

PM launches first anti-polio drive for 2025; vows to eradicate disease from country

Islamabad (News Desk) Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday launched the year's first nationwide anti-polio campaign, running from February 3 to 9, by administering polio drops to children under five and vowing to eradicate the disease from the country. Pakistan is one of the last two countries in the world, alongside Afghanistan, where polio remains endemic. Despite global efforts to eradicate the virus, challenges such as security issues, vaccine hesitancy, and misinformation have slowed progress. Last year, the country reported more than 70 polio cases, with the virus de-

tected in around 90 districts. This year, the first case was reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan district. Addressing the launching ceremony of the anti-polio drive today, the prime minister reaffirmed his determination to eliminate the disease from Pakistan. According to The Associated Press of Pakistan, he said, "The national polio vaccination drive would target millions of children to save their future and health." The premier hoped that the dedicated teams would work "day and night to eradicate the disease, and would reach the far-flung areas and villages," adding

these teams would successfully meet the huge responsibility by "utilising their complete energies". The prime minister said that unfortunately, during the last year, a total of 77 polio cases were reported in the country which emerged as a huge challenge, besides posing a setback. On the first case for the year reported last month, the premier expressed resolve to eradicate polio at all costs; with dedicated teamwork and support from the international partners. The prime minister also expressed the hope that with international coordination and support, the

crippling disease in the neighbouring brotherly country Afghanistan would end. He appreciated all the international partners including the World Health Organisation, Unicef, Bill Gates Foundation and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for their commitment and efforts to the government in its efforts to eliminate polio. Polio is a paralysing disease that has no cure. Multiple doses of the oral polio vaccine and completion of the routine vaccination schedule for all children under the age of five are essential to provide children with high immunity against this terrible disease.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif launching the first anti-polio campaign for the year on Sunday

NAB files reference over Bahria Town Karachi land grab

KARACHI (News Desk) The National Accountability Bureau has filed a reference against former Sindh chief minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah, senior minister Sharjeel Memon, property tycoon Malik Riaz, and several senior government officials for converting, exchanging, and transferring government land to Bahria Town. The accountability watchdog alleged that the entire hierarchy of the executive, the revenue board, and the Malir Development Authority (MDA) had conspired to cede valuable public property to an individual for some gains. The NAB investigating officer filed the reference before the administrative judge of accountability courts Karachi and named 33 individuals as accused. It maintained that the accused in active connivance grabbed 17,671.87 acres under the grab of "adjustment/exchange/consolidation in 2013-14 in sheer violation of law for Bahria Town, causing a colossal loss of over Rs708.08 billion to the national exchequer. The reference names former Sindh Board of Revenue member Ahmed Baksh Narejo; land utilisation department's secretaries Saqib Ahmed Soomro and Mohammad Javed Hanif Khan; then MDA director general Mohammad Sohail; Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) directors general Manzoor Qadir and Agha Maqsood Abbas.

Sewage samples from 26 districts test positive for wild poliovirus type 1



ISLAMABAD: Environmental samples collected from 26 districts have confirmed the presence of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) in those areas. An official of the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication said sewage samples were collected from Badin, Ghotki, Hyderabad, Jacobabad, Kambar, Karachi Central, Karachi East, Karachi Korangi, Karachi Malir, Karachi South, Karachi West, Karachi Keamari, Mirpurkhas, Sujawal, Sukkur, Abbottabad, Bajaur, D.I. Khan, Lakki Marwat, Peshawar, Chaman, Loralai, Quetta, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi. Sewage samples collected from Thatta, Umerkot, Khairpur, Tando Allah Yar, Tando Muhammad Khan, Noshero Feroze and Lakki Marwat districts also tested positive for WPV1 last month. Positive sewage samples indicate the presence of poliovirus in the area, putting children at risk of contracting the crippling disease. Pakistan is one of the last two countries in the world, alongside Afghanistan, where polio remains endemic.

