

# Independent

Member APNS &amp; CPNE

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www.dailyindependent.com.pk Quetta

Ph: 2841470/2841473 REG: No. BC-116 B/ID-445 Vol. XXVII No. 146, Rajab 25, 1447 AH Thursday January 15, 2026 Pages 08, Price Rs.15

## Pak signs crypto deal linked to Trump family to explore stablecoin payments

**Rapid growth of digital payments, financial innovation, essential parts of Pakistan's expanding digital economy: PM**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has signed an agreement with a company affiliated with World Liberty Financial, the main crypto business linked to the family of US President Donald Trump, to explore the use of a dollar linked stablecoin for cross border payments, the government said on Wednesday.

The Pakistan Virtual Asset Regulatory Authority said it had signed a memorandum of understanding with SC Financial Technologies, which it described as an affiliated en-

tity of World Liberty Financial. The agreement will allow dialogue and technical engagement around "emerging digital payment architectures".

The development marks one of the first publicly announced partnerships between World Liberty Financial, a crypto based finance platform launched in September 2024, and a sovereign state. It also comes amid warming ties between Pakistan and the United States.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad

Shehbaz Sharif, Wednesday, said that the rapidly growing pace of digital payments and financial innovation were essential parts of Pakistan's rapidly expanding digital economy.

A delegation of World Liberty Financial USA led by Zachary Witkoff, Chief Executive Officer called on him, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The prime minister shared his vision for digital Pakistan aimed at increased connectivity, access, transparency and openness for the citizens.

The prime minister appreciated the growing international interest in Pakistan's digital financial markets and noted with deep sense of satisfaction that the country's was fast becoming part of global digital finance.

Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb, SAPM Syed

Zachary Witkoff signing on behalf of the respective sides.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces & COAS Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir witnessing signing of MoU between the Government of Pakistan and SC Financial Technologies LLC, an affiliated entity of World Liberty Financial, regarding digital payment architectures for cross border transactions while Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb and CEO World Liberty Financial Mr. Zachary Witkoff signing on behalf of the respective sides.



MANAMA: President Asif Ali Zardari in a meeting with His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa Al-Qudaibiya Palace.

**Investment in human dev. vital to Balochistan's bright future: CM Sarfraz Bugti**  
**Says education, health among top priorities of govt**

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has said that sustainable development in the province hinges on strengthening human resources, stressing that long-term progress cannot be achieved without major investment in education, health and social welfare sectors.

He made these remarks during a meeting with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Country Representative Luay Shabaneh, in which population management, maternal and child health, youth and women's welfare, and data-driven policymaking

were discussed.

The meeting was attended by Parliamentary Secretary for Population Agha Omar Ahmedzai, Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, Secretary Population Zafar Ali Buledi, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Babar Khan, and UNFPA Quetta Head Sadia Ata.

CM Bugti said that goals such as providing dignified employment opportunities to youth, empowering women and safeguarding child welfare could not be realised without meaningful reforms in the education and health sectors. He

**Continued on page 2**

**PM assures Amir of Qatar Pak continued support for regional peace**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday assured the Qatari leadership that Pakistan would continue to play a positive role in maintaining regional peace and stability.

The prime minister received a telephone call from Amir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

During their warm and cordial conversation, the two leaders expressed satisfaction at the current trajectory of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Qatar and reaffirmed their shared resolve to further strengthen these time-tested fraternal bonds. Recent developments in the Middle East were also discussed. The prime minister appreciated Qatar's constructive and proactive role in promoting peace, dialogue, and mediation across the region, and acknowledged its meaningful efforts to defuse tensions through diplomatic solutions.

**JCP recommends 6 judges, four additional judges for appointment in PHC**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Judicial Commission of Pakistan on Wednesday met at the Conference Room of the Supreme Court of Pakistan for making recommendations for confirmation of Additional Judges as Judges of the Peshawar High Court.

The meeting was chaired by the Chief Justice of Pakistan, being the chairperson.

The Commission recommended, by majority of its total membership, the confirmation of Additional Judges as Judges of the Peshawar High Court, after due consideration of the relevant Data Form, Antecedents and evaluation of material placed before it. The Additional Judges recommended for appointment as judges include Justice Muhammad Tariq Aftab.

**Field Marshal emphasizes Pakistan's commitment to economic stability**

RAWALPINDI (APP): A delegation of World Liberty Financial USA led by Mr. Zachary Witkoff, Chief Executive Officer of a leading global fintech firm, called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ.

The meeting reflected the growing interest of international private investment groups in Pakistan's evolving economic landscape and also signals rising global confidence in Pakistan's fintech potential and aims to strengthen financial inclusion and cross border digital finance, said a press release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) here.

Mr. Witkoff highlighted the immense economic potential Pakistan holds and lauded the efforts of Pakistan's leadership in embracing futuristic technologies to realize the full

**Continued on page 2**

**Bilawal accuses 'some forces' of rolling back provincial powers, shifting resources to Islamabad**

THARPARKAR (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday accused "some forces" of deliberately promoting a narrative that Sindh and smaller provinces had failed to perform, warning that the campaign was aimed at justifying the rollback of provincial powers and resources to Islamabad.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Thar Institute of Engineering, Science and Technology — affiliated with NED University of Engineering and Technology — on the Mithi-Islamkot Road in Tharparkar, Bilawal said development in Tharparkar is the strongest response to what he described as a "deliberate conspiracy" aimed at rolling back the constitutional rights, authority and resources of provinces.

"The biggest rebuttal to this false narrative is

Tharparkar itself," he said, pointing to the contrast between the district's conditions before 2008 and the situation following the 18th Constitutional Amendment.

Bilawal said the Pakistan Peoples Party believed in pro-poor and people-centric governance, adding that his party was willing to compete with other provinces and governments in education, health and development. "No one can defeat the people of Sindh in this competition," he said.

He stressed that development in Tharparkar and in all four provinces was essential for Pakistan's overall progress, rejecting the idea that provincial development could only flow from the federal capital.

Referring to Thar coal, Bilawal said the resource belonged to the people of

**Continued on page 2**

QUETTA: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Country Representative Luay Shabaneh meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

**Pak slams Indian security adviser's 'avenging history' remarks**

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has denounced Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval's remarks of "avenging history" and creating a strong India in every aspect.

On Saturday last, India's National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval had called for "avenging history" and creating a strong India in every aspect. Speaking in New Delhi, Doval sketched out a historical map of India, recalling the contributions made by the people and the nature of Indian civilisation. "You all are lucky that you were born in an independent India. The free India we see today was not like always like that.

Our ancestors fought for independence for generations; they went through so many trials and tribulations. People like Bhagat Singh were hanged, Subhash Chandra Bose struggled all his life and Mahatma Gandhi had to do satyagraha for us to gain independence and countless people had to give their lives," he said.

Responding to media queries regarding the Indian National Security Advisor's remarks on "avenging history", Spokesperson of the Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tahir Hussain Andrabi issued a statement in Islamabad on Wednesday.

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Balochistan, Muhammad Tahir addressing Levies personnel undergoing training at the Police Training College (PTC) Quetta.

**Federal, Balochistan agree to strengthen youth skill development and manpower**

**Skilled youth can transform Balochistan's economy: Bugti**



QUETTA (APP): Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain called on Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti here on Wednesday.

In the meeting, matters of mutual interest, especially manpower development, youth skill development and employment opportunities abroad were discussed in detail.

During the meeting, Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti apprised the Federal Minister about the aims and objectives, progress and future strategy of the Chief Minister Youth Skills Development Program.

**Continued on page 2**

**SHC rules SSGC capital tariff unconstitutional**

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh High Court (SHC) has declared the capital tariff imposed on industries by Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) unconstitutional.

According to details received on Wednesday, the SHC approved petitions filed against the tariff and ruled that its application violated the constitution. The petitions contended that Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) had imposed the capital tariff on industries in February 2025, resulting in a significant increase in production costs and causing severe financial difficulties for industrial units.

The hearing was adjourned to February 2025, when the amounts collected from industries under the capital tariff will be reviewed.

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**Pak jets in demand worldwide after military wins: PM Shehbaz**

**Announces expedited Karachi-Chaman highway overhaul, major development initiatives for Balochistan**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday announced that work on the long-awaited Karachi-Chaman highway, often referred to as a bloody road due to frequent accidents, has formally begun and will now be completed within a year instead of the originally planned two years.

Addressing the federal cabinet members before the meeting, the prime minister said he had recently visited Quetta, where the foundation stone of the nearly 850-kilometre highway was laid.

**Continued on page 2**



**Three wanted Indian-sponsored terrorists killed in DIKhan operation**

D I KHAN (INP): Three Indian-sponsored terrorists have been killed in Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) police operation in Dera Ismail Khan. According to CTD, three most-wanted terrorists were killed during an operation in DI Khan area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The slain terrorists include Naimatullah, Abdul Rauf Afghani and Mustafa.

The slain terrorists were involved in attacks on security forces. Hand grenades and weapons recovered from the terrorists. Meanwhile, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday paid glowing tributes to the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) for conducting a successful operation.

**Modern training after levies merger enhancing police capability: IGP Balochistan**

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Balochistan, Muhammad Tahir addressing Levies personnel undergoing training at the Police Training College (PTC) Quetta.

and to ensure the protection of lives and property across the province.

During his visit, the IGP reviewed various training facilities and inspected specialised units, including the Bomb Disposal Squad.

Commandant Police Training College Quetta Shehzad Akbar, DIG Special Branch Balochistan Tahir Alaudin, Deputy Commandant PTC Fahad Khosa, Chief Law Instructor Nazar Badini and other senior officers were present on the occasion.

Senior officers briefed the IGP on ongoing training programmes, modern equipment and operational preparedness at the training college. Bomb Disposal

**Continued on page 2**



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan presides over the meeting of Evaluation Committee.

## Australia-Pakistan three T20Is series to begin from January 29 at Gaddafi

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has confirmed Australia's T20I tour of Pakistan later this month beginning from January 29 at the Gaddafi Stadium here.

The three-match T20I series scheduled to be played at the Gaddafi Stadium will take place on 29, 31 January and 1 February.

The series will serve as crucial game time for both sides ahead of the all-important ICC Men's T20I World Cup 2026 in India and Sri Lanka where Pakistan are placed in Group A and Australia in Group B.

Australia's T20I squad will arrive in Lahore on Wednesday 28 January. The coin toss in all the three matches is set to take place at 5.30pm PKT with the first ball expected to be bowled at 6pm PKT.

This will also be Australia's third trip to Pakistan since March-April 2022, when they played a three-match Test and ODI series followed by a solitary T20I.

They played three of their ICC Champions Trophy 2025 matches in the country as well.

Australia bagged a close three-wicket win in

the only T20I they played at the Gaddafi Stadium on 5 April 2022.

Expressing immense excitement in hosting Australia prior to the ICC mega event, COO PCB Sumair Ahmed Syed said "We are excited and look forward to hosting Australia for the three-match T20I series here in Lahore. The tour marks a blockbuster beginning of the year for Pakistan Cricket fans and I urge them to turn out in numbers during the series to support both the teams as they put final touches to their T20 World Cup preparations.

### Field Marshal.

Continued from page 1

Bahrain, in recognition of its services and contribution to strengthening Pakistan-Bahrain relations.

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir welcomed the exchange of views and emphasized Pakistan's commitment to economic stability, investor confidence, and enabling an environment conducive to responsible private sector participation in national development, the press release said.

The Acting President said Pakistan and Italy enjoy over 75 years of diplomatic relations rooted in a long-standing friendship and cooperation at important international fora.

### Pak signs..

Continued from page 1

Tariq Fatemi and Chairman Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority Binal Bin Saqib also attended the meeting.

Zachary Witkoff showed keen interest to engage with Pakistan for a secure and transparent digital payment infrastructure, including innovations in cross-border settlement and foreign exchange processes.

He lauded Pakistan's policy framework which was helping to position the country as a leading contender in the global digital landscape.

He expressed keen desire to further deepen engagement with Pakistan to explore next-generation digital payment and cross-border finance innovations.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and CDF/COAS Syed Asim Munir later witnessed signing of MoU between the Government of Pakistan and SC Financial Technologies LLC, an affiliated entity of World Liberty Financial, to enable structured dialogue and technical understanding around emerging digital payment architectures for cross border transactions.

Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb and CEO World Liberty Financial Zachary Witkoff signed the MoU on behalf of the respective sides.

### Bilawal..

Continued from page 1

Tharparkar and described it as an asset comparable in scale to Saudi Arabia's oil reserves. He said repeated attempts by former prime minister Benazir Bhutto to utilise the coal reserves had been thwarted, delaying economic benefits for decades.

He said the use of Thar coal after 2008 had not only brought economic change to the region but had also contributed electricity to the national grid, benefiting industrial centres such as Faisalabad. "This is how a strong federation functions," he said.

Bilawal said economic activity in Thar had led to a parallel social transformation, with investments in healthcare resulting in a network of dispensaries, basic health units and hospitals across the district.

He cited the role of the Thar Foundation and a public-private partnership with Indus Hospital as examples of improved health services.

On education, he said the inauguration of the NED-affiliated institute fulfilled a long-standing demand of local youth.

He noted that classes began in 2019 in a government building and that the Sindh government had now inaugurated a dedicated campus, with a commitment to upgrade it into a full-fledged university before the end of its term.

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, Provincial Minister for Universities and Boards Muhammad Ismail Rahab, and NED University Chancellor Tufail Ahmed also addressed the ceremony.



MANAMA: His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa conferring the Order of Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa First Class on President Asif Ali Zardari at Al-Qudaibiya Palace.

## President, King of Bahrain hold..

Continued from page 1

for the King to undertake an official visit to Pakistan.

This was followed by an extended meeting, during which both sides discussed concrete ways to enhance trade and investment cooperation.

The president also highlighted the long-standing defence and security cooperation between the two countries, describing it as a pillar of the bilateral relationship. He noted the close institutional linkages between the armed forces of Pakistan and Bahrain and reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen this partnership.

He invited Bahraini investors to explore opportunities in Pakistan's priority sectors, including agriculture and food security, IT and digital services, healthcare, tourism and infrastructure, and highlighted the facilitative role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council in supporting foreign investors.

President Zardari underlined that Pakistan views Bahrain as an important economic partner and expressed confidence that closer collaboration could unlock mutually beneficial opportunities.

### CANCELLATION

It is submitted to all contractors the scheme having TSE No 252612930313 namely as "PRE-FEB ACCOMMODATION (SP) DISTRICT CHAGAI" were published on BPPRA Website and daily leading News paper vide PRQ No 2980 /30-12-2025 is hereby cancelled due to some observations raised by concerned authority new date will be published on BPPRA website and the daily leading news paper as well.

### EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (Building) CWPP&H Department District Chagai

PRQ No.3261/14-01-2026

[www.dpr.gov.pk](http://www.dpr.gov.pk) [@dpr\\_gov](mailto:@dpr_gov) [@dpr\\_gob](mailto:@dpr_gob) [@dgpr.balochistan](mailto:@dgpr.balochistan)

### CORRIGENDUM

With reference to PRQ No. 2977 published on 30/12/2025, it is informed that the following scheme was advertised under the said PRQ:

TSE-252612930903-Construction of Pre-Fab accommodation at District Killasaifullah

1. Eligibility Criteria - Revised.
2. Date of Submission and Opening of Tender - Changed from 19/01/2026 to 22/01/2026.
3. Technical Evaluation - Modified.
4. Tender Fee Reduced from 2000 to 1000

All other terms and conditions of the tender notice remain unchanged.

### Executive Engineer-Building CWPP&H Department District Killa Saifullah

PRQ No.3244/13-01-2026

[www.dpr.gov.pk](http://www.dpr.gov.pk) [@dpr\\_gov](mailto:@dpr_gov) [@dpr\\_gob](mailto:@dpr_gob) [@dgpr.balochistan](mailto:@dgpr.balochistan)

### TENDER NOTICE

The Director General Health Services invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items. TSE-252601943211 Only electronic bid will be submitted. No physical bid is required.

Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB.

Tender Fee Not Required

S.No Class of Object Bid Security

1 Medical Equipment and Accessories 2%

(Total Item(s) Count: 24)

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules – 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 3 Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity 10,00,000 in Previous 3 Years Turn over of at least 30,00,000 PKR in 3 Subsequent Previous Years Presence in Active Tax Payer List Sales Tax Certificate. The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan JV is not permissible Submission of the required Bid Security In case Bid Security is not found as required during financial evaluation the bidding firm shall be declared as in-eligible and non-responsive i) Affidavit on stamp paper of Rs. 100/- duly notarized to the effect that iii. Bidder has submitted the correct and complete information along with the bidder. If any document / information is found forged / engineered / fake / bogus at any stage, the bidder may be declared as Blacklisted in accordance with law and the performance guarantee and payment, if any may be forfeited. ii) Bid Validity Compliance (90 Days) iii) Delivery Period Compliance (120 Days) iv) Price Reasonability v) Compliance of warranty period. vi) Agreement with all terms & conditions vii) Agreement of operations of plant during the warranty period. Authorization or Sole Agent Certificate by the Manufacturer for Balochistan / sub dealer having sole authorization from the principal sole distributor for Balochistan may also apply. Proof of such authorization signed and stamped, on Manufacturer's Letter Head for participating in this tender may be applied. This certificate should be produced in original for verification and the same should be verifiable from the issuer; if the procuring agency needs such verification at any time. The Manufacturer or sole distributor (In case of change of sub distributor) must ensure after sales and services during post warranty period irrespective of further affiliation with the bidder. The bidder must be submit their delivery compliance certificate / undertaking to supply the goods the concerned health facility throughout Balochistan as already mentioned in the Schedule of delivery / Districts Catalogue / brochure & technical data sheet having complete technical specifications of all quoted products.

**Procedure Of Procurement:** Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure

**Bid Security:** The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee. Deposit at Call of 2 % specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank.

**Tender Documents:** The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from

[www.bppra.gov.pk](http://www.bppra.gov.pk) [Issuance of tender](mailto:@issuance_of_tender) Documents: Complete

Bidding Document can be viewed at [www.bppra.gov.pk](http://www.bppra.gov.pk) [Last Date of bid submission](mailto:@Last Date of bid submission): Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 29 January, 2026 10:15 AM through supplier dashboard.

**Tender opening:** All tenders will be opened on same day at 11:15 AM on EPPS System

**Address:** Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al-Nayan Institute of Cardiology Kach mor Quetta

Phone no: 0812882290 Email: [prosmbzan@gmail.com](mailto:prosmbzan@gmail.com)

## Miscellaneous

### Investment in human..

Continued from page 1

provincial government, and institutional reforms in these sectors were necessary to achieve sustainable outcomes. He further noted that improving maternal and child health indicators required systematic reforms, adding that youth and women's welfare formed the backbone of the province's social and economic development.

Both sides agreed on the establishment of a provincial task force on population affairs to improve coordination among relevant departments and ensure effective implementation of policies related to population, health and education.

The chief minister underlined that population and development policies must be based on credible data and evidence, supported by strong advocacy and an effective data governance system. He reiterated that education and healthcare remained among the top priorities of the

Balochistan government to strengthen collaboration.



QUETTA: MPA Maulvi Noorullah meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti. Principal Secretary to CM Babar Khan is also present.

CANCELLATION		
This is General Information for all Government Contractors that his office Notice Inviting eTendering which was published in daily newspaper for the following work is hereby cancelled due to as per direction of Director Enforcement BPPRA, Government of Balochistan vide his letter No.BP/PR/Enforcement/2025-26/774-80, dated 12th January/2026 and new date will be communicated through wide publicity in newspapers and BPPRA website accordingly.		
S#	Name of Works	PRQ No.
1	Construction of OPD Block at Helpers Eye Hospital at Quetta. (PSD No. 2152/ Z2025.1012)	2875/19.12.25 252612924693

### Executive Engineer (Buildings), City Quetta CWPP&H Department Quetta

PRQ No.3260/14-01-2026

[www.dpr.gov.pk](http://www.dpr.gov.pk) [@dpr\\_gov](mailto:@dpr_gov) [@dpr\\_gob](mailto:@dpr_gob) [@dgpr.balochistan](mailto:@dgpr.balochistan)

### TENDER NOTICE

The sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nayan Institute of Cardiology invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items. TSE-252601932821 Only electronic bid will be submitted, No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB.

Tender Fee 1,000 PKR

S.No	Class of Object	Bid Security
1	Electrical & Electronic items (Total Item(s) Count: 3)	2%

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules – 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 3 Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity 5,00,000 in Previous 3 Years Turn over of at least 8,00,000 PKR in 3 Subsequent Previous Years Presence in Active Tax Payer List Sales Tax Certificate. The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan JV is not permissible Submission of the required Bid Security In case Bid Security is not found as required during financial evaluation the bidding firm shall be declared as in-eligible and non-responsive Submission of the required Bidding document Fee Firm must ensure after sales and services during post warranty period

Catalogue / Brochures / technical data sheet (having complete technical specifications of the offered goods) Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee. Deposit at Call of 2 % specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from

[www.bppra.gov.pk](http://www.bppra.gov.pk) [Issuance of tender](mailto:@Issuance_of_tender) Documents: Complete

Bidding Document can be viewed at [www.bppra.gov.pk](http://www.bppra.gov.pk) [Last Date of bid submission](mailto:@Last Date of bid submission): Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 29 January, 2026 10:15 AM through supplier dashboard.

