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Balochistan govt pledges investor-friendly environment and youth empowerment at first investment and trade expo

*Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti vows security, reduced bureaucratic hurdles, and stronger industry-academia collaboration to drive economic growth

By Staff Reporter

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has reaffirmed his government's commitment to promoting investment, industrial development, and employment opportunities in the province, saying that strengthening partnerships between the government, private sector, and educational institutions is essential for sustainable economic growth.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Balochistan Investment and Trade Expo (BITE) 2026 in Quetta on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said that the government is determined to bridge the gap between the state and the youth by empowering young people through modern education, skills development, and economic opportunities.

The expo, organised by the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBoIT), marks the province's first government-led investment and trade exhibition in 21 years. The event was jointly inaugurated by Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti and former federal minister and senator Saleem Mandviwalla.

The ceremony was attended by senior government officials, business leaders, investors, and representatives of chambers of commerce, including Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, BBoIT Vice Chairman Bilal Khan Kakar, FPCCI Patron-in-Chief S.M. Tanveer, businessman Mian Zahid Hussain, PPP Balochistan President Sardar Umar Gorgage, and several other prominent figures.

More than 100 companies, provincial departments, and federal regulatory institutions from across Pakistan have established stalls at the exhibition to showcase business opportunities, industrial activities, products, and investment prospects. The event also attracted a large number of students and citizens.

In his address, Bugti stressed that empowering young people is one of the government's key priorities.

He said universities must move beyond traditional teaching models and place greater emphasis on research, skills development, information technology, modern technologies, and artificial intelligence-based programmes.

He noted that educational institutions should align their curricula with industry requirements to ensure graduates possess market-relevant skills and are capable of achieving economic self-reliance.

"The need of the hour is to reduce the gap between the state and young people and equip them with the education and skills required to succeed in a rapidly changing world," he said.

The Chief Minister also urged private industries and businesses to provide employment and training opportunities to Balochistan's youth, adding

that stronger collaboration between universities and industries would help students gain practical experience before entering the job market.

Sarfraz Bugti said that the primary objective of BITE 2026 is to facilitate direct engagement between Balochistan's business



community and national as well as international investors, while also strengthening communication between entrepreneurs and the government.

He praised the support extended by universities, particularly BUITEMS, the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the province's business community in organising the event.

Describing Balochistan as a province covering nearly

47 percent of Pakistan's land area, he acknowledged that it faces significant challenges related to infrastructure, industrialisation, and business facilitation.

However, he emphasised that the government is fully aware of these realities and is working on comprehensive strategies to address them.

"We intend to create a conducive environment for development and investment through practical measures rather than denying challenges or making unrealistic claims," he stated.



PML-N President Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif attend a high-level meeting on the upcoming 100-day development plan for AJK .

Nawaz hails his govt's 'serious' work on AJK development as PML-N charts 100-day plan

AJK: The PML-N said its top leadership, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, discussed development and reconstruction in AJK with the region's president and premier, both of whom belong to the PML-N.

Addressing the meeting, Nawaz hailed the efforts of his government in the development of AJK, particularly the formulation of a 100-day programme to develop the region.

"This is the first time, I think, that a party's government and the party's leadership are on the same page regarding participating in AJK's development with such seriousness," he said, adding, "I have never seen such enthusiasm before."

He highlighted Amir Muqam, Rana Sanaullah, Chaudhry Tariq and Khawaja Saad Rafique's efforts in particular.

He also expressed appreciation for the contributions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, who he said had provided green buses for Muzaffarabad and Mirpur as well as clinics on wheels and laptops. "This is a very good spirit and we should appreciate it," he said.

In addition, he highlighted that PM Shehbaz had also agreed to allocate resources to the programme, calling it a "very good thing" that there was so much passion surrounding the decisions to contribute to the region's development.

Nawaz regretted that there were previous governments in AJK that had "not cared" about it at all and forgotten its promises to the public. He highlighted the contrast between then and the current time.

He added that, now that Gillani had become the prime minister in the region, he felt that he himself had become prime minister.

"The zeal that is in my heart, I see that very same zeal inside his heart," he said, adding that he would continue to visit AJK from time to time and hold meetings to discuss development. Nawaz also said that while he had been premier, and Raja Farooq Haider had been AJK PM, "our sole focus used to be on development". In particular, he noted that one project that they wanted to launch was for a motorway from Muzaffarabad to Mirpur. "With this, your entire Azad Kashmir interior would have opened up [...] If there ever was a finest project in the history of Azad Kashmir that was ever conceived, it was that project," the PML-N leader said, requesting PM Shehbaz to now give that project "top priority".

Balochistan's first-ever investment and trade expo inaugurated to promote economic growth and attract investors

By Staff Reporter

QUETTA: Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, on Wednesday inaugurated the province's first-ever Balochistan Investment and Trade Expo (BITE 2026), organised by the



Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBoIT), marking a significant step towards promoting investment, trade and industrial development in the province.

The expo, described as the first government-led event of its kind in Balochistan in 26 years, aims to showcase the province's economic potential and introduce domestic and international investors to a wide range of business and investment opportunities across various sectors.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, BBoIT Vice Chairman Bilal Khan Kakar welcomed investors, business leaders and distinguished guests, stating that BITE 2026 would serve as an important platform for connecting Balochistan's local products, industries, enterprises and startups with national markets.

He said the provincial government was undertaking a series of initiatives to encourage investment and economic activity, including the creation of employment and technical training opportunities for young people, support for the agriculture sector, expansion of digital services, promotion of e-commerce and the provision of one-window facilities through the Business Facilitation Centre.

Bilal Kakar emphasised that Balochistan possesses substantial economic potential and natural advantages, adding that greater efforts were needed to effectively utilise the opportunities available in the province.

Addressing the gathering, FPCCI Patron-in-Chief S.M. Tanveer termed the organisation of BITE 2026 a major development for investment promotion in Balochistan.

He noted that the province offered significant opportunities in agriculture, food production and industrial development.

Tanveer also offered the support of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) in providing technical and

vocational training to youth and appreciated the government's efforts to address the concerns of the business community.

Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Ahmad Gul Kakar congratulated the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade on successfully organising the expo and stressed the need to simplify procedures relating to licences, no-objection certificates (NOCs) and regulatory approvals to further facilitate investors.

He also highlighted the importance of maintaining law and order and improving security conditions on national highways to enhance investor confidence and support economic activities.

Meanwhile, BUITEMS Vice Chancellor Dr Khalid Hafeez described BITE 2026 as an important opportunity to strengthen collaboration between educational institutions, industry and the business community.

Referring to modern academic programmes in robotics, intelligent systems and data science, he underscored the need for stronger partnerships between universities and industry to support innovation, research and economic growth.

The expo features more than 100 companies, provincial government departments and federal regulatory institutions from across Pakistan, including Balochistan. Participants have established exhibition stalls showcasing investment opportunities, business ventures, innovative products and development projects spanning multiple sectors of the economy.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, former federal minister Saleem Mandviwalla, provincial ministers, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Information and Political Affairs Shahid Rind, prominent business and industrial leaders, the Consul General of Iran, and other senior government officials.

Observers view BITE 2026 as a significant initiative aimed at positioning Balochistan as an emerging destination for investment and commerce by bringing together government institutions,

industry stakeholders, entrepreneurs and investors under one platform to explore new avenues for economic cooperation and sustainable development.

Pakistan, Turkiye explore expanded defence cooperation in advanced military technologies

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Turkiye on Wednesday agreed to explore expanded defence cooperation in unmanned and autonomous systems, electronic warfare, advanced aerospace



technologies and indigenous research, development and production, as the two countries sought to deepen their strategic military partnership.

The understanding was reached during a meeting between Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu and Turkish Air Force Commander General Rafet Dalkiran at Air Headquarters in Islamabad, according to a statement issued by the Pakistan Air Force Directorate General of Public Relations (DGPR).

The meeting focused on translating the longstanding strategic partnership between the two countries into greater operational collaboration, technological cooperation and joint efforts to address emerging challenges in modern air warfare, the statement said.

The two air chiefs also underscored the need for institutionalised professional exchanges, integrated training programmes and joint exercises to improve interoperability between their respective air forces, it added.

During the meeting, ACM Sidhu highlighted that relations between Pakistan and Turkiye, rooted in shared history, common values and mutual trust, had evolved into a robust strategic partnership with considerable potential for expansion in the defence and aerospace sectors.

The PAF chief also briefed the visiting commander on the air force's ongoing transformation into a technologically advanced, multidomain force, driven by capability-based modernisation, indigenous innovation and investment in next-generation operational concepts, according to the DGPR.

He assured the Turkish counterpart of Pakistan's full support in pilot training, professional development and capacity-building initiatives for the Turkish Air Force.

General Dalkiran, meanwhile, acknowledged the PAF's professional standing, operational proficiency and combat experience.

Pakistan conducts successful launch of Fatah-3 supersonic cruise missile: ISPR

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Army on Wednesday successfully launched the Fatah-3 supersonic cruise missile, according to the military's media wing.

In a statement, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said, "The Pakistan Army successfully conducted the launch of the Fatah-3 supersonic cruise missile, marking another significant milestone in strengthening Pakistan's national defence capabilities.

"The weapon system is equipped with advanced navigation and propulsion systems and is capable of engaging targets at long range with high precision and lethality at supersonic speed," it said.

It added that the missile would "significantly enhance the operational flexibility and strike range



of the Pakistan Army's Rocket Force Command, further strengthening the country's overall conventional deterrence and defence posture".

According to the statement, the Army Rocket Force Command commander, senior officers from the armed forces, scientists and engineers witnessed the launch.

It added that President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, and the services chiefs congratulated the team on the successful launch. They appreciated the dedication and commitment of all personnel involved in achieving this significant milestone in Pakistan's defence development, the statement concluded.

Governor Balochistan announces new auditorium for SBK Women's University at 12th convocation

By Our Reporter

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has announced that funds will be allocated in the forthcoming provincial budget for the construction of a modern, fully equipped auditorium at Sardar Bahadur Khan (SBK) Women's University, enabling graduates and students to participate in convocations and other major university events on a larger scale.

Addressing the participants of the university's 12th Convocation, the governor said that through collective efforts and prudent planning, all public-sector universities in Balochistan had successfully overcome their financial challenges. He noted that institutions which were previously facing budget deficits are now operating with surplus budgets, while the overall ranking and performance of universities across the province have significantly improved.

Jaffar Mandokhail credited Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, provincial leaders, education stakeholders, and university vice chancellors for their contributions toward strengthening higher education in the province. He extended heartfelt congratulations to graduating students, their parents, faculty members, and university administrators on the successful completion of their



academic journey.

The convocation ceremony was attended by Provincial Education Minister Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani, provincial ministers Mir Shoaib Nosherwani, Mir Saleem Khosa, and Mir Asim Kurd Gello, Member of the National Assembly Akhtar Bibi, senior officials, judges, vice chancellors from various universities, educationists, researchers, and a large number of graduating students and their families.

The governor paid tribute to Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Rubina Mushtaq and her team for successfully organising the convocation. He described SBK Women's University as a leading institution in Balochistan's higher education landscape and highlighted its unique role as the province's only women's university.

He said the university is not only providing women with access to higher education

but is also equipping them with professional skills and leadership qualities needed to contribute effectively to society.

Speedy courts being established to ensure protection of children and women: Maryam Nawaz



By Maqsood Khalid

Lahore: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that effective measures are imperative to ensure the safety, dignity and better future of children. Speedy courts are being established to ensure the protection of children and women. A new law will also be introduced to ensure exemplary punishment for those involved in the exploitation of children and women.

In her message on the World Day for the Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence, the chief minister said protecting children from sexual exploitation, abuse and all forms of violence was a collective responsibility of society.

She said children's safety was being ensured through Safe City cameras and panic buttons across Punjab.

Abuse and violence against children were not merely crimes but also violations of human dignity. Those involved in crimes against children were enemies of society and must face strict legal action.

Maryam Nawaz said Virtual Child Safety Centres had been established across Punjab to provide protection to children. More than 100,000 missing and abducted children had been safely reunited with their families.



MANILA: Federal Minister for Law and Justice and Human Rights Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar adressing the 2nd Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violance Against Children in Manila.

Thar coal mining to shift from diesel to grid power, saving $30m annually



ISLAMABAD: Under the proactive, vigilant and visionary leadership of the Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, work formally begins on moving Thar coal mining from diesel to the national grid, which will save Pakistan around $25 million to $30 million in foreign exchange every year.

The contract has been awarded and completion has been brought forward to the first quarter of 2028 (by April 2028), well ahead of the original end-2028 target by roughly eight to nine months, said a press release.