Islamabad lawyers announce strike tomorrow over 'unconstitutional' judicial appointments

Islamabad (News Desk) The Islamabad Bar Council, Islamabad High Court Bar Association, and Islamabad District Bar Association, in a joint meeting on Sunday, announced a strike in the district courts and the Islamabad High Court tomorrow to protest what they call "unconstitutional measures" undermining the judiciary and legal profession. The move comes a day after President Asif Ali Zardari approved the transfer of a Lahore High Court (LHC) judge, Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar, along with two others, to the IHC despite opposition from five

IHC judges. They warned in a letter to top judges that his elevation as IHC chief justice would "violate constitutional procedures and judicial norms". According to a resolution passed in a joint session of the capital's legal fraternity today, a strike will be observed tomorrow to protest the "unconstitutional measure affecting the judiciary and the legal profession". The legal fraternity of Islamabad ensures its commitment to resist the unjustified transfers and appointments of judges from other provinces to the IHC, said the resolution, a copy of which is

available with Dawn.com. Lawyers said that they would pursue "all legal and constitutional avenues to challenge this decision and safeguard the judicial independence of Islamabad". The legal fraternity further demanded that the Bar Association's application — seeking the nullification of the 26th Constitutional Amendment — be heard by all 16 judges of the Supreme Court. It condemned the Judicial Commission of Pakistan's (JCP's) decision to call a meeting to appoint additional judges to the SC in February and called the action a "blatant attempt

to manipulate the court's composition, filling it with individuals favoured by the ruling parties and establishment". The resolution said that the move blatantly disregarded the fundamental principle of an independent judiciary, undermining the public's trust in the legal system. "Lawyers across the nation firmly believe that no appointments to the SC should proceed until a final decision is reached on the petitions challenging the validity of the 26th Amendment," it claimed, calling for the postponement of the JCP meeting on February 10.



Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi meets with National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in Islamabad on Sunday

Interior minister, NA speaker discuss PTI's 'attitude' during talks with govt

Lahore (News Desk) Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq met in Islamabad on Sunday, with the PTI's "attitude" during the recent talks with the government coming under discussion. After more than a year of heightened tensions between the government

and the PTI, the two sides commenced dialogue in the last week of December to bring down political temperatures. But despite weeks of negotiations, the dialogue process stalled on major issues — the formation of two judicial commissions and the release of PTI prisoners. The PTI boycotted the fourth meeting this week,

calling off talks over a delay in the government forming judicial commissions to probe the protests of May 9, 2023 and Nov 26, 2024. While the government renewed the invitation to the PTI to rejoin the negotiation process by proposing a parliamentary committee, the latter rejected the offer.

Naqvi met with the NA speaker today, where both discussed matters of mutual interest and the overall situation in the country, a statement by the interior ministry said. It added that the "PTI's attitude, despite the positive progress made by the government for negotiations," was also discussed during the meeting.

Negotiations with Afghanistan not domain of provincial govt: Amir Muqam

Islamabad (News Desk) Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Kashmir Affairs, and Gilgit-Baltistan Amir Muqam said on Saturday that negotiations with Afghanistan fall outside the provincial government's jurisdiction. Islamabad has repeatedly conveyed its concerns to the Afghan government over the presence of terror outfits, including the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), inside Afghanistan, saying that the

militants have consistently used Afghan soil to launch terror attacks inside Pakistani territory. Kabul denies the allegations. Last month, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur announced plans to send a delegation to Afghanistan for dialogue on bilateral issues. This week, the provincial government said it would engage cross-border tribesmen to curb militancy and ensure regional peace. "Negotiations with Af-

ghanistan are not the domain of the provincial government, it is a federal subject," Muqam said while appearing on the Dawn News programme 'Doosra Rukh' on Saturday. He clarified that if a province wishes to speak with a foreign nation, it should pass on its request to the federation. "If the province talks on its own behalf, then who will implement [commitments made during the talks]?" he asked. The minister contin-

ued, "In this manner, Balochistan will say tomorrow that they will talk to Iran, and Punjab will say that it shares a border with India, so they want to talk to them. "Ali Amin Gandapur should not do this, it does not come under his domain, it is a federal subject." Muqam then turned his attention to negotiations between the PTI and the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). "What was the fate of the talks they held ear-



lier and what was the result?" he asked. When asked if the federal government was not taken into confidence before this statement by the KP chief minister, he replied: "He always follows his whims, he acts like a king. The PTI founder is like this as well as the party, whatever idea they have, they go on about it themselves."

Repatriation of Morocco boat tragedy survivors completes

GUJRAT: (News Desk) The repatriation of at least 22 Pakistani survivors of last month's boat tragedy has been completed with the arrