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KCR / RAILWAY



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Murad reaffirms commitment to KCR revival with Chinese support

Hopes for the revival of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project were rekindled on Wednesday as Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah reaffirmed his commitment to launching the important transport project in collaboration with Chinese authorities and investors.

At a meeting with Chinese Consul General in Karachi Yang Yundong ahead of his visit to Beijing in September, the chief minister discussed the progress on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, as well as the KCR, stating that it was time to bring this long-awaited transport initiative to the people of Karachi.

The KCR project has been in the pipeline for the past several years, facing challenges including funding, removal of encroachments on the track and delays.

The KCR was included in CPEC in December 2016 at the request of the Sindh government, and later in 2017, the project was approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council.

CM says he will visit Beijing in September to explore cooperation for mega transport scheme for Karachi

However, the PTI government decided to revive the KCR on a BOT (build, operate and transfer) basis, approved by the public-private partnership (PPP) authority, with heavy subsidies to the private partner by the government.

Later, the change in regime led to a change in the financial structure of the project, as the incumbent Pakistan Democratic Movement-led government abandoned the PPP mode and decided to seek Chinese investment for the project under CPEC.

Consequently, work on the first two underpasses in Gulshan-i-Iqbal by the Frontier Works Organisation — which had been awarded a contract for three underpasses, a flyover, and an elevated 6.4-km-long structure along with the laying of new railway tracks — was stopped after the federal government decided to execute the project under CPEC.

As per the approved plan, the KCR has a 43.2 km route, including 25.51 km elevated and 17.7 km on ground, and it would have 24 stations — 13 elevated and 11 on-ground.

In his meeting with Chinese envoy Yang, which was also attended by Deputy Consul General Zhang Hao, the chief minister discussed strategic partnerships ahead of the upcoming China visit.

According to a press statement issued by the CM House, the chief minister's discussions focused on strengthening bilateral relations, progress on CPEC projects and the long-delayed KCR.

The chief minister announced his plan to visit China in September to present a range of new PPP projects.

Among the key proposals to be presented in China are projects related to water treatment and desalination plants in Karachi.

Mr Shah emphasised that the Sindh government was in the process of establishing additional special economic zones (SEZs), and that Chinese investment and partnership in these zones would be highly valuable.

He also expressed his desire for Chinese collaboration in developing the Inclusive City in Karachi for persons with disabilities, envisioned as a model institution in Pakistan.

Mr Yang Yundong welcomed the proposals and stressed the need to finalise the projects so that meetings could be arranged accordingly.

CM Shah suggested potential partnerships with the Shanghai and Hubei governments for the Inclusive City project, adding that Chinese expertise could help mainstream persons with disabilities in society.

He stressed the importance of forging PPPs in sectors such as healthcare, water management and agricultural development. He highlighted the need for hybrid seeds that consume less water and yield more, as well as plans to introduce climate-friendly hybrid fruits and vegetables in partnership with China.

He instructed the provincial investment department to prepare detailed PPP proposals ahead of the visit.
(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 10/07/2025)

Senate body calls for expediting work on ML-1 rail project

The Senate Standing Committee on Railways on Monday recommended expediting work on the Main Line-1 (ML-1) project, which aims to upgrade and modernise key infrastructure to enhance freight and passenger connectivity from Karachi to Peshawar.

Chairing a meeting of the committee at the Divisional Headquarters of Pakistan Railways (PR) Karachi, the chairman of the Standing Committee Jam Saifullah Khan emphasised that railway station upgradation efforts must be equitably distributed among all provinces.

The committee members — Senators Nasir Mehmood, Asad Qasim, Dost Ali Jeesar, Dost Muhammad Khan and Ashraf Ali Jatoi — PR secretary and chairman Syed Mazhar Ali Shah, CEO Amir Ali Baloch and other senior officers attended the meeting.

While deliberating on the long-pending ML-1 project and the vulnerable Sukkur-Multan section, the standing committee chairman urged the ministry to expedite the initiative.

He also directed that proper planning be undertaken to safeguard railway tracks from waterlogging and flood damage, which have severely impacted operations in the past.

The chairman railways briefed the committee that the ML-1 project is among PR's top priorities, as it is the central railway line linking Karachi with the entire country. For this reason, the project will commence from Karachi, and efforts are underway to initiate development work at the earliest, he added.

'344 acres of encroached land retrieved'

The committee was briefed on the removal of encroachments from railway lands and informed that 307 acres are under encroachment by government departments and 954 acres by private individuals, while a total of 344 acres of encroached land worth Rs3.3 billion has been retrieved in the Karachi division over the past three years.

The committee urged provincial governments to assist in reclaiming this land. It also expressed concern over stay orders issued by local courts, which delay land recovery efforts. The divisional superintendent railways proposed that, before issuing such stays, courts should hear the ministry's position.

The committee also noted a lack of adequate support from district administrations and police during anti-encroachment operations, despite prior coordination and notifications from PR.

Senator Mehmood raised the issue of frequent train accidents, expressing concern over the recurring loss of innocent lives. In response, the committee directed the Ministry of Railways to take immediate and concrete steps to reduce the frequency of such incidents and ensure passenger safety.

To revive inoperative routes, the committee recommended that the ministry coordinate with provincial governments — following the example of Punjab — to seek funding from provincial budgets for infrastructure development and the operation of intercity fast trains.

While discussing train operations, the committee was informed that the Karachi Railway Division has 624 kilometres of operational routes, whereas 439 kilometres remain inoperative. The committee expressed concern over this high ratio of non-functional segments and emphasised the need to revive economically viable routes.