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**Address:** Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al-Nayan Institute of Cardiology Kach mor Quetta

Phone no: 0812882290 Email: [prosmbzan@gmail.com](mailto:prosmbzan@gmail.com)

### Manager shiekh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nayan Institute of Cardiology

AB No.703/13-01-2026

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## Balochistan steps up Youth Skills drive to expand employment and overseas opportunities

### Independent Report

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has said that the provincial government is accelerating practical initiatives to equip young people with modern, market-driven skills, enabling them to secure dignified employment, achieve economic self-reliance and contribute to national foreign exchange earnings.

He expressed these views during a meeting with Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain, where matters related to youth skill development, manpower planning and overseas employment opportunities were discussed.

Briefing the federal minister, CM Bugti out-

lined the progress and future strategy of the Chief Minister Youth Skills Development Programme. He said the initiative is designed to align training with both local and international labour market requirements, producing a skilled workforce capable of competing successfully at home and abroad.

The chief minister stressed that empowering youth with employable skills was a key priority of the provincial government, noting that skilled manpower not only improves household incomes but also strengthens the national economy through increased remittances.

Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain appreciated the Balochistan government's efforts to

promote youth welfare and skill development, and assured full support from the federal government. He emphasised that close coordination between federal and provincial institutions was essential to ensure sustainable manpower development and effective utilisation of overseas employment opportunities.

Both sides agreed to further strengthen collaboration to expand foreign employment prospects, enhance the quality of training programmes and improve institutional coordination. CM Bugti underlined that all stakeholders must work together to ensure timely access to quality skill development and respectable employment opportunities for the youth.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti presides over the meeting to review progress on Youth Skills Development Program.

## Balochistan achieves record in textbook distribution for 2026 academic year

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan Secondary Education Department has achieved a historic milestone in the publication and distribution of textbooks for the academic year 2026, setting new benchmarks in transparency, cost efficiency, and timely delivery.

According to an official handout, more than 50 percent of textbooks printed by the Balochistan Textbook Board have already been completed and transported from Lahore to Quetta. As in previous years, the textbooks will be distributed free of cost to students across all districts before the academic calendar.

Through a fully transparent printing tender process, the provincial government achieved savings of approximately Rs125 crore, significantly easing the burden on the exchequer. These achievements reflect

the vision of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Khan Bugti, Provincial Minister for Education Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani, and the directives of Secretary Education Asfandyar Khan.

Chairman Dr. Gulab Khan Khilji ensured a substantial reduction in costs compared to previous years and introduced a modern, needs-based curriculum aligned with contemporary educational requirements, replacing outdated syllabi dating back to the 1970s.

Departmental figures reveal that during the academic year 2023-24, around 9.25 million textbooks were published at a cost of Rs2.124 billion. In 2024-25, 9.309 million textbooks were printed at a cost of Rs1.086 billion. In contrast, for the academic year 2025-26, 11.5 million textbooks have been produced at a remarkably reduced cost of Rs883.1

million, highlighting unprecedented financial savings.

This year, textbooks were printed at a cost of Rs0.65 per page, the lowest among all provinces in the country. For comparison, the per-page printing cost in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stood at Rs0.79.

According to the School Directorate, the demand for textbooks for the current academic year reached 11.5 million copies—an increase of 2.2 million compared to last year. This surge is primarily attributed to the revival of nearly 4,000 previously closed schools and the recruitment of more than 10,000 new teachers by the provincial government.

Under the National Curriculum 2022-23, new textbooks from primary to intermediate levels have been developed.

## Quetta administration moves to reactivate non-functional schools

### Independent Report

QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehrullah Badini has directed the immediate revival of all non-functional schools in the district, declaring that ensuring uninterrupted access to education is a top priority of the district administration and that no negligence in this regard will be tolerated.

Principals of non-functional schools, District Education Officers (DEOs) and cluster heads were also present. During the meeting, it was decided that DEOs, in coordination with their respective cluster heads, would conduct on-ground inspections of all 149 non-functional schools in the district and submit comprehensive reports within a specified timeframe.

The deputy commissioner instructed the concerned officers to identify obstacles hindering the functioning of schools and take immediate corrective measures to restore educational activities. He stressed that the management would closely monitor

QUETTA: President National Party and MPA Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

## Noor Pirkani says: Govt approved issuance of Benazir Kisan Card for welfare of farmers in Balochistan

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Agriculture Balochistan Noor Ahmed Pirkani on Wednesday said that Balochistan government has formally approved the issuance of Benazir Kisan Card for the welfare of farmers across the province, under which an agreement has been signed with HBL Konnect.

The meeting was informed that the Balochistan government would provide financial assistance to farmers in the form of subsidies from time to time, which would include the purchase of seeds, fertilizers, agricultural chemicals and agricultural machinery.

For the convenience of farmers, a web-page named "Kisan Balochistan" has been developed, where farmers could register themselves online.

QUETTA: Pushtunkhwa National Awami Party Provincial President Nasrullah Zair addressing a press conference.



QUETTA: Inspector General Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir being briefed DIG Special Branch Tahir Alla ud Din Kasi regarding equipments use to defuse the explosion materials.

## Commissioner calls for swift completion of utility projects, emphasizes service delivery

### Independent Report

NASEERABAD: Commissioner Naseerabad Division Salahuddin Noorza, has underscored that uninterrupted public services and timely completion of development projects are among the government's highest priorities. He directed divisional and district administrations to resolve public issues without delay and remove all departmental hurdles that hinder effective service delivery.

The commissioner was chairing an important review meeting on ongoing development schemes of the Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department and Urban Planning & Develop-

ment. The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Naseerabad Captain (Retd) Zulfiqar Ali Karar, Superintendent Engineer PHE Abdul Jabbar, Executive Engineers from Jaffarabad, Sohbatpur, and Urban Planning, along with other concerned officials.

Officials briefed the meeting on the progress of various water supply and urban development projects, highlighting key challenges such as electricity outages affecting clean drinking water schemes and delays in inter-departmental payments that have slowed project execution.

Commissioner Noorza stressed that all

development projects must be completed within stipulated timelines and strictly in accordance with approved standards. He directed engineers to personally supervise ongoing schemes to ensure durability, transparency, and tangible benefits for the public.

Rearranging the government's commitment to citizen-friendly governance, the commissioner said that quality, accountability, and sustainability must remain the core principles of all public utility projects, as these initiatives directly impact the daily lives and well-being of the people.

He said that government-owned land at the local cattle farm is being allocated for agricultural purposes, which will enable farmers to benefit from modern farming techniques and increase overall output. The initiative, he added,



GWADAR: MPA Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman Baloch inaugurates Municipal Committee Gwadar office. Deputy Commissioner Naequebullah Kakar, Director General GDA Moinur Rehman and other political and social personalities.

## DC Jaffarabad terms GPI a game-changer for agriculture & rural economy

### Independent Report

JAFFARABAD: Deputy Commissioner Jaffarabad, Khalid Khan, has described the Green Pakistan Initiative as a transformative step toward an agricultural revolution in the country, saying it will significantly enhance farm productivity, promote modern cultivation practices, and strengthen the rural economy.

He said that government-owned land at the local cattle farm is being allocated for agricultural purposes, which will enable farmers to benefit from modern farming techniques and increase overall output.

The initiative, he added,

will not only boost agricultural growth but also create new employment opportunities and improve livelihoods in rural areas of the district.

The Deputy Commissioner expressed these views while chairing an important meeting to review the procedure for transferring cattle farm land to the Agriculture Department.

Superintendent Amir Baksh Soomro and representatives of concerned departments briefed the meeting on the total land available, its present condition, proposed mechanisms for allocation.

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## Musakhel police expands jurisdiction following levies merger

### Independent Report

MUSAKHEL: The police in Musakhel have officially expanded their jurisdiction, with the former A and B areas now fully integrated under police control following the merger of Levies personnel.

SP Musakhel, Kaleem Allah Kakar, chaired a critical meeting on the merger process, stressing that the handover and integration would be carried out transparently, efficiently, and professionally.

Dedicated committees have been formed to oversee the transition and ensure all procedures are followed according to rules.

SP Kakar instructed members to coordinate closely with the Deputy Commissioner of Musakhel to finalize all formalities promptly.

He assured that all Levies personnel joining the police will be treated fairly, with decisions based on merit and transparency.

offending factories. He warned factory owners to adopt eco-friendly practices, properly manage waste and wastewater, and prevent harm to surrounding communities.

The Minister stressed that all factories must hold valid No Objection Certificates (NOCs) from the Department of Environment, and those with expired NOCs must renew them immediately.

Authorities were instructed to conduct weekly inspections and submit detailed compliance reports to higher officials.

QUETTA: Pushtunkhwa National Awami Party Provincial President Nasrullah Zair addressing a press conference.

## Balochistan Government cracks down on industrial pollution in Hub

### Independent Report

HUB: Balochistan's Environment and Climate Change Minister Naseemur Rehman Mullakhail, has ordered strict action against factories in Hub violating environmental regulations, emphasizing the government's commitment to public health and ecological protection.

During an inspection of the industrial area, Minister Mullakhail expressed concern over non-compliance with environmental SOPs and directed authorities to issue immediate notices to all

offenders.

He warned factory owners to adopt eco-friendly practices, properly manage waste and wastewater, and prevent harm to surrounding communities.

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**Blaming the IMF**

The call by a panel, led by the planning and development minister, for "urgent ease of doing business reforms" to more than double export revenues to over \$60bn within three years is familiar rhetoric. The panel was formed by the prime minister to devise a strategy to exit the IMF programme once the current bailout facility ends at the end of next year. Its weeklong consultations with public and private sector stakeholders this month has apparently concluded that the current state of affairs cannot drive the 250m-strong population towards sustained progress due to cross-cutting constraints affecting all 20 priority export products and six export drivers.

There is nothing new in the diagnosis of the problems hampering economic and export growth, or the solutions suggested by the panel. If anything, both diagnosis and prescription echo past policy pronouncements that were never followed up. The constraints to economic and export growth — high, volatile energy costs, policy unpredictability, distorted taxation, logistics and trade facilitation bottlenecks, institutional fragmentation, regulatory burden, etc — cited by the panel are old hat. These have featured in donor and government reports and in media commentary.