The progress was reported today at a review meeting on the electrification of Thar Block I and Block II chaired by the Federal Minister, and attended by representatives from the Thar Coal and Energy Board (TCEB), Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC), Sino Sindh Resources Limited (SSRL), the Power Division, and Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO). Under the direction of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Power Division has moved from planning to execution of this project, which will connect mining operations in both blocks to the grid through 132kV transmission infrastructure from the Islamkot Grid Station and supply around 60 megawatts of electricity to the mining sites. Finishing earlier means the savings begin earlier.

The gains are direct and measurable. Daily diesel savings are projected at around Rs25 million. The cost of coal production—and consequently the coal tariff—is expected to fall by about $0.70 per ton, lowering the overall power purchase basket cost. Power for mining operations, which costs around 33 cents per kilowatt-hour when generated from diesel, will drop to 13 cents, a reduction of over 60 percent. Mining currently burns between 200,000 and 250,000 liters of diesel a day, including about 35,000 liters for dewatering alone. Much of that will now be replaced by cheaper electricity.

The reform also delivers a cleaner future. Carbon emissions are expected to fall by about 80,000 tons a year, and diesel-powered mining vehicles will be progressively converted to electric systems, supporting long-term decarbonization goals.

National women leadership conference concludes in Quetta with strong call for women's empowerment and leadership

By Our Reporter

QUETTA: The National Women Leadership Conference concluded successfully in Quetta, bringing together more than 300 women from Balochistan and across the country to discuss leadership, economic empowerment, education, entrepreneurship, and women's participation in decision-making processes.

Held at the BUITEMS, the conference served as a platform for dialogue, networking, and the exchange of experiences among women from diverse professional and academic backgrounds.

Participants reaffirmed their commitment to promoting women's leadership and creating greater opportunities for women to contribute to social and economic development.

Speaking on the occasion, Provincial Adviser for Sports Meena Majeed Baloch emphasized that women in

Balochistan possess immense leadership potential and must be provided with the opportunities and supportive environment necessary to thrive.

"Women's leadership is not merely a dream but a guarantee of a brighter future," she said, adding that equal access to education, employment, business opportunities, and participation in decision-making is essential for sustainable development.

She further stressed that enhancing women's self-confidence, economic independence, and leadership capabilities is vital for building stronger communities and achieving long-term progress.

According to her, the advancement of women is not only an individual achievement but also a pathway toward the development of families, society, and the nation as a whole.

The conference featured discussions on the challenges and opportunities facing women in leadership roles. Participants agreed that the daughters of Balochistan have the potential to excel and assume leadership positions at both national and international levels, provided they receive adequate support, mentorship, and opportunities.

A key session focused on women's economic empowerment, where speakers highlighted the importance of financial independence as the foundation of genuine freedom and empowerment.

JICA seeks stronger education ties with Pakistan



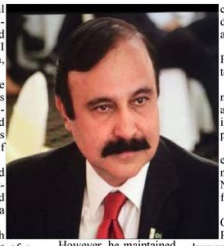
ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Headquarters is visiting Pakistan this week to strengthen education cooperation, with a special focus on improving access to quality education and addressing the challenge of out-of-school children.

The JICA delegation, led by Ms. KOMORI Akiko, Deputy Director General of the Human Development Department and Director of the Basic Education Group at JICA Headquarters, has sought a courtesy meeting with the Honourable Federal Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, during its visit from 18 to 20 November.

The proposed meeting aims to provide an opportunity for the JICA delegation to brief the Honourable Federal Minister on Japan's ongoing education cooperation in Pakistan, particularly in Sindh, and to exchange views on key education sector priorities, including out-of-school children, strengthening foundational learning, expanding girls' access to education, and enhancing support from development partners, including the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

Japan's Country Development Cooperation Policy for Pakistan places significant emphasis on human capital development, particularly through improving the quality of and access to education. In line with these priorities, JICA has maintained a longstanding partnership with the Government of Pakistan, supporting initiatives aimed at expanding flexible learning opportunities for out-of-school children, strengthening foundational learning, improving girls' access to schooling, and preventing student dropouts through enhanced classroom practices and improved school management.

PTI founder directed lawyers to adopt delaying tactics instead of arguing in £190m case: Dr. Tariq



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Wednesday said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder had instructed his legal team to adopt delaying tactics instead of arguing the case on merit.

Speaking to the media at Parliament House, the minister said the Islamabad High Court was hearing the case related to the PTI founder's conviction in the £190 million corruption case.

He said there were strong chances that the sentence awarded to the PTI founder would be upheld by the Islamabad High Court.

He added that the trial court had awarded the sentence after considering all the evidence.

Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said politics was being played over the PTI founder's health, adding

that excuses were being made at times over the unavailability of preferred food and at other times over the choice of doctors.

He also described as absurd the allegations that a snake had emerged from Bushra Bibi's

cell, saying such allegations were part of a false narrative aimed at influencing judicial proceedings.

The minister said the PTI founder's legal team had turned into a "drama team" and wanted to prolong the case.

However, he maintained that no matter how many delaying tactics were employed, the case would be decided on merit.

He said that even if politics were played over the PTI founder's health, the courts would continue proceedings in accordance with the law and merit.

Referring to the PTI founder's letter to the

chief justices, the minister said it was also an attempt to influence judicial proceedings.

He added that efforts were being made to secure an NRO for the PTI founder.

Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry urged the PTI founder's lawyers

to present solid legal arguments and debate the evidence and merits of the case before the court.

He said the tactics being employed to influence judicial proceedings would not succeed.

Love For Homeland: Dr. Hasnat Left A Lucrative UK Job To Serve Pakistan, Now Leading Jinnah Institute of Cardiology As Dean

By Maqsood Khalid



Lahore: The services of Dr. Hasnat, Dean of Jinnah Institute of Cardiology, are being highly praised in medical circles, as he left a luxurious and highly paid job in the United Kingdom out of love for his homeland to serve Pakistan.

Dr. Hasnat served in the United Kingdom for a long period, where he earned great respect for his expertise, honesty and professional skills in the field of cardiology.

According to sources, Dr. Hasnat had all facilities, respect and an excellent salary package in the UK, but his heart was filled with the passion to serve his own country and nation. This same passion brought him back to Pakistan.

After returning to Pakistan, Dr. Hasnat took charge as Dean at Jinnah Institute of Cardiology. Under his leadership, there has been a remarkable improvement in the treatment of heart patients, modern facilities and administrative affairs at the Institute.

According to hospital sources, Dr. Hasnat is a patient-friendly, soft-spoken and dutiful doctor. He personally listens to patients' problems and promotes teamwork among the staff. During his tenure, the systems of Emergency, OPD and heart operations at Jinnah Institute of Cardiology have been further improved. Providing free and quality treatment to poor and deserving patients has remained his top priority. Doctors, nurses and paramedical staff say that the return of Dr. Hasnat is no less than a blessing for Pakistan.

Pak Water and Environment Expo 2026 opens in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: The two-day Pak Water and Environment Expo 2026, featuring an exhibition and conference, kicked off here on Wednesday, bringing together industry professionals, manufacturers, suppliers and technology experts to showcase innovative solutions for water treatment, wastewater management, recycling and renewable energy.

Director General Water, Capital Development Authority (CDA), Sardar Khan Zimri, inaugurated the event by cutting a ribbon and visited stalls set up by leading water treatment companies.

The expo aims to promote modern technologies and sustainable solutions to address challenges facing Pakistan's water and environment sectors.

The conference, held alongside the exhibition, featured the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) as its knowledge partner.

Addressing the conference, Prof. Dr. Imran Hashmi of the Institute of Environmental Sciences and Engineering (IESE), School of Civil and Environmental Engineering (SCEE), NUST, highlighted the importance of smart water quality monitoring and public health risk assessment, emphasizing opportunities for research, technology development and industrial collaboration to improve water safety.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Arshad, Associate Dean, IESE, NUST, discussed the impact of rapid urbanization on water quality, particularly emerging contaminants and their implications for environmental sustainability.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Faheem Khokhar, Head of the Department of Environmental Sciences, IESE, NUST, highlighted the growing challenges of smoke, describing it as the country's "fifth season," and stressed the need to address its environmental and public health impacts.

Prof. Dr. Sher Jamal Khan highlighted the potential of Moving Bed Biofilm Reactor.

Ayaz calls for stronger Pakistan-US trade, economic ties



ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Wednesday emphasized the need to further strengthen trade and economic relations between Pakistan and the United States, stressing enhanced engagement between the business communities of the two countries to promote bilateral trade and investment.

He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of the American Business Council at Parliament House.

Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kiani was also present.

Welcoming the delegation, the Speaker appreciated the business community's role in strengthening Pakistan-US economic relations and said Pakistan offered vast opportunities for trade and investment across various sectors.

He underscored the importance of exploring these opportunities through stronger business-to-business engagement, institutional linkages and expanded commercial partnerships between the two countries.

Ayaz Sadiq also briefed the delegation on Pakistan's parliamentary system and legislative procedures, highlighting Parliament's role in facilitating economic and commercial activities.

He said creating a conducive environment for trade and investment was among the government's key priorities, adding that investor-friendly policies had been introduced to facilitate the business community and encourage both domestic and foreign investment.

Emphasizing the need for sustained engagement and mutual cooperation, the Speaker called for strengthening institutional and business-to-business linkages to unlock the full potential of bilateral economic relations. Reaffirming Parliament's commitment to supporting the business sector, he assured the delegation of all possible cooperation through legislation to address business-related concerns and safeguard the interests of the business community. He said Parliament would continue to play an effective role in promoting economic and commercial activities, while parliamentary cooperation and sustained dialogue remained essential to further consolidating Pakistan-US relations.

Effective measures, concrete planning indispensable to protect children from violence: Azam Nazeer Tarar

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Human Rights, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, has reaffirmed Pakistan's global commitment to ending violence against children, emphasizing that effective measures and concrete action planning are indispensable to protecting every child in every setting.

Addressing the 2nd Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children in Manila, Philippines, on Wednesday, the Federal Minister stated that the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the protection of the family, mother, and child, and provides free and compulsory education to every child aged five to sixteen. He noted that Pakistan is advancing the pledge made at the Bogota Conference—to keep children safe from all forms of violence—with tangible practical measures and a clear roadmap in Manila today.

Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar informed the conference participants that last month, Pakistan launched its first-ever National Strategy to End Violence Against Children (2026–2031), alongside the formulation of the Islamabad Capital Territory Child Protection Policy. He clarified that a comprehensive action plan, annual work plans, and clear responsibilities for federal ministries, provinces, and territories are being established to ensure effective implementation of this strategy.

Highlighting the expansion of the country's child protection system, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar stated that Pakistan had 42 Child Protection Units at the time of the first global conference, which have now been expanded to 81 districts. He said the government aims to extend effective child protection mechanisms to 100 districts by 2030. This system will adopt an integrated, multi-sectoral approach to address all forms of exploitation, including technology-facilitated violence, while further strengthening improved data and accountability frameworks.

The Federal Minister stressed the importance of positive parenting training, nonviolent discipline, and reforming social and gender norms that perpetuate violence against children. In this

regard, Pakistan has developed a training manual titled "Art of Parenting," under which Master Trainers across the country are working closely with families and educational institutions.

Referring to legal reforms, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar noted that over the past two years, new legislation has been enacted in Islamabad, Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan to set the minimum age of marriage at 18 years.



QUETTA: NP memeber MIr Abdul Kareem Khetraan adressing a press conference.

Govt. developing national policy to transform marble, granite industry: Haroon

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister for Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan on Wednesday said that the government is developing a comprehensive Marble Policy 2026–29 to modernize marble and granite industry, improve mining and processing standards, promote value addition and boost exports.

He spoke at a meeting with representatives of the Marble Association and discussed developing Pakistan's marble and granite industry and formulating a comprehensive national model policy to make the sector globally competitive, a news release said.

The meeting was attended by the coordinator to the prime minister for industries and production and commerce Rana Ihsan Afzaal ,the Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Stone Development Company (PASDEC), Chief Executive Officer of the National Productivity Organization (NPO), Additional Secretary Industries and representatives of the marble industry.

Haroon said that the proposed policy would focus on modernising the industry through advanced technology, efficient mining practices and value addition. It would cover the entire value chain, from quarrying and extraction to processing, finishing, polishing and exports.

The adviser said that Pakistan possessed enormous potential in marble and natural stone resources, offering significant opportunities for investment, industrial development and export growth. However, he stressed that realising this potential required a shift towards scientific mining practices, modern processing technologies and internationally competitive production standards.

"Our priority is to prevent the wastage of valuable raw materials, introduce modern mining techniques and improve the overall quality and productivity of the industry," he said.