On staffing matters, the secretary briefed the committee about ongoing efforts to rationalise workforce numbers due to the implementation of digital technologies. He noted that legacy systems are being replaced and that specialised staff would be recruited to operate new digital systems efficiently.

'Collaboration with provinces'

The committee was also briefed that PR is working on various development projects in collaboration with provincial governments.

The secretary of railways informed the committee that efforts are underway to engage all provinces in collaborative railway infrastructure projects and the operation of viable intercity train services.

The meeting was informed that Punjab has committed to development work on 350 railway level crossings, and a Lahore-Rawalpindi fast train project is under consideration. In Sindh, a Karachi-Rohri fast train and other projects are under discussion with the provincial government.

Regarding passenger amenities, the committee was informed of recent improvements at several stations, including the installation of ATMs, information desks, drinking water facilities, washrooms, tuck shops and escalators. The chairman directed that escalators should also be installed at high-traffic stations like Hyderabad and Rohri, where passengers face significant challenges.

Addressing staff welfare, the committee raised serious concerns over delays in the payment of pensions, GP funds, commutation, benevolent funds, marriage grants and farewell salaries to retired and current employees. Representatives from various employee unions were also heard.

The secretary informed the committee that multiple requests have been made to the Ministry of Finance for special funds to clear pending liabilities. Despite recommendations from the committee itself, no separate allocations have been made, and the Ministry of Railways lacks sufficient resources to meet these commitments on its own, he added.

On security issues, Senator Qasim raised concerns about safety at railway stations in Balochistan, particularly Quetta. The DIG informed the committee that additional personnel have been deployed following incidents such as the Jaffar Express attack, and new security plans are being developed to further enhance passenger safety.

(By APP Dawn, 13, 05/08/2025)

Standing committee on railways seeks timely completion of Karachi Circular Railway

The Senate Standing Committee on Railways during its second day's session at the Pakistan Railways Divisional Superintendent's Office on Tuesday pushed for the timely completion of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR).

The committee members also travelled on a part of the track from the City Railway Station to Wazir Mansion to get an idea of the situation.

While speaking to the media about their little trip, and their meeting earlier, Chairman of the Standing Committee Jam Saifullah Khan said that the KCR is an old project which everyone has been hearing about for years now. "We wanted to look into its progress and also how we can help in expediting things," he said.

"The Sindh Mass Transit Authority also briefed us on the KCR; we held a meeting with Pakistan Railways also on this matter besides visiting the KCR track ourselves today," Jam Saifullah Khan shared. "But I regret to inform you that there are many bottlenecks in the KCR which are hindering its progress," he added.

"On our part, we have firmly advised both the Sindh Mass Transit Authority and the Pakistan Railways to expedite things. The chief minister of Sindh is already willing to take up the responsibility to make the KCR operational. But there are certain things regarding the KCR, which we believe also need to be discussed and resolved between the CM Sindh and the prime minister of Pakistan," he said.

While elaborating on some coming in the way of the KCR's completion, the chairman of the Standing Committee on Railways said that the issues included land matters such as transfer of railways land to the Sindh government.

"There are some hitches there," he said. It was also mentioned that they have requested Pakistan Railways to be reasonable about the price of land to the Sindh government.

"Earlier, the project was going to be linked with CPEC as the Chinese government was interested in taking it up but the law and order situation and security issues because of the insurgency in Balochistan came in the way of that. Still, things are improving there and we are speaking to the Chinese government about it again.

"I also want to say to the people of Karachi to have faith regarding the KCR. The Mass Transit Authority and the Pakistan Railways have also provided me assurance that all issues will be resolved. We will try to resume all ground work for KCR by next year. We understand that mass transport is a genuine issue in this city of about 25 million people. Our coming here ourselves was to expedite all areas showing slow progress as we want to resolve the issues of the people as well as take action wherever we see any negligence. We want to facilitate the people of Karachi," he said.

As far as encroachment of railways land is concerned, especially around the KCR tracks, the chairman of the committee said that it has been resolved, more or less. "We didn't find much encroachment on or around the tracks hindering KCR's right of way.

It was also said that the feasibility for running of KCR amounts to around two billion dollars. "But we have suggested to the Sindh Mass Transit Authority to see if this amount is not too much," he said, adding that all that the Standing Committee wants is for the project to move ahead and be completed.

"If the Chinese are no longer interested in the KCR, we also have the Asian Development Bank as our other option," Jam Saifullah Khan pointed out.

Replying to a question about what happened to the KCR which was already running partially, it was explained that earlier the original KCR track was restored partially. "But that track is not going to cater to the entire city, which has grown along with a far bigger population," he pointed out. "Some parts of the old track, if revived, might also cause traffic blockades now," he added.

Senator Nasir Mahmood Butt, one of the committee members, also said that the reason behind their coming to Karachi was to personally see if there are any issues which they can help in resolving. "Such standing committees are formed for this purpose. We are here to facilitate the Sindh government in whatever way that we can," he said. "The KCR is now a Sindh government project and the railways is with the Sindh government for the same reason. We are also with both of them," he said. "If there are any misunderstandings as regards land transfer we are here to clear matters between them also," he said.

The other committee members included Senators Asad Qasim, Dost Ali Jessar, Dost Muhammad Khan and Ashraf Ali Jatui.

