

Military court sentences 25 PTI activists for May 9 riots

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) Twenty-five activists from the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) have been sentenced to rigorous imprisonment ranging from two to 10 years by a military court for their involvement in the May 9 riots, the military's media wing said on Saturday.

"In light of the Supreme Court decision, Field General Court Martial have in first phase promulgated the punishments to following 25 accused after examining all evidence, affording all legal rights to the accused and completion of due process," the Inter-Services Public

Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. The military's media wing described the sentences as a key step towards ensuring accountability and justice in the wake of the unprecedented violence, which it attributed to a "sustained narrative of hate and lies". "These blatant acts of violence not only shocked the nation but also underscored the necessity of checking this unacceptable attempt of political terrorism to impose [a] perverted will through violence and coercion," the ISPR said. The riots erupted on May 9, 2023, after the brief arrest of PTI founder

and former prime minister Imran Khan in the Al-Qadir Trust graft case, triggering nationwide protests. Demonstrators stormed and vandalised military installations, set fire to monuments honouring fallen soldiers and attacked government buildings. The military has since referred to May 9 as a "Black Day" and vowed to hold accountable all those responsible for it. "The 9 May tragedy marked a dark chapter in the history of Pakistan," the ISPR said, describing the events as "politically provoked violence and arson" orchestrated to un-

dermine the state. The violence resulted in the arrest of hundreds of PTI workers, and 105 cases were referred for trial by military courts. The decision to try civilians in military courts was met with significant legal challenges. The Supreme Court initially ruled against these trials, but a seven-member constitutional bench established after the 26th constitutional amendment later permitted them. On Dec 13, the Supreme Court directed that pending cases from the May 9 riots be finalised, allowing judgements to be announced.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday directed relevant authorities to bring tax defaulters into the tax net and take strict action against non-compliance.

Four terrorists killed in Khyber infiltration attempt: ISPR

KHYBER: (news desk) Security forces killed four terrorists while foiling an infiltration attempt by a group of terrorists trying to cross the Pak-Afghan border into Khyber district, the military said on Saturday. In a statement, the ISPR said that on the night between Dec 19 and 20, movement of a group of terrorists, trying to infiltrate through Pakistan-Afghanistan border, was picked up by security forces in the Rajgal area of Khyber. It said troops effectively engaged and thwarted their attempt to infiltrate. Resultantly, four militants were killed.

"During the intense fire exchange, one brave son of soil, Sepoy Amir Sohail Afridi, 22, resident of Khyber, having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat," the statement added.

The ISPR said Pakistan had consistently been asking the interim Afghan government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border. It said the interim Afghan government is expected to fulfil its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by khawarij for perpetuating acts of terrorism against Pakistan. Tirah evacuation opposed Meanwhile, local tribal elders expressed strong opposition to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Apex Committee's decision regarding the evacuation of Tirah Valley for action against 'miscreants', saying they would not submit to such a decision under any circumstances.

PTI, rights watchdog take exception to military justice



ISLAMABAD: The PTI has decided to challenge the military court convictions of its supporters at every available forum, as its leadership termed the trials of the May 9 suspects in military courts a blatant violation of fundamental human rights and principles of justice. The government, on the other hand, labelled the convictions as "justice being served" with the information minister, saying that no one involved in the May 9 riots, prompted by the arrest of PTI leader Imran Khan, would be spared. In a statement posted on PTI founder Imran Khan's account of 'X', the former prime minister urged the international bodies to take notice of the "miscarriage of justice committed in the name of military trials." "Punishing innocent citizens by acting as judge, jur, and executioner through a military trial, after staging May 9 false flag operation themselves, is a blatant violation of human rights,"

16 security men martyred in check post attack

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN / BAJAUR: (news desk) Sixteen security personnel were martyred in a terrorist attack on a check post in tehsil Makin of South Waziristan Upper on Saturday, the military's media wing said. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations, a group of terrorists attempted to attack a security forces' check post in the general area Makin between the night of December 20 and 21. "The attempt was effectively thwarted by own troops and in ensuing fire

exchange, eight khwarij were sent to hell. However, during intense fire exchange, sixteen brave sons of soil, having fought gallantly embraced Shahadat," it said. Sanitisation operation is being conducted in the area and the perpetrators of the heinous act will be brought to justice, the ISPR said, adding that security forces are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of "our brave men further strengthen our resolve". In July, the government,

designated the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan as Fitna al Khwarij, while mandating all institutions to use the term Khariji when referring to the perpetrators of terrorist attacks on Pakistan. Other security sources said that the attackers used heavy weapons. The banned TTP claimed responsibility for the attack, saying they had retaliated the killing of "several important commanders of our organisation in recent security forces operations". Separately, police and security forces defused an

improvised explosive device (IED) planted in Wana's Rustam Bazaar, South Waziristan Lower district, on Saturday. According to police sources, the IED was placed outside a washroom near a water tank under the cover of darkness. However, security forces and police arrived at the scene in time and safely neutralised the device, preventing a potential disaster. Authorities have launched an investigation into the incident to identify those responsible for planting the bomb.



The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has initiated an inquiry into the matter of giving loans by the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) to its own employees

FO rejects US stance on Pakistan missiles

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) The Foreign Office on Saturday strongly rejected the United States' criticism of Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile programme, calling it irrational and devoid of historical context as it vowed to continue developing its missile capabilities in line with its credible minimum deterrence strategy, emphasising their necessity in the face of evolving threats from India.