The adviser highlighted the need to equip the marble industry with modern machinery, skilled manpower, quality testing laboratories and effective certification facilities.



He said that sustainable access to raw materials, scientific quarrying methods and advanced processing technologies would be essential for strengthening the sector and improving the quality of Pakistani marble and granite in international markets.

He further stated that the proposed policy would also address the infrastructure and logistics requirements of the industry, including road and rail connectivity, port facilities and other transportation arrangements necessary to facilitate the movement of raw materials and finished products.

Highlighting the importance of international engagement, the adviser said that Pakistan needed to strengthen its links with international buyers, investors and technology providers to expand market access for its marble and granite products.

He observed that the upcoming visit of Italian experts to Pakistan would provide an important opportunity to assess the industry's potential, technological requirements and investment prospects.

He said that the visiting Italian experts would be facilitated in visiting mining and processing centres to gain first-hand insight into the industry's existing capabilities, challenges and areas requiring technological improvement.

The adviser urged all stakeholders of the marble industry to present their recommendations through a coordinated and unified approach.

He assured the participants that every viable proposal from the industry would be considered for inclusion in the policy or taken up for further consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

Haroon also stressed the importance of supporting small and medium-sized enterprises operating in the marble and granite sector by improving their access to financing, modern machinery and advanced technologies.

He encouraged industry representatives to benefit from available government facilities.-APP

Govt. 's reforms deliver largest LPG shipment as SLL receives cargo of 15,000 metric tons

ISLAMABAD: The Government's deregulation efforts in the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) sector have started delivering results, with SSGC LPG Limited (SLL) importing a record 15,000 metric tons LPG cargo, the largest of its kind which berthed at Engro Vopak Terminal Limited (EVTL).

The shipment marks the first major import under the new LPG guidelines aimed at ensuring the availability of LPG at affordable rates for the public.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif and Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik, the government has transformed the LPG pricing regime to enable state-owned enterprises to play a leading role in securing LPG supplies. Previously, formal sector companies had exited imports due to regulatory constraints that prevented them from recovering procurement costs.

Government has directed state-owned companies to lead LPG imports and strengthen the country's supply chain especially in winter.

The increased influx of LPG is expected to further improve market availability, ease supply constraints and help bring prices down through greater product availability. It will also enhance supplies to hilly, remote and far-flung areas, particularly during the peak winter season.

A welcome ceremony was held at Port Qasim to mark the arrival of the shipment, with Special Secretary Petroleum Mirza Nasir ud Din Mashood as the chief guest, Managing Director SLL, Jawad Ali Khan, Senior Executive Director (LPG) OGRA Sarmad Aslam, and other senior officials were present at the occasion.

Speaking at the ceremony, Special Secretary Petroleum Mirza Nasir ud Din Mashood said that the Prime Minister and Federal Minister for Petroleum had directed to take effective measures to ensure LPG availability to the public. He said the arrival of the record shipment marked a new era for the LPG sector and would further strengthen the country's supply chain. He congratulated MD SLL on this achievement.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) EVTL, Syed Ammar Shah said that Government's policy initiatives have opened the sector for new investors and it was a step in the right direction. Senior ED OGRA Sarmad Aslam said that Government's efforts were bearing fruit and will help transform the sector.

The landmark import is expected to be followed by more shipments.-APP

MCCI prioritises Expo Centre, agro-food processing zone for South Punjab's industrial growth

MULTAN: Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) President Dr Muhammad Shafiq Khan Pitafi on Tuesday announced an ambitious development agenda for South Punjab, prioritising the establishment of an Expo Centre, Agro-Food Processing Special Economic Zone to transform the region's agricultural potential into industrial growth, investment and employment opportunities.

Addressing a Meet the Press programme at the MCCI, he said South Punjab could not achieve sustainable economic progress by relying solely on agricultural production. Instead, value addition of agricultural commodities, food processing and export promotion were essential to establishing new industries and strengthening the regional economy.

He said the promotion of small-scale industries, cottage industries and SMEs could generate extensive employment opportunities, particularly for young people, while the chamber was committed to resolving the business community's problems and creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship.

MCCI Senior Vice President Azhar Mumtaz Tipu, Vice President Sheikh Abdul Wahab, Media Committee Convener Hafiz Umair Saeed, member Sheikh Tahir Amjad, Media Adviser Jamshed Rizwani, Secretary General Muhammad Shafiq and PRO Soveira Khalid were also present. Commerce reporters and representatives of different newspapers and television channels attended the programme.

Dr Pitafi said the chamber's primary responsibility was to facilitate the business community and effectively communicate its concerns to government quarters. Running a business was a respectable means of earning a livelihood and creating employment for others.

He said the chamber wanted to restore dignity to entrepreneurship and ensure that the business community received its due recognition in society. The growth of small businesses would ultimately contribute to the development of cities and the country, making the promotion of SMEs, small industries and young entrepreneurs a key priority.

Highlighting the chamber's initial performance, he said several initiatives had been undertaken under its first 100-day plan, exceeding even the original expectations. The membership process had been simplified, while the chamber's office was being transformed into an accessible public office for members, eliminating the need for special permission or recommendations to visit their own institution.

Emphasising the need for industry-academia collaboration, he said universities would be encouraged to align their education and research programmes with the practical requirements of industries. Stronger linkages between academia and the business sector were essential to producing skilled human resources and supporting industrial growth.

He described the proposed Agro-Food Processing Zone as a key initiative for converting agricultural produce into value-added exportable products. The project would strengthen local industries while creating new opportunities for farmers, investors and young entrepreneurs.

Similarly, the establishment of an Expo Centre would provide a platform to showcase South Punjab's products at national and international levels, while the Special Economic Zone would attract fresh investment and accelerate industrial activities.

Acknowledging the challenges involved in executing these projects, he said the chamber was making concerted efforts to turn these development priorities into reality.

The MCCI president said young entrepreneurs would not be allowed to abandon viable business ideas merely because of a lack of financial resources. The chamber would invite young people to present their business proposals and connect them with potential investors to help translate promising ideas into practical ventures.

He said women's participation was equally essential for sustainable economic development. In collaboration with the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the MCCI was taking initiatives to encourage women and young girls to participate in business and entrepreneurial activities.

He recalled that the South Punjab Business Forum, organised within the first 50 days following the chamber's election, was an important step towards bringing the regional business community onto a common platform.

Dr Patafi also expressed concern over the inadequate representation of South Punjab's business community at federal and provincial levels. He said consultations and contacts were underway to secure due representation, including the presidency of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), for South Punjab.

He said the chamber would strive to unite all chambers of the region when Punjab's turn came in the federation's leadership process. The objective was to end the perception that business representation in Punjab remained confined to Lahore and Gujranwala and to highlight South Punjab's significance as a major agricultural, commercial .

Aurangzeb highlights reforms to double SME financing to Rs2tr by 2028

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday highlighted Pakistan's reforms to expand financing for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), targeting an increase in lending to Rs two trillion by June 2028, while promoting digital financial inclusion, private investment and technology-driven financing solutions.



Addressing the Ministerial Dialogue on SME Growth, Jobs and Competitiveness at the Global SME Finance Forum 2026 in Singapore, held during the ongoing Singapore Fintech Festival, the minister underscored the vital role SMEs played in Pakistan's economy, accounting for 90% of businesses, 40% of GDP, around 20% of exports and approximately 78% of non-farm employment.

He observed that the sector's contribution could be significantly greater with improved access to finance and a more enabling business environment, said a press release issued by finance ministry here.

Highlighting the government's financing ambitions, he outlined the target of increasing SME financing to Rs two trillion by June 2028, almost double the current level.

He emphasised the need to move beyond conventional, collateral-based lending towards technology-enabled, data-driven and inclusive financing solutions, supported by stronger participation from banks, fintech companies, development finance institutions and private investors.

Aurangzeb highlighted the SME Connect Portal, launched by the State Bank of Pakistan on November 1st, as an important step towards facilitating SME registration, improving access to financing, enabling application tracking and enhancing transparency in banks' responses and processing times.

He stressed the importance of accessible working capital and long-term financing to strengthen the productive capacity of SMEs and help them compete in international markets.

He also emphasised the role of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) in building the capacity of businesses to better understand and manage their balance sheets and disclosures, enabling them to become more financially prepared and attractive to lenders and investors.

Emphasising the role of technology, the Minister identified fintech solutions, digital payments, alternative credit assessment and digital lending as important tools for widening access to finance, particularly for businesses that lack conventional collateral. He also called for greater use of risk-sharing mechanisms to facilitate lending to SMEs.

He also highlighted the potential for engagement with Singapore's financial technology ecosystem, including through the Global Finance and Technology Network (GFTN).

The Minister called for greater mobilisation of private capital and stronger partnerships with development finance institutions, international financial institutions and investors through credit guarantees, risk-sharing arrangements, blended finance and technology transfer.

Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to developing an inclusive, competitive, digitally enabled and export-oriented SME ecosystem, the Minister emphasised that international partnerships, innovation and private-sector investment would be essential to unlocking the sector's full potential.

The Minister also visited the Singapore FinTech Festival, where he inaugurated Ignite's Pakistan Pavilion and interacted with

Pakistani companies including Tax Nerd Pakistan, Ping Up, Bagh-e, Fintanixor Technologies, and Lendverse / Tawha Technologies. Representatives of the participating companies briefed him on their respective products, services and innovative fintech solutions.

The Minister also visited the pavilion of Ant International, where he was briefed on the company's services and solutions.

Commerce Minister, HBL CEO discuss SME financing, regulatory reforms,global trade expansion



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a meeting with a delegation led by Muhammad Nassir Salim, President and CEO of Habib Bank Limited (HBL), to discuss SME financing, digital banking, export facilitation and expansion of Pakistan's trade in key international markets.

Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan emphasized the need to bring Pakistan's largely informal SME sector into the documented economy to improve access to institutional financing, enhance product quality and strengthen export competitiveness, said a release issued here on Wednesday.

He stressed that compliance with international standards, quality assurance and traceability were increasingly important

for Pakistani businesses competing in global markets.

The Minister also highlighted the Government's efforts to simplify business regulations, remove overlapping

licensing requirements and reduce unnecessary administrative hurdles to encourage investment and industrial growth.

The HBL delegation shared its perspectives on SME financing, digital financial services and the challenges faced by banks in financing undocumented businesses.

Both sides discussed measures to strengthen financial inclusion and promote digital transactions and greater economic formalization.

The Minister highlighted emerging trade and investment opportunities across Africa,

Southeast Asia and the Middle East, and noted that the Ministry of Commerce was developing country-specific and sector-wise strategies to diversify Pakistan's exports and identify new markets.

He underscored the importance of banking-sector support in providing trade finance, facilitating international transactions and enabling Pakistani exporters to enter and expand in overseas markets.

It was also agreed that the Ministry of Commerce would support HBL in strengthening trade-related banking and financing linkages with Pakistan's key trading partners, including Bangladesh, China, the Maldives and Sri Lanka. Such collaboration would help facilitate trade transactions, improve access to banking channels and support greater bilateral trade with these markets.

Both sides also discussed the Prime Minister's focus on SME development, agriculture and housing, and the role of financial institutions in supporting these priority sectors.

The meeting concluded with an understanding to strengthen coordination between the

Ministry of Commerce and HBL to facilitate trade, investment,

SME development and Pakistan's commercial engagement with key international markets.

Pakistan's freelancer export earnings hit record $210 mln in October

ISLAMABAD: (APP): Advisor to the Finance Minister, Khurram Schehzad on Wednesday said Pakistan's freelancers' export earnings had reached an all-time monthly high of US$ 210 million in October, registering a 53 per cent increase year-on-year.

In a post on his official handle on X, Schehzad shared that freelancers' export earnings during July-October of the ongoing fiscal year 2026-27 (FY27) had surged to US$ 760 million, compared with US$ 515 million in the corresponding period last year, reflecting a growth of 47 per cent.

He said freelancers had also recorded historic annual export earnings of US$ 1.76 billion in FY26, highlighting the growing contribution of Pakistan's digital workforce to the country's services exports.

According to the figures shared by the advisor, if the current growth momentum continues, freelancers' annual export earnings could surpass US$ two billion in FY27.

Schehzad said Pakistan's freelancers were emerging as an important contributor to services exports, helping expand the country's digital presence in international markets, strengthen foreign exchange inflows and create new economic opportunities for the youth.

Schehzad highlights economic stability, calls for private-sector-led growth

LAHORE: Advisor to the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Khurram Schehzad on Tuesday highlighted Pakistan's improving macroeconomic stability and investment climate, stressing the need for sustained reforms and private-sector participation to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Addressing the 6th Future of Retail Conference as guest of honour, he said Pakistan had made significant progress in restoring macroeconomic stability through fiscal consolidation, expenditure discipline, improved external-sector resilience and structural reforms.