Pakistan Railways secretary and chairman Syed Mazhar Ali Shah, CEO Amir Ali Baloch and other senior officers also attended the meeting.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 06/08/2025)

Long-delayed KCR

Karachi is the only city in the world with a population over 20 million and no citywide rail-based public transport system — a few other megacities only have regional train networks, but all of them have plans to expand their networks. And while trains need not be the primary public transportation option in a metropolis, all similarly sized cities also have elaborate public bus networks, often complemented by other options such as trams, ferries and boats, and private hire transport options, including buses, taxis and rickshaws.

But Karachi does not even have a satisfactory bus network — public buses only ply a few routes, while private buses are often dangerously overloaded. Yet, the Sindh government and Karachi's local leaders have shown little interest in reviving the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR). Despite many half-hearted attempts to restart the service since it went offline in 1999, the KCR is now a textbook example of the results of rampant government corruption, specifically as it relates to encroachments.

KCR's potential is undeniable — a 43.13 km modern rail network could carry 550,000 daily passengers, decongesting city roads while also reducing costs and, in many cases, travel time. Unfortunately, about 20% of KCR right-of-way land is under 'adverse occupation'. Other hurdles for the almost \$2 billion project include cost escalation and institutional deadlock brought on by local, provincial and federal leaders' inability to take ownership of the project, or let anyone else get credit for getting it back on track.

If Karachi is to ever have a functional public transport system, decision-makers need to put their egos aside and build a system that integrates and expands public rail and bus networks, which includes reviving KCR and operationalising other routes as quickly as possible. While difficult, it is possible — Dhaka's metro line was operationalised in about six years. Jakarta, a similarly sized city which did not have a rail system until 2011, has since built over 600 km of local rail lines and continues expanding, as cities must do to remain relevant in the global economy.
(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 07/08/2025)

Train in vain

TALK of 'revival' of the long-dead Karachi Circular Railway has turned into a running joke for denizens of this unfortunate metropolis. The last KCR train stopped chugging in 1999, and in the 26 years since several governments have talked of 'reviving' the urban transport scheme. Yet these plans never come to fruition, or half-baked efforts stall because of legal disputes, bureaucratic bungling, or disagreements between the federal and Sindh governments. But the provincial administration feels that all hope should not be lost on this count. While meeting the Chinese consul general in Karachi on Wednesday, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said he was "committed" to relaunching the KCR with Beijing's help. In fact, Mr Shah has plans to visit the Chinese capital in September to try and kick-start the KCR. Time will tell whether this visit yields tangible results or adds to previous failed efforts.

As stated above, several attempts have been made to restart the KCR. These include a Japanese plan that was abandoned, as well as including the scheme in the CPEC framework. A partial 'revival' was made in 2020, plying on a very limited basis when compared to the original KCR route; this attempt was soon forgotten. That Karachi needs an integrated transportation system — linking bus rapid transit corridors, feeder buses and a modern urban train system — is stating the obvious. The present state of public transport in Pakistan's largest city can be described as exceptionally lousy. The city's weary commuters can rightly ask if the state — centre and province — has the collective will to clear the encroachments and bureaucratic bottlenecks, and address the funding constraints hindering the KCR's actual revival. Moreover, our Chinese friends may be uninterested in throwing money at a project with no coherent plan for its restoration. Therefore, when the Sindh CM heads to Beijing, he must have a workable scheme ready to resuscitate the KCR.
(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 11/07/2025)

Govt seeks \$7b ADB loan for ML-I

Pakistan on Wednesday requested the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to fully finance the nearly \$7 billion Mainline-I (ML-I) railways project in consortium with other multilateral lenders after failing to secure funding from China.

The country waited almost a decade for China's 85% financing commitment for the project. The government has now returned to the ADB, which was keen to fund in 2016 but withdrew due to Beijing's insistence on sole financing.

The Manila-based lender, along with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), has shown willingness to provide about 60% funding for the Karachi-Rohri section, said sources.

They added that the ADB may also consider financing other sections, but due to the project's size, the lender may take a section-wise approach.

Pakistan raised the issue of complete financing from the ADB, AIIB, and other multilateral agencies during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb's meeting with ADB President Masato Kanda.

The early completion of the Karachi-Rohri section is critical for transporting copper and gold from the Reko Diq mines, said sources.

The Reko Diq Mining Company plans to begin production by 2028, requiring a railway network for smooth and timely transportation.

The ADB has asked for detailed design documents of the Karachi-Rohri section to assess actual funding needs. It may partner with the AIIB to provide 60% of the funding, around \$1.2 billion, for this section, they added.

The Planning Commission is expected to receive revised project cost documents this week to determine the true cost.

For mineral transportation, Pakistan needs rail links from Reko Diq to Gwadar and Reko Diq to Karachi, which require quality infrastructure at ML-I and ML-III. But the government has not found financing for ML-III, which will largely handle copper and gold transport and may not be commercially viable, said the sources.

The ADB has promised a \$10 million Project Readiness Facility by November to validate the earlier Chinese feasibility study of ML-I, vet the project's detailed design, and review the Rohri-Multan section. Based on its findings, the ADB is expected to approve multi-tranche loan facilities with AIIB and the European Investment Bank, sources added.

Government estimates put the Karachi-Rohri section at \$2 billion and the Rohri-Multan section at \$1.6 billion, bringing just these two to \$3.6 billion. However, it is expected that due to international competitive bidding, the total cost will be still less than the projected cost under the bilateral framework.

The prime minister was keen to hold the groundbreaking ceremony of the ADB-funded ML-I in June next year, but the railways ministry and ADB gave December as the timeframe, said the sources.

The ADB president linked funding to the outcomes of the Project Readiness Facility report.