The persistence of these structural problems shows that the challenge lies less in their diagnosis or analysis and more in the state's capacity and willingness to deliver politically tough, rules-based reform. Against this backdrop, the panel's implicitly holding restrictive IMF financing responsible for the government's failure to aggressively implement reforms to return the economy to a sustainable growth path is an attempt to gloss over the state's own dereliction of duty. Indeed, the IMF programme conditions and targets primarily aim for economic and fiscal stabilisation by imposing fiscal discipline rather than driving the economy towards growth.

However, the lender does not stop the government from undertaking or implementing reforms to restructure the economy or address stagnant growth. For example, it may demand that the authorities increase tax revenues as a ratio of GDP to slash the budget deficit — which should encourage the government to broaden the tax base. Nor does it ask them to cut development spending — instead of this, the government could reduce its own wasteful expenditure. Rather, the IMF — ideological and policy differences with its prescriptions aside — encourages the government to create a conducive business climate. The authorities are blaming the IMF programme for a sluggish, moribund economy to cover up their own incompetence, and obscure the ruling party's unwillingness to dismantle the entrenched politically protected rent-seeking structures. Unless the government walks the talk on reform to create a rules-based economy, its rhetoric of doubling exports and breaking the proverbial begging bowl will remain a pipe dream.

**Arifa Noor**

I grew up in a Lahore very different from the grey expanse it has now become. Back then, it was a sleepier city but a very green one. The main boulevard in Gulberg was a long road with a wide and very green belt in the centre that ran from the Jail Road-Sherpao intersection all the way to Liberty market. The road on both sides of this green expanse was smallish and not that busy. But as the city grew, a decision was made to broaden the road and reduce the green belt, in order to accommodate the traffic. Since then, concrete has swallowed up most of the green. And the traffic continues to be a nightmare. The roads are wide and there are limited spots for U-turns or crossings but the traffic is far from manageable. Those who are forced to walk have to dash across between fast-moving cars and motorcycles. It is hard to think of

any place in Lahore where the traffic is less chaotic, despite the flyovers and underpasses that have mushroomed all over the city, replacing the greenery in many cases. The canal, which once was the preferred spot for those who wanted to go for a 'long drive', is now a noisy, chaotic place, despite a series of underpasses. There was a time a drive next to the canal could be a relaxing affair as the city ended close to where Johar Town is. When an aunt of mine moved near Thokar Niaz Beg, it seemed so far away that a trip to her place was planned with as much fanfare as a day trip out of town. By now, of course, the city has spread far beyond what then seemed to be nowhere land.

The city has become much bigger, swallowing areas around it and the people travelling in and out and through the city have also increased; but decades later, no one seems to realise that widening roads and installing flyovers doesn't lead to a smooth traffic flow. In fact, more and bigger roads mean more cars and motorcycles. In the process, the sleepy green city of my childhood and youth has become ugly and concrete-ridden. For people such as myself who left Lahore some years ago, finding one's way is at times impossible. Readers may be wondering what the point of this trip down memory lane is. There is a point. I was reminded of the disappearance of the city of my childhood because of the debate raging in Islamabad where trees have been cut down in what is said to be large numbers and in more than one location. For once, so intense and consistent was the criticism that the government was forced to pay attention.

The authorities, which range from climate change to interior to CDA, insist that only paper mulberry trees (the cause of allergies) were

cut down and that each tree will be replaced by three saplings — as if a fully grown tree which is removed today can be adequately replaced by three saplings, which may or may not survive.

The larger context is not about how these trees were cut down but the mindset of what constitutes development and work across our political landscape. Since the 1990s, the political obsession is with building roads, broadening them, installing flyovers — a version of Dubai or Midwestern US. However, in the decades since, the world has moved on to a different version of urban living but as with our politics, we are stuck in a world and a vision that no longer works.

And so, 'development' continues to be pushed. In Islamabad, the greenery is being replaced by big roads, flyovers and underpasses with little thought for their need or their capacity to manage traffic. If it seems there

is a crossing where there is a wait and queues due to traffic lights, the 'solution' is to build an interchange or flyovers. No one realises that the wider roads in Lahore will eventually prove insufficient. Slowly, the greenery will give way to more concrete till the city is unrecognisable to those who grew up in it decades ago. And with the challenge of climate change, more roads and cars with less green cover is really a case of pouring oil on fire.

At one level the problem is not just about outdated notions. They are also vanity projects for our ruling elite. In Islamabad, for instance, at one level the rapidity with which construction takes place is about 'Shehbaz speed' in competition with 'Mohsin speed'. If the former built one in record time, during his previous stint, taking over land belonging to a university, the current interior minister has to be faster and more efficient. He is now busy transforming the

**With the sleeves rolled up****Jawed Naqvi**

The world is in ferment as the US lurches dangerously to the extreme right. Europe too has discarded a long cultivated democratic pretence and is eyeing its chance in the melee. Hungary, Poland, Austria and Italy have been singled out by Donald Trump's strategists, according to their leaked documents, to subvert democracy for a right-wing takeover in Trump's footsteps. British, French and German establishments are nudging their countries also towards militarism. EU is targeting Russia, Palestine and Iran even as Nato looks poised to implode in the chaos of Trump's claims over Greenland. The EU seeks to humour Trump over Venezuela while retaining a different yardstick to judge Vladimir Putin's genocide in Gaza.

French left leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon is leading a mass upsurge against Emmanuel Macron and the EU, accusing European leaders of "prostrate servility" to Trump. Mélenchon homed in on President Emmanuel Macron's ideas on sending troops and long-range weapons to Ukraine. He demanded referendums in Donbass, Crimea and all contested regions because "it's the people who decide" rather than warmongering elites who "don't give a damn about people's lives".

The left in the US is punching above its weight to hold its ground, using every chink in Trump's

ultimatums to Canada's economy.

Ideally, this is the time for the left to be initiating and, where possible, spearheading mass movements against the rightward slide. Jeremy Corbyn recently unfurled the flag with a separate party to challenge the British establishment, which includes his former Labour Party colleagues who he watched with dismay removing the last stitch of morality by abetting Benjamin Netanyahu's genocide in Gaza.

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Donbass, Crimea and all contested regions because "it's the people who decide" rather than warmongering elites who "don't give a damn about people's lives".

The left in the US is

armour to put up a promising fight for democracy. In the absence of trustworthy support from the mainstream media, YouTube channels are abuzz with analysts and activists keeping Trump in their crosshairs. A white woman activist raging against MAGA's nativism was murdered by Trump's hired guns from ICE. The killing in Minneapolis has set off a prairie fire across states. In the absence of vocal criticism of Trump from the Congress, the left, increasingly joined by Jewish students and senior scholars, is intervening strategically to ensure that Trump gets his comeuppance in the November mid-term polls and thereby can be reined in from doing further damage. Regardless of the outcome the left won't be accused of sitting on its hands when America was dismembering democracy.

Brazil and Colombia have slammed Trump's abduction of a fellow Latin American president from his home in Caracas. Trump's toolkit for Iran is different. A colour revolution is being quelled, says Pepe Escobar, a well-regarded Brazilian observer of the Middle East. Regarding

less of the images posted in Western media, Escobar says the Iranian leadership is braced for another round of war with US and Israel, only this time better prepared. It is a testament to the feckless ways of the left that a group like Mujahideen-i-Khalq, which was instrumental in depositing the Shah of Iran, has become a cat's paw for Israeli and US intrusion in its own country. Veteran Iran watchers are sanguine that without the organisational skills and a well-oiled machinery of the deeply camouflaged Mujahideen-i-Khalq, Reza Pahlavi, the former crown prince would have no standing with the rioters.

The Gulf has also been jolted by the events in Venezuela. "We are entering an era where international guarantees are fragile, institutions are weakened and power speaks louder than principle. Awareness today is not a luxury; it is a requirement for survival," cautioned Saudi Arabia's Arab News. It stressed that the seizure of Russian funds in Western banks was a betrayal of crucial trust that the world took for granted. "The lesson

is clear. The time to act is now." Interestingly, the writer in the Saudi paper is prominent UAE businessman Khalaf Ahmad Al-Habtoor. It says something for the thread that still unifies the two countries despite their recent aloofness.

South Asia is inevitably deeply affected by the turn of events unfolding at breakneck speed in the Middle East and in Latin America. Pakistan, currently in the good books of Trump (for no palpable reason), has spoken out boldly on the heist in Venezuela, with its defence minister reportedly calling for the abdication of Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu by the US (instead of Nicolás Maduro who should be freed).

Bangladesh has witnessed street protests for Nicolás Maduro. On the other hand, he is to host the BRICS summit around August, which comes with the terror of having to take an unequivocal stand on Trump's thuggery and India's one-sided love with the US. In the meantime, China, Russia and Iran began a week of joint naval exercises in South Africa's waters on Saturday. The 'BRICS Plus operation' would "ensure the safety of shipping and maritime economic activities". The sleeves have been rolled up, mostly.

**Biggest conglomerate****Ehsan Malik**

Pakistan's economy is often described as private-sector led. In practice, the state remains the country's most influential 'business group'. It owns major listed companies, dominates markets together with military welfare foundations, extracts liquidity, shields firms behind tariffs, subsidises inputs, and guarantees returns. The state is retaliating. Venezuela and Mexico are staging massive rallies with sleeves rolled up to combat Trump's threat to them. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, sensing enough was enough of his neighbour, is mending his country's ties with China. He could be visiting Beijing shortly to counter

ment, rational firms optimise for proximity to power rather than efficiency or innovation.

Where the profits really come from? The distortion is most visible in corporate earnings. Using recent aggregated KSE-100 profitability, total index profits are estimated at around Rs1.3 trillion. Of this, about 35-40 per cent is earned by companies that are directly state-owned or controlled, including oil and gas producers, state banks, utilities and military-run enterprises. The state's footprint extends much further when one looks beyond ownership to policy-rent-exposed sectors, even where ownership is private.

If one groups together sectors whose business models are materially shaped by state policy — rather than open competition — the picture becomes starker: banks whose profits are dominated by lending to government; oil and gas exploration operating under administered pricing and concession regimes; fertiliser benefiting from subsidised or priority gas allocation; power generation and related infrastructure operating on guaranteed-return or assured-offtake contracts; and auto-assemblers and parts of chemicals protected by high import tariffs.

Taken together, these sectors account for roughly 70-75pc of total KSE-100 profits. This is a measure of how much of Pakistan's listed corporate earnings sit in sectors where state policy is a first-order determinant of margins, volumes, risk or cashflows. In other words, most profits generated by Pakistan's largest companies are not the outcome of unfettered competition, but of state-shaped economies.

The cost to competition: This structure produces predictable distortions. Capital is misallocated towards protected or policy-favoured sectors rather than those capable of driving productivity, exports or technological upgrading. The state becomes both referee and player, compromising regulatory neutrality. And private firms, faced with state-backed incumbents and policy uncertainty, choose the safer route: serve the protected domestic market, lobby for concessions, and avoid global competition. Over time, this produces *ex a c t -* what Pakistan exhibits today: weak innovation, limited scale-up, a narrow export base, and a business culture conditioned to seek protection rather than compete.