He highlighted the reduction in the fiscal deficit, efforts to broaden the tax base and strengthen revenue mobilisation, and the rebuilding of foreign exchange reserves from critically low levels witnessed during FY2022-23.

Despite global challenges, including geopolitical tensions, commodity price volatility and external economic uncertainties, Pakistan had demonstrated resilience, with stronger macroeconomic fundamentals providing a stable foundation for economic recovery and growth, he added.

Schehzad said maintaining macroeconomic stability and pursuing policy reforms were essential to strengthening investor confidence, attracting domestic and foreign investment and generating sustainable economic growth.

"Over time, these improvements would help create an enabling environment for stronger business activity, employment generation, improved household purchasing power and increased consumer demand," he said.

Highlighting the retail sector's role, he said it was no longer merely a point of sale but a vital economic link connecting farms, factories, financial institutions and households.

A vibrant and competitive retail sector contributed to stronger supply chains, business expansion, employment generation and wider economic activity, he added.

He also reaffirmed the government's commitment to facilitating small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), recognising their role in entrepreneurship, employment generation and economic growth.

In this regard, he said Rs300 billion had been earmarked exclusively for SME exporters under the Export Finance Scheme through the Prime Minister's Access to Finance Initiative to meet their working capital requirements and enhance export competitiveness.

He stressed the importance of improving access to finance, promoting business formalisation and creating an enabling environment for smaller enterprises to expand and participate more effectively in the formal economy.

Schehzad said the government's economic agenda remained focused on consolidating macroeconomic stability, accelerating structural reforms, improving the investment climate and enabling the private sector to lead economic expansion.

He said the next phase of economic progress must translate stability into greater investment, stronger businesses, employment opportunities and tangible improvements in people's economic well-being.

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BITE 2026: Turning Balochistan's Economic Potential into Lasting Opportunity

Balochistan's economic future depends not merely on the resources it possesses, but on its ability to create an environment in which investment can translate into industrial growth, employment and improved livelihoods. The Balochistan Investment and Trade Expo (BITE) 2026 is a welcome initiative in this direction. Organised by the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade after a gap of 21 years in government-led investment and trade exhibitions, the event offers an opportunity to rethink the province's economic priorities and strengthen its engagement with the business community.

The participation of more than 100 companies, provincial departments and federal regulatory institutions reflects the importance of providing investors and entrepreneurs with a shared platform. However, the real measure of BITE's success will not be the number of stalls or the scale of the inaugural ceremony. It will be determined by the investment commitments secured, businesses facilitated, industries established and jobs created in the months and years ahead.

Balochistan occupies approximately 47 per cent of Pakistan's land area and has considerable economic potential. Yet, persistent gaps in infrastructure, industrialisation, connectivity and administrative capacity have constrained its development. These challenges require practical and sustained responses. Better highways, efficient trade corridors, reliable utilities and improved access to markets are essential if the province is to become a competitive destination for domestic and international investors.

Security is equally important. No investor can make a long-term commitment without confidence in the safety of commercial activity, personnel and infrastructure. The provincial government's assurance of enhanced security for industrial areas, particularly Bostan, Hub and Bela, must therefore be supported by effective coordination, institutional preparedness and consistent implementation.

Equally urgent is the need to remove bureaucratic barriers. Unnecessary procedures, delays and fragmented decision-making discourage entrepreneurship and increase the cost of doing business. Strengthening one-window operations, introducing technology-based facilitation and ensuring transparent administrative processes can help build investor confidence. These reforms must be practical, accessible and supported by accountable institutions.

Perhaps the most important dimension of BITE 2026 is its emphasis on young people. Economic development cannot be sustainable if local communities remain disconnected from the opportunities it generates. Universities must strengthen research, information technology, artificial intelligence and skills-based education, while aligning academic programmes with the needs of emerging industries. Private businesses, in turn, should become active partners in providing internships, vocational training and employment to local graduates.

The federal initiative to provide more than 25,000 employment opportunities to Balochistan's youth is encouraging. A transparent and merit-based allocation process, alongside efforts to extend opportunities to border districts such as Chaman, Qila Abdullah and Killa Saifullah, could help address economic vulnerabilities and support a transition towards more sustainable livelihoods. BITE 2026 should therefore be viewed as the beginning of a sustained economic engagement, not a one-time exhibition. Its outcomes require regular monitoring, follow-up with investors and measurable progress in facilitating businesses. Balochistan does not lack potential; what it needs is consistent policy, effective governance and stronger public-private partnerships.

The province's economic promise will become meaningful only when investment creates opportunities for its people. That must remain the ultimate benchmark of BITE 2026.

By Rukhshanda Saba

Balochistan's Investment Drive: BITE 2026 Opens New Avenues for Economic Growth and Youth Empowerment

Balochistan is seeking to reposition itself as an emerging destination for investment, trade and industrial development, with the provincial government emphasising investor confidence, improved security, administrative reforms and youth empowerment as key pillars of its economic strategy. The first Balochistan Investment and Trade Expo (BITE) 2026, organised by the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBoIT), marks an important step in this direction, bringing together businesses, investors, government institutions and academic stakeholders on a common platform after a gap of 21 years in government-led investment and trade exhibitions.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, while inaugurating the expo in Quetta on Wednesday alongside former federal minister and senator Saleem Mandviwalla, reaffirmed that sustainable economic growth requires stronger partnerships between the government, private sector and educational institutions. He said the government's objective was not merely to attract investment but also to create an economic environment in which local businesses could expand, industries could flourish and young people could find meaningful employment.

More than 100 companies, provincial departments and federal regulatory institutions from across Pakistan have established stalls at the exhibition, showcasing products, industrial activities and investment opportunities. The event has also attracted students and members of the public, providing them with an opportunity to explore the province's economic potential. Senior government officials, business leaders and representatives of chambers of commerce attended the inaugural ceremony, including Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, BBoIT Vice Chairman Bilal Khan Kakar, FPCCI Patron-in-Chief S.M. Tanveer, businessman Mian Zahid Hussain and PPP Balochistan President Sardar Umar Gorgage.

Addressing the gathering, Bugti acknowledged that Balochistan, despite covering approximately 47 per cent of Pakistan's land area, continues to face substantial challenges in infrastructure, industrialisation and business facilitation. He maintained that recognising these realities was essential for developing practical solutions rather than relying on unrealistic claims. The provincial government, he said, was working with the federal government to improve highways, trade corridors and security arrangements, which are fundamental to attracting long-term investment.

Security remains an important consideration for investors. The Chief Minister assured the business community that the provincial government, law enforcement agencies and Pakistan's security institutions were committed to protecting commercial activities and investment. Industrial zones in Bostan, Hub and Bela, he said, would receive particular attention in providing a secure and supportive business environment.

Equally significant is the government's focus on removing bureaucratic obstacles. Bugti identified red tape and unnecessary administrative procedures as major barriers to investment, stressing that entrepreneurs should not have to navigate multiple government offices to establish businesses. The provincial government is therefore strengthening one-window operations and introducing technology-based facilitation systems to make investment procedures more accessible, transparent and efficient.

The Chief Minister also placed considerable emphasis on bridging the gap between the state and the youth.

He urged universities to move beyond conventional teaching methods and prioritise research, skills development, information technology, modern technologies and artificial intelligence-based programmes. Academic curricula, he said, must reflect industry requirements so that graduates possess practical skills and can participate effectively in the modern economy.

He also called upon private industries to provide local graduates with employment, internships and vocational training opportunities. Acknowledging that the government alone cannot employ every young person, he stressed that its responsibility was to create an enabling environment for private enterprise, entrepreneurship and job creation.

Referring to the federal government's initiative to provide more than 25,000 employment opportunities to Balochistan's youth, Bugti said a structured mechanism had been developed for their allocation. He also indicated that discussions would be pursued to extend further opportunities to border districts, particularly Chaman, Qila Abdullah and Killa Saifullah, where livelihoods have historically depended on cross-border trade and informal economic activities. Promoting legal trade while creating alternative employment opportunities, he observed, was essential for improving local economic conditions.

BITE 2026 therefore represents more than a commercial exhibition.

It provides an opportunity to connect investors with local businesses, strengthen institutional partnerships and introduce

Balochistan's economic potential to a wider national and international audience. Its lasting success, however, will depend on effective follow-up, consistent policy implementation and the ability to translate investment interest into actual industrial activity.

For Balochistan, the challenge is to turn its economic potential into tangible opportunities for its people.

By bringing government, business and academia together, the province is seeking to build an investment-oriented economy in which industrial growth,

private enterprise and youth empowerment become mutually reinforcing drivers of sustainable development.

By Advocate Munir Ahmed Kakar

Strengthening the Legal Community: Balochistan Government Introduces Four Key Welfare Measures for Lawyers

The strength of any democratic society lies in the supremacy of law, an independent legal profession and an accessible justice system. Lawyers are central to this framework, serving not only as advocates for individual rights but also as guardians of constitutional values, institutional accountability and the rule of law. Recognising their vital contribution, the Government of Balochistan has taken an important step towards improving the professional welfare, financial security and protection of the legal fraternity through four significant government notifications.

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti recently met representatives of the Pakistan Bar Council and Balochistan Bar Council, including Advocate Munir Ahmed Kakar, Advocate Nadir Ali Chalgari and other members of the legal community. During the meeting, the Chief Minister formally handed over four notifications issued by different provincial departments, reflecting the government's commitment to addressing long-standing welfare concerns of lawyers.

These measures cover four important areas: legal advisory support, healthcare facilities, protection and compensation in cases of terrorism-related fatalities, and access to financial and banking services.

Under the notification issued by the Law Department, arrangements have been made to facilitate legal advisory support for members of the legal profession.

This initiative recognises that lawyers themselves also require institutional support to effectively perform their professional responsibilities and contribute to the administration of justice.

The Health Department's notification provides lawyers with medical facilities equivalent to those available to government employees in Grade 18. Access to healthcare is an essential component of professional welfare, particularly for members of the legal community who often work under considerable professional pressure and demanding circumstances. Extending this facility represents an important recognition of their contribution to society.

Perhaps one of the most significant measures concerns the safety and protection of lawyers. Under the Home Department's notification, lawyers who lose their lives in terrorism-related incidents or targeted attacks while performing their professional duties will be declared martyrs and extended the benefits available under the applicable government martyr compensation framework. This measure acknowledges the risks faced by members of the legal fraternity and the importance of protecting those who continue to serve the cause of justice despite challenging circumstances.

The fourth notification, issued by the Finance Department, addresses financial inclusion. It aims to facilitate lawyers' access to banking services, including loans, credit cards and other financial facilities offered by financial institutions. Access to such services is an important aspect of economic stability and professional independence, enabling lawyers to meet their financial needs through recognised banking channels.

These four initiatives collectively represent a broader approach to strengthening the legal profession in Balochistan. Their significance extends beyond individual benefits. A professionally secure, financially supported and adequately protected legal community is better positioned to uphold constitutional guarantees, defend citizens' rights and contribute to an effective justice system.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti's engagement with representatives of the bar councils also reflects the importance of institutional dialogue between the government and the legal fraternity. Meaningful consultation with professional bodies is essential for identifying genuine challenges and developing practical solutions.

The next important step will be the effective implementation of these notifications, ensuring that the announced facilities translate into tangible benefits for lawyers across Balochistan, including those practising in remote districts.

Ultimately, strengthening the welfare of lawyers is an investment in the justice system itself. By recognising their professional contribution and addressing their welfare needs, Balochistan is taking a constructive step towards reinforcing the institutions that sustain the rule of law, protect fundamental rights and strengthen public confidence in the justice system.

Dar-e-Nijaat: A look into the psychology of a generation



We call young people, particularly Gen-Z, entitled, smart yet distracted, morally loose and permanently online. We rarely call them what they might actually be: a generation facing existential crises and navigating psychosocial challenges earlier than previous generations, often during their childhoods and early adolescence, with less guidance than their predecessors.

At the same time, they reach traditional adult milestones (such as driving, marrying and financial independence) much later, all of which lead to a unique maturity paradox.

In traditional developmental psychology, like Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, identity formation versus role confusion peaks in late adolescence. However, Gen-Z had to build a public-facing identity much earlier due to social media algorithm demands. Further substantiating this is social psychologist Jonathan Haidt who, in his book The Anxious Generation, argues that the shift from a play-based to a phone-based childhood has made young people more psychologically vulnerable. Dar-i-Nijaat, another compelling creation by writer Umera Ahmed and directed by Saqib Khan, offers an interesting psychological portrait of this generation.

Through four young people — Zaryab (Durefishan Saleem), Zamil (Nameer Khan), Abu Bakar (Sheheryar Munawar, who may be a few years older than the others and closer to the Millennial-Gen-Z cusp) and Hamna (Romaisa Khan) — the drama explores the collision of love, desire, duty, faith, identity and the search for belonging and meaning.

A mental health professional examines the four young characters of Dar-i-Nijaat through a psychological lens, exploring their emotional struggles and their causes, family histories, attachment patterns and search for identity, belonging and meaning

Dar-i-Nijaat is more than a tale of morality among young people making mistakes. It is a story about the emotional histories of four young people that lead to their choices, the relationships that shape them, and the possibility of finding a way forward.

Here is a closer look at each character and the psychological stresses they are undergoing.

ZARYAB: ENTITLED ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT IN FREEFALL

Zaryab is the middle child of liberal, high-society, status-conscious parents.

Florence Pugh speaks out after Governors Awards appearance sparks concern over her changing look



Florence Pugh has responded to online speculation about her appearance following her appearance at the 2026 Governors Awards, telling critics that ageing and cosmetic surgery should not be confused.

The 30-year-old actress attracted attention after stepping onto the red carpet in a custom light pink Valentino gown featuring a bejewelled bodice and ruffled skirt. She completed the look with silver heels, a diamond necklace and long, wavy blonde hair.

Photographs from the event sparked mixed reactions on social media, with some users questioning whether Pugh had undergone cosmetic enhancements. However, the actress has now addressed the discussion directly in a comment beneath an Instagram video scrutinising her appearance.

"Guys. I turned 30. I'm a woman. Body's and faces change. It's not that deep, the fact that people can't even tell between what's aging and what's surgery is disturbing. Sadly puppy fluff doesn't last forever," Pugh wrote.

Her response comes amid wider conversations about the scrutiny women in the entertainment industry face over their appearance and ageing.

In a 2026 interview with Elle, Pugh previously discussed the pressure placed on actresses, saying, "You can never get any footing right."

The actress has had a busy year, appearing in Netflix's East of Eden and Spider-Man: Brand New Day. She is also set to appear in Dune 3 and Avengers: Doomsday, both scheduled for release on December 18.

Aiman Khan, Muneeb Butt honoured at British Parliament



Actors Aiman Khan and Muneeb Butt received special recognition at the British Parliament in London for their contributions to drama, entertainment and the promotion of Pakistani culture internationally.

Both Aiman and Butt also shared videos from the event, including clips of their speeches, expressing gratitude for the honour and the affection they received from the Pakistani community in the United Kingdom.

Addressing the gathering, Aiman thanked those who attended the event and said she felt blessed to have received the recognition. "I am really happy and feeling blessed that we are here and have received this award. Just like people love us in Pakistan, we have gotten that same love in the UK," she said.

The actor also credited her husband for the achievement saying, "Thank you Muneeb, we have won this award because of you. We are a power couple!"

Butt also expressed gratitude for the support and affection the couple received. "I have no words to express how blessed and happy I am for the love you all have given us," he said.

The actor also shared an interesting reflection following his visit to the British

Parliament, revealing that the experience had sparked in him a growing interest in politics.

Sharing his interaction with a member of parliament, Butt stated, "We also visited the parliament today and I was sharing my thoughts with the honourable MP. I have also been getting more interested in politics."

The couple's recognition highlighted the reach of Pakistani entertainment beyond the country's borders, with their work in television contributing to the growing international visibility of Pakistani drama and its artists.

South Korean Government to survey underage K-pop singers' rights following NewJeans contract controversy

The South Korean government plans to conduct its first comprehensive survey of underage entertainers in 2027 and review its standard contracts, following renewed concerns over young K-pop singers' rights sparked by a US news outlet's recent report on girl group NewJeans' exclusive contracts.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism said Monday that it takes the concerns



seriously and plans to examine whether existing regulations adequately protect underage performers' rights to education, rest and sleep.

The survey will seek to establish how many underage artists are represented by entertainment agencies, their ages and whether their basic rights are being respected. The ministry has yet to finalise the scope and methodology.

"We plan to conduct a separate survey to properly assess the current situation and continue expanding psychological counselling and legal advisory services," Kim Yu-mi, director of the ministry's Popular Culture Industry Division, said.

"We will also review whether improvements to the standard contracts are necessary," she added.

The move follows a Nov. 5 investigation by The New York Times into exclusive contracts signed in 2022 between NewJeans and its agency Ador, a subsidiary of K-pop powerhouse Hybe. All five members were minors, aged between 14 and 17, when they signed the agreements.

The report raised concerns about provisions requiring members to bear a substantial portion of expenses incurred during their trainee years, including cosmetic surgery and dermatological treatments. It also questioned clauses allowing the agency to continue using their names, likenesses and voices after their contracts ended, including for AI-generated content.

Other provisions drew scrutiny for broadly restricting the members' personal conduct, including their attitudes toward work, romantic relationships and personal management. The report also questioned the formula used to calculate financial penalties for early contract termination, which could potentially result in higher payments than those calculated under the government's standard contract.

Hybe and Ador disputed the concerns, maintaining that the contracts were lawfully negotiated with the involvement of the members, their parents and legal representatives.

"Furthermore, the exclusive contracts themselves contain provisions protecting fundamental rights, encompassing the protections guaranteed under the government-standard supplementary agreement for minors," the companies said in a joint statement.

The controversy has brought renewed attention to Korea's standard exclusive contracts for entertainers, first introduced by the government in 2009 to address unfair practices in the entertainment industry.

Although the contracts have been revised over the years, with additional agreements introduced to strengthen protections for minors, questions remain over whether the existing framework adequately reflects the realities of today's K-pop industry.

Under the Popular Culture and Arts Industry Development Act, entertainment agencies are required to safeguard underage performers' physical and mental health, education, personal rights, sleep, rest and freedom of choice.

The law also restricts late-night entertainment activities involving minors, with different working-hour limits depending on age and certain exceptions permitted under specific conditions. Agencies are also prohibited from interfering with young performers' education.

Christina Ricci explains why 'Mermaids' co-star Cher has held a grudge against her for years

Christina Ricci has revealed why her friendship with Cher never recovered after they starred together in the 1990 film Mermaids, admitting that the legendary singer still holds a grudge over an unanswered voicemail.

During Tuesday's episode of Watch What Happens Live With Andy Cohen,



the 46-year-old actress was asked whether she remained in contact with her former co-star.

"I'm not [still in touch]. Unfortunately, she's still mad at me, she holds a grudge," Ricci explained.

The Yellowjackets star recalled a magazine interview she had done with Cher when she was 19.

According to Ricci, the singer made comments about her that were not particularly flattering before later leaving her a voicemail explaining that journalisis had misrepresented her remarks.

"Then she left me a voicemail about how journalists are always trying to get the worst things and blah, blah, blah, and she was so sorry, and I was 19, and so I didn't return that message," Ricci recalled.

Andy Cohen suggested that Cher had been upset because Ricci never returned her call. The actress agreed, revealing that subsequent attempts to contact the singer had received "radio silence".

Despite the distance, Ricci made it clear that she still admires Cher, telling the camera,

"Love you, Cher, I love you so much."

Speaking to Entertainment Weekly in 2024, Ricci previously praised Cher for supporting her during Mermaids,

recalling how the singer "took me under her wing" and "never wanted me to feel insecure".

The actresses also starred alongside Winona Ryder in the comedy-drama, which helped establish Ricci as a rising young talent in Hollywood.

Iranian army says drone strikes targeted US installations at Kuwait air base

TEHRAN: Iran's army said on Wednesday that it targeted US military platforms in Kuwait for drone and missile operations, according to local media.

"Early this morning, Iranian military drones struck Patriot air defence systems and US military drone and missile launch platforms at Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait," it said.

The statement came after Kuwait's military said its air defences were engaging "hostile" drones early Wednesday.

The General Staff of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces said any explosions that might be heard would be the result of air defence systems intercepting the attacks.

Kuwait condemns repeated Iranian attacks, reserves right to respond

Kuwait on Wednesday strongly condemned repeated Iranian attacks on the country, including the latest drone strikes, saying they violated its sovereignty and threatened its security and stability.

In a statement, the Foreign Ministry said the attacks "constituted a serious breach of international law, the UN Charter and UN Security Council Resolution 2817."

It warned that "continued attacks represented a dangerous escalation threatening regional security and stability and undermining diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalation."

The ministry said Kuwait "reserves its full right to take all necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty, protect its security and defend its territory and vital facilities against any aggression or threat, in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter and international law."

UAE company says vessel attacked while transiting Strait of Hormuz

Abu Dhabi National Oil Company Logistics and Services (ADNOC L&S) said on Wednesday that



one of its vessels was attacked while transiting the Strait of Hormuz on Tuesday evening.

In a statement carried by the Emirati news agency WAM, the company said one crew member remained missing, with search and rescue operations ongoing in coordination with the relevant authorities.

All other crew members were safely evacuated from the vessel, while 11 sustained injuries, the company said, adding that those requiring medical attention were receiving the necessary care.

ADNOC L&S said its top priority was "supporting search and rescue efforts and providing assistance to the crew and others affected by the incident."

The company stressed the importance of "protecting seafarers and ensuring freedom of navigation and maritime security."

Iran would respond 'at the same level' if hit by US nuclear attack: Lawmaker

Iranian lawmaker Mohammad Reza Mohseni Sani warned on Tuesday that Tehran would respond "at the same level" if the US used nuclear weapons against Iran.

Mohseni Sani, a member of parliament's national security committee, told the Iranian news website Khabarfoori that the country had prepared for a possible military attack.

He said the conduct of US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meant nothing could be ruled out.

The lawmaker also expressed deep scepticism about reaching an agreement with Washington, saying he saw no positive prospects for a deal. He said diplomacy would depend on Washington changing course and concluding that continuing the war served no purpose. He linked that possibility to what he described as an electoral defeat for the US administration.

Democrat Mary Peltola wins in Alaska, securing 56-44 US Senate majority



WASHINGTON: Democrat Mary Peltola won Alaska's US Senate race on Tuesday, projections from US media showed, defeating Republican incumbent Dan Sullivan and giving her party its ninth Senate flip of the midterm elections and a commanding 56-44 majority in the upper house of Congress.

Peltola, 53, who made a living in the commercial fishing industry before entering politics, also becomes the first Democrat to win a US Senate seat in her home state in nearly 20 years and the first Alaska Native ever to do so.

Alaska Natives account for roughly 15 per cent to 18pc of Alaska's population, the highest Indigenous proportion of any US state.

The contest was the final uncalled midterm race in the Senate.

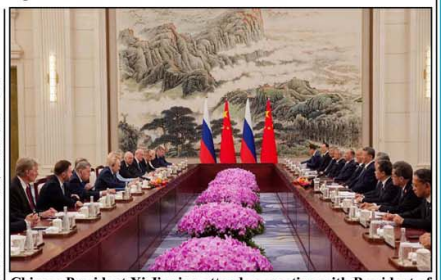
Peltola's win gives Democrats their largest Senate majority since 2009 which, combined with securing control over the House of Representatives, sets up two years of possible deadlock between Congress and Republican President Donald Trump.

Peltola was projected to have won 50pc of first-place votes to Sullivan's 46pc, enough to clear the 50pc threshold and avoid additional rounds under Alaska's ranked-choice voting system.

Trump won Alaska by 13 percentage points in 2024, but voter frustration with the high cost of living and the state's strong independent political streak put it back in play for Democrats.

"As a lifelong Alaskan who has dedicated my career to serving our state, there is no greater honor than having Alaskans support in our fight to take on corporate greed, lower costs, and put Alaska first," Peltola said on X after media projected her victory.

"Thank you, Alaska. Lets get to work."



Chinese President Xi Jinping attends a meeting with President of Russia Vladimir Putin at the APEC China 2026 Summit in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, China.

Xi, Putin meet ahead of historic Trump trilateral summit

SHENZHEN: Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin began talks in Shenzhen on Wednesday, a day ahead of a historic three-way summit with Donald Trump in the southern Chinese city.

Thursday's trilateral has triggered fears that the three powerful men could decide the fate of Ukraine over the heads of Kyiv and Europe, and seek to carve up the world into 21st-century spheres of influence.

Washington had signalled that Ukraine — something Xi vehemently sees as not China's problem — was not expected to be addressed, before Trump said that it would.

China has said only that the leaders would hold "in-depth exchanges on safeguarding world peace and promoting strategic stability in major-power relations" on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting.

Also up for discussion are the Iran war and nuclear disarmament, according to Washington, after a US-Russia bilateral treaty on atomic weapons expired in February.