China had earlier asked Pakistan to reduce the ML-I cost from nearly \$10 billion to \$6.7 billion to make it financially viable. It was the only declared "strategically important" project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and Islamabad demanded a concessional loan.

The project has faced over seven years of delay due to Pakistan's high indebtedness. Pakistan had sought a loan equal to 85% of the cost from China, but Beijing refused concessional terms.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Xi Jinping had agreed a couple of years ago to advance the ML-I project in phases.

The original ML-I track was 1,872 kilometres long but was later reduced to cut costs.

Sources warned that even with ADB and other multilateral funding, arranging rupee cover from the finance ministry will be difficult due to the small size of the public sector development programme. The ministry must provide over Rs600 billion in rupee cover for just the Karachi-Rohri section in the next three years.

ADB's president also met Finance Minister Aurangzeb, who requested an enhanced guarantee limit to issue Panda bonds. Initially planned at \$250 million this year, the ministry is now considering raising \$750 million to bridge funding gaps.

Aurangzeb said he would travel to China with the prime minister to discuss floating Panda bonds, requiring higher ADB guarantee limits.

A finance ministry handout said Aurangzeb highlighted Pakistan's priorities for deeper collaboration with ADB in energy transition, climate resilience, transport, human capital, and resource mobilisation.

He expressed appreciation for ADB's consistent partnership and reiterated Pakistan's determination to build climate resilience and improve disaster preparedness after recent floods.

Aurangzeb also thanked ADB's president for prioritising Pakistan as the first country he visited after assuming office, recalling earlier meetings in Washington in April.

The minister acknowledged ADB's substantial support in recent years, citing reforms in resource mobilisation, women's financial inclusion, disaster risk financing, and clean energy transition.

The ADB president appreciated Pakistan's economic reforms and resilience, commending progress in stabilising the economy and advancing structural changes, the ministry said.

He assured continued ADB support in climate adaptation, population challenges, infrastructure, and resource mobilisation. Kanda also pledged readiness to assist Pakistan in launching its first Panda Bond and other innovative financing tools. (By Shahbaz Rana The Express Tribune, 11, 28/08/2025)

We don't have tracks strong enough to run fast trains, says Hanif Abbasi

"The Railways Ministry is a big task entrusted on me by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and in these few months that I have been here, I have been trying to implement the prime minister's vision," said the federal minister for railways, Hanif Abbasi, while sharing their plans for improving Pakistan Railways.

He was speaking at an event organised by the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry here on Thursday.

"The projects I'm going to talk to you about today have already taken off and you will see the results of our efforts soon," he said.

The federal minister said that he was trying to build up the railways infrastructure within their limited resources. "We are still using coaches from the 1960s," he said.

"Yes, we are also incorporating eight to 10 coaches from China in our trains after every two or three months. But there are so many other problems that we are facing also such as newer and faster trains but not strong enough tracks to run them on," he said.

One way to run the railways more efficiently, according to the minister, is through outsourcing. Pakistan Railways has picked up speed while moving in that direction. "The prime minister asked me to look into outsourcing. So as I speak, 11 passenger trains have already been outsourced while another nine would also be outsourced in the next six days and the rest after that. In total there are 38 trains, which will be outsourced. Similarly, we will also be outsourcing freight trains," the federal minister shared.

Railways minister shares PR's plan to outsource 38 trains, eight hospitals and 14 schools

They also plan to outsource eight big Railways hospitals and 14 schools, the deals for four of which have also been finalised. But, he said, that despite these steps, their workers will not lose any benefits. In fact, railways workers and their families will

receive free medical and medicines. There will be subsidised school fees in the outsourced schools for workers' children. Further outsourcing plans also include the railways sleeper factory.

To bring passengers back to Pakistan Railways, they are looking to facilitate them by digitising their system, installing ATMs at stations along with point-of-sale terminals for easy transactions. Plus, new Commercially Important Person (CIP) lounges for passengers, new washrooms and escalators.

Efforts are also under way to improve punctuality. Hanif Abbasi said that they have signed an agreement with Asian Development Bank for a \$2 million project for laying a new Karachi to Rohri track of 480km, a part of the ML-1 track. "It was the worst track where train speed had to be reduced. Finishing that track will make a big difference of four hours," he said.

The issue of derailment has also been addressed by getting a new head of mechanics to look into that issue.

Besides Rs15 billion worth of encroached railways land has also been recovered. "And there is 50 billion worth of more property which we intend to take back," he said.

While reminding of the importance of Karachi, the federal minister said that without this city, Pakistan loses its economy. He also said that he had been approached by landlocked countries such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan asking for not road access but train access for trade. "For this we have signed an agreement in Kabul for railroad access from Kohat to Karlachi [a crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan on the Durand Line] to Mazar-i-Sharif from where there already is a 75km track to Uzbekistan's border. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan wants train access through Chaman to reach the Karachi and Gwadar ports. Besides, for the transport of our own coal and minerals from Thar Coal we have given the FWO a 105km target," he shared.

Meanwhile, the federal minister made no mention of the Karachi Circular Railway. Even when a journalist brought it up he was sternly told to do his homework before asking questions about things, which did not concern him.

Following the KCCI event, the federal minister met Sindh Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani where under a formal agreement with the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board extensive measures will be taken to ensure cleanliness inside Karachi's Cantonment and City railway stations, trains and their surrounding areas by using modern technology.

Later, Hanif Abbasi also met the chairman of Karachi Port Trust, Rear Admiral Ateeq ur Rehman Abid, at the KPT Head Office to discuss issues related to the Dedicated Freight Corridor as well as pertaining to the East and West wharves renewal/operations. The focus of the meeting remained on the importance of railways for cargo handling, which brought to fore the requirements of improving rail tracks nationwide as well as those linked to the Karachi Port.

The chairman informed the federal minister about their planned connectivity projects where rail links are extremely pivotal as they offer a solution to address traffic congestion due to port activities.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 05/09/2025)

Sindh govt, Pakistan Railways focus on KCR

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi have agreed to enhance cooperation between the provincial government and Pakistan Railways in multiple sectors, including the revival of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR), outsourcing of key services, removal of encroachments, and upgradation of the Karachi-Rohri passenger train service.

Karachi Circular Railway

The meeting discussed the revival of KCR. The chief minister said the project was an urgent need for Karachi and its delay was unfortunate. He proposed joint preparation of the project by Sindh and Pakistan Railways, with donor agencies and private sector partners also engaged. The initial study of KCR was carried out by JICA from 2008 to 2013, and it was included in CPEC in 2016. The government later prepared a revised feasibility study with China Railway Construction Corporation, estimating the project cost at \$2.002 billion. The 43-km loop with 24 stations is expected to serve 650,000 passengers daily, linking east-west and north-south corridors of Karachi. The updated feasibility, however, is still awaiting approval from Chinese authorities.

Encroachment clearance has so far recovered over 11 acres of railway land near Drigh Road, Karachi University, Urdu College, and Gilani stations, though challenges remain at Liaquatabad and Urdu College. The CM assured that Sindh would continue supporting Pakistan Railways in clearing the KCR route and rehabilitating affected communities.

It was decided that cleaning and waste management at Karachi Cantt and City Stations would be outsourced to the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB), with a formal agreement already in place. Cantt Station's washing lines may also be handed over to SSWMB. Sindh government will also assist in upgrading and beautifying major railway stations. CM Shah noted that the provincial government had already constructed the approach road to Cantt Station in 2018.

Karachi-Rohri passenger train upgrade

Federal Minister Abbasi announced that all railway tracks between Karachi and Sukkur (480 km) would be upgraded, and an air-conditioned Karachi-Rohri passenger service would be launched at a cost of Rs6 billion.

CM Shah pledged Sindh's investment in the project, adding that the upgraded up-and-down service would greatly facilitate passengers.

Another flood approaches Sindh on Sept 8

Shah on Friday chaired a meeting at CM House to review flood preparedness and relief efforts as heavy rains and rising river flows pose serious risks across the province.

The CM warned that water levels at Guddu Barrage could peak on September 8, with possible inflows between 700,000 and 900,000 cusecs. He directed officials to ensure timely evacuation, functional relief camps, and coordination among departments. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 06/09/2025)

Sindh, Pakistan Railways to jointly finalise modalities for KCR revival

The Sindh government and Pakistan Railways (PR) have agreed to collaborate on finalising the modalities for the revival of the long-delayed Karachi Circular Railway (KCR).

During a meeting at the CM House on Friday, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah proposed to Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi that technical experts from both Sindh and PR should jointly work out the modalities of the project.

According to a statement issued by the CM House, the chief minister stressed the urgent need to revive the KCR and expressed frustration over the project's continued delays.

The statement said that the KCR would serve an estimated 650,000 passengers daily and provide critical east-west and north-south connectivity across Karachi. However, it added, the updated feasibility still awaits approval from Chinese authorities as the project is set to be executed under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The chief minister proposed to the minister a collaborative approach, suggesting that the Sindh government and PR jointly develop the project, with involvement from donor agencies and the private sector.

The federal government decided to execute the project under CPEC, and as per the approved plan, the KCR has a 43.2-kilometre route, including 25.51km elevated and 17.7km on ground, and it would have 24 stations — 13 elevated and 11 on-ground.

The meeting was informed that anti-encroachment drives had already cleared over 11 acres of railway land along Drigh Road, Karachi University, Urdu College, and Gillani stations, but "problematic encroachments" remain near Liaquatabad and Urdu College.

The chief minister assured the minister that the Sindh government would continue to support PR in anti-encroachment operations and urban rehabilitation measures linked with the KCR route.

The meeting agreed that experts from both sides will jointly work out the final modalities of the KCR project, station outsourcing, and new train services.

The railway minister endorsed the chief minister's proposals and gave assurances of full federal support. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 06/09/2025)

Pakistan, China agree on \$7bn ML-1 financing consortium

The government announced on Monday that Pakistan and China had agreed to form a consortium of bilateral and multilateral partners to finance the \$7 billion Mainline-1 (ML-1) railway project, along with a four-year action plan (2025-29) for the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Speaking at a news conference, Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal said that during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to China, the two sides had agreed to constitute a consortium of financiers, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), China and Pakistan, for the 1,700-km Karachi-Peshawar railway line.

He said China had assured financing not only for ML-1 but also for the Karakoram Highway. Negotiations with multiple financiers would be concluded within a month. He added that ML-1 and the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway would already have been completed, had it not been for the 2018 political change, alleging that the subsequent PTI government "destroyed the process".

The minister said Pakistan and China had agreed to develop and implement a four-year action plan to build, between 2025 and 2029, a "China-Pakistan community with a shared future" with stronger political trust, closer trade ties, deeper security cooperation and stronger people-to-people links. Agriculture modernisation and industrial development would be prioritised under CPEC's second phase, with space for third-party participation.

Minister says Beijing also assured funding for Karakoram Highway

The next meeting of the Joint Cooperation Council (JCC) of CPEC will be held on Sept 26 in Beijing. Both sides also agreed to advance industrial park development in line with local needs, support enterprise investment in special economic zones (SEZs) — particularly in Karachi and Islamabad — and offer preferential policies and a supportive business environment.

Mr Iqbal said the action plan was a "solid development" of leadership-level meetings aimed at deepening strategic cooperation and advancing the shared vision of an even closer partnership in the new era between two "time-tested, friendly countries."

The two sides agreed to make full use of the Framework Agreement on Industrial Cooperation to accelerate industrialisation, support exports and encourage Chinese firms to invest in Pakistan, including in the mining sector and building mining industrial parks.

They also agreed to promote cooperation in crop cultivation, animal husbandry, epidemic control for plants and animals, aquaculture, agro-processing, agricultural mechanisation and capacity building in seed technology and drip irrigation.

The plan includes aligning the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with Pakistan's 5Es Framework, implementing both large-scale landmark projects and "small and beautiful" livelihood projects, while ensuring both high-quality development and robust security. (By Khaleeq Kiani Dawn, 01, 09/09/2025)

Pakistan Railways plans to locally manufacture 295 high-capacity wagons

The Pakistan Railways (PR) plans to locally manufacture as many as 295 high-capacity wagons with Chinese assistance by March and the related manufacturing units have been assigned targets in this regard.

Targets have also been assigned for manufacturing of over 170 high-speed state-of-the-art passenger coaches, including some brake vans by June 2027, according to a senior PR official.

"Manufacturing of modern high-capacity goods wagons and high-speed passenger coaches is part of PR's plan to improve its freight and passenger services by inducting modern rolling stock in the system. Under this, the PR has started implementing this plan with Chinese assistance, placing orders for manufacturing of 820 wagons and 230 coaches about 4 years ago," PR General Manager (Manufacturing & Services) Ghulam Qasim explained while talking to *Dawn*.

"A total of 200 wagons were manufactured in China and during this, PR officers and officials were also given training under the transfer of technology agreement. Similarly, 46 of the total 230 passenger coaches were also built completely in China and shipped to Pakistan," Mr Qasim added.

He said that since the remaining wagons and coaches were to be built in PR's carriage factories and workshops. For this purpose, Chinese engineers had arrived and the manufacturing had finally been started, he added.

In Pakistan, as many as 325 wagons had so far been manufactured and the work on the remaining ones was currently underway. The 200 wagons' CBUs included flat container wagons (70), high sided open top wagons (70), covered wagons (20) and brake vans (20).

The 325 wagons manufactured completely in Pakistan included 200 semi knocked down (SKD) and 95 completely knocked down (CKD) units. "For manufacturing the remaining 295 wagons under a phased manner, the PR's railways factory, Risalpur and Lahore Mughalpura workshops have been assigned the targets starting from November 25 and ending on March 30," Mr Qasim maintained.

It is pertinent to mention that the PR has been using hundreds of 1970 model German-made passenger coaches and it continued receiving this model till 1989. Later, it continued to refurbish the same 1970 model coaches until 2002 when it procured 175 coaches and another 200 in 2009.

In 2021, PR signed an agreement of \$140 million – approximately Rs31 billion – with a Chinese company. Under the contract, the company pledged to manufacture 230 state-of-the-art passenger coaches, of which 46 were provided to railways as CBUs and the remaining 184 were planned to be manufactured in Pakistan under the supervision of Chinese experts.

Under another similar contract for manufacturing 820 wagons, a Chinese firm started manufacturing 200 CBUs and the remaining 620 were planned to be manufactured in Pakistan. (By Khalid Hasnain Dawn, 02, 15/11/2025)

Iconic Cantt Railway Station undergoes facelift

Pakistan Railways has completed the long-awaited upgradation of the historic Cantt Railway Station, providing passengers with a range of modern facilities ahead of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit today (Monday). The premier will review the project and inaugurate the refurbished Shalimar Express along with the newly introduced passenger amenities.

The renovation work — carried out under the supervision of Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi — has been completed on schedule. Officials said the minister has been in Karachi for the past two days to personally monitor progress.

Karachi Cantt Station, the city's central rail hub, was originally built during the colonial British era. Construction began in 1896 and had been completed in 1898. In those years, the project had cost a whopping 80,000 rupees to the British.

Today's Cantt Station was initially known as Frere Street Railway Station. Located near Dr Daudpota Road in Saddar, the station houses a hospital, mosque, and police station. The Sindh government has declared the structure a protected heritage site, and it has undergone several renovations over the decades.

Under the latest upgradation, the station now features two modern CIP (Commercially Important Persons) lounges, three waiting halls, four escalators, executive washrooms, and POS machines for instant ticketing. ATM machines have also been installed for passenger convenience. Information desks have been set up in line with contemporary standards, while a QR code-based digital complaint system has been introduced to ensure quick redressal by the Ministry of Railways and headquarters.

To improve sanitation, Pakistan Railways has partnered with the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB), which will maintain round-the-clock cleanliness through mechanical sweeping at the station and surrounding tracks. Standardised stalls have been installed to maintain visual uniformity, and a modern public announcement system has been introduced for accurate and uninterrupted passenger guidance.

Officials said the Karachi Cantt Station upgrade is part of PM Shehbaz Sharif's directive to modernise railway stations nationwide, with similar projects planned across Sindh in phases.