The real reform choice: Weaning the economy off state dominance is politically difficult. Patronage creates constituencies and guaranteed-return structures provide investors illusive comfort, as the IPPs discovered.

Pakistan does not need ideology; it needs consistency: separation of the state's role as regulator and owner, time-bound reduction in tariffs and discretionary subsidies, competitive neutrality in credit, and a gradual exit from guaranteed-return business models.

Until then, the private sector will remain cautious and under-scaled — not because it lacks ambition, but because the rules reward dependence.

Pakistan's biggest conglomerate is not listed under a single name. It is called the state — and it continues to crowd out the private sector by thwarting competition and impeding growth.

**Misogyny's polite face****Khadija Bari**

According to ILO, women globally hold around 30 per cent of senior and middle management positions, rising to 35-40pc in many advanced economies. But Pakistan ranks among the worst performers. Women occupy less than 8pc of senior and middle management roles, placing the country alongside Afghanistan and Yemen at the bottom of global rankings. Even compared to other Muslim-majority countries, the gap is stark: Brunei reports 32.1pc, the UAE 23.5pc, Tunisia 26pc, and Turkey 19.1pc.

These figures reflect the lived reality of Pakistan's workplaces, where women's presence is increasingly visible but their authority remains marginal.

Misogyny in Pakistan's workplaces has many faces. In traditional environments, it is loud and unapologetic: 'Yeh kaam aurai nahi kar sakti' (women can't do this work) or 'aurat ka kaam ghar sambhalna hai' (women's place is the home). Women are mocked, and their ambition is dismissed. In more polished institutions, misogyny is subtler. It cloaks itself in the language of progress and inclusion. Women are applauded on Women's Day, and showcased as symbols of modernity. Yet while they are invited to the table, they are steered towards its edges. This misogyny does not shout; it smiles — while ensuring that authority and strategy remain male domains.

At first glance, gender equality in such environments appears convincing. But over time, the fine print becomes visible. In meetings, regardless of how many women are present, it is usually a woman who is politely

asked to take notes, circulate minutes, or draft follow-up emails. This invisible office housework is rarely assigned to male colleagues. Framed as helpfulness rather than hierarchy, its cumulative effect is powerful: women are positioned as facilitators, not decision-makers. Women's ideas face a similar fate. A suggestion offered by a woman is often met with silence. Minutes later, when a male colleague repeats the same point, it is received with enthusiasm.

The idea gains legitimacy only after passing through a male voice.

Over time, clear patterns emerge. Administrative coordination, compliance work and routine management tasks gravitate towards women, while strategic decisions — growth plans, financial strategy, mergers and long-term vision — remain male preserve. When these strategies succeed, credit accrues to male leadership. When they fail, women are often pushed forward — not to lead recovery, but to manage the fallout and absorb blame. Their presence becomes part of an organisation's PR strategy: women as symbols of inclusivity, as buffers against criticism.

As a result, women are disproportionately clustered in front-facing roles — human resources, customer service, corporate communications — positions emphasising visibility and emotional labour rather than authority. Even when women rise, another ceiling often awaits them. Promotions depend on informal male networks where loyalty is prized over leadership. The unspoken test is not competence but compliance: will she align unquestioningly with existing power structures?

Achievement, too, is narrated differently. A man's success is attributed to intelligence and leadership. A woman's success is often explained away as networking or favour. Her failures — even those rooted in decisions she did not make — are personalised and amplified. The result is a workplace where women are present everywhere except where power is exercised.

This form of misogyny is particularly difficult to challenge because it is polite and persistent. No one explicitly says women do not belong. Instead, they are quietly confined to roles smaller than their capacity, their authority diluted through practices that appear neutral but are deeply gendered. But they matter profoundly. They shape leadership pipelines, determine who is seen as a strategist, and decide who is invited into rooms where futures are shaped. ILO statistics merely quantify what countless professional women experience daily: visibility without authority. Addressing white-collar misogyny requires more than gender-sensitisation workshops or Women's Day celebrations. It demands structural change. Office housework must be redistributed and made rotational. Women's achievements must be recognised without reducing them to 'soft skills'. Decision-making spaces must be audited: who is present when strategy is discussed, and who is absent? Inclusion must occur before decisions are made, not after.

Pakistan can't afford to sideline half its population. The cost is not only moral but economic. The International Growth Centre estimates that closing gender gaps could raise Pakistan's GDP by up to 30pc. Until white-collar misogyny is dismantled, Women's Day flowers will continue to wilt long before they reach the boardroom.



## FM Aurangzeb admits some companies quitting Pakistan due to high taxes, expensive energy

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Aurangzeb has said that the government is fully aware of the challenges facing the economy, admitting that some companies are leaving the country due to high taxes and expensive energy.

Addressing the Pakistan Policy Dialogue in Islamabad on Wednesday, Senator Aurangzeb, however, said there were 20 new foreign investors who have entered the Pakistan market during the last 18 months. These new foreign investors included Google, Aramco, Wafi Energy, Turkish Petroleum and others, he added.

The finance minister also revealed that the government will hand over 24 more state units to the Privatization Commission for offloading after the successful sale of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA).

Aurangzeb said that foreign remittances would cross \$41 billion during the

current fiscal year as compared to previous year's \$38 billion.

He said handling of tax policy has been delegated to the Finance Division as the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is focused on collection of taxes.

Aurangzeb said the circular debt is gradually decreasing due to reforms in the energy sector.

The minister said "There are firms which are also leaving that is true... if the taxation is high or the energy cost is high or its financing cost is always moving in the right direction those have been real issues."

Aurangzeb said high taxes and high energy cost remain "real problem for businesses," adding the government has begun reforms to reduce the burden on the national exchequer and bring economic stability. "But those firms which have been able to look at business models because it takes two to tango, what the government has to do, and what the private sector

has to do, and if you have wedged into their business models for the last 50 years it's not going to work in the New World Order," he maintained.

The minister said some of the multinational firms switched to local sourcing "because of their margins are fine and they are now able to export, therefore they stay." And if another firm has not been able to do that, then that's something we know they need to think through, he added.

Aurangzeb said structural reforms were underway across the country and that the transformation process of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is continuing.

"Compliance and enforcement are essential to ensure implementation of tax laws," he added.

The finance minister said over Rs1.00 billion are wasted by state units every year. "Utility Stores, PWD and PASSCO were shut down due to losses," he added.

Aurangzeb said high taxes and high energy cost remain "real problem for businesses," adding the government has begun reforms to reduce the burden on the national exchequer and bring economic stability. "But those firms which have been able to look at business models because it takes two to tango, what the government has to do, and what the private sector



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI) Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, held an important meeting with Tarik Ali Khan, High Commissioner of Canada to Pakistan and Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Aurangzeb Khichi.

## CM Balochistan, SAPM discuss cooperation for SMEs development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Wednesday held an important meeting with Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti and discussed enhanced cooperation between the federal and provincial governments for the promotion and development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Welcoming the Chief Minister to the Ministry of Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar emphasized that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision is centered on empowering SMEs and women entrepreneurs as key drivers of inclusive and sustainable

economic growth, said a news release.

He noted that, in line with the prime minister's directives, all provinces must work together to strengthen Pakistan's micro, small, and medium enterprise sector.

The SAPM highlighted that provinces play a crucial role in SME development, adding that Balochistan possesses immense potential, abundant opportunities, and a hardworking workforce capable of contributing significantly to the national economy.

He announced the establishment of the SME Task Force with the Government of Balochistan to ensure coordinated efforts in

and effective implementation of SME-related initiatives.

The special assistant further said that the task force will focus on agriculture-based SMEs, livestock development, youth empowerment, and the promotion of women-led businesses, which form an integral part of the broader SME development strategy.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti reaffirmed that the Government of Balochistan is fully committed to the promotion of SMEs across the province. He expressed the desire that the people of the Balochistan expand their businesses and compete effectively in the market.

## Pakistan, UAE move closer to CEPA as technical talks near conclusion: Jam Kamal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Wednesday said that Pakistan and United Arab Emirates (UAE) are moving closer to the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) as technical talks near conclusion.

Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Pakistan, Salem Mohammed Salem Al Bawab Al Zaabi, called on Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan at his office here, where both sides reaffirmed their commitment to deepening bilateral economic ties and expediting progress on the Pakistan-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), said a release issued here.

Khan underscored the historical, strategic, and people-to-people bonds between Pakistan and the UAE, describing the relationship as strong and time-tested across political, defense, and social spheres. He emphasized, however,

that both countries are keen to translate this closeness into a more robust and balanced trade and investment partnership that reflects the true potential of bilateral relations.

The minister highlighted Pakistan's ongoing economic reforms and reaffirmed the government's resolve to create a more enabling environment for business and investment. He noted that despite short-term challenges faced by the private sector due to stabilization measures, the government remains focused on medium-term growth, export expansion, and regional connectivity, particularly through partnerships with Gulf countries.

Ambassador Al Zaabi appreciated Pakistan's reform efforts and the professionalism of the technical teams engaged in CEPA negotiations. He lauded Pakistan's market size, human capital, and strategic location, and conveyed the UAE's strong interest in expanding cooperation in



HYDERABAD: Women are busy selecting and purchasing quilts from a vendor during the chilly winter weather in the city.

## DISCOs, loss-making firms to go private under 2026 plan, PM Adviser says

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to the Prime Minister on Privatization Muhammad Ali said that under the government's 2026 privatization plan, the process of transferring all loss-making commercial enterprises to the private sector is moving forward, while Pakistan International Airlines is being upgraded to resume flights from April with enhanced facilities meeting international standards.

He particularly appreciated Canada's significant progress and breakthrough in the trade of canola, describing it as a strong example of expanding trade cooperation between the two countries.

The committee discussed the pricing framework under the applicable petroleum policy regime.

timely completion of the process in line with the government's broader reform agenda.

Talking about Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Adviser Ali said that the bidding process for PIA also being completed and following privatization, the airline's services will be significantly improved.

He added that a CEO is being finalized and a comprehensive business plan has already been prepared.

Standards are being closely reviewed and improvements in services are underway, which passengers will witness firsthand, he said.

He confirmed that PIA will be handed over to the private sector and is expected to operate its first flight under the new management in April.

Furthermore, for DISCOs, Adviser said that five DISCOs, including Islamabad, Gujranwala and Faisalabad, are already in the advanced phase of privatization, while two other DISCOs are also being prepared for the process.



HYDERABAD: A worker busy in preparing flower garlands for selling at his workplace.

