environmentally friendly transport and economic convenience. Under the scheme, stu-

dents, working women, and government employees will receive a 30 percent subsidy, while the general public can purchase electric bikes through easy installment plans facilitated by bank financing.

Chief Minister Bugti described the measures as significant steps toward improving public welfare, promoting sustainable transportation, and easing economic burdens for residents of Balochistan.



PISHIN: Secretary Agriculture Noor Ahmed Pirkani in a group photo with the officers of Agriculture and member of Zamindar Action Committee Pishin.

SAU, BAC sign MoU for joint research on climate resilience, sustainable agric

Independent Report

QUETTA: Sindh Agriculture University (SAU), Tandojam and Balochistan

Altaf Ali Siyal on behalf of SAU and Principal Prof. Dr. Abdul Razaq Reki on behalf of BAC.



Agriculture College (BAC) Quetta on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to boost inter-provincial academic and research collaboration on key agricultural and environmental challenges.

These include dry land and rangeland management, climate change adaptation, forestry development, food security and the effective utilization of drainage and rainwater.

The SAU spokesperson Gul Sher Lochi said the MoU signing ceremony was held at the Senate Hall of the university, where the agreement was formally signed by the Vice Chancellor Engr. Prof. Dr.

In their separate addresses on the occasion, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Baloch, Training and NGO Coordinator (BACP), Muhammed Ashfaq, religious leaders Dr. Atta-ur-Rehman, Dr. KD Usmani, Maulana Ahsanul-Haq, Qari Abdul Hafeez, Zakir Usmani, Ehsanullah and others said that scholars, journalists and people belonging to other schools of thought would have to play their role to prevent the growing disease of AIDS.

He noted that in recent years, nearly half of Sindh remained submerged due to extreme climatic situations, with rainfall recorded up to 1,600 mm in certain areas, clearly reflecting the growing intensity of climate change impacts.

He urged that joint scientific research was essential to prevent water wastage, ensure safe storage, develop efficient drainage systems and promote the productive use of rain and drainage water in agriculture. Dr. Siyal further shared that experts from SAU and BAC would collaborate on dry land and rangeland management research in Balochistan, while SAU would contribute its expertise under its newly launched forestry degree program to support forest development initiatives in Sindh.



TURBAT: Deputy Commissioner Kech Bashir Ahmed Bareach talking to delegation of All Parties Kech and Anjuman-e-Tajiran.

Development initiatives in Barkhan build public confidence, Wali Bareach

Independent Report

LORALAI: Commissioner Loralai Division Wali Muhammad Bareach has highlighted that development projects go beyond mere construction of roads and buildings, serving as crucial pillars for public trust, community prosperity, and a brighter future for residents.

He made these remarks while receiving a detailed briefing from Executive Engineer Buildings & Roads Barkhan, Fazal Muhammad Zarkoon, on the progress of ongoing development schemes in Barkhan District. The briefing included updates on educational, judicial, residential, and road infrastructure projects, outlining current achievements, challenges faced, and upcoming targets.

Key projects in the building sector include the construction of Girls Inter College Rakhn, Boys Inter College Rakhn, Prosecution Staff Office and Residential Building (Phase-II) Rakhn, upgradation of Government High School Rakhn, Doctors Colony Barkhan, Social Welfare Office, and Social Welfare Hall Barkhan. These initiatives are aimed at improv-

ing educational access, reinforcing administrative and judicial facilities, and providing enhanced residential amenities for government employees.

Road development projects under execution include Kori to Konal Bargahani Road, BT Road Syed Muhammad Rand, Main Rakhn Road to Basti Mewa Pakhto Road, Basti Fazal Khan to Chori Road, Wanga to Zori Road, and Baghao Road to Nakam BT Road, along with other blacktop schemes. These works are expected to boost regional connectivity and facilitate smoother transportation across the district.

Commissioner Wali Muhammad Bareach expressed satisfaction with the progress and instructed officials to ensure that all projects are completed with transparency, high-quality standards, and within the scheduled timelines. He reiterated that the Government of Balochistan is prioritizing the development of underdeveloped regions.

Local residents and social organizations have welcomed the initiatives, praising the efforts of the provincial government and district administration.



GWADAR: Deputy Commissioner Naqeebulah Kakar presides over the meeting to review preparation made for anti-polio campaign.



QUETTA: A delegation from different walk of life meeting with Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

AIDS patients in country is around 210,000, out of which only 49,584 registered: Zulfiqar

QUETTA (APP): Provincial Coordinator

Balochistan AIDS Control Program Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Baloch on Friday said that currently, the number of AIDS patients in Pakistan was around 210,000, out of which only 49,584 were registered. He expressed

these views while addressing a seminar held at Quetta Press Club in collaboration with Balochistan AIDS Control and UNICEF on the "Role of Religious Leaders and Media in Preventing HIV/AIDS".

In their separate addresses on the occasion, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Baloch, Training and NGO Coordinator (BACP), Muhammed Ashfaq, religious leaders Dr.

Atta-ur-Rehman, Dr. KD Usmani, Maulana Ahsanul-Haq, Qari Abdul Hafeez, Zakir Usmani, Ehsanullah and others said that scholars, journalists and people

belonging to other schools of thought would have to

play their role to prevent the growing disease of AIDS.

They said that those

affected by this disease were forced to live a very

painful and painful life, the

most worrying thing was

that after getting AIDS,

complete recovery is not

possible, so special attention

needs to be paid to

measures to prevent and

cure this disease.

They highlighted that

the first case of AIDS ap-

peared in the world in the

1980s and it quickly be-

came an epidemic. African

countries were the most af-

fected by this disease, but

gradually all developing and

developed countries were

caught in its grip.

The speakers men-

tioned that according to

2021 data, the number of

people infected with the

HIV virus worldwide is

and AIDS was a very dan-
gerous disease, at that time
the whole world was wor-
ried about the spread of this
disease and the human cost
that was worried about the
loss of lives, so far, millions of
people had died from this
disease.

They said that those
affected by this disease were
forced to live a very
painful and painful life, which
is a moment of concern for all
of us, they said. They noted
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Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Saturday January 10, 2026

Pre-monsoon audit

The NDMA's decision to launch a nationwide Infrastructure Audit Programme before the monsoon is a welcome step. It suggests a shift away from routine warnings towards real action. The programme reflects a lesson Pakistan has learned the hard way: natural hazards turn deadly when roads, buildings and public facilities are ill-prepared. The floods of 2022, the destructive monsoon episodes of 2024, and fresh warnings of heavier rainfall in 2026 show that extreme weather is becoming all too frequent. In this context, the NDMA's plan to inspect high-risk and heavily used buildings is timely. As the federal housing minister noted at the launch, many losses are not caused by nature alone; they also result from unsafe construction, poor maintenance, and infrastructure that fails under predictable stress. Auditing such assets before disaster strikes is a sensible place to begin.

However, Pakistan's real problem has never been a lack of plans but a failure to implement them. Frameworks are announced but responsibility often fades once action is required at provincial and district levels. The new programme will only matter if its findings lead to actual decisions. Unsafe buildings must be repaired or closed, resources must be directed where risks are highest, and political pressure should not override safety concerns. Earlier warnings about a harsher monsoon show us that time is available, but is often wasted. Early alerts mean little if drains remain blocked, encroachments untouched and evacuation plans unenforced. Infrastructure audits must, therefore, be backed by clear timelines, enforcement and public accountability. Otherwise, they risk becoming another report that gathers dust. Urban centres, in particular, cannot continue as they are. Karachi's drainage failures, Lahore's unchecked construction and Peshawar's strained public buildings show the cost of delay. The NDMA has offered a pathway. Whether the state follows this path or again waits for the floodwaters to arrive will decide how much damage the next monsoon causes.

Zafar Mirza | Miftah Ismail

On Jan 1, the government launched the results of the Household Integrated Economic Survey 2024-25 under the subtitle of 'Data-driven insights for inclusive growth' — though we are moving in a direction opposite to inclusive growth, as the HIES data itself shows.

Before moving further, we appreciate the fact that HIES 2024-25 has been done, and technically speaking, done well. It is statistically sound and representative as it covers 32,000 households across the country and across the five socioeconomic quantiles covering both urban and rural Pakistan. And, it's for the first time that the HIES has been done digitally. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics deserves appreciation.

The six highlights adorning the official press release of the launch as milestones are: three percentile points increase in literacy; two per cent points decrease in out-of-school children and three points increase in the use of clean

fuels. Household internet access has jumped from 34pc to 70pc and individuals using the internet has increased from 17pc to 57pc. These are indeed improvements. But then, full immunisation of children improving five percentage points and moving from 68pc to 73pc actually means that 27pc of our children are still not fully immunised. We also know that most of the unvaccinated children are: some 57pc of children in the erstwhile Fata agencies (now districts) and almost two-thirds of children in Balochistan are not fully immunised. But the highlights or milestones of HIES 2024-25 are still shallow waters. Real sharks lurk in deep waters. HIES has indeed been successful in "capturing real lives through real data".

One key revelation of this survey is that the average monthly household income in Pakistan more than doubled between 2018-19 and 2024-25 — from Rs41,545 to Rs82,179. This is a 97.81pc increase. How nice it sounds that, on average, households are now making more money. In terms of income distri-

bution, in 2024-25, the poorest quintile was earning an average of Rs41,851, while the richest was earning Rs139,317 — nearly three times higher. Inequality is more pronounced in the urban areas, where the richest households earn well above Rs146,920, and the poorest remain below Rs42,412. But then, average household consumption expenditure increased by 113pc during the same period. In 2018-19, an average household in Pakistan was consuming or spending Rs37,159 per month; in 2024-25 it was consuming Rs79,150. Overall, as compared to 2018-19, the poor households in the first quintile showed an increase of 84pc, while the rich quintile showed an increase of 131pc, demonstrating a widening increase in consumption between the rich and poor.

The net result of the so-called increased household income and even greater increase in consumption is that in the last six years, an average Pakistani household has become poorer and lives a more difficult life. How much poorer? Let's see.

HIES 2024-25 shows that macroeconomics and

People are eating less

The real story is hidden in real income values by controlling the inflation effect, i.e., comparing HIES 2024-25 income data with 2018-19 prices. This comparison shows that on average people are poorer today than they were in 2018-19. Except for the richest 20pc of rural households all others, poor and rich in both the urban and rural areas, have lost out on their incomes.

The worst affected are the poorest urban citizens who have lost 23pc of their real income. In 2018-19, the average poorest urban household earned Rs24,365 whereas in 2024-25 the same household made Rs18,820 in 2018-19 prices. The average urban citizen became 19pc poorer and the average rural citizen 7pc poorer in the intervening six years.

Even more disturbing is how this relative poverty is affecting real lives. The major share of household income in terms of percentage is being spent on basic food items — 36.72pc, which is a bit more than in 2018-19, and yet, they are consuming less food than they were six years ago. A table (37.C) in HIES 2024-

tells this sad story. Per capita consumption has gone down in almost all main food items. For example, in 2018-19, the average urban Pakistani was consuming 6.12 kilograms of wheat but in 2024-25 s/he was consuming 5.67 kg. All per capita consumption values of essential food items — including rice, pulses, milk, mutton, beef, chicken, eggs, potato, onion, sugar and tea — have gone down in the last six years in both the cities and the rural areas.

The only exceptions to this sad trend are tomatoes and cooking oil.

In essence, Pakistanis are spending more and eating less than they were six years ago. The prevalence of food insecurity has increased from 15.9pc in 2018-19 to 24.4pc in 2024-25, according to the survey. They are also now spending less on education than they were in 2018-19. Almost 4pc of household expenditure went into education six years ago, which declined to around 2.5pc. Household health expenditure being relatively inelastic has slightly increased from 3.22pc to 3.34pc.

HIES 2024-25 shows that macroeconomics and

household economics are at odds with one another. Macroeconomic repairs are being carried out by impoverishing the people through high direct and indirect taxes and extremely high and exploitative utility bills. The salaried class is worst hit. Macroeconomic stability is destabilising the people.

The current government has to shoulder the responsibility of this sad state of affairs but the reality is that our economic woes are rooted in the extractive economic system we have been pursuing, our perennial governance issues and — the mother of all issues — our chronically unstable politics. Pakistan desperately needs deep, consistent and sustainable structural reforms in all these domains for which a national consensus needs to be established through a national dialogue among all stakeholders. The seriousness of our social, economic and political issues is such that these cannot be left to one government alone. All parties and state institutions need to sit together and develop a long-term development plan and firewall it against any change of government and any political turbulence.

Excluded from healthcare

Tahera Hasan

Women's access to healthcare in Pakistan is shaped not only by poverty, but also by the intersection of documentation, marginalisation and gender. After more than a decade of work in one of Karachi's largest informal settlements, it has become evident how the absence of identity documents interacts with restrictive social norms and institutional power imbalances to systematically exclude women from public services. Insights from a community-based maternity home reveal that women's avoidance of healthcare is less about awareness and more about fear, administrative exclusion, and the everyday costs — financial, social, and emotional — of navigating systems that were not designed with them in mind.

Women consistently report feeling safer and more willing to seek care when maternity services are located within their own communities. Proximity reduces travel costs, but more importantly, it limits exposure to spaces where women anticipate scrutiny and judge-

ment. Despite this, reliance on traditional birth attendants, or dais, and home births remains widespread. These choices are often dismissed as backward or uninformed. In reality, they reflect rational decision-making in an environment where institutional healthcare is frequently experienced as punitive rather than protective.

Home births are not chosen because women are unaware of the risks. Families are acutely conscious of the dangers of maternal and infant mortality, unhygienic practices, and delivery-related complications. What weighs more heavily, however, is the fear of mistreatment within formal health facilities. Women describe being spoken to harshly, questioned about their morality or marital status, and made to feel unwelcome. For many, the prospect of humiliation — particularly in male-dominated, overcrowded public hospitals — is a stronger deterrent than the clinical risks of delivering at home.

This fear is reinforced by the real costs of accessing Pakistan's public healthcare system, even where services are offi-

cially free. Travel, repeated visits due to referrals, diagnostic tests, and the time spent away from household or income-generating work can make a single hospital visit a significant burden for low-income families. The cumulative impact of transport, lost wages and logistical challenges often makes seeking institutional care a difficult and sometimes untenable choice.

Documentation acts as a further and decisive barrier. While policy may not always mandate identity documents for maternity care, in practice CNICs, marriage certificates and other paperwork are routinely demanded. Front-line discretion determines access and undocumented women are frequently delayed, discouraged, or turned away. For women without CNICs — many of whom belong to historically marginalised or stateless communities — health facilities become sites of anxiety rather than care.

These administrative barriers are deeply gendered. Women are more likely than men to lack documentation, and more dependent on male rela-

tives to obtain or present it. When documents are missing, women bear the burden of explanation and negotiation. In maternity settings, this vulnerability is heightened. The fear is not only of being refused care, but of being reported, questioned, or publicly shamed. Stories of such encounters circulate quickly within communities, reinforcing collective mistrust and reinforce the avoidance of formal healthcare.

For stateless and undocumented populations, the consequences are particularly severe. Stateless-ness does not simply limit mobility or access to education; it directly amplifies maternal risk. A woman without legal identity is less likely to seek antenatal care, more likely to delay seeking help during complications, and more vulnerable to being excluded at critical moments. In these cases, the link between legal identity and survival in childbirth is stark but largely unacknowledged in policy discussions.

Private healthcare, often presented as an alternative, offers little relief. Costs are prohibitive, and there is growing concern

about the routine medicalisation of childbirth. Families report being pushed toward caesarean sections even when normal delivery is medically viable. Decisions are poorly explained; consent is often perfunctory, and costs escalate rapidly. For women who already feel powerless within healthcare settings, such experiences deepen mistrust and reinforce the perception that institutional care prioritises profit or control over patient well-being.

At the core of these experiences lies the question of dignity. Women from low-income and undocumented backgrounds repeatedly describe being treated as burdens rather than patients. Communication is minimal, empathy scarce, and accountability weak. These interactions mirror broader social hierarchies, where class, gender, and legal status intersect to shape who is deemed deserving of care.

The persistence of home births and reliance on dais should therefore be understood as a symptom of systemic failure. Pakistan's health system remains heavily oriented towards tertiary care, while

primary and community-based services — those most accessible to women — remain under-researched and undervalued. Weak referral systems, in-a-dequate oversight of front-line behaviour, and the exclusion of undocumented populations from planning processes allow these patterns to persist.

Reframing the issue is essential. Women do not avoid healthcare because they are careless or resistant to modern medicine. They avoid it because the system exposes them to indignity, financial strain, and administrative risk. Awareness campaigns alone cannot address this. What is required is health system design that recognises documentation as a barrier, addresses gendered power dynamics, and treats dignity as integral to care. Until healthcare can be accessed without fear, without hidden costs, and without proof of legal belonging, avoidance will remain a rational response.

The true measure of a health system is not the sophistication of its hospitals, but whether women — regardless of status — feel safe enough to seek care when it matters most.

Forgotten women

Nasira Habib

Seventy-Seven per cent of Pakistan's more than 11 million farms are smaller than five acres, yet the country's agricultural policies rarely reflect this reality. They fail to recognise that the survival of these farms depends heavily on women's labour and ecological knowledge. Despite their central role, women remain largely invisible in agricultural policy, planning and data.

Across Pakistan's agroecological zones — in Punjab's plains, Sindh's deserts, and the mountain valleys of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan — women's knowledge of soils, seeds, plants and seasonal rhythms has been refined over generations. They traditionally managed organic materials in ways that maintained soil fertility. They selected diverse crop varieties, preserving traits for soil types, water availability, taste, cookability, and resilience.

These processes yielded thousands of seed varieties emerging from local ecosystems. They developed an intimate and holistic understanding of their local ecosystems, soil and plant health, and plant properties, including medicinal uses. Grandma's remedies still come in handy to heal our minds and bodies.

Women also sustained livestock, which is a central pillar of food sovereignty. They fed and watered cattle, buffaloes, goats, sheep and poultry; collected fodder and grasses; milked animals; made yoghurt, lassi, cheese, butter and ghee; and applied traditional remedies for common illnesses. Their labour

formed the bedrock of mixed crop-livestock systems, which nourished rural families and stabilised incomes.