Beijing has long maintained that the US and Russia should reduce their giant nuclear arsenals before it agrees to talks on its smaller stockpile.

In from the cold

Chinese and Russian news agencies reported at around noon on Wednesday that Xi and Putin had met for talks — the fifth time the two leaders have met this year, including once by video link.

Putin has been shunned by the West since launching

Europe's worst conflict since World War II with his 2022 attack on Ukraine.

Addressing the APEC gathering on Wednesday, he said he expected the trilateral summit with Xi and Trump to be "highly useful".

"At a time when military-political risks are on the rise, what is desperately needed is unity rather than division… and dialogue rather than ultimatums," Putin said.

He said Western sanctions imposed on Russia since his 2022 invasion of Ukraine had failed, arguing that they were "not capable of fully stopping growth or destroying the economies of the competition".

Earlier, Xi called for greater international cooperation on AI and free trade.

"Starting by lowering tariffs, expanding access and exploring regulations and management standards, China will conduct deep-seated reform," Xi said as he opened the event.

Xi and Putin were expected to discuss energy and finance and then – in a smaller

format – foreign policy including Ukraine and North Korea, Russian officials said.

Kim incoming?

Trump was on Wednesday still in the Philippines where a day earlier he met fellow leaders of the Quad — Australia, Japan and India — for the first time in his second term. The grouping is broadly aimed at counterbalancing China's regional influence.

Child among six killed by Israeli forces across Gaza Strip

GAZA CITY: Israeli forces killed six people across the Gaza Strip , including a six-year-old boy, the civil defence agency and hospitals in the war-ravaged Palestinian territory said.

Israel and Hamas regularly accuse each other of violating the ceasefire that came into effect in October 2025, after two years of conflict.

Mahmoud Bassal, spokesman for Gaza's civil defence agency, said that a total of six people were killed and several injured "as a result of Israeli fire" on Tuesday. Israel's military said it was looking into the reports, adding that it struck "several terrorists" in Gaza on Tuesday, and was "not aware" of any six-year-old killed by its fire.

Bassal said that two people including a 21-year-old and a six-year-old boy were killed by Israeli fire in the central Gaza city of Deir el-



Balah. Nasser Hospital, in Gaza's south, confirmed the two deaths and identified the child as Iyas al-Namnam.

Bassal said that two people were killed in an Israeli drone bombing near northern Gaza's Jabalia camp. Al-Shifa hospital in nearby Gaza City confirmed the two deaths.

UN agency warns of hypothermia deaths without more supplies

Bassal added that one man was killed by bombing and another by Israeli live fire in southern Gaza, with Nasser Hospital confirming both deaths. More than 1,600 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the ceasefire, according to a tally based on data from the Gaza health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the United Nations.

Hypothermia deaths

The UN migration agency warned on Tuesday of further deaths from hypothermia in Gaza .

Pro-Iran Iraqi group refuses to withdraw from its stronghold

JURF NASR: Iraq's pro-Iran group Kataeb Hezbollah said it will not leave its stronghold, despite the US-backed prime minister calling on the armed faction to withdraw and allow the army to enter.

Iraq has faced mounting US pressure to curb Iran's influence and rein in Tehran-backed armed groups a difficult task in a country long caught between the two rivals and still recovering from decades of conflict and instability.

On Monday, Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi gave Kataeb Hezbollah an unspecified deadline to withdraw from Jurf al-Sakher, south ofBaghdad, after the government earlier said an investigative committee had confirmed oil smuggling in the area a claim the armed group denied.

"I can state decisively and with absolute certainty, that the dream they dream of the Kataeb withdrawing from Jurf al-Sakher will not come true, not even over our dead bodies,' Abu Taleb al-Saidi, a Kataeb Hezbollah commander, said during a press visit to the area. A security source said that the deadline for Kataeb Hezbollah to withdraw from the area south of Baghdad was Friday. Saidi stressedthat his group did not want a confrontation with Iraqi armed forces.

This news agency visited Jurf alSakher on Tuesday for the first time in over a decade as part of a media tour organised by the armed group.

At the entrance, a large poster displayed slain leaders of the Iran-led 'Axis of Resistance,' which also includes Lebanon's Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthis.

Armed fighters stood along both sides of the road, which cut through stretches of vast empty land overgrown with wild plants. Successive Iraqi governments have long struggled to balance relations betweenthe US and Iran, whose influence has grown significantly in Iraq since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled former ruler Saddam Hussein.

Two Iraqi political sources said that Esmail Qaani, head of the Quds Force, the foreign operations branch of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, arrived in Baghdad on Monday and discussed with Zaidi the escalating tensions over Jurf al-Sakhar.

Strategic post Tensions have surged between Zaidi and Kataeb Hezbollah since the premier vowed to ensure that armed factions would hand over their weapons to the state a longstanding US demand. Kataeb Hezbollah has recently issued several statements criticising the prime minister, accusing him of corruption and threateninghis government.

It accused the government of 'fabricating lies' about oil smuggling and of waging 'the largest blackmail operation aimed at foreing' it to abandon its weapons.

Zaidi, who came to power early this year, has pursued closer ties with Washington, with Iraqi political sources telling this news agency that his relationship with Tehran has been strained.Washington accuses Iran of using Iraq's economy to evade sanctions, and has previously sanctioned Iraqi individuals for blending Iraqi and Iranian oil. Pro-Iran armed groups, which Washington designates as terrorist organisations, have long targeted US interests in Iraq and stepped up their attacks across the region in support of Tehran during the Middle East war, triggered by US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

Kataeb Hezbollah has maintaind a presence in Jurf al-Sakher for more than a decade, after helping recapture the area from the militant Islamic State group.

Man sentenced to over 27 years in US for plot to assassinate Trump

WASHINGTON: A US judge has sentenced a Pakistani man, found guilty of plotting to assassinate President Donald Trump and other prominent US politicians, to more than 27 years in prison, the Department of Justice (DOJ) said .

"Earlier today, in federal court in Brooklyn, Asif Merchant, 48, of Pakistan, was sentenced by US District Judge Eric R Komitee to 330 months in prison for attempting to commit an act of terrorism transcending national boundaries and murder for hire," the DOJ said in a statement.

Prosecutors said Merchant tried to recruit people in



the US in a plan targeting Trump and others in retaliation for Washington's assassination of Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani in 2020, when Trump was in his first term.

Targets in the 2024 plot also included then-President Joe Biden and Nikki Haley, who ran against Trump that year for the Republican presidential nomination, federal prosecutors said.

A federal jury in March convicted Merchant of travelling to the US to arrange for political assassinations on American soil, according to the Justice Department.

That trial in the New York City borough of Brooklyn started in late February.

Merchant testified at his trial that he joined the plot with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps but did so unwillingly, to protect his family in Tehran.

Merchant said he was never ordered to kill a specific person but that his Iranian handler named three people in the course of conversations in the Iranian capital.

Law enforcement thwarted the plan before any attack occurred. A person Merchant contacted in April 2024 to help with the plot reported his activities and became a confidential informant, the DOJ said. Merchant was arrested and pleaded not guilty that year.

Tehran has denied that it targeted or plotted to attack Trump or other US officials. US-Israeli attacks on Iran since February 28 have killed thousands and displaced millions. Many top Iranian leaders, including then-supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, have been assassinated, too.

Missile strike cripples bridge linking Russia with Crimea

KYIV: A section of the bridge connecting Russia to the annexed Crimean peninsula appeared to be lying in rubble in the water after Ukraine hit the road-and-rail link with missiles in a brazen overnight attack. Ukrainian President Volod-ymyr Zelensky hailed the strike as "unprecedented" and a justified retaliation for Russia's barrages of its infrastructure in the almost five years since Moscow invaded.

Road traffic was completely halted, with Russian-installed officials on the peninsula urging locals not to panic and saying the delivery of food and essentials would not be affected.

Moscow also launched attacks on key Ukrainian bridges, firing ballistic missiles at two major river crossings in Kyiv.

Reporters saw crater-like holes on Kyiv's Northern Bridge and people crossing on foot during the morning rush hour.



"It's cold, raining, just a total mess. It feels like I'm in some kind of movie… This is hardcore for Ukrainians," Veroni-ka Roshchenko, a 20-year-old jewellery workshop employee said.

Strikes on Ukraine

The strike on the bridge comes as Russia's attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure intensified with the onset of winter. Reporters in Kyiv heard waves of attacks as Russia fired missiles and drones at the city overnight.

Moscow accuses Paris of troop deployment in Ukraine

Both the Northern and Southern bridges in the capital — key bridges across the Dnipro river that form part of the city's ring road — were hit. Traffic was suspended, causing gridlock on Tuesday morning.

Russia's army confirmed it had hit both bridges. Kyiv's Mayor Vitali Klitschko posted a video from the Northern Bridge showing debris stre--wn across the road. He later said traffic was partially resumed thro-ugh the Southern Bridge. The stri-kes on Kyiv also disrupted heating and water in parts of the capital, he said.

The wave of strikes comes as the United States renews its push for an end to the war. But diplomatic efforts have so far failed to reach a breakthrough, with fighting grinding into another winter. Moscow wants a sweeping deal to rewrite "Europe's security architecture" as part of any agreement to halt the fighting.

'French troops in Ukraine'

Russia said on Tuesday it was aware of French troops having been sent to Ukraine, calling it "direct participation" in the war and saying a message had been issued to Paris.

"Not only French ones, we know this. We have conveyed our concern... this is no longer support for Ukrai--ne, but direct participation in the war," Foreign Minister Sergei La---v------rov told reporters. His remarks come a day after a source and other media said that French soldiers had been operating in Ukraine for several months to train Ukrainian personnel and help maintain equipment.

France on Tuesday rejected Lav--rov's claim that the deployment amounted to "direct participation" in the Ukraine war as "absurd". There is a "very limited" deployment of French troops in Ukraine for training and equipment maintenance, deputy defence minister Alice Rufo told parliament.

"There is the absence of any intention to fight, contrary to what the Russian foreign minister said this morning, which is absurd." A source said earlier the mission of a small contingent of French troops excludes any combat role.

"The rotation of French trainers supporting Ukraine in France, Poland, or occasionally in Ukraine is a reality," the source said. "But this is not a military operation.

Pakistan pacers run riot as SL crumble for 98 in second Test

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan's pace attack produced a devastating display of disciplined fast bowling to dismiss Sri Lanka for a paltry 98 before the hosts built a 23-run lead on the opening day of the second Test at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium .

Mohammad Abbas, Razaullah and Aamer Jamal claimed three wickets apiece as Sri Lanka were bundled out in 35.3 overs on a green-tinged surface that offered considerable assistance to the seamers. Pakistan, in reply, reached 121 for three at stumps, with opener Azan Awais unbeaten on 47 and nightwatchman Saqib Khan on two.

Saqib, who claimed seven wickets on his debut in the drawn first Test, provided the breakthrough in the fourth over by inducing Pasindu Sooriyabandara into edging an outswinger to wicketkeeper Ghazi Ghori.

Abbas then took charge, having experienced batter Dinesh Chandimal caught at short leg by Awais for seven before removing Kamindu Mendis for eight.

Razaullah further tightened Pakistan's grip by dismissing Lahiru Udara, who had laboured to four off 34 deliveries, with a sharp delivery that found the first slip.

He followed it up by trapping first-Test centurion Dhananjaya de Silva leg-before for one, leaving Sri Lanka reeling at 36 for five.



Abbas, operating with metronomic accuracy, repeatedly troubled the batters with movement in both directions. His figures of three for 14 at an economy rate of just one run per over reflected the effectiveness of his disciplined approach.

Razaullah, meanwhile, delivered one of the most impressive spells of the day, combining pace with a more attacking length than he had employed in the first Test.

Speaking to PCB Digital after the day's play, the young fast bowler said he had discussed his plans with senior players Salman Ali Agha, Abbas and Shan Masood before the match.

"Abbas bhai came to me and suggested that I bowl a little fuller. I was also trying to concentrate on outswing. In the previous match, I was attempting to bowl both inswing and outswing, but the ball was not moving much. Alhamdulillah, today the result was positive," he said.

Razaullah also revealed that his aggressive celebration after dismissing Dhananjaya was dedicated to his brother.

He said he had been thinking about the dismissal during the previous night and had discussed it with his brother while travelling to the ground.

Sri Lanka briefly threatened a recovery through skipper Kusal Mendis and Sonal Dinusha, who added 49 runs for the sixth wicket after the visitors had slumped to 36 for five.

The day belonged largely to Pakistan's fast bowlers, who exploited the conditions with impressive control and accuracy. Captain Babar Azam had little hesitation in opting to field after winning the toss, and his decision was vindicated almost immediately.