## Officials told NA body 63% locomotives of Pak Railway exceeded 20 years of service

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Railways was informed by officials that more than 63 percent of locomotives have exceeded 20 years of service, contributing to operational disruptions and delays.

The requisitioned meeting of the committee on Railways held on Wednesday to review operational challenges faced by the institution, particularly train engine failures and passenger service quality.

The meeting was presided over by Member of National Assembly, Ramesh Lal in the absence of the Committee Chairman, in accordance with sub-rule (2) of Rule 216 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007.

During the briefing, the Committee was informed that incidents of locomotive failures have shown a slight increase compared to previous years, largely due to an aging fleet.

To address these issues, the Committee was apprised of a range of corrective measures, including improved maintenance regimes, enhanced budgetary allocations, specialized training for technical staff, procurement of quality materials through third-party inspections, and technical assistance from original equipment manufacturers (OEMs).

Plans for the overhauling and modernization of diesel-electric locomotives were also shared. The Committee was further briefed on the availability of passenger coaches.

## Over 4,000km optical fiber projects completed in three provinces

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan reveal that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the OFC-KPK/Package-e-2 project has covered 800.22 kilometers, reaching districts such as Bajaur, Mohmand, Orakzai, and others. The project has benefited 38 union councils/tehsil headquarters and involved a total expenditure of Rs2.15 billion.

In Peshawar, Nowshera, Charsadda, and Mardan, the OFC-UC-KP-LOT17 project has installed 75.46 kilometers of OFC, serving 78 UCs/THQs.

According to details, the Pure Extra Virgin Olive Oil of Loralai district is considered one of the best olive oils in the world in terms of quality, taste and efficacy.

The vast agricultural potential in Balochistan has made Pakistan famous globally and this global success has not only made the province popular across the world, but also broadened the horizon of Pakistan's agricultural exports.

## Pakistani olives win Silver Award at New York Int'l Competition

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Olives from Loralai district of Balochistan has earned a recognition for Pakistan at the New York International Olive Oil Competition by winning the Silver Award.

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## Gold prices surge by Rs4,300 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): Gold prices witnessed a sharp increase in the local market on Wednesday, as the price of 24-karat gold per tola surged by Rs4,300 to settle at Rs486,162.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold increased by Rs3,687 to Rs416,805, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Likewise, the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went up by Rs3,380 to Rs382,085.

## NECA, Malik Group unveil roadmap for 3,000 EV charging stations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Malik Khuda Baksh, Chief Executive Officer of Malik Group of Companies, in a meeting with Additional Secretary and Managing Director of the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEEA), Humayun Khan, unveiled the approved roadmap for establishing 3,000 electric vehicle (EV) charging stations across Pakistan.

Humayun Khan reaffirmed the authority's full institutional backing and pledged to expand the initiative to 6,000 EV charging stations nationwide. The meeting, held at

the office of Humayun Khan, reviewed key hurdles delaying the roll-out of EV charging stations.

Discussions focused on EV charger imports, including customs duties, regulatory documentation, and inter-agency coordination.

Humayun Khan welcomed the proposal and sought recommendations for internationally compliant EV charger brands, along with a detailed issue-and-solutions report within three days to ensure timely facilitation and effective implementation of the national green mobility initiative.

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## RCCI, Uzbekistan explore trade expansion with pharma sector in focus

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has placed institutional reform, digital transformation, and automation at the top of its agenda to help build a documented economy, with the ultimate objective of significantly increasing Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio.

Dr. Naeem Ullah, Chief Reforms and Modernization at the FBR, said that reforms and digitization are critical to achieving a documented economy, which in turn is essential for raising the tax-to-GDP ratio and ensuring long-term economic sustainability. He shared these views during an exclusive interview with APP Digital. Dr. Naeem, who is also serving as the Acting Chief of the Transformation Delivery Unit, said the unit is responsible

for overseeing and implementing the ongoing transformation process within the FBR. He noted that the institution is currently undergoing a major phase of reform, digital transformation, and automation aimed at modernizing tax administration and addressing Pakistan's persistent economic challenges.

According to the senior official, digital transformation has become the central pillar of the FBR's reform agenda. The gradual integration of process automation is fundamentally reshaping tax administration in Pakistan by replacing outdated, manual systems with automated, cloud-based platforms.

These systems enable real-time monitoring, advanced data analytics, and stronger enforcement mechanisms.

RCCI, Uzbekistan explore trade expansion with pharma sector in focus

RAWALPINDI (APP): A meeting and interactive session was held between the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI) and Shohrukh Gulamov, Deputy Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in Islamabad, aimed at strengthening bilateral economic cooperation and exploring new avenues of trade and investment. President RCCI, Usman Shaukat, along with Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, participated in the meeting. Former RCCI President Dr. Shumail Daud was also present on the occasion.

During the interaction, both sides discussed matters related to close cooperation between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, with par-

ticular emphasis on the scope of joint ventures, enhancement of trade and investment ties, and collaboration in key sectors, including the pharmaceutical industry.

President RCCI, Usman Shaukat, recalled and briefed the Deputy Minister about RCCI's recent Business Opportunity Conference held in Tashkent in November, which marked an important step toward deepening economic engagement between the two countries. He highlighted the subsequent meetings with Uzbek Chambers of Commerce, ministerial-level engagements, and the visit to the Export Pharmaceutical Park, which opened new prospects for collaboration, especially in the pharma sector.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Wednesday closed bearish, losing 1,381.69 points, a negative change of 0.75 percent, to settle at 182,569.82 points compared to 183,951.51 points on the previous trading day, the two countries.

## Car sales increase by 41.73% during 1HFY 2026

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sale of cars in the country witnessed an increase of 41.73 during the first half of the current fiscal year 2025-26 as compared to the corresponding half of last year.

During the July-December 2025-26, as many as 65,910 cars were sold against the sale of 46,502 units, showing growth of 41.73 percent, said Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA).

Among sale of cars, Toyota Corolla and Toyota Yaris cars also grew by 73.57 percent from 9,633 units to 16,720 units while the sale of Honda cars witnessed a surge of 58.71 percent from 6,404 units during last year to 10,164 units during current year.

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ISLAMABAD (APP): The benchmark KSE

## At least 100 children killed in Gaza since ceasefire: UN

GENEVA (AFP/APP): At least 100 children have been killed by Israeli airstrikes and ground forces in Gaza since the start of a tenuous ceasefire three months ago, a United Nations said.

The UN children's agency UNICEF said that at least 60 boys and 40 girls had been killed in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory since early October.

"More than 100 children have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire," UNICEF spokesman James Elder told reporters in Geneva.

"That's roughly a girl or a boy killed here every day during a ceasefire," he said, speaking from Gaza City.

"These children are killed from airstrikes, drone strikes, including suicide drones. They're killed from tank shelling. They're killed from live ammunition. They're killed by quadcopters."

"We are at 100 — no doubt," he said, adding that

the true number was likely higher.

"A ceasefire that slows the bombs is progress but one that still buries children is not enough."

AFP has sought a response from the Israeli military.

An official at Gaza's health ministry, which maintains casualty records, has reported a higher figure of 165 children killed during the tenuous ceasefire, out of a total 442 fatalities.

"Additionally, seven children have died from exposure to cold since the beginning of this year," Zaher Al-Wahidi, Director of the Computer Department at the Ministry of Health, told AFP.

Elder stressed that the ongoing Israeli attacks came after more than two years of war which has "left life for Gaza's children unimaginably hard".

"They still live in fear. The psychological damage remains untreated, and it's becoming deeper and harder to heal the longer this goes

on," he said.

In November, authorities in Gaza said more than 70,000 people had been killed there since the beginning of the war waged by Israel in response to Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

Nearly 80 percent of buildings in Gaza have been destroyed or damaged in the relentless air and ground offensive, according to UN data.

On January 1, Israel suspended 37 international aid agencies from accessing the Gaza Strip, despite what the UN said at the time was an "outrageous" move.

"Blocking international NGOs, blocking any humanitarian aid... that means blocking life-saving assistance," Elder stressed on Monday.

While UNICEF had managed to significantly increase aid entering the densely populated strip since October, he stressed: "You need partners on the ground, and it (the aid) still doesn't meet the need."

"To help address im-

mense shelter needs, during the past week our partners delivered supplies to 28,000 families, including 1,600 tents, 16,000 tarpaulins and 27,000 blankets," Dujarric said.

Despite these efforts, at least 1.1 million people still urgently need assistance as weather conditions continue to deteriorate. A new storm on Friday once again battered makeshift tents, leaving thousands without protection. UN teams and partners are conducting assessments and supporting the most vulnerable, but aid workers stress

that tents are only a temporary measure. More durable solutions are urgently required, including tool kits, cement and heavy machinery to clear debris, alongside sustained funding to allow a transition from emergency relief to early recovery, Dujarric added. Children remain among the hardest hit. Health partners reported that another infant has reportedly died from hypothermia, bringing the total number of reported deaths to four, all of them very young children, according to figures from the Ministry of Health.

## UN warns powerful storm worsens humanitarian crisis in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The humanitarian crisis across the Gaza Strip remains extremely serious, with harsh winter weather threatening to reverse recent gains in aid delivery, according to the United Nations. Briefing correspondents at UN Headquarters in New York, Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric reported that ongoing rainstorms are damaging and destroying fragile shelters, leaving large numbers of displaced people exposed to the cold.

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mense shelter needs, during the past week our partners delivered supplies to 28,000 families, including 1,600 tents, 16,000 tarpaulins and 27,000 blankets," Dujarric said.

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## Denmark, Greenland officials to meet Vance, Rubio

COPENHAGEN (AFP/APP): Denmark's foreign minister said that he and his Greenlandic counterpart would meet with US Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio at the White House on Wednesday.

US President Donald Trump has been talking up the idea of buying or annexing the Arctic territory for years, and further stoked tensions on Sunday by saying that the United States would take the territory "one way or the other".

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen told reporters in Copenhagen that he and

his Greenlandic counterpart Vivian Motzfeldt had requested a meeting with Rubio, and Vance had asked to "take part in that meeting and will host it."

"Our reason for requesting the meeting has been to move the entire discussion... into a meeting room, where you can look each other in the eye and talk through these issues," Lokke said following a foreign policy meeting in Denmark's parliament. Meanwhile Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen said he would be meeting with NATO's Secretary General Mark Rutte on Monday to discuss Arctic security.

## Syrian army tells Kurdish forces to withdraw from area east of Aleppo city

ALEPPO (AFP/APP): Syria's army told Kurdish forces on Tuesday to withdraw from an area they control east of Aleppo after dislodging fighters from two neighbourhoods in the city in deadly clashes last week.