"The alleged threat perception from Pakistan's missile capabilities and delivery means, raised by the US official, are unfortunate," said FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch. "These allegations are unfounded, devoid of rationality and sense of history." The spokesperson was commenting on US Deputy National Security Adviser Jon Finer's remarks, delivered at the Carnegie

Endowment for International Peace, in which he accused Pakistan of developing long-range ballistic missiles capable of striking targets beyond South Asia, including the US. "It's hard for us to see Pakistan's actions as anything other than an emerging threat to the United States," he said, citing increasingly sophisticated missile technology and development of larger rocket motors.

The spokesperson reiterated that Pakistan's strategic programme is solely designed to preserve peace and stability in South Asia. "Pakistan's strategic capabilities are meant to defend its sovereignty. We cannot abdicate our right to develop capabilities commensurate with the need to maintain credible minimum deterrence and address evolving threats," she added.

Top judges oppose spy agencies' input in judges, bureaucrats'

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) Two senior judges have opposed seeking input from intelligence agencies about judges or bureaucrats when considering them for promotions. In an order issued on Saturday, Islamabad High Court's (IHC) Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan said a bureaucrat with a meritorious service record could not be denied promotion solely on the basis of anonymous intelligence reports about his integrity. Separately, Justice Syed

Mansoor Ali Shah, the senior puisne judge of the Supreme Court, said that allowing intelligence agencies' input in the appointment of judges "is prone to misuse". Justice Khan passed the order on the petition of Tahir Hassan, Grade 20 officer of the Information Group. Mr Hassan was one of the officers in line for promotion to Grade 21 when the Central Selection Board (CSB) — which promotes bureaucrats in grades 19 to 21 — met in August 2023. However, he was denied

the promotion despite his stellar service record since reports from intelligence agencies found him "to be an officer of mixed reputation and questionable integrity". 'Oxymoronic' reports The court found that intelligence reports were presented before the board for the first time during the meeting, and neither the CSB members nor the petitioner had seen those reports before. The officer was denied promotion solely on the basis of these reports despite the fact that he had

"13 'Outstanding', 22 'Very Good' and 2 'Good' evaluations over his career from 1994 to 2022, the court noted. "It is downright shocking for a system of justice to countenance a framework whereby an officer's career can be put in jeopardy on the basis of an intelligence report that was neither before his department before recommending him for consideration nor was before the CSB members at any time before they convened to consider an officer's promotion, Justice Khan w



rote in the order. The judge lambasted the causal format of the intelligence reports and called them oxymoronic since "there is nothing intelligent written in those rep

orts". The report from ISI, reproduced in the order, stated that the officer had a "satisfactory [professional] competence but was "financially corrupt and involved in corrupt practices".

PM orders strict action against tax defaulters

LAHORE: (news desk) Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday directed relevant authorities to bring tax defaulters into the tax net and take strict action against non-compliance.

While presiding over a crucial review meeting on strategies to enhance revenue collection, the PM said, "Improving FBR's performance through technology is government's top priority." After being briefed on the installation and monitoring of video analytics in sugar industry, the PM hoped the move would improve revenue collection, eliminate hoarding, and help stabilise prices. He also ordered stringent action against tax evasion and under-reporting by sugar mills.

PTI formally disassociates itself from Fawad Chaudhry

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) The PTI has "completely disassociated" itself from former information minister Fawad Chaudhry, stating that he is not authorised to issue statements on media or participate in TV talk shows on behalf of the party. An official announcement in this regard was made by the party after its chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan along with lawyers met PTI founder Imran Khan in the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi on Saturday.

During the meeting, Mr Khan issued "special directives" with regard to the party affairs and directed the party chairman to publicly disassociate from Mr Chaudhry since he had already quit the party. "Accordingly, following Khan Sahab's instructions, the PTI completely disassociates itself from Fawad Chaudhry and clarifies that Fawad Chaudhry has no relation whatsoever with the PTI. Moreover, he is not authorised to represent the PTI on media, social media, and TV talk shows, or issue statements on behalf of the PTI, or present his personal opinions as the party's stance," says the official announcement. When contacted, Mr Chaudhry said he could not comment on the development, claiming that Mr Khan had himself instructed him not to respond to any criticism of him from the present party office-bearers. "Unless meet Imran Khan and know the reason, I cannot comment as Imran Khan has specifically instructed me not to respond to any criticism or statement by present temporary office holders.

Zain Qureshi among three indicted in GHQ attack

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Rawalpindi on Saturday indicted three more individuals in the case related to the violent protests outside the General Headquarters (GHQ) on May 9, 2023.

The suspects include Zain Qureshi, Raja Nasir Mahfouz and Raja Shahbaz Tiger, bringing the total number of indicted individuals in the case to 116. In a separate development, Bushra Bibi, the wife of former prime minister Imran Khan, has been granted interim bail by the ATC of Rawalpindi in 32 cases linked to PTI protests. The court adjourned further hearings in the matter until Jan 13.

Mr Qureshi was not present at the proceedings and was indicted through his legal representative, Ali Bukhari. The court also reserved its decision on a petition filed by Mr Khan and Fawad Chaudhry, seeking access to CCTV footage from the hearing held on Dec 5. A verdict on the matter will be announced during the next session. Separately, the prosecution has requested the court to block the national identity cards of four accused individuals — Bilal, Ijaz, Asim and Shaheer Sikandar — pending further investigation. The hearing has been adjourned to Dec 24, when pending requests will be addressed and trial proceedings will continue. The court recorded statements from two prosecution witnesses: Meesam, an officer from the Cabinet Division, and Malik Sajid, a joint director at the State Bank of Pakistan.