The prime minister will also inaugurate the upgraded Shalimar Express today.
(By Dua Abbas The Express Tribune, 04, 17/11/2025)

PM promises revival of Karachi Circular Railway with Sindh govt's help

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Monday that the federal government in collaboration with the Sindh government would revive the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR), hoping the long-delayed project would soon become a reality.

He also promised to upgrade and modernise all railway stations across the province and the country.

He said that the digitisation and modernisation of Pakistan Railways and the provision of state-of-the-art facilities would play a key role in strengthening the national economy.

The prime minister expressed these views while addressing the inauguration ceremony of the new Shalimar Express and the newly upgraded waiting rooms, CIP lounge at Karachi Cantonment Railway Station.

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar and others were present on the occasion.

Responding to CM Shah's request to include the KCR project in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the prime minister assured full cooperation, calling it a vital initiative.

He said he had flagged the KCR project at every international forum and "we would jointly revive it as this project was inevitable for the people of Karachi".

He hoped this project would soon become a reality.

The PM said the Shalimar Express running between Karachi and Lahore has been converted into a new, upgraded train.

He described Karachi as not only the economic hub but also the heart of Pakistan.

'54 railway stations modernised'

The prime minister said that 54 railway stations had already been modernised.

He said that soon after assuming office, Railways Minister Abbasi worked diligently to modernise the railway system. "After revamping Lahore Railway Station, now Karachi Cantt Station has also been upgraded with contemporary facilities."

He said that all railway stations in Sindh would be modernised in coordination with the provincial government to ensure better travel facilities for the passengers.

He said like Sindh and Punjab, such coordination with the governments of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan should be evolved, which would ultimately make the railways the best transport system of this region.

He said the federal government would work with all provinces to extend the railway network to Central Asia, specifically highlighting the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan railway line project.

He reiterated that cooperation with all provincial governments would continue to ensure modernisation across the railway network and help stabilise the economy.

He said the railway's freight system was also being organised.

The PM said the federal and Sindh governments had a partnership to provide transportation for Thar Coal, with both governments investing 50 per cent each in the project.

He assured that all required funds would be released in this regard so that the set targets of the projects could be achieved.

He also emphasised reviving the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul rail route, saying this would boost the economy.

He noted that Mr Abbasi had initiated discussions with the Asian Development Bank for a \$2 billion loan to further upgrade the railway line from Karachi to Rohri. He said that eventually it would be connected to the Reko Diq project.

Praising the services of Mr Abbasi, he said once all stations, big or small, are upgraded he would recommend a presidential award for him.

Calling him the hero of today's ceremony, he congratulated the minister for transforming the outdated railway system.

Earlier, speaking on the occasion, Mr Abbasi said that significant improvements were achieved in just eight months, including the modernisation of Karachi Cantt Station and the renewal of the Shalimar Express.

He added that Rs1 billion was being spent on upgrading the Rohri Station, while work was also underway at Karachi City Station.

Mr Abbasi said that 14 trains were being outsourced under a government policy and railway hospitals and schools were also being given to private administration, while ensuring full protection for railway employees. "Work on the ML-1 project is also progressing," he added.

Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah welcomed the prime minister to Karachi and reaffirmed full cooperation from the provincial government.

He appealed to the PM for federal support in establishing the KCR project. "A large-scale project like the KCR cannot be completed by the Sindh government alone," he said.

He reaffirmed the Sindh government's commitment to fully cooperate with federal authorities and the railways to ensure the successful implementation of the project.

He expressed gratitude to the PM and Minister Abbasi and emphasised that upgrading railway lines and branches was a positive development for Sindh's residents.

The CM Shah pointed out that, until the Karachi-Hyderabad motorway is completed, train travel remains the most viable public transport option.

He called for expedited federal efforts to finish the motorway, reiterating that improved regional connectivity will greatly benefit thousands of commuters daily.

Earlier, the prime minister inaugurated the new Shalimar Express at Karachi Cantt Station by cutting the ribbon and unveiling the plaque. He visited the upgraded waiting area, CIP lounge, state-of-the-art dining hall and computerised ticketing system.

Mr Abbasi briefed the prime minister regarding modernisation and upgradation of the railways.

The ceremony was also attended by foreign diplomats and parliamentarians, senior officers from the federal as well as provincial governments.

(By APP Dawn, 13, 18/11/2025)

Pakistan Railways set to outsource 11 more trains

With the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approving \$10 million in assistance for preparing the Railway Improvement Project, Pakistan Railways is moving to outsource 11 more trains, a step expected to generate an additional Rs8.5bn for the country's largest state-owned rail operator.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired a meeting on Pakistan Railways on Saturday, where he was informed that tenders had been floated for outsourcing the eleven passenger trains to the private sector. Pakistan Railways has already outsourced four trains.

The meeting was also informed that railway hospitals in Lahore, Karachi, Multan, Peshawar, Quetta and Sukkur were being outsourced, while the outsourcing of railway schools, colleges and rest houses was already underway. Similarly, dry ports in Islamabad, Lahore and Azakhail were also being handed over to private operators.

It was also noted that 40 luggage and brake vans had been outsourced, which are expected to bring in an additional Rs820m. The outsourcing process for two cargo express trains was in progress and is projected to generate Rs6.3bn in additional revenue.

Addressing the meeting, the premier stressed that a public-private partnership model should be adopted when managing Pakistan Railways' land and properties.

He said that the railway system serves as the backbone of a country's economy and directed that top-tier legal and economic experts be engaged, especially for projects related to regional connectivity and cross-border rail links.

He appreciated the ongoing measures for the revival of the railway system and commended Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi and his team.

The meeting was informed that the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul train service would resume soon, and preliminary work on the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan rail corridor was underway.