But the Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s dismissed the critical role of women. Their composting, nutrient-recycling and carbon-sequestering systems were abandoned in favour of synthetic fertilisers that initially boosted yields but eventually depleted soil organic matter and disrupted microbial life. Their seed-saving skills were replaced by commercial seeds that had to be purchased each season.

Chemical inputs, including pesticides, replaced the centuries-old wisdom that had emerged from peaceful coexistence with nature. Their management of diverse cropping systems was undermined by monocultures. The ecological balance that women maintained — through mixed cropping, organic recycling, and careful water use — was pushed aside.

Despite their central role in sustaining small farms, rural women are too often reduced to unpaid labourers with ever-increasing workloads but no rights and no voice. They work longer hours than men, perform the most physically demanding tasks, and yet hold little to no decision-making authority over land, income or farm planning.

Today, Pakistan's farms bear the consequences: declining soil fertility, widespread micronutrient deficiency, pesticide contamination, water depletion and a dangerous dependence on costly external inputs.

Food insecurity is rising even as production systems grow more fragile. The promise of the

Green Revolution has given way to a landscape of ecological degradation and economic vulnerability. As climate change intensifies, as floods, droughts, and heatwaves become more frequent and as male out-migration increases, women's responsibilities have grown heavier — while their rights remain unchanged.

Reversing this damage requires returning to the principles that women have long embodied: recycling organic matter, protecting genetic resources and biodiversity, and working with — and not against — ecological processes.

Agroecology does not replace traditional knowledge — it builds upon it. It gives a scientific and policy language to what women have practised for generations. It strengthens soil health, restores biodiversity, eliminates chemical dependency, and enhances climate resilience.

Pakistan's agricultural future depends on recognising rural women not merely as workers but also as farmers, ecological stewards, innovators and leaders. Their daily decisions shape the fertility of our soils, the biodiversity of our fields, the health of our livestock and the nutrition of our families.

Women have sustained smallholder agriculture for generations. The time has come for our policies, institutions, and national imagination to place them at the centre — and to learn from the ecological wisdom they have safeguarded for centuries.

Empowering women is not an act of social benevolence; it is a practical necessity for environmental regeneration and food sovereignty.

Afterlife of disaster

Maria Ahmad

Fifteen years after the Airblue ED 202 plane crash that killed all 152 people on board, an appellate court in Islamabad has awarded Rs5.4 billion in compensation to the families of eight victims. This is unlikely to be the end of the matter. The case will move through further stages of appeal, and the money may not arrive anytime soon. That part is familiar. What is easier to miss is the quiet truth beneath it, that these families are still carrying a national tragedy through the legal system long after the rest of the country has moved on.

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does not move in the same register as legal time, which advances in adjournments and orders, while grief remains where it is.

There is nothing exceptional about this. From the Pan Am Flight 103 crash in Scotland to Malaysian Airlines MH17 in Ukraine, families affected by aviation disasters in history have described the same afterlife of catastrophe: years spent repeating the same facts, the same narrative, keeping loss institutionally intelligible, even after public urgency has passed.

In the constitutional accounts of law associated with American sociologists Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey, legality does not operate only at the level of courts and statutes. It is made and remade by the ordinary actions of ordinary people, whose lives are reshaped as they move through legal processes. In other words, when people turn to law, they do not simply use it. They supply it with what it needs to function, and are adjusted by that process in turn.

If, as legal sociologists suggest, it is out of the most ordinary acts that law is produced, then grief does not merely encounter the legal system. It helps sustain it. Each filing, appearance, and statement of loss performs the work through which legality reproduces itself in the aftermath of tragedy. That work is not abstract. Courts rely on earlier accounts of loss to decide what care was owed, how responsibility should be fixed, and what compensation is appropriate. A 1991 US supreme court judgement on damages for mental distress for passengers following a near-crash is still referenced in aviation litigation. A damages claim

following the PIA flight PK 668 crash in Multan in 2006 sits behind the Airblue judgements.

These tragic histories are rarely recalled in full. In legal argument, while catastrophes are reduced to a single name, 'Lockheed' is no longer just a place in Scotland, but shorthand standing in for years of loss. This does more than just preserve loss. Reduced this way, loss

is able to travel — across cases, places, and time — and to set, in advance, the terms on which later loss will have to be presented in order to be internationally recognised. That is how grieving persons turn to the law already knowing what will be demanded of them and what kinds of suffering can be compared. What was extracted from grief remains in circulation as loss, available for public use, detached from the people who first bore the cost of making their suffering usable.

None of this imputes villainy. Nor is it novel. It's a structural requirement of a common law system that depends on continuity, precedent, reasoned justification. Legal systems account carefully for outcomes. They are less attentive to what it takes to sustain participation. Loss has to remain available for the law to continue, but the burden of keeping it so leaves little trace in the record.

That is why the recent Airblue judgments should land with force, even if they are headed into further rounds of appeal. Not because anything finally settles after all these years, but because the demands placed on the grieving may now, perhaps, begin to recede. Keeping one's grief permanently available to the system is not a civic function anyone should have to bear.

Murad reviews development portfolio; orders fast-track completion projects

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Friday reviewed the overall progress of development projects across the province and issued firm directions to all concerned departments to ensure timely completion, strict adherence to quality standards, and accelerated execution of all approved schemes.

The meeting, held at CM House, was attended by provincial ministers – Sharjeel Inam Memon, Saeed Ghani, Nasir Shah, Jam Khan Shoro, Ziaul Hassan Lanjar, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, Home Secretary Iqbal Memon, DG P&D Altaf Sario and others.

Chairman Planning & Development Board Najam Shah briefed the meeting on development performance, ongoing flagship projects, and institutional reforms.

Reviewing the province's development trajectory, the Chief Minister said that Sindh's de-

velopment budget has increased significantly – from Rs 55 billion in 2008-09 to Rs 1,018 billion in 2025-26, including Rs 367 billion through Foreign Project Assistance (FPA) and Rs 76 billion under the Federal PSDP. During this period, over 13,000 development schemes were taken up, with 9,193 projects completed across roads, irrigation, WASH, education, health, agriculture, and social sectors, the meeting was told.

Expressing dissatisfaction with delays and cost overruns in some schemes, the Chief Minister directed departments to prioritise completion and functionality over new announcements, warning that negligence, poor workmanship, and weak supervision would not be tolerated.

The chief minister was briefed on major post-flood rehabilitation initiatives under the Sindh Flood Emergency Rehabilitation Project (SFERP), including the rehabilitation of 141 flood-affected roads spanning 825 kilometres, restoration of 500 water supply and drainage schemes, and

completion of cash-for-work programmes benefiting over 139,000 households. He directed that climate-resilient standards under the "Build Back Better" approach be strictly enforced.

Reviewing urban sector interventions, the meeting was informed about the Karachi Neighbourhood Improvement Project (KNIP), under which roads, parks, drainage, sewerage, public spaces, and street lighting have been upgraded, significantly improving mobility, safety, and urban livability. The CM stressed that such neighbourhood-level projects must be expanded to other urban centres based on documented performance and impact. The Sindh Municipal Services Delivery Programme (MSDP) was also reviewed, with briefings on improved water supply, wastewater management, and solid waste services in Jacobabad. Murad Shah directed local governments to ensure the sustainability of assets and proper operation and maintenance after project completion.



Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah reviews progress on development projects across province at CM House in Karachi.

Shafi Jan says:
Negotiations can't move forward unless discussion on Feb 8 electoral mandate

ISLAMABAD (INP): Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Shafi Jan has made it clear that negotiations cannot move forward unless there is a discussion on the February 8 electoral mandate, warning that his party would not engage in talks merely as a formality.

Speaking to a private TV channel program Shafi Jan said PTI is not refusing dialogue but insists that talks must be conditional. He added that PTI is now focusing on a street movement, and only after this shift has the government once again spoken about negotiations. "Unfortunately, the process of talks has reached a deadlock," he said, claiming that PTI had previously attempted to initiate dialogue two to three times.



PESHAWAR: Commissioner, Riaz Khan Mehsud addresses media at Peshawar Press Club.

Senate body for expediting K-IV project to augment city's water supply system

KARACHI (APP): The Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat, taking notice of water supply issues of Karachi, on Friday urged the Sindh Government to take swift steps for curbing the tanker mafia and upgrading existing water infrastructure of the metropolis at par with the growing population. The Committee decided to convene quarterly review meetings to monitor the K-IV and other important projects and expediting progress on them and also suggested holding a joint meeting of all the relevant senate committees with attendance of Sindh Chief Minister, Mayor Karachi and senior officials for resolution of Karachi's long standing water and sewerage woes.

The Senate body, which met with Senator

Rana Mehmood-ul-Hassan in the chair here at the Sindh Assembly Building, received detailed briefings on the performance of the National Engineering Services Pakistan (NESPAK) and the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA).

Senators Farooq Hamid Naek, Amir Walidin Chishti, Abdul Qadir Khan, Att-ur-Rehman, Saleem Mandviwala and Shahadat Awan, along with Members Sindh Assembly Saima Agha, Sharif Jamal, Rana Shoukat Ali and Asif Moosa attended the meeting. They raised concerns over the water supply situation in Karachi and unauthorized operations of the tanker mafia, lamenting that the tanker mafia has been allowed to hijack the city's water supply, forcing citizens to pay for water.