The visitors struggled to negotiate the movement off the surface, losing four wickets in the opening hour as Pakistan maintained relentless pressure outside the off-stump.



Alamgir Ghazi celebrates after a goal against India during the SAFF Championship final Dhaka's National Stadium .

Pakistan fall to India in SAFF final after late heartbreak

Pakistan's hopes of lifting their maiden SAFF Championship title ended in heartbreak on Tuesday as defending champions India came from behind to secure a 2-1 victory in the final at the National Stadium, extending their record to 10 titles and completing an unprecedented hat-trick of consecutive triumphs.

The Shaheens produced an impressive first-half display and looked on course for a historic victory after taking the lead through Alamgir Ghazi in stoppage time.

However, the dismissal of defender Junaid Shah early in the second half proved a turning point, allowing India to seize control and score twice to retain their crown.

Pakistan, appearing in their first-ever SAFF Championship final, began confidently and enjoyed the better of the opening exchanges, putting India's reshuffled side under sustained pressure.

The Green Shirts threatened repeatedly down the flanks, with the combination of Abdul Samad Arshad and Haris Zeb causing problems for the Indian defence.

India, meanwhile, struggled to establish attacking rhythm, although they came close to scoring around the 35th minute when Pakistan goalkeeper Yousuf Butt produced an important save to deny a dangerous effort.

Just when the first half appeared destined to end goalless, Pakistan broke the deadlock in spectacular fashion.

Junaid Shah delivered a cross from the left during first-half stoppage time which took a deflection off an Indian defender before falling to Alamgir inside the penalty area.

The midfielder made no mistake, curling a superb right-footed effort into the far corner to send Pakistan into the interval with a deserved 1-0 advantage.

India returned after the break with greater urgency and immediately began pushing forward in search of an equaliser. Yousuf was called into action in the 51st minute, denying PV Vishnu after the Indian midfielder made his way through the Pakistan defence.

The contest, however, took a dramatic turn in the 60th minute when a Video Assistant Referee (VAR) review resulted in Junaid being shown a straight red card for a reckless challenge on Brison Fernandes.

Reduced to 10 men, Pakistan struggled to contain the defending champions, who wasted little time capitalising on their numerical advantage.

India restored parity almost immediately when a free-kick delivery from Lhungdim Khaiminthang caused problems inside the penalty area. Macarton Nickson got a slight touch before Suhail Ahmad Bhat side-footed the ball into the net to make it 1-1.

The equaliser shifted the momentum firmly in India's favour as Pakistan were forced to retreat and defend deep. Butt kept his side in contention with another important intervention in the 67th minute, turning away an effort from Vishnu.

Pakistan coach Nolberto Solano responded with substitutions, withdrawing Alamgir as he attempted to reorganise his depleted side. However, India continued to dominate possession and press for a decisive goal.

Their persistence finally paid off in the 88th minute when a corner created confusion inside the Pakistan penalty area. Sandip Mandi found himself unmarked and headed past Yousuf to put India ahead for the first time in the match.

Pakistan threw players forward during the closing stages in a desperate attempt to force an equaliser, but India held firm through five minutes of added time to secure victory. The defeat was particularly painful for Pakistan, who had reached the final after defeating hosts Bangladesh 1-0 in the semi-final, courtesy of Abdul Samad Arshad's late winner. Despite falling short of the title, the Shaheens' run to their first-ever final marked a significant milestone for the national side.

Wirtz scores twice as Germany thrash Dutch to win Nations League group



BERLIN: Florian Wirtz scored twice as Germany hit four goals in 18 second-half minutes to thrash the Netherlands 5-0 in Berlin on Monday and reach the Nations League quarter-finals as group winners.

Germany, the Netherlands and Greece all finished on 11 points in Group A2 after substitute Giorgos Masouras scored in the 69th minute to give Greece a 1-0 win over Serbia at home.

The Dutch advanced as runners-up and Greece finished third while Serbia ended the campaign without a point.

It was the Netherlands' first defeat since Xavi Hernandez took charge in August. The Dutch had beaten Greece 7-0 three days earlier and needed a draw in Berlin to win the group.

Donyell Malen had a chance to put the visitors ahead but headed over from close range. Derry Scherhant hit the post at the other end before cutting in from the left in the 41st minute and firing into the top corner for his first international goal.

The 24-year-old Freiburg winger grew up five minutes from the Olympiastadion, where he made his Bundesliga debut for Hertha Berlin.

"What can I say? I don't think it could have gone any better. I couldn't even have dreamed of a better outcome. It's truly unbelievable. I had an incredible time out there and I'm just absolutely delighted," Scherhant said.

Wirtz doubled the lead on the hour with a left-footed drive from outside the box that went in off the far post. Nico Schlotterbeck headed in Brajan Gruda's free kick five minutes later before Gruda set up Wirtz for a close-range finish in the 71st.

"We always hope we can give the fans a lot of enjoyment. And we enjoyed it very, very much ourselves, especially in the second half," Wirtz said.

Gruda turned in a rebound in the 77th minute after Scherhant struck the post. Germany's fifth goal secured top spot on head-to-head goal difference. The Dutch had last trailed by five goals in an international in 1959, when West Germany beat them 7-0 in Cologne.

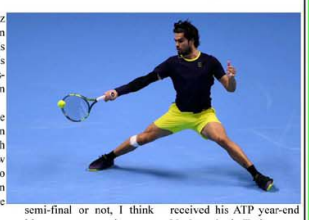
The Netherlands offered little in attack after Germany's second and missed injured captain Virgil van Dijk at the back, with the hosts cutting through a flimsy defence at will.

"I'm really sad, because before the game I was really proud," Xavi told reporters. "Today it was not about the football, but about speed and about [our] values."

I want to say sorry to our supporters, because today we showed our worst face. It's part of the process... We need to keep going and work on our values."

In St Gallen, Scotland lost 4-0 to already-promoted Switzerland in Group B1. Lewis Ferguson turned a cross into his own net in the 22nd minute before Winsley Boteli and Alvyn Sanches struck four minutes apart early in the second half.

Alcaraz sweeps aside Tiafoe in ATP Finals



TURIN: Carlos Alcaraz looked in ominous form on Monday as he began his bid to win the ATP Finals for the first time by cruising past Frances Tiafoe in straight sets, 6-2, 6-2.

World number three Alcaraz took just over an hour to deal with American Tiafoe and show why he is the favourite to win the whole thing in Turin, where he was the beaten finalist last year.

Since returning in August from a wrist injury that kept him off the tour for four months, Alcaraz has won three of the five tournaments he has entered, most recently the Paris Masters.

Alcaraz, 25, can book his place in the semi-finals on Wednesday by beating Italian Flavio Cobolli, who, in the absence of former world number one Jannik Sinner, is the crowd favourite.

"Sometimes I feel really comfortable," Alcaraz said. "I feel like I'm better than the opponent in every aspect of the game. Whether I qualify to the semi-final or not, I think it's a great experience, a great week, getting experience," he added.

Tiafoe had a nightmare debut match at the season-ending tournament, the 28-year-old having no answer to Alcaraz's speed and power.

Only briefly in the second set did he look like challenging his opponent, a seven-time Grand Slam winner, when at 3-2 down he wasted three opportunities to break back.

In the late game, Cobolli went down 7-6(7/4), 6-3 to fourth-ranked Daniil Medvedev, the 2020 champion.

Off the court, Germany's Alex-ander Zverev received his ATP year-end No 1 trophy in Turin.

"It's a great honour to be holding this trophy, to be part of this celebration," said Zverev, who won his first two Grand Slam titles at Roland Garros and the US Open during the 2026 season.

He also reached the semi-finals at the Australian Open and made his first final at Wimbledon.

"To be the year-end No 1 is the most special thing. It's the biggest achievement of my career," Zverev said. "I'm having the best year of my life and now, to be holding this trophy, is the perfect end."

South Africa collapse after Bavuma injury on 3rd day of Bangladesh Test

JOHANNESBURG: An injury to captain Temba Bavuma preceded a South Africa collapse on the third day of the first Test against Bangladesh at the Wanderers Stadium .

South Africa were 386 for seven, still 14 short of Bangladesh's first innings total of 400, when rain and lightning prevented any play after lunch in the first of two Tests.

Visiting wicket-keeper Litton Das held six catches — a Bangladesh Test record.

He became only the third player in Test history to score a century and make six dismissals in an innings.

South Africa seemed to be well on course to take a substantial lead as Bavuma and Ryan Rickelton took their total to 358 for four after resuming on 287 for four.

But Bavuma retired hurt with a calf injury on 49, shortly after Bangladesh took the second new ball. Three wickets then fell for the addition of just 15 runs.

Bavuma had received extensive treatment on the field but retired when he could only hobble through for a single after Rickelton had played the ball into the deep for what would normally have been an easy two.

His departure sparked a dramatic change in fortunes.

Wiaan Mulder flashed at a wide ball from Taskin Ahmed and was caught by Litton.

Marco Jansen became Litton's fifth victim and Taskin's second before Simon Harmer edged Hasan Mahmud to the wicket-keeper.



Rickelton, who was dropped by Mahfijul Islam at cover off Mehidy Hasan when he had 30, was unbeaten on 56.

According to a statement from Cricket South Africa during the lunch break, Bavuma was being assessed for discomfort in his right calf and would return to bat.

But dark clouds were building up and an initial delay because of lightning was followed by rain which ended play for the day.

Hasan left the field with a right elbow injury after bowling four balls in his second over of the day but returned with the elbow strapped up and was Bangladesh's most successful bowler with 4-72.

All three instances of six catches and a century in an innings have occurred in Johannesburg. South Africa's Denis Lindsay achieved the feat against Australia in 1966/67 and AB de Villiers did it against Pakistan in 2012/13.

SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH (1st Innings) 400 (Towhid Hridoy 137, Litton Das 120; K. Rabada 5-70, D. Paterson 4-92)

SOUTH AFRICA (1st Innings, overnight 287-4):

A. Markram c Litton b Hasan4

M. Ackerman c Taskin b Hasan157

Z. Hamza c Litton b Mominul83

T. Bavuma retired hurt49

M. Breetzke c Litton b Hasan2

R. Rickelton not out56

W. Mulder c Litton b Taskin0

M. Jansen c Litton b Taskin8

S. Harmer c Litton b Hasan1

K. Rabada not out5

EXTRAS (B-8, LB-3, NB-9, W-1)21

TOTAL (for seven wickets, 90 overs) 386

STILL TO BAT: D. Paterson

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-5 (Markram), 2-207 (Hamza), 3-268 (Ackerman), 4-279 (Breetzke), 5-361 (Mulder), 6-373 (Jansen), 7-376 (Harmer)

BOWLING: Taskin 23-4-88-2 (4w), Hasan 20.4-3-72-4 (2w), Ebadot 7-0-36-0 (3w), Mehidy 25.2-2-120-0 (1w), Mominul 14-1-59-1.

France's Diallo claims to have support from outside Europe for FIFA job

PARIS: France's Philippe Diallo said he had the backing of countries beyond Europe in his bid to depose Gianni Infantino in the upcoming FIFA presidential election.

'To beat him you need 106 votes, which is a majority,' said Diallo, the president of the French Football Federation (FFF) who already has the 'unanimous' backing of European governing body UEFA.

'It is now up to me and my team to go and convince those on other continents, but already since yesterday Ihave received spontaneous signs of strong support which will be revealed in the coming days.Diallo was speaking to reporters in Paris the day after accepting an invitation from UEFA to stand against Infantino in the election which will take place next March.

UEFA, which has 55 member associations, said that European nations had 'unanimously pledged their full support' to Diallo, ahead of Wednesday's deadline for candidates to declare themselves.

Under its Slovenian president Aleksander Ceferin, UEFA has led the opposition to Infantino since his plan to sell stakes in the World Cup to private investors was revealed in July.

Infantino quickly abandoned theproposal in the face of widespread uproar, but UEFA has since gone to a court in Florida in an attempt to gather evidence for a potential complaint of 'criminal mismanagement' against the current FIFA president in Switzerland.

Diallo announced in September that the FFF was withdrawing its backing for Infantino in the election, following similar announcements from other European associations. At the time he said that 'the trust placed in the FIFA president has been betrayed'.

'OPEN GOVERNANCE' 'There can no longer be a type ofsingle-handed governance where the biggest issues in football are decided behind the scenes, without any transparency and without anyone being consulted, without going through the executive committee, Diallo, 63, said on Tuesday.

'My vision will be one of open, collegiate governance, in which the different bodies really play their part.