A plan was being developed for upgrading the Karachi-Kotri section of Main Line-1 and Main Line-3.

The premier was informed that so far, 155 railway stations have been equipped with solar power. Seven digital portals under the 'Rabta' initiative are operational, 56 trains have been shifted onto the new system, and 54 stations have been digitised.

Free Wi-Fi service has been provided at the Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Faisalabad stations.

An online freight booking system has been launched while a pilot digital weighing bridge has been installed at Karachi City Railway Station.

To enhance security, 148 AI-powered surveillance cameras have been installed, and ATM machines are being set up at railway stations.

Cleanliness services have also been outsourced.

(By Amin Ahmed Dawn, 03, 23/11/2025)

Shalimar Express hits full steam on first run

The newly upgraded Shalimar Express has captured passengers' attention since its launch, with over 900 travellers on its first run achieving 100% occupancy. Despite the enthusiasm, many commuters feel that facilities still fall short of the standards set by the Green Line Train.

Railway authorities are optimistic that private commercial management of the service could generate rupees 1.25 to two billion annually, potentially funding further improvements in travel amenities.

Passenger concerns

Several travellers raised concerns over sudden platform changes at Karachi Cantt Station, inadequate lighting in train coaches, and the need for better seating, fans, and food quality. Commuters with children and women found it challenging to adjust quickly when platform numbers were altered at the last minute.

Railway upgrades

According to Karachi Division Railway spokesperson Syed Qamar Shah, the station was inaugurated by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Two CIP lounges have been introduced, and three historical waiting halls were renovated. Both family and economy-class passengers can use these upgraded facilities. QR codes have been installed for station navigation and submitting complaints or suggestions. Information desks, a modern announcement system, and live train tracking screens were also installed.

Train composition

Shalimar Express features AC Business, AC Parlour, Lower AC, and Economy class coaches. Its commercial management has been handed to a private company under a public-private partnership, expected to yield rupees 1.25 to two billion annually, said Pakistan Railways spokesperson Babar Ali Raza.

Operational details

The train departs Karachi at 6:30pm and reaches its destination in 19 hours, easing travel and waiting times. The first-day booking was already full two days prior, reflecting high demand. Daily, approximately 1,800 passengers are expected to travel.

Authorities' appeal

Railway officials urged passengers not to express frustration by damaging train property, warning that doing so could affect services and amenities in the future.

While the Shalimar Express launch marks a milestone in Karachi's rail services, authorities face the challenge of meeting passenger expectations for comfort, lighting, and overall onboard facilities.

(By Dua Abbas The Express Tribune, 04, 23/11/2025)

Sharjeel seeks WB's help for KCR revival

Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has urged the World Bank (WB) to support the revival of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) as well as the project of a high speed train between Karachi and Sukkur.

In a meeting with a WB delegation that called on him on Wednesday, the minister said the two projects would prove to be a game changer for Sindh.

The minister and the bank delegation discussed ways to improve urban mobility across the province and strengthen the transport system, said a press release issued after the meeting.

Mr Memon, who holds the portfolios of information, transport and mass transit, briefed the delegation on the WB-funded Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Yellow Line project and noted that work on one section, the Taj Haider Bridge, had been completed and that the remaining work was progressing quickly.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 14, 13, 27/11/2025)

ML-1 Groundwork to begin in July next year

The government has decided to commence groundwork on the Karachi-Rohri segment of the Karachi-Peshawar mainline (ML-1) in July next year.

The government had secured a \$2 billion financing package from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the project, aiming to complete it before December 2028 to facilitate transportation from the multi-billion-dollar Reko Diq Copper and Gold Project.

Planning Minister Professor Ahsan Iqbal chaired a review-meeting on key Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) projects in the railways, highways and water sectors, directing the relevant ministries to prioritise timely execution, quality assurance, and realistic financial planning for the next three years to ensure delivery of nationally critical infrastructure.

The meeting, held here, reviewed major transport and water-sector interventions under PSDP 2025-26, a news release said on Saturday.

The meeting also reviewed the upgradation of 884 kilometres of Main Line-3 (ML-3) and the Thar Coal Railway Connectivity Project, a strategic initiative aimed at improving logistics for energy supply and industrial development.

The Thar Coal Railway Connectivity Project, with an estimated cost of Rs53.7 billion, consists of three packages, including construction of a new single-track railway line from the Thar coal mines to the new Chorr station over a distance of 105 kilometres, a new double-track line of approximately nine kilometres from Bin Qasim to Port Qasim, while package III covers the development of a coal unloading pit at Port Qasim and Lakhra Power Plant station. The project is expected to be completed by June 2026.

Iqbal directed the Ministry of Railways to submit a clear assessment of funding requirements for the next three years.

The meeting also reviewed the National Highway Authority's portfolio under PSDP 2025-26, which comprises 71 projects with a total cost of approximately Rs3,407 billion.

Under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) framework, the Minister emphasized Sambrial-Kharian-Rawalpindi motorway, M-8 in Balochistan, and Mashkel-Panjgur-Chadgi road projects as high-priority initiatives requiring accelerated implementation.

The meeting also reviewed major water-sector projects under PSDP 2025-26, which comprise 34 projects with a total approved cost of Rs1,848 billion. Key projects discussed included the Dasu Hydropower Project, Diamer-Bhasha Dam, Mohmand Dam Hydropower Project, Chashma Right Bank Canal, Tarbela 5th Extension Hydropower Project, and the K-IV water supply project for Karachi.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 02, 28/12/2025)