The Committee recommended that the Sindh Government should take immediate measures to curb the tanker mafia and upgrade Karachi's existing water infrastructure in line with the K-IV water supply project and the rapidly growing requirements of the city. The Committee further decided that the matters related to the funding and progress of the K-IV project would be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

The Committee suggested convening a single-point agenda joint meeting of Senate Standing Committees on Finance, Planning and Development, Cabinet Secretariat and Water and Power, with participation of the Sindh Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, Mayor of Karachi, Managing Director KWSC.

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Officials discussed strategies to help drug addicts reintegrate into society as responsible and productive citizens. It was agreed

that the Sindh Government should take immediate measures to curb the tanker mafia and upgrade Karachi's existing water infrastructure in line with the K-IV water supply project and the rapidly growing requirements of the city. The Committee suggested convening a single-point agenda joint meeting of Senate Standing Committees on Finance, Planning and Development, Cabinet Secretariat and Water and Power, with participation of the Sindh Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, Mayor of Karachi, Managing Director KWSC.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik chairs a high-level meeting on Environmental Protection of Pakistan.

CM orders revised medicines list, zero tolerance for hospital lapses

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has ordered for preparation of a revised medicine list for government hospitals and called for a foolproof mechanism to ensure an uninterrupted supply of essential drugs across the province.

Presiding over a meeting on health projects on Friday, she ordered for formation of a dedicated committee to finalise the updated medicines list. Expressing serious concern over reports of medicine shortages despite hefty allocations, she noted that Rs80 billion is being spent on medicines and termed any failure in timely delivery to patients as "unacceptable."

The meeting also reviewed proposals aimed at modernising public hospitals, including the possible use of Chinese-manufac-

tured medical equipment to upgrade healthcare facilities throughout Punjab.

Taking strict notices of public complaints regarding the conduct of hospital security staff, CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif approved, in principle, the installation of body cameras for security guards, ward boys, nurses and pharmacy staff. She further directed hospital administrations to ensure daily steam cleaning of facilities by 9:00 a.m. to maintain hygiene standards.

The chief minister also ordered a ban on the use of mobile phones by doctors and nurses during duty hours, stressing that patient care must remain the top priority at all times.

To strengthen hospital governance, the meeting approved the creation of a Medical Superintendent (MS) pool, with salary in-

crements to be linked directly to performance. Community health inspectors were assigned the task of conducting regular hospital surveys to monitor service delivery and identify shortcomings.

Additionally, CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed the establishment of a data analysis centre to assess the impact and effectiveness of public welfare initiatives in the health sector.

During the briefing, it was informed that more than 2,500 doctors have been recruited over the past two years. The meeting was also told that 585,000 patients across Punjab have been registered for home delivery of cardiac medicines, while doorstep delivery has been completed for 6,000 patients suffering from hepatitis and tuberculosis.

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Governor for implementation of PHC judgment regarding PSC members recruitments

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has directed the provincial government to ensure the immediate and complete implementation of a judgment passed by the Peshawar High Court regarding recruitments of members in KP Public Services Commission in writ petition by Awais Khan vs Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and others.

According to an official communication issued by the Governor's Secretariat and addressed to the Chief Secretary, the direc-

tive follows a letter from the Additional Registrar (Judicial) of the Peshawar High Court along with a copy of the judgment.

The letter states that the competent authority, the Governor has desired that the judgment be implemented in letter and spirit in accordance with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission Ordinance, 1978, read with Article 242 of the Constitution of Pakistan and Rule 34 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government Rules of Business, 1985.

Lahore to be divided into three security zones for Basant

LAHORE (INP): The City of Lahore will be divided into three zones for security arrangements during Basant days.

The city will be divided into red, yellow and green zones for security arrangements. Entry of motorcyclists without antennas and helmets will be prohibited in the red and yellow zones.

In the city, 47 places have been identified in the red zone and 32 places in the yellow zone. Camps for police, rescue and mechanics who install antennas will be set up in the red and yellow zones.

Governor emphasizes need for collective efforts to achieve peace, stability and dev.

Independent Report

LAHORE: Governor of Punjab, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, emphasized the need for collective efforts to achieve peace, stability, and development in the country. He reaffirmed Pakistan People's Party's commitment to serving the people, stating that party workers and activists are their strength and will be supported.

He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation led by Syed Daud Ali Gilani at Governor House Lahore. On this occasion, workers of different political parties announced their formal joining of the Pakistan People's Party.

The Governor of Punjab said that the PPP is the only political party that has always raised voice for the rights of the people. He said that the party workers are our strength and we will not leave them alone.

The Governor of Punjab further said that the PPP will soon regain its lost position in Punjab. The Governor of Punjab said that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has such leadership skills that can take the country forward in a better way. He said that the doors of the Governor House are open for the people.



KARACHI: A Group photo with Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat Senator Rana Mahmood-ul-Hassan after chairing meeting at Sindh Assembly.

Climate change, natural disasters increasing in GB; Caretaker CM GB

ASTORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, Justice ® Yaar Muhammad, while speaking on the occasion of a departmental briefing given by the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA) here Friday, said that due to climate change, the incidence of natural disasters in Gilgit-Baltistan was increasing, which would pose a major challenge in the future.

In the city, 47 places have been identified in the red zone and 32 places in the yellow zone. Camps for police, rescue and mechanics who install antennas will be set up in the red and yellow zones.

The caretaker chief minister emphasized that a comprehensive strategy should be formulated for timely rescue, relief, and rehabilitation in the event of natural disasters. He said that the availability of heavy machinery in all districts is essential so that relief operations can be initiated immediately in case of any natural calamity. On this occasion, he directed that the availability of staff at the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority's warehouse must be ensured.

Bilal reviews progress on 'Apni Chhat Apna Ghar' scheme in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Minister for Housing and Public Health Engineering Bilal Yasin on Friday visited Rawalpindi to review progress on the chief minister's flagship housing initiative, Apni Chhat Apna Ghar.

During the visit, the minister met with beneficiaries of the scheme, who expressed gratitude to Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and described the initiative as people-friendly and welfare-oriented. Bilal Yasin emphasized the provision of qual-



Sunni Tehreek activists hold Madh-e-Sabha rally in Hyderabad.

Minister inaugurates child Nutrition Stabilization Center in Mardan

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Minister for Health, Khalq ur Rehman, on Friday officially inaugurated the Nutrition Stabilization Center established for malnourished children at Benazir Bhutto Children Hospital, Mardan.

The center comprises 8 beds, where children suffering from malnutrition will be provided with medical treatment and protein-rich nutrition.

WHO has provided beds, essential medical equipment, a qualified nutritionist, and other staff for the center.

A separate play area for children has been arranged, along with a dedicated kitchen for preparing protein-rich meals for malnourished children.

KP minister launches joint initiative for drug addiction rehabilitation

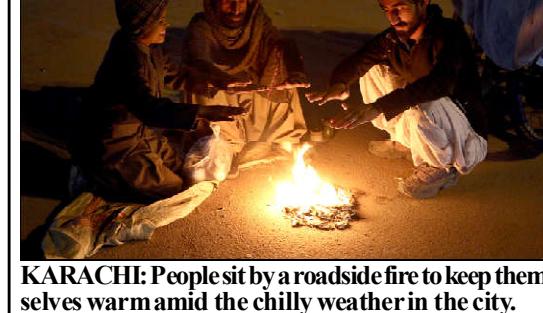
PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control, Syed Fakhruddin Khan on Friday chaired a high-level meeting with officials from the Excise Department and representatives of the private rehabilitation organization "The Haq Awaz" to plan a coordinated effort for the treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts across the province.

The meeting, held at the Directorate General Excise & Taxation and Narcotics Control in Hayatabad, Peshawar, was attended by Secretary Khalid Ilyas, senior departmental officers, Anti-Narcotics Wing officials, and members of the rehabilitation organization.

Officials discussed strategies to help drug addicts reintegrate into society as responsible and productive citizens. It was agreed

that the Excise Department would refer addicts from Peshawar and other districts to "The Haq Awaz", where they will receive structured medical treatment and rehabilitation services. As part of the initial phase, 100 individuals will receive free treatment and rehabilitation, and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the department and the organization will soon formalize the collaboration.

Minister Syed Fakhruddin Khan described the initiative as a "major humanitarian effort", highlighting the government's commitment to social welfare and public service. He praised the organization for supporting the department's objectives and emphasized that post-rehabilitation monitoring will be implemented to prevent relapses and protect recovering individuals from negative influences.



KARACHI: People sit by a roadside fire to keep themselves warm amid the chilly weather in the city.

Court asks EOBI to pay pensions to private-sector employees

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Constitutional Court has directed the Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) to pay pensions to private-sector employees who completed 14 and a half years of service.

A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice Ameenuddin Khan, ruled that employees who have completed less than 15 years but at least 14 and a half years of service are entitled to a pension. The court dismissed all appeals filed by EOBI and upheld the Lahore High Court's verdicts of 2024 and 2025.

According to details, Mustafabad police received credible information that both policemen were involved in selling hashish.

During the raid, the police arrested 20 kilos of hashish from the possession of one policeman, identified as Naseeb Rashid, and 21 kilos of hashish from Mohammad Tayyab.

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A separate play area for children has been arranged, along with a dedicated kitchen for preparing protein-rich meals for malnourished children.

PM approves policy framework to reform gemstones sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday gave an in-principle approval to the national policy framework to reform the gemstones sector, align it with international standards, and provide a conducive environment for foreign investment.