The move raises fresh concerns of further fighting between the two sides, as Syria's Islamist government seeks to extend its authority across the country and progress stalls on integrating the Kurds' de facto autonomous administration and forces into the central government.

## Furious farmers roll hundreds of tractors into Paris in fresh protests

PARIS (AFP/APP): Around 350 tractors rolled into Paris, driving down the Champs-Elysees avenue and setting up camp near the parliament building, as farmers protested a litany of woes including a trade deal the European Union has struck with four South American countries.

The protests reflect a deep sense of malaise afflicting France's agricultural sector, with the planned signing of an accord between the European Union and the Mercosur bloc seen as the last straw.

French farmers have complained of climate and economic uncertainties and have since December staged protests and set up roadblocks over the government's handling of a lumpy skin disease outbreak.

"We're at the end of our tether," said one of the activists, Guillaume Moret, 56.

"We haven't made any money from our farms for three years. Politicians are incapable of giving us any direction," said the head of the FNSEA union for the region of Ile-de-France around Paris.

The FNSEA, France's leading agricultural union, and another union, Jeunes Agriculteurs, are demanding "concrete and immediate action" from the government.

Arriving from towns around Paris but also from the Hauts-de-France region of northern France, the protesters parked their tractors not far from parliament's lower house, the National Assembly, in central Paris.

## Sudan 'lost all sources of revenue' in the war: finance minister to AFP

PORT SUDAN (AFP/APP): Widespread destruction, massive military spending and plummeting oil and gold revenues have left Sudan's economy in "very difficult times", army-aligned finance minister Gibril Ibrahim said, nearly three years into the army's war with rival paramilitary forces.

In an interview with AFP from his office in Port Sudan, Ibrahim said the government is eyeing deals for Red Sea ports and private investment to help rebuild infrastructure.

This week, Sudan's prime minister announced the government's official return to Khartoum, recaptured last year, but Ibrahim's ministry is among those yet to fully return.

## British parents to get guidance on limiting screen time for children under 5

ANKARA (WAM/APP): Parents of children under 5 in the UK will soon receive official guidance on limiting screen time following new government research that links excessive use to delayed language development.

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said the recommendations will be published in April and shaped "with parents, not dictated to them," according to ITV News. "By age two, almost all children – around 98% – are watching screens such as mobiles, tablets, and TV every day, during a critical period for language development," Phillipson wrote in The Sunday Times, citing reports that some children struggle to converse or concentrate when starting nursery or school.

According to government findings, toddlers with around five hours of screen time daily learn "significantly" fewer words.

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## Greece airspace shutdown exposes badly outdated systems

ATHENS (AFP/APP): A deeply embarrassing systems failure which forced Greece to close its airspace for several hours with pilots unable to speak to air traffic control, has exposed badly outdated communication systems at Athens International Airport – one of the world's top travel destinations.

Flights had to be diverted to neighbouring countries with thousands of travellers hit after the "unprecedented" technical malfunction on January 4, which baffled experts.

Even more than a week after the chaos, questions as to what sparked the glitch – and how the system returned online – remain unanswered, with a report expected this week.

According to the Greek civil aviation authority, the YPA, the malfunction began at 8:59 am (0659

GMT) when multiple radio frequencies serving Athens airspace were hit by continuous "noise" interference.

The agency's transmitters began sending out "involuntary signal emissions", YPA said.

As technicians raced to radio relay stations on top of mountains near Athens and further afield to locate the problem, planes were essentially flying blind, experts said – unable to communicate with air traffic controllers – until the incident began to gradually abate four hours later.

"Hundreds of flights were directly affected – those in contact with air traffic control or already in the air that changed their route," Foivos Kaperonis, a board member of the Greek air traffic controllers association (EEEK), told AFP.

KAMPALA (APP): As dark clouds gathered overhead, young and old members of Uganda's long-embattled opposition gathered for prayers at the home of an imprisoned politician – the mood both defiant and bleak.

The mayor of Kampala, Erias Lukwago, told the gathering on Sunday that this week's election was a "face off" between ordinary Ugandans and President Yoweri Museveni.

"All of you are in two categories: political prisoners and potential political prisoners," he said.

Museveni is widely expected to extend his 40-year rule of the east African country in Thursday's election, thanks to his near-total control of the state and security apparatus. The 81-year-old came to power as a bush fighter in the 1980s and has maintained a militarised control over the country, brutally cracking down on challengers.

The cargo ship he was in charge of, the Portuguese-flagged Solong, rammed into the jet-fuel-laden Stena Impero, an oil tanker early on March 10 last year, setting both vessels ablaze and triggering a massive off-shore rescue operation.

The US-flagged tanker, which had been chartered by the US military, was anchored 13 miles (21 kilometres) from the port of Hull, northeastern England, at the time of the crash. One Solong crew member, Marig Angel Pernia from the Philippines, was lost and is presumed dead in the collision, which also sparked fears of environmental damage after a tank containing fuel was ruptured.

The UK government last year ruled out foul play. A preliminary report found that "neither the Solong nor Stena Impero had a dedicated lookout on the bridge" at the time of the incident and that visibility was "patchy".

## Ugandan opposition denounces 'military state' ahead of election

LONDON (APP): The Russian captain of a cargo ship which hit a tanker in the North Sea off the UK coast triggering a huge fire goes on trial Monday charged with manslaughter for the death of a crew member.

Vladimir Motin, 59, from St Petersburg, has been charged with one count of gross negligence manslaughter. He has pleaded not guilty and will stand trial at London's Old Bailey court which is expected to last several weeks.

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## Germany plays down threat of US invading Greenland

WASHINGTON (APP): Germany's top diplomat played down the risk of a US attack on Greenland, despite President Donald Trump's repeated threats to seize the Danish autonomous territory. Trump has been talking up the idea of buying or annexing the Arctic territory for years, and further stoked tensions this week by saying that the United States would take the territory "one way or the other".

When asked about a unilateral military move by Trump, German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul said he had "no indication that this is being seriously considered." "I believe there is a common interest in addressing the security issues that arise in the Arctic,"

## Russia strikes power plant, kills four in Ukraine barrage

KHARKIV (APP): Russia battered Ukraine with more than two dozen missiles and hundreds of drones, killing four people and pummelling another power plant, piling more pressure on Ukraine's brittle energy system.

An AFP journalist in the eastern Kharkiv region, where four people were killed, saw firefighters battling a fire at a postal hub and rescue workers helping survivors by lamp light in freezing temperatures.

The operator did not reveal which of its plants was struck, but said Russia had attacked its power plants over 220 times since Moscow invaded Ukraine in 2022. Moscow has pummelled Ukraine with daily drone and missile barrages in recent months, targeting energy infrastructure and cutting power and heating in the frigid height of winter.

The Ukrainian air force said that Tuesday's bombardment included 25 missiles and 293 drones.

## UN demands independent probe into woman's killing by US immigration officer

GENEVA (APP): The United Nations demanded a swift and independent investigation after a federal immigration officer fatally shot a protester in the US city of Minneapolis last week.

The UN rights office voiced deep concern at the killing of 37-year-old Renee Good, who was shot dead in her car by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent in the Midwestern city last Wednesday.

"Under international human rights law, the intentional use of lethal force is only permissible as a measure of last resort against an individual representing an imminent threat to life," UN rights office spokesman Jeremy Laurence told reporters in Geneva.

"We take note of the FBI investigation and insist on the need for prompt, independent and transparent investigation into the killing," he said.

Laurence also urged "all authorities to take mea-

## Cold winter and AI boom pushed US emissions increase in 2025

WASHINGTON (APP): Greenhouse gas emissions in the United States rose last year, snapping a two-year streak of declines as cold winter temperatures drove demand for heating fuel and the AI boom led to a surge in power generation, a think tank said Tuesday.

The 2.4 percent increase in the world's largest economy came as President Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress enacted a series of policies hostile to climate action, though the authors of the Rhodium Group report said the full impact of those decisions will only be felt in the coming years.

Rich nations, including Europe's largest economies Germany and France, are slowing the pace of planet-warming gas reductions even as global temperatures continue to soar, with 2025 set to be confirmed as the third-hottest year on record.

US emissions fell in 2024 by 0.5 percent and in 2023 by 3.5 percent, after the economy rebounded from the Covid pandemic and emissions rose in both 2021 and 2022, by 6.3 percent and 1.2 percent respectively.

Building emissions rose 0.8 percent, followed by the power sector where emissions increased by 3.8 percent, the report said.

"Weather is bumpy year-to-year – we tend to see building emissions bump around like this due to higher fuel use for heating," Rhodium Group analyst and the report's co-author Michael Gaffney told AFP.

## PM seeks effective recommendations to evaluate performance of federal secretaries, officers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehzad Sharif on Wednesday directed to formulate comprehensive and effective recommendations to evaluate the performance of federal secretaries, emphasizing that recognition and appreciation of officers demonstrating good performance were essential for the overall improvement of the civil services.

Chairing a meeting to review proposed civil services reforms and recommendations for a performance evaluation system in ministries, the prime minister said reforms were indispensable to align Pakistan's civil service with international standards and global best practices.

He instructed the relevant committee to finalize evolutionary yet effective

and comprehensive reform recommendations for the national civil service at the earliest.

He further directed that recommendations be prepared for a system linking promotions, financial benefits, and other facilities to a comprehensive performance evaluation of officers.

The prime minister said the objective of civil service reforms was to ensure visible improvement in the lives of the people through effective public service delivery and provision of facilities.

He added that comprehensive civil service reforms aimed at economic prosperity, social harmony, development, and progress were among the government's top priorities.

The prime minister directed that meaningful consultations be held with stakeholders from the civil administration, all services, and cadres as part of the proposed civil service reforms.

He noted that the civil service was the backbone of governance and public welfare in any country.

The prime minister further directed that special recommendations be formulated to align officers' performance and competencies with contemporary requirements and global standards.

He said the committee established for civil service reforms should propose practical and sustainable recommendations that should also be capable of ensuring effective public facilitation.



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehzad Sharif chairs Federal Cabinet meeting in Islamabad.

## Gilani underscores education diplomacy, calls for deeper academic ties with University of London

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting President Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Wednesday described education diplomacy as one of the most enduring instruments of international engagement amid stressing sustained academic partnerships beneficial for the country to address deep-rooted challenges in its education sector and prepare its youth for a rapidly changing world.

Addressing a reception hosted in honour of a visiting delegation of the University of London and its alumnus, the acting president Gilani said the presence of the delegation symbolised a bridge of knowledge, aspiration and partnership between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. He paid tribute to the University of London's global standing and its nearly two centuries of contribution to human progress across disciplines.

Acting President Gilani noted that many dis-

tinguished Pakistanis were alumni of the University of London and had gone on to excel in public service, law, medicine, academia, business and diplomacy. This shared academic heritage, he said, formed the bedrock of bilateral educational cooperation and provided a strong basis for expanding ties.