UEFA had been struggling to find a credible candidate to stand against Infantino in the election, which will take place at the FIFA Congress on March 18 next year in the Moroccan capital, Rabat.

Arsene Wenger, the French for-mer Arsenal manager and FIFA's current chief of global football development, had at one point been seen as a potential candidate that could get Europe's backing but he will not stand.

The Asian Football Confederation, which consists of 47 member associations, announced last month that it was backing Infantino for re-election having previously indicated it would oppose him.

FIFA has a total of 211 member associations, with each having one vote in the presidential election. A majority is needed for a candidate to win.Diallo, the 63-year-old son of a Senegalese boxing champion, has been president of the FFF since January 2023. Kozo Tashima, honourary president of the Japan Football Association and a member of the FIFA Council, said at the start of this month that he also intended to stand againstInfantino.

Thursday, November, 19, 2026

DAILY MIRROR



Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti receives his portrait from a student



Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti interacts with exhibitors while visiting a stall at the Balochistan Investment and Trade Expo 2026.

BA proposed Balochistan Non-Formal Education Bill 2026, stressing measures to expand educational opportunities in remote, underdeveloped areas

By Staff Reporter

QUETTA: The Balochistan Assembly Standing Committee on Social Welfare in its meeting reviewed the Balochistan Non-Formal Education Bill 2026, stressing that legislative measures are essential to expand educational opportunities in the province's remote, underdeveloped, and underserved areas.

The committee emphasised that introducing an effective non-formal education system has become a pressing necessity in the province, where vast geographical distances, dispersed populations, and limited educational infrastructure continue to pose significant challenges.

The members of committee noted that the proposed law would create new learning opportunities for individuals who, for various reasons, have been unable to access conventional schools and educational institutions.

The committee meeting, chaired by Fazal Qadir Mandokhail, was held on Wednesday and attended by committee members Mir Asadullah Baloch, Zabid Ali Reki, Farah Azeem Shah, and Hadiya Nawaz. Also present were Assembly Secretary Tahir Shah Kakar, Social Welfare Secretary Ismatullah Qureshi, and Deputy Secretary of the Law Department Ehsan Barkat.

During the session, members held an extensive discussion on various provisions of the proposed legislation, its objectives, and the legal and administrative framework required to improve literacy rates across the province.

Committee members were informed that under Articles 25-A and 37-B of the Constitution of Pakistan, the promotion of education and the provision of educational facilities to citizens are fundamental responsibilities of the state.



In line with these constitutional obligations, the proposed legislation seeks to empower the Social Welfare Department to implement modern, flexible, and needs-based educational programmes aimed particularly at economically and socially disadvantaged segments of society.

The bill proposes the provision of free education, literacy initiatives, basic numeracy skills, life skills training, and vocational education to individuals who have been unable to benefit from the formal education system. Officials told the committee that the legislation is designed to address educational deprivation among children, youth, and adults while simultaneously enhancing their economic prospects through skills-based learning. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Fazal Qadir Mandokhail described the proposed legislation as particularly important for people living in remote regions who have never had the opportunity to attend school or receive even basic religious education.

He added that introducing a practical and effective non-formal education framework is essential to addressing the long-standing educational deprivation faced by such communities. Committee member Mir Asadullah Baloch highlighted the unique educational challenges of Balochistan, saying that the province's vast territory and scattered population make it difficult for the traditional education system to provide equal access to all citizens.

He observed that non-formal education could serve as an effective alternative for reaching people living in remote areas, rural communities, and economically disadvantaged families. He further stressed the importance of bringing out-of-school children and education-deprived individuals into the mainstream educational system. Meanwhile, committee member Zabid Ali Reki advocated for broadening the scope of the legislation beyond basic literacy. He emphasised the need to integrate vocational training, practical skills development, and employment-oriented education indicators in Balochistan remain a matter of concern compared to other provinces.

The committee members noted that the proposed legislation would provide the Social Welfare Department with a strong legal foundation to combat illiteracy.

Quetta administration decides to intensify crackdown against beggars

By Our Reporter

QUETTA: The Quetta district administration has decided to further intensify its ongoing campaign against begging across the provincial capital, with authorities announcing stricter enforcement measures against professional beggars and increased coordination among relevant government departments.

The decision was taken during a meeting chaired by Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehrullah Badini, which was attended by Assistant Commissioner City Ameer Hamza, officials from the Social Welfare Department and representatives of the police.



The meeting reviewed the progress of the ongoing anti-begging campaign and discussed measures to make enforcement efforts more effective throughout the city.

According to the decisions reached during the meeting, authorities will accelerate operations against children and other individuals involved in begging at traffic signals,

intersections and other key public locations in Quetta. Officials said action would be carried out without discrimination,

while individuals found to be engaged in organised or professional begging would be arrested and dealt with in accordance with the law, including being sent to jail where applicable.

Addressing participants, Deputy Commissioner Mehrullah Badini directed that begging would not be allowed under any circumstances on city roads, highways, traffic signals and other public areas. He emphasised the need for strict implementation of anti-begging measures to improve the city's public environment and address associated social concerns.

The meeting further decided that the district administration, police and Social Welfare Department would conduct joint operations on a daily basis.

The participating departments will also submit regular reports on enforcement

activities to ensure effective monitoring and accountability.

Officials reaffirmed their commitment to making Quetta a beggar-free city through coordinated efforts, institutional cooperation and a comprehensive strategy involving all relevant stakeholders.

The administration expressed confidence that sustained enforcement,

combined with close coordination between law enforcement and welfare authorities, would help curb professional begging and improve the overall civic environment in the provincial capital.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister (DPM/FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chairing ameeting of the Cabinet Committee obn the EXport of Surplus Sugar at MOFA.

Balochistan's blue carbon project wins global recognition at UN climate conference

By Our Reporter

QUETTA: Balochistan has achieved a significant milestone in the field of climate action and sustainable development, as the province's flagship Blue Carbon Offset Project received strong international recognition and support at the 31st United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Antalya, Türkiye.

The achievement comes under the climate vision and strategic sustainability initiatives of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, positioning Balochistan as an emerging destination for global carbon finance and environmental investment.

During a high-level plenary session on blue carbon and climate finance, the provincial delegation was led by Secretary Forest and Wildlife Department Asadullah Faiz, who presented a detailed overview of Balochistan's natural resources, coastal ecosystems and future investment opportunities. The province's Blue Carbon Offset Project emerged as a focal point of discussion, attracting considerable attention from international carbon project developers, green sovereign wealth funds and multilateral climate institutions.

Global investors described the project as a model initiative with strong environmental, financial and governance credentials, highlighting its potential to contribute to



climate mitigation while generating sustainable economic benefits.

The landmark project has been structured under the Balochistan Public-Private Partnership Authority through a 46-year public-private partnership agreement, with an investment of US$31 million to be financed entirely through private developer equity. As a result, the project will place no financial burden on the provincial exchequer.

Under the initiative, 34,351 hectares of mangrove forests across six major coastal clusters in the districts of Gwadar, Lasbela and Hub will be restored, protected and sustainably managed. In accordance with international carbon accounting standards and Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, the project is expected to generate more than US$707 million in carbon revenue over its lifespan, while contributing significantly to the absorption of millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide. The conference also highlighted the ecological significance of Balochistan's 770-kilometre coastline, one of Pakistan's most valuable natural assets. Addressing participants, Asadullah Faiz noted that the provincial government is already implementing conservation measures for three notified marine protected areas, namely Astola Island, Miani Hor and Churna Island, while also managing approximately 160,000 hectares of protected mangrove reserves.

He further informed the conference that, beyond the initial Blue Carbon Project, Balochistan possesses an additional 160,000 hectares of viable coastal and wetland areas that could be utilised for future carbon initiatives and international climate investments. This prospect drew considerable interest from global investors and environmental organisations attending the conference.

A key feature of the project that received widespread appreciation was its community-based conservation model. Under the framework, 15 per cent of carbon revenue will be allocated to a Community Development Fund aimed at supporting local populations through initiatives such as solar-powered water desalination systems, provision of clean drinking water and the creation of environmentally sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court condoles with Chief Minister over Aunt's passing

By Staff Reporter

QUETTA: Chief Justice of the Balochistan High Court, Justice Kamran Khan Mallahkhail, called on Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti to offer condolences on the passing of his aunt.

During the meeting, the Chief Justice expressed his heartfelt sorrow and sympathies with the Chief Minister and his bereaved family. He also offered prayers for the eternal peace of the departed soul, seeking forgiveness and elevated ranks for the deceased.

A collective prayer (Fateha) was held for the deceased, during which prayers were offered for her forgiveness and eternal peace.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti thanked the Chief Justice for his visit, condolences, and prayers, appreciating the gesture of support during the family's time of grief.

Balochistan High Court declares appointment of women's harassment ombudsperson invalid

By Our Reporter

QUETTA: The Balochistan High Court has declared the appointment of Tahira Parveen Baloch as Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment of Women unlawful, setting aside her appointment and directing the provincial government to make a fresh appointment in accordance with the law.

The ruling was issued by a division bench comprising Justice Shaukat Ali Rakhshani and Justice Allah Dad Roshan while hearing a constitutional petition challenging the appointment.

In its detailed judgment, the court held that merely having served as a former District and Sessions Judge was not sufficient to establish the legal eligibility required for appointment to the office of Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment of Women.

The bench observed that eligibility for such a position must be assessed in light of the candidate's overall service record and legal qualifications. The court specifically noted that a person against whom departmental proceedings had resulted in a penalty of compulsory retirement on charges related to corruption and misconduct could not automatically be considered qualified for the post merely on the basis of previous judicial service.

Consequently, the court declared the government notification appointing Tahira Parveen Baloch as Ombudsperson to be illegal and void.

The judgment further restrained Tahira Baloch from performing any duties associated with the office

with immediate effect, effectively ending her tenure as the provincial ombudsperson responsible for addressing complaints of workplace harassment against women.

The court also directed the Government of Balochistan to initiate a fresh appointment

process and fill the position in accordance with the relevant legal requirements and statutory procedures.

'He who claims equity must come with clean hands': Asif hits back at Bilawal

* "If you are talking about a system collapse, then all of us, as people connected to this system, must also take stock of our responsibilities," defence minister says

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif joined others from the ruling PML-N on Wednesday in responding to PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari following the latter's hard-hitting speech over several issues, including new provinces, constitutional tweaks and treatment of the opposition.

"He who claims equity must come with clean hands," Asif reminded Bilawal in a post on X, as the wrangling between coalition partners PML-N and PPP appeared to deepen.

The exchange has particularly heated up after Bilawal delivered a no-holds-barred speech the previous day that covered the question of new provinces. The Bhutto scion also expressed support for several opposition demands and questioned past decisions and actions taken by the ruling coalition.

Bilawal referred to Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's recommendation of holding a referendum to decide on the creation of new administrative units and said: "In our history, a referendum has always been carried out for an undemocratic act and never a democratic one."

The PPP chairperson also remarked that the governance system had not collapsed, but was rather "made to collapse" — seemingly reacting to Naqvi's statement in July that the current "system" of governance had "collapsed" and needed a "reset".

Asif began his response to Bilawal by addressing this matter.

He said: "No system can reset without public support. If you are talking about a system collapse, then all of us, as people connected to this system, must also take stock of our



responsibilities.

The defence minister also appeared to throw his weight behind the proposal for holding a referendum on new provinces as he said that there would surely be a debate on "system reset" in Parliament, but the public too could not be "deprived of its fundamental right".

"The pinnacle of legitimacy would be reached if the public opinion is also taken into account along with that of Parliament."

Seemingly reacting to Bilawal's support for the release of incarcerated former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan and other demands by the opposition, Asif added: "Holding politicians accountable in this country is nothing new, and no politician exempt from accountability."

He mentioned that the PPP had been in power in Sindh for 18 years.

"Sindh has turned into paradise. The world admires the condition of Karachi," he said, seemingly taking a jibe at the PPP, which is often criticised over the lack of development in Sindh.

Asif then said Bilawal and his party had been a "partner of the PML-N in the business of government since 2022. You get the profit and the PML-N and Pakistan suffer loss".

"He who claims equity must come with clean hands," Asif continued. "This is a centuries-old maxim of equity. Are your hands clean? Do you have the right to lecture or threaten?"

The defence minister said, "We have just one objective: to change the lives of the people of Pakistan so that ordinary people can live with dignity.

Make public participation in governance a reality … Do not confine the people's rights to the pages of the Constitution."

He said after achievements on diplomatic and military fronts, now the "fight is for devolving governance to

grassroots, in which public opinion and Parliament's role are entirely democratic and constitutional. Governance is not anyone's monopoly; Allah has granted this right to 250 million people."