The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting here on the country's gemstone reserves, sectoral reforms, export enhancement, and implementation of modern technology, directed strict adherence to the timeline for actions outlined in the policy framework this year.

Citing vast reserves of gemstones in Pakistan, he instructed geological surveys to determine the geography and value of these reserves, ensuring full consultation with all relevant institutions, provincial governments, and stakeholders.

The prime minister also instructed immediate measures to establish international-standard laboratories and certification systems.

Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the establishment of two model Centers of Excellence for gem-

stones in the country this year and engaging the internationally acclaimed experts to resolve obstacles in policy implementation.

He said that the country's gemstone exports were negligible comparing immense reserves, and called for encouraging private companies, especially young entrepreneurs, to invest in the sector.

Highlighting the globally-famed quality of Pakistan's precious stones, he said that curbing smuggling and promoting legal exports would bring in billions of dollars in foreign exchange.

The prime minister also instructed the finance ministry to immediately release available funds to uplift the sector.

The participants of the meeting were briefed on Pakistan's gemstone potential, regional comparisons, required measures for export growth, and the National Policy Framework's structure, objectives, and implementation timelines.

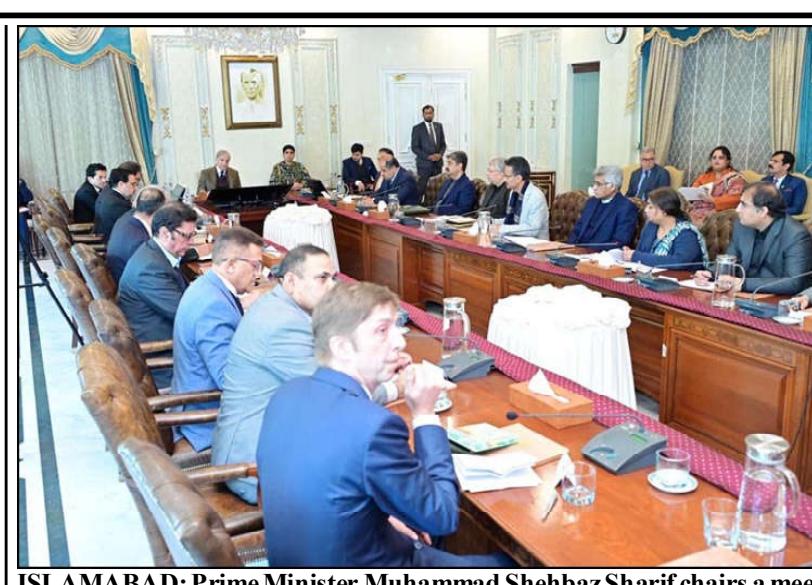
It was told that Pakistan's gemstone reserves valued at around \$450 billion while annual exports stood merely at \$5.8 million. Over 5,000 companies are processing

more than 30 types of precious stones in the country. Leading reserves include emerald, peridot, ruby, topaz, and aquamarine.

The Ministry of Industries and Production has formulated a comprehensive action plan identifying challenges and priority measures to achieve a \$1 billion export target over five years through reforms. This year, the ministry will integrate the gemstone value chain into the national economy, promote local processing for value addition, adopt modern technology, launch private sector training programs, and introduce Brand Pakistan.

The key elements of the framework include an international-standard certification regime, establishment of a dedicated authority for sector development and investment, a National Warranty Office, geological mapping, modern mining technology, Brand Pakistan promotion, and Centers of Excellence.

The meeting was attended by Federal Ministers Azam Nazir Tarar and Ali Pervaiz Malik, Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani, Special Assistant Haroon Akhtar, and senior officials.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on Gemstones sector reforms.

Cabinet Committee reviews SOEs performance

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Cabinet Committee on State-Owned Enterprises (CCSOEs) here on Friday reviewed the performance of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and reaffirmed its commitment to transparency and structural reforms.

The meeting of the cabinet committee was held under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammed Aurangzeb, according to a press release issued by the finance ministry.

The committee was presented the Annual Consolidated Performance Report of Commercial and Non-Commercial State-

Owned Enterprises (SOEs) for FY 2024-25, prepared by the Central Monitoring Unit (CMU) of the Finance Division.

The presentation made by Majid Soofi Director General CMU, covered in depth detail of SOE 260 degree view covering the financial and non-financial performance of SOEs, government support and fiscal flows, contribution of SOEs to the exchequer, debt profile, corporate governance status, business plan assessments, and the proposed way forward under the SOEs Act, 2023.

The Committee was informed that during FY 2024-25, aggregate revenues of SOEs stood at approximately PKR 12.4 trillion, reflecting a decline largely attributable to reduced profitability in the oil sector following lower international oil prices.

Aggregate profits of profit-making SOEs declined by 13 percent to PKR 709.9 billion compared to PKR 820.7 billion last year, while aggregate losses of loss-making SOEs showed improvement, declining by around 2 percent to PKR 832.8 billion. Despite this improvement, the net result was an overall net loss of PKR 122.9 billion for the SOE sector, compared to a net loss of PKR 30.6 billion in the previous year.

LCCI, UBL sign MoU to promote digital payments

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) and United Bank Limited (UBL) Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote digital payments and ensure safe, fast and efficient financial transactions for LCCI members.

The MoU was signed by LCCI President Faheem Ur Rehman Saigol and UBL Cluster Head Digital Banking Group Amman Uel Channa. UBL Group Head Muhammad Amir Sheikh was also present at the cer-

emony. Under the agreement, UBL will provide digital payment and QR-based transaction facilities to LCCI. This will help LCCI members adopt modern, cashless payment systems and improve transparency, convenience and efficiency in business transactions.

Speaking on the occasion, LCCI President Faheem Ur Rehman Saigol said that digital banking and fintech solutions are essential for the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and for documenting the economy.

Likewise, the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold increased by Rs.2,672 to Rs.369,038, whereas silver prices also registered an increase.

Gold prices surge by Rs3,400 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): Gold prices increased sharply in the local market on Friday, as the price of 24-karat gold per tola surged by Rs.3,400 to settle at Rs.469,562, while the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold went up by Rs.2,915 to Rs.402,573, according to the All Pakistan Sarla Gems and Jewellers Association.

Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold increased by Rs.2,672 to Rs.369,038, whereas silver prices also registered an increase.



ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Privatisation and Chairman Privatisation Commission, Muhammad Ali chairing the Privatisation Commission Board meeting.

SMEDA to organise 3-day 1st National SME Cluster Expo from 24th

LAHORE (APP): The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) is going to hold the first 'Made in Pakistan: SME Cluster Showcase 2026' here at Expo Center from January 24 to 26.

SMEDA CEO Ms. Nadia Jahangir Seth told media here Friday that the exhibition aims to strengthen the country's micro, small and medium enterprise ecosystem, as per SME development vision of the Prime Minister, which is being implemented under the direct leadership of SAPM Haroon Akhtar Khan and Secretary MoIP

Saif Anjum. The expo, she said, is envisioned as a multi-national platform that will evolve over time from product visibility and cluster recognition into structured B2B partnerships, subcontracting ecosystems, export readiness and global buyer linkages. She hoped that the exhibition would expand market access and position SME clusters as a structured and competitive pillar of the national economy.

SMEDA CEO said that Pakistan's SMEs form the backbone of economy and are concentrated in regional and sectoral clusters but most of them.

Value addition of raw material imperative to promote exports: FCCI

FAISALABAD (APP): President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Farooq Yousaf Sheikh said that fundamentally Faisalabad is an agrarian economy and we must excel in value addition of raw material produced in vast tracts of its farm land which is imperative to promote exports of high value, packed and innovative food products.

Talking to a group of progressive farmers, he said that agriculture is 24 per cent of our total economy which is not only providing raw material to the textile and sugar industry but also directly providing jobs to the 42pc of our

workforce. He expressed satisfaction over the successive bumper crop of potato and said that our farmers should avoid selling their produce at throwaway prices but try to add value through non-traditional strategies. He said that vegetables, potatoes and other perishable products must be preserved and exported to earn precious foreign exchange in order to root out rural poverty.

He said that potato production has been on a growth trajectory for the last many years but instead of converting it into the high value products, our farmers are complaining of low market prices.

DPM reviews sugar availability, price

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar Friday chaired the meeting of committee to review sugar availability and price.

He reviewed the progress on disposal of imported sugar, sugar production 2025-26 and current prices.

The committee noted with satisfaction the downward trend in sugar prices both at the ex-mill and retail stages.

The DPM directed the concerned provincial departments to ensure that the farmers also receive a fair price for sugar-cane in a timely manner.

The meeting was attended by representatives of provinces, Federal Minister National Food Security & Research (MONFSR), SAPM Tariq Bajwa, Secretary MONFSR, Member FBR, Chairman TCP, and senior officers of relevant departments.

Rupee gains 03 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Friday appreciated by 03 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 280.02 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 280.05.

According to the Pakistan Foreign Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 280.8 and Rs 282.75, respectively.

Jam sees Pakistan-Indonesia trade ties entering a 'stronger, more progressive phase'

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Friday said Pakistan's trade and economic relationship with Indonesia is moving from recovery towards stability, with strong prospects for expansion, particularly in the palm oil sector and other emerging areas of cooperation.

Speaking as the chief guest at the Indonesia Palm Oil Networking Reception held at a local hotel, the minister highlighted the growing partnership between the two countries, calling recent high-level exchanges a clear sign of mutual trust and long-term commitment.

Jam Kamal Khan said, "This bilateral relationship has real strength, and it will only grow with time".

Referring to Pakistan's recent economic challenges, the commerce minister acknowledged that the country went through a difficult phase marked by high inflation, elevated interest rates and trade constraints. However, he said the situation has improved significantly. "From recovery to stability, Pakistan has taken a difficult but necessary course. While conditions are not yet ideal, the direction is positive and

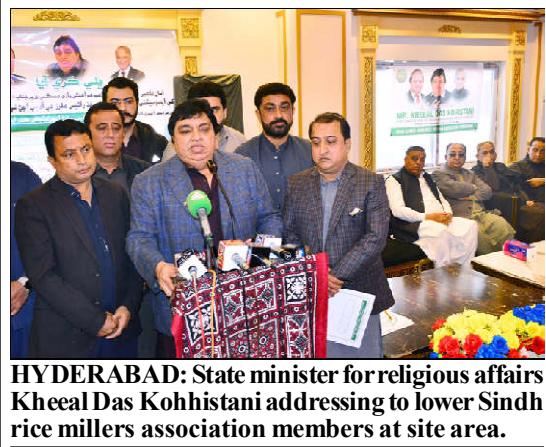
encouraging," he added.

Jam Kamal Khan stressed that economic revival depends heavily on the private sector, praising Pakistani businesses for their resilience during tough times. He said the government has increased engagement with the private sector through regular consultations and joint working groups, allowing businesses to directly propose reforms and policy measures.

Highlighting Pakistan's expanding foreign diplomacy, the minister said the country has strengthened trade ties with ASEAN, Gulf, Central Asian, European and US markets.

He added that frequent visits by foreign leaders and Pakistani delegations over the past year reflect renewed international confidence in Pakistan's economy.

The minister also spoke about future initiatives, including Pakistan's plan to organize a single-country exhibition for ASEAN markets, potentially in Jakarta. He said the exhibition would give Pakistani exporters an opportunity to showcase products, explore new markets and build partnerships across the region.



HYDERABAD: State minister for religious affairs Kheel Das Kohistani addressing to lower Sindh rice millers association members at site area.

Sino-Pak green energy coop leads to sustainable growth

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chinese solar solutions are becoming increasingly embedded in Pakistan's industrial and public-service sectors, helping stabilize electricity supply, reduce operating costs and support the country's shift toward cleaner energy, according to a report published by China Economic Net (CEN) on Friday.

In Multan, a 300-kilowatt solar power system installed at Laeque Rafiq Hospital serves as a critical backup source, ensuring that essential medical equipment continues to operate during grid disruptions.

Hospital administrators say the system has strengthened energy security for patient care.

Manufacturing facilities are also benefiting from Chinese photovoltaic technology. At the Pak Rice Mill along the GT Road in Kamoke, a 400-kilowatt rooftop solar installation generates about 5.46 million kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by more than 520 tonnes.

"Pak Rice is sold across Pakistan," said factory representative Ahmed Ilyas. "Since installing solar panels, our electricity costs have fallen and production efficiency has improved."

Such projects reflect a broader strategy by Chinese companies to adapt renewable-energy solutions to local conditions.

According to Xu Ting, Middle East and Africa regional general manager at Astronergy, the Pakistani government is actively promoting distributed solar power as a way to ease electricity shortages and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

That policy environment has helped accelerate market growth. Astronergy reported shipments of nearly 465 megawatts to Pakistan in 2024, and deliveries rose to 750 megawatts in 2025—an increase of more than 60% year on year.



QUETTA: Additional Secretary Finance Rohana Gul Kakar presides over the SNE 2026-27 meeting of Civil Defence.

SSGC cuts unaccounted-for-gas losses by 60 per cent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGC) has achieved a major reduction in unaccounted-for-gas (UFG) through a series of structural, technical and governance reforms implemented over the past several years.

According to a document available with Wealth Pakistan, the company reduced UFG by 43.6 billion cubic feet, reflecting a 60% decline between FY19 and FY25. Out of these, 12 billion cubic feet were achieved in Balochistan between FY23 and FY25, indicating targeted interventions in high-loss areas.

To support these initiatives, the SSGC significantly enhanced its capital investment in gas infrastructure. Capitalization increased from Rs9 billion in FY22 to Rs17 billion in FY23, followed by further expansion to Rs24 billion in FY24 and Rs37 billion in FY25. The company has projected capitalization of Rs40 billion for FY26 and FY27.

As part of this investment drive, around 5,000 kilometers of the gas distribution network have been rehabilitated across Sindh.

Alongside infrastructure upgrades, the company carried out extensive operational restructuring. This included the establishment of a zonal structure and new regions, as well as a redefinition of departmental and divisional responsibilities aimed at improving accountability and operational efficiency.

Chinese technology powers homes and harvests in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chinese solar technology powers homes and harvests in Pakistan, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Friday. The report says, for years, Rashid Akram and his family endured the harsh routines of summer in Lahore, where temperatures regularly climb above 45 degrees Celsius.

Chronic power outages and rising electricity prices have long strained households and farmers across Pakistan, particularly during peak heat.

That began to change about 18 months ago, when Akram installed 36 rooftop solar photovoltaic modules from Chinese manufacturer Astronergy, following a recommendation from a friend.

Solar panels installed at

PSX sheds 1,133 points to close at 184,410 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Friday closed bearish, losing 1,133.34 points, a negative change of 0.61 percent, to settle at 184,409.67 points compared to 185,543.01 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market witnessed a trading volume of 1,033,852 million shares with a traded value of Rs 52,924 billion, against 1,433,986 million shares valuing Rs 91,336 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization declined to Rs 20,768 trillion from Rs 20,862 trillion a day earlier.

Out of 483 active companies in the ready market, 162 advanced, 271 declined, while 50 remained unchanged.



LAHORE: A high level delegation of American Business Leaders Senior Punjab Minister Marriyum Aurangzaib.

Gaza civil defence says Israeli attacks kill 13 including 5 children

GAZA CITY (AFP/APP): Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli attacks in the Palestinian territory on Thursday killed at least 13 people, including five children, despite a ceasefire that has largely halted the fighting.

Four people, including three children, were killed when a drone struck a tent sheltering displaced people in southern Gaza, agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP.

In the north of the Gaza Strip, an 11-year-old girl was killed near the Jabalia refugee camp and a strike on a school killed one person, while a drone near Khan Yunis in the south killed a man, the agency added.

Two more Gazans, including a child, were killed in other attacks, reported the agency, which operates under Hamas authority.

added.

Since October 10, a fragile US-sponsored truce in Gaza has largely halted the fighting between Israeli forces and Hamas, but both sides have alleged frequent violations.

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem told AFP that the strikes in Gaza on Thursday "confirm the Israeli occupation's renunciation of its commitment to the ceasefire agreement," Bassal said.

Israeli forces have killed at least 425 Palestinians in Gaza since the ceasefire took effect, according to Gaza's health ministry.

At least 21 people were killed on November 22 Israeli strikes, making it one of the deadliest days in Gaza since the ceasefire came into effect.

The Israeli military said militants have killed three of its soldiers during the same period.



Guards escorting handcuffed accused scam boss Chen Zhi off a China South plane in Beijing.

Xi chairs CPC leadership meeting to hear work reports of state institutions

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): The Communist Party of China (CPC) leadership met on Thursday to hear a series of work reports from the leading Party members' groups of the top legislature, central government, top political advisory body, supreme court and supreme procuratorate. The Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee also heard a work report from the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee.

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, presided over and addressed the meeting. The meeting emphasized that China is confronted with profound and complex changes in its development environment over the five-year period ahead, with ar-

dous and demanding tasks on the agenda. It stressed the imperative of upholding, making full use of, and further developing the Party's leadership—the country's greatest institutional strength—to provide the fundamental guarantee for advancing Chinese modernization. Last year, the leading Party members' groups of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the State Council, the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate resolutely upheld the authority of the CPC Central Committee and its centralized, unified leadership, and made significant advancements in various fields, the meeting noted.

US, Colombia vow joint fight against guerrillas: minister

BOGOTÁ (AFP/APP): Colombia's leftist President Gustavo Petro agreed with his US counterpart Donald Trump to take "joint action" against cocaine-smuggling guerrillas on the border with Venezuela, Bogota's interior minister said Thursday.

The two leaders held their first phone call on Wednesday, de-escalating tensions after Trump had threatened military action against Colombia following the ouster of Venezuela's leftist leader Nicolas Maduro by US forces.

Trump and Petro "committed to taking joint actions" against the National Liberation Army (ELN), Colombia's last remaining major armed rebel group, Interior Minister Armando Benedetti said in an interview with Blu Radio.

Colombia accuses the ELN of launching attacks and kidnappings of Colombian soldiers and retreating

to rear-base locations in Venezuela.

Petro asked Trump "to help strike hard at the ELN on the border" with Venezuela, Benedetti said.

He said the guerrillas must "be attacked in their rear" as well as on Colombian soil. Colombia and Venezuela share a porous 2,200-kilometer (1,400-mile) border where various armed groups vie for control of the profits from drug trafficking, illegal mining and smuggling.

Later Thursday, the leader of a separate rebel grouping summoned other guerrilla commanders to a meeting to discuss the removal of Maduro.

"We know we have had our differences in the past, but today we are facing a common enemy" in the United States, said Ivan Mordisco, leader of the remnants of the dissolved FARC armed movement, also thought to have rear-bases in Venezuela.

"Peace is sought through weapons as a condition for asserting one's own dominion."

European political order 'in danger': France

PARIS (AFP/APP): The European political order "is today in danger", the French foreign minister said on Friday in his annual address to France's ambassadors.

"No, European civilisation will not fade away. But yes, our political order is today in danger, despite its precious stability in an unpredictable world, despite its immense scientific, technological, cultural and financial wealth," said Jean-Noel Barot. A US national security strategy released in December by the administration of President Donald Trump launched a brutal attack on Europe, describing it as facing "civilisational erosion" from migration and calling for "cultivating resistance" among right-wing parties.

"No, Europe is not on the brink of civilisational erosion, and the presumptuous voices claiming it is would do better to watch out for their own erosion."

'War is back in vogue,' Pope Leo says

VATICAN CITY (AFP/APP): Pope Leo XIV told diplomats to the Vatican on Friday that war was "back in vogue," delivering a speech warning of sabre-rattling and a weakness of multilateralism.

"A diplomacy that promotes dialogue and seeks consensus among all parties is being replaced by a diplomacy based on force, by either individuals or groups of allies."

"War is back in vogue and a zeal for war is spreading," said the first US pope.

Leo warned that the principle established after the Second World War, "which prohibited nations from using force to violate the borders of others, has been completely undermined".

"Peace is sought through weapons as a condition for asserting one's own dominion."



A highway maintenance vehicle drives on the A9 road, as a crashed vehicle lies on its side, with Scotland in the grip of a deep freeze following Storm Goretta, near Aviemore, Scotland, Britain.

Russian attack damaged 20 Kyiv residential buildings, Qatar embassy: Zelensky

KYIV (AFP/APP): A "massive" Russian night-time attack on Ukraine damaged 20 residential buildings in Kyiv and its suburbs, as well as Qatar's embassy, President Volodymyr Zelensky said Friday. Russia hit Ukraine as temperatures plunged to freezing with its latest barrage of missiles—including the hypersonic Oreshnik—as Moscow rejected Western proposals to end its almost four-year invasion.

Kyiv was the worst hit in the strikes, Ukraine said, with four people killed and at least 25 wounded. "Twenty residential buildings alone were damaged," Zelensky said, adding that "a building of the Embassy of Qatar was damaged last night by a Russian drone". "Qatar, a state that

Syria announces ceasefire with Kurdish fighters in Aleppo

ALEPO (AFP/APP): Syria's defence ministry announced a ceasefire in Aleppo on Friday after days of deadly clashes between the army and Kurdish fighters forced thousands of civilians to flee.

The violence killed 21 people and was the latest challenge for a country still struggling to forge a new path after Islamist authorities ousted longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad just over a year ago.

Since Tuesday, government forces have been fighting the US-backed Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Aleppo, the country's second city. Both sides have traded blame over who started the fighting, which comes as they struggle to implement a deal to merge the Kurds' administration and military into the country's new government.

The ceasefire appeared to be holding through Friday morning, said an AFP photographer located on the edge of the Ashrafieh neighbourhood.

Trump says US oil pledged \$100 bn for Venezuela ahead of White House meeting

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): US President Donald Trump said Friday the world's biggest oil companies pledged to invest \$100 billion to revive Venezuela's oil sector as he prepared for a meeting with top industry executives.

US forces seized Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro in a sweeping military operation on January 3, with Trump making no secret that control of Venezuela's oil was at the heart of his actions.

"At least 100 Billion Dollars will be invested by BIG OIL, all of whom I will be meeting with today at The White House," Trump wrote on his social media platform ahead of the gathering, where he was expected to convince the oil heads to support his plans in Venezuela.

The Trump administration has repeatedly said that it is running Venezuela, with Energy Secretary Chris Wright on Wednesday asserting that Washington will control the country's oil industry "indefinitely."

Venezuelan interim

Protesters, US law enforcers clash after immigration agent kills woman

federal forces are making the streets more dangerous.

Large, noisy crowds gathered around Minneapolis in protest on Thursday, chanting slogans against ICE. Federal immigration agents armed with pepperball guns and tear gas wrestled several protesters to the ground. More protests are planned.

In a separate incident Thursday afternoon, US immigration enforcement agents shot and wounded two individuals in the western city of Portland, local police said.

"Two people are in the hospital following a shooting involving federal agents," a statement from Portland Police said, adding a man and a woman were wounded by "apparent gunshots." That incident was still unfolding.

Trump and senior officials have claimed that in the Minneapolis incident, Good was trying to kill the ICE agents.

Despite aid efforts, UN warns winter devastates displaced in Gaza & West Bank

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Despite harsh winter conditions and continuing Israeli restrictions, the UN and partners are maintaining large-scale humanitarian operations in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, with a focus on shelter, water, health and education.

Briefing reporters in New York on Thursday, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric, citing the UN aid coordination office, OCHA, said hu-

manitarian teams are continuing to support the most vulnerable families in Gaza "despite impediments" and the cumulative impact of two years of conflict between Israeli forces and Hamas militants.

"Over the past days, one of our partners distributed 7,000 dignity kits, more than 5,600 dignified family hygiene kits and 1.3 million bars of soap to some 200,000 people," he said, stressing that assis-

tance is reaching communities in both the north and south of the devastated Strip.

Emergency shelter support remains a priority as temperatures drop, it was pointed out.

Humanitarian partners have reached more than 16,000 households across Gaza with tents, tarpaulins and other essential materials, including kits to weatherproof and reinforce makeshift shelters.

Israel army says struck Hezbollah targets in several areas' of Lebanon

JERUSALEM (APP): Israel's military said it struck Hezbollah targets in several areas of Lebanon on Friday, a day after the Lebanese army said it had completed the first phase of its plan to disarm the group.

Under US pressure and amid fears of expanded Israeli strikes, Lebanon has committed to disarming the Iran-backed militant group, which was weakened by more than a year of hostilities with Israel including two months of all-out war that ended with a November 2024 ceasefire.

Despite the truce, Israel has kept up regular

strikes in Lebanon, usually saying it is targeting Hezbollah sites and operatives, and has maintained troops in five south Lebanon areas it deems strategic, accusing the group of rearming. In a statement on Friday, the Israeli military said it struck "several areas in Lebanon", targeting "weapons storage facilities and a weapons production site that were used for the rehabilitation and military build-up of the Hezbollah terrorist organisation".

"Additionally, several launch sites and rocket launchers, along with military structures, were struck," it added.

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Pakistan, UAE relations moving toward effective economic cooperation: PM

Says Govt accords special importance to B2B cooperation in IT, emerging technologies

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday appreciating the growing interest of the UAE investors in Pakistan's digital economy, said that the Government of Pakistan accorded special importance to business-to-business (B2B) cooperation in the fields of information technology, digital innovation, blockchain, and other emerging technologies.

The prime minister, in a meeting with a delegation of the UAE's Sajwani Group, said that the recent high-level contacts and exchanges had increased mutual trust between the private sectors and investors of Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, providing a

strong foundation for advancing bilateral cooperation.

He said that the deep, fraternal and longstanding Pakistan-UAE relations were based on mutual trust which were heading towards more effective economic cooperation and investment.

The prime minister viewed that the recent visit of the UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan to Pakistan had further strengthened the bilateral partnership, also creating a conducive environment for promoting cooperation.

He said that the UAE's investment and global connectivity, combined

with Pakistan's human resources and workforce, represented a highly beneficial partnership for economic growth.

The members of the Sajwani Group delegation thanked the prime minister for warm hospitality and reiterated their commitment to further strengthen investment cooperation and economic partnership.

Prime Minister Shehbaz, who also hosted a luncheon for the delegation, expressed confidence that, with the strong support of the political leadership of both countries, the engagement in the private sector would take Pakistan-UAE economic cooperation to new heights.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting to review performance of FIA's immigration wing.

PM orders solarization of loss-making feeders of PESCO, QESCO

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed that loss-making electricity feeders be shifted to solar power with the cooperation of local communities and provincial governments to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply in remote areas of the country.

Chairing a high-level review meeting on solarization to ensure uninterrupted power supply to remote areas of the country, the prime minister said the initiative would help reduce financial losses of deficit-running feeders while pro-

viding continuous and affordable electricity to those regions.

He directed the immediate launch of pilot projects on high-loss feeders of Peshawar Electric Supply (PESCO) and Quetta Electric Supply Company (QESCO).

The prime minister emphasized that consultation with elected representatives and active community participation would be ensured to guarantee the success and sustainability of the pilot projects.

During the briefing, the

Saudi envoy meets climate change minister

ISLAMABAD (INP): Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Saad Al-Malki, on Friday called on Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik.

During which both sides discussed ways to enhance bilateral and strategic cooperation.

According to an official statement, the meeting focused on Pakistan's priorities related to climate resilience and sustainable development, with the minister underscoring the importance of international partnerships in tackling global environmental challenges.

Dr Musadik Malik also appreciated Saudi Arabia's continued support and engagement with Pakistan in various sectors.