He said the University's international programmes and recognised teaching centres had enabled thousands of Pakistani students to access world-class education without leaving the country. "This had helped democratise learning and allowed young Pakistanis to compete globally while remaining rooted at home," he added.

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## China's ambassador Jiang Zaidong called on Sardar Ayaz Sadiq

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong, on Wednesday called on Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, at the Parliament House.

Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that China is Pakistan's closest and most reliable friend, which has always stood by Pakistan in every difficult time.

He expressed pride in Pakistan's all-weather and enduring friendship with China.

Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq appreciated the close cooperation between Pakistan and China in the economic and Defence sectors, and noted that Pakistan-China ties are based on strong foundations of mutual trust and respect.

He reaffirmed that Pakistan and China are strate-

gic partners.

NA Speaker further stated that both countries have always stood shoulder to shoulder in challenging times, and emphasized that Pakistan-China Defence Cooperation is playing an important role in ensuring sustainable peace in the region.

Recalling his previous tenure as Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that the address of President Xi Jinping to a joint sitting of the Parliament of Pakistan was a great honour for the Pakistani Parliament.

The Chinese Ambassador appreciated the positive remarks of Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq regarding China and stated that the peoples of Pakistan and China are bound together by strong and enduring bonds of friendship.



ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador Jian Zedong called on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at Parliament house.

## Govt slashes industrial power tariffs, cuts cross subsidy by Rs123bn

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Power Division on Wednesday said that the government has achieved a substantial reduction in the industrial cross-subsidy burden and electricity tariffs through wide-ranging reforms, aimed at enhancing industrial competitiveness and easing pressure on consumers.

In a statement, the Power Division said that the industrial cross-subsidy burden had been reduced from Rs 225 billion (Rs 8.9 per unit) in March 2024, when the present government assumed office, to Rs 102 billion (Rs 4.02 per unit) at present, reflecting a significant reduction

of Rs 123 billion. The statement further said that industrial electricity tariffs, including taxes, declined from Rs 62.99 per unit in March 2024 to Rs 46.31 per unit by December 2025, while the national average tariff reduced from Rs. 53.04 to Rs. 42.27.

The Power Division said that to further reduce electricity prices, the government terminated inefficient power plants and successfully renegotiated contracts with Independent Power Producers (IPPs), resulting in tariff relief. It added that negotiations with remaining IPPs were continuing to secure additional reductions.



ISLAMABAD: The Hon'ble Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mr. Justice Yahya Afridi, chairing the meeting of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan at the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

## Rescuers retrieve eight bodies from debris after landsliding incident

KOHAT (INP): The rescuers retrieved eight dead bodies from debris after a landsliding incident in Qamar village in tehsil Gambat of Kohat.

Rescue officials said that all eight persons dead bodies have been retrieved from the boulders.

It was earlier reported that dead bodies of four persons were removed from the debris.

Rescue 1122 teams were rushed to the area after getting information about the landslide incident in Gambat.

The rescue teams retrieved four dead bodies trapped beneath the boulders from the spot after hectic efforts. The rescue workers were engaged in search of remaining persons said trapped under the rubbles, officials said.

Widespread monsoon rains wreaked havoc in the country last year causing landslides in various parts of the country especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa leaving several people dead after cloudbursts in mountainous regions resulting in several deaths.

## Info Secretary Imran says: Digital, social media central to transparent government outreach

INDEPENDENT REPORT QUETTA: Balochistan Secretary for Information Imran Khan has said that the landscape of public communication has rapidly evolved, with digital and social media now playing a decisive role in delivering timely, transparent and accurate information to the public. He stressed that the Public Relations Department must adopt a modern, integrated media strategy to effectively convey government policies and initiatives.

He made these remarks while chairing a high-level review meeting on the overall performance of the Public Relations Department. The meeting was attended by Director General Public Relations Muhammad Noor Khetran, senior officers of the Information Department and representatives of relevant sections. During the meeting, DG Public Relations Imran Khan commended the department's performance, noting a marked improvement over the past two years, particularly in expanding the government's presence and engagement on social media.

He said that building effective and continuous communication between the government and the public remained the primary responsibility of the Information Department.

Addressing the participants, Secretary Information Imran Khan commended the department's performance, noting a marked improvement over the past two years, particularly in expanding the government's presence and engagement on social media. He said that building effective and continuous communication between the government and the public remained the primary responsibility of the Information Department.

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## Minister lauds University of London as partner in strengthening education

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday praised the University of London for its academic excellence and enduring role in strengthening higher education in Pakistan.

Speaking at a reception held in honour of a visiting delegation led by University of London Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Phil Allmendinger, the minister highlighted the institution's rich academic legacy and its global reputation.

Tarar, himself an alumnus of the university, said his degree had greatly benefited him, underscoring the value of its teaching centres in nurturing both faculty and students.

## Customs seized smuggle NCP vehicles, heavy bikes worth Rs. 412.2 million

ISLAMABAD (APP): The customs enforcement Islamabad seized smuggled NCP vehicles, heavy bikes and electronic goods worth Rs. 412.2 million. The Collectorate of Customs Enforcement, Islamabad, has seized a large consignment of smuggled and non-duty-paid goods, including luxury vehicles, heavy bikes, and electronic items, during intelligence-based operations conducted late at night. The total estimated value of the seized goods is Rs. 412.2 million, said a release issued here on Wednesday.

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## JI to launch referendum on Punjab local government law from Jan 15: Hafiz Naeem

INDEPENDENT REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Pakistan will launch a four-day public referendum from Thursday (January 15) to gauge public opinion on the Punjab Local Government Act, JI Emir Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman announced on Wednesday.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman said that an independent and transparent referendum process had been arranged under the supervision of autonomous referendum commissions at central and district levels. He said that millions of people would participate in the exercise, after which a schedule for surrounding the Punjab As-

sembly would be announced in the light of public opinion.

He said the referendum would continue for four days, with camps set up at intersections, markets, educational institutions and other public places across Punjab. According to him, the printing of ballot papers has been completed, and all arrangements have been finalised to ensure transparency.

Rejecting the Islamabad Local Government Ordinance, the JI chief demanded its immediate withdrawal and called for local government elections in the federal capital according to the previously announced schedule of February 15.

## Quetta residents' gas shortages highlighted in national party protest

QUETTA (ANN): In the

midst of severe winter, the National Party (NP) staged a protest in Quetta to highlight the persistent gas shortages affecting residents, particularly in Hazara Town, Mariab, and Saray, where gas supply has reportedly become almost non-existent.

Addressing the protest, Provincial General Secretary Chingiz Hai Baloch Advocate, Dr. Ramzan Hazara, and other political and social leaders criticized the Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) for what they called unjust treatment of the public. They emphasized that the lack of gas in harsh winter conditions has made life

miserable for ordinary citizens, especially children, and demanded immediate action to restore supplies.

The NP leadership warned that if the company failed to ensure continuous gas supply in Quetta, the party would escalate the protest movement across Balochistan, stressing that the public cannot be left at the mercy of the company during extreme cold.

During the protest, SSGC General Manager Raheel Malik contacted the NP leaders for dialogue.

Subsequently, a three-member committee comprising Chingiz Hai Baloch, Dr. Ramzan Hazara, and Ayaz Ali Kashtmand held formal negotiations.

Acting President Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani hosts University of London delegation led by Pro-Vice Chancellor in Islamabad.

## FCCP to issue appropriate order in Arshad Sharif murder case: Justice Amir Farooq

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan (FCCP) has indicated that it may conclude proceedings in the suo moto case concerning the murder of renowned journalist Arshad Sharif.

The hearing was conducted on Wednesday by Justice Amir Farooq.

During the proceedings, Justice Amir Farooq remarked that the investigation process had been considerably slow, though the court did not wish to cast blame on any individual or institution. He added that the court would issue an appropriate order in the matter.

Counsel for Arshad Sharif's widow informed the court that a commission had been constituted on the basis of the suo moto notice, and the investigation was still ongoing. Justice Amir Farooq inquired about progress in Kenya. The counsel responded that the

Kenyan court had ruled in their favour, declaring the incident a murder instead of an accident and directing a formal investigation. However, no practical progress had been made in Kenya so far.

The counsel further stated that they approached the court to ensure the Government of Pakistan stood with the family, but there appeared to be a gap between the government's position and their expectations.

Additional Attorney General Aamir Rehman told the court that the JIT report had already been submitted. He said Kenya initially declined to cooperate in the investigation, but Pakistan and Kenya concluded a Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) agreement in September last year. He added that once Kenya grants permission, the Pakistani team will visit the crime scene.



Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari inaugurates Thar Institute of Engineering Science and Technology in Tharparkar.

## Pak urges KSA to extend Hajj quota as per country's Population: Sardar Yousuf

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf has said that the government is in contact with Saudi authorities to seek an increase in Pakistan's Hajj quota to 230,000 in line with the country's population.

"With the increase in quotas for other countries, Pakistan's quota will also be significantly enhanced,"

the minister said, expressing hope while addressing a Hajj rituals training workshop and talking to media on Wednesday at the Hajj Complex. Sardar Yousaf said the Ministry of Religious Affairs is actively pursuing the inclusion of Lahore station in the dual-immigration system like Islamabad and Karachi to provide maximum facilitation to Hajj pilgrims.

The source said that the BHCP had stopped treating patients under the Balochistan Health Card in private hospitals in Karachi after the State Life Insurance became indebted to Rs 5 billion. He mentioned that after the news was published, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti took notice of the non-release of money and issued orders to release the money immediately.

Party leaders have made it clear that, in the absence of meaningful consultation, the PPP will not extend support to government-sponsored legislation in either the National Assembly or a joint session.

As per details, the PPP has decided to condition its support for government legislation on prior consultation and formal engagement, sources said. The party is expected to convey its reservations to the government over being excluded from the law-making process and will demand to be

## Finance Dept releases Rs. 2.25b for Health Card Program

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Finance Department has released Rs 2.25 billion for the Health Card Program.

Finance Department source on Wednesday said that the Balochistan Health Card Program (BHCP) issued by the Balochistan government to provide medical treatment to poor and deserving patients.

The source said that the BHCP had stopped treating patients under the Balochistan Health Card in private hospitals in Karachi after the State Life Insurance became indebted to Rs 5 billion. He mentioned that after the news was published, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti took notice of the non-release of money and issued orders to release the money immediately.

Addressing the participants, Secretary Information Imran Khan commended the department's performance, noting a marked improvement over the past two years, particularly in expanding the government's presence and engagement on social media. He said that building effective and continuous communication between the government and the public remained the primary responsibility of the Information Department.

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