The Saudi ambassador reaffirmed the Kingdom's commitment to further strengthening bilateral ties.

Both sides reiterated the longstanding, brotherly relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and expressed confidence that cooperation between the two countries would continue to expand in the future.

Two TTP terrorists arrested in Sahiwal

SAHIWAL (INP): Two terrorists of banned organization Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have been arrested by Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) during an intelligence-based operation in Sahiwal on Friday.

According to sources, the CTD personnel also recovered a large quantity of explosives from the possession of arrested terrorists including IEDs, hand grenades and detonators. The operation was carried out at Al-Ghazia Cold Storage near 89/6R Farid Town.

The suspects are said to belong to Lodhran district.

A case has been registered under the Anti-Terrorism Act at the CTD police station. Further investigation is underway with the arrested suspects.

One killed, three injured in Qalat road accident

QALAT (APP): One person was killed and three others sustained injuries in a road accident that took place near national highway area of Qalat, Balochistan, TV channels quoting Rescue 911 reported on Friday.

MEXT offers each year scholarships to international teachers who wish to conduct research on school education at designated educational institutions in Japan as teacher training students under the Japanese Government's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

According to a press release issued by the embassy on Friday, the scholarship is open to Pakistani teachers with at least five years of teaching experience in primary or secondary schools, both in the public and private sectors. Applicants must be 35 years of age or below.

The program aims to provide Pakistani educators with the opportunity to

conduct research on school education in Japan and learn modern teaching methodologies and techniques from Japanese experts, which would contribute to their professional development and enhance educational practices upon their return.

MEXT offers each year scholarships to international teachers who wish to conduct research on school education at designated educational institutions in Japan as teacher training students under the Japanese Government's MEXT Scholarship program.

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According to initial reports, a woman lost her life when a rashly driven car turned turtle near national highway area of Qalat. Three persons including a woman and child were also injured in the same incident.

Rescue team after receiving reports rushed to the site to shift body and injured to the hospital.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets Sajwani Business delegation of UAE and holds a luncheon in its honor.

At UN, Pakistan welcomes Syria's cooperation with OPCW on chemical weapons destruction

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Welcoming Syria's cooperation with the Technical Secretariat of Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Pakistan has underscored the need for independent verification to eliminate suspected chemical weapons in Syria that were developed under the Assad regime and any risks of proliferation.

"We look forward to their continued cooperation, in full compliance with the CWC and Security Council resolutions, to close the Syrian chemical weapons file as soon as possible," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, acting

permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council on Thursday.

The 15-member Council had met to discuss Syria's 'chemical weapons file', focusing on issues related to the use, monitoring and compliance with international obligations on chemical weapons.

As highlighted by the Technical Secretariat, the Pakistani envoy pointed out that Syria's security situation is severely affected by Israel's military occupation of parts of Syrian territory and its continued strikes on Syrian sites and facilities, which have also impeded OPCW's technical work.

The Pakistani envoy

therefore, remains critically important," he said.

At the same time, Ambassador Jadoon said Pakistan supports Syria's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, which are essential for durable peace and stability, while also backing an inclusive, Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process.

The Pakistani envoy pointed out that Syria's security situation is severely affected by Israel's military occupation of parts of Syrian territory and its continued strikes on Syrian sites and facilities, which have also impeded OPCW's technical work.

FCCP adjourns hearing of super tax case for Jan 12

ISLAMABAD (APP): Amin-ud-Din Khan and comprising Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Arshad Hussain Shah, heard the matter.

Presenting detailed arguments on behalf of various companies, senior counsel Makhdoom Ali Khan contended that the withdrawal of statutory exemptions available to petroleum companies constituted a violation of the Tax Act of 1948 and the Petroleum Companies Act. He argued that the exemptions granted to petroleum exploration companies under the 1948 Act could not be rescinded, and noted that the Islamabad High Court had previously affirmed that exemptions must be granted wherever the law provides for them.

PIC orders police to ensure protection of woman complainant

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Information Commission (PIC) on Friday ordered the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and Islamabad Police to give protection to a woman complainant.

It ordered to send copies of the decision to the Ministry of Interior, DG FIA and IG Islamabad.

The commission took notice on the life threats to a woman who sought information under the Right to Information Act.

The PIC ordered to hear the matter on priority basis. Munir Ahmed Advocate appeared on behalf of the petitioner.



Blocking democracy won't solve crises, rulers must abandon RTS and form-47 tactics: Naeem

Independent Report

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Emir Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman has warned the ruling elite that blocking democratic pathways and branding political dissent as treason will not resolve the country's deepening crises.

"The powerful must abandon manipulation through 'RTS' and 'Form-47 tactics' and stop imposing restrictions on the youth," he said while addressing participants of training camp at Mansoorah on Friday.

He said the country Pakistan is being held hostage by a class that thrives on corruption, oppression, falsehood, and injustice.

The imposed elite, he added, has deprived the nation of basic rights such as

education, healthcare, and justice. Resisting the obsolete system and its protectors is a fundamental religious obligation, said the JI chief, asserting that Jamaat-e-Islami will bring change through the strength of public opinion.

Rehman said the rulers are fearful of the new generation, particularly Generation Z, and are systematically closing the doors of education and em-

DPM calls PC to act as central clearinghouse for economic decisions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister (DPM/ FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday stressed that the Planning Commission (PC) should act as the central clearinghouse for economic decisions, providing guidance to ministries and divisions to maintain policy consistency and development planning, while supporting sustainable reforms to strengthen Pakistan's economic governance.

The deputy prime minister chaired a meeting on economic reforms, highlighting the historic and central role of the Planning Commission (PC) in Pakistan's economic and development policymaking, a DPM's Office news release said. He emphasized the need to empower PC to drive strategic policy, give priorities, and oversee public investment effectively.

The DPM was of the view that the Planning Commission should serve as the apex body under the direct leadership of the Prime Minister, integrating a Policy & Planning Wing and a separate Development Wing.

Minister leads Islamabad environment review, orders streamlined action

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik on Friday chaired a high-level meeting to review environmental protection measures and the preservation of green cover in the federal capital, stressing the need for coordinated and transparent action to address the public health and ecological concerns.

Dr Malik was assured that the campaign would not lead to a reduction in Islamabad's overall tree cover, as plans are in place to plant more trees than those removed. Replantation efforts will include the installation of mature native trees to accelerate ecological recovery.

Emphasising timely implementation, the minister directed relevant departments to strengthen coordination to ensure plantation activities are carried out during the upcoming spring season.



ISLAMABAD: His Excellency Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, called on the Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Malik.

Pak shifting focus of relations with US from geopolitics to geo-economics: Envoy Rizwan

WASHINGTON (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, Rizwan Sheikh has said that from a national security perspective, Pakistan's focus is shifting from geopolitics to geo-economics, adding that the scope of the bilateral cooperation would be further expanded in 2026.

The envoy expressed confidence that the coming year would see a deepening of collaboration across mutually beneficial areas.

Drawing attention to the events of May 2025, Ambassador Rizwan Sheikh stated that due to India's irresponsible and aggressive posture, the security situation of the region faced grave threats.

Motorways across Pakistan closed due to dense fog

LAHORE (INP): Dense fog continues to blanket most parts of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provinces, prompting the closure of several motorway sections as a precautionary measure to ensure public safety.

According to details, Motorway M-1 is closed for all kinds of traffic from Swabi to Burhan, M-4 from Sher Shah to Sham Kot, M-5 from Sher Shah to Sukkur, and M-14 from Fateh Jang to Kot Badian.

Thick fog also engulfed different sectors of Islamabad and its adjacent areas. Thick fog was also reported from Jaffarabad, Sohbatpur, Shikarpur, and Bolan due to low visibility.

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



QUETTA: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaa Khan Nasar inaugurates development works in Rehmat Colony-2 Sirk Road.

ECP sets Jan 20 deadline for postal ballot applications in PP-167 by-elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has set January 20, 2026 as the deadline for receiving applications for postal ballot papers for the PP-167 Lahore-XIII by-election.

The commission stated that the facility is designed to assist voters unable to appear at polling stations.

Under election law, postal ballots are available to government employees, military officers and soldiers, as well as their registered voters and children residing with them, provided they live outside their constituencies.

Persons with disabilities who cannot travel may also apply, if they hold a national identity card bearing the disability logo issued by NADRA. Prisoners in custody are likewise entitled to vote through postal ballots. Officials assigned election duties by the Returning Officer including police personnel who are registered voters have been directed to submit their applications within three days of their appointment. Applications must be submitted on the prescribed form to the Returning Officer of the constituency.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan presides over the high level meeting.

Japan embassy announces MEXT teachers training scholarship 2026 for Pakistani educators

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Embassy of Japan in Islamabad has announced the MEXT Teachers Training Scholarship Program 2026, offering Pakistani teachers an opportunity to receive professional training and research exposure in Japan under the Japanese Government's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

According to a press release issued by the embassy on Friday, the scholarship is open to Pakistani teachers with at least five years of teaching experience in primary or secondary schools, both in the public and private sectors. Applicants must be 35 years of age or below.

The program aims to provide Pakistani educators with the opportunity to

conduct research on school education in Japan and learn modern teaching methodologies and techniques from Japanese experts, which would contribute to their professional development and enhance educational practices upon their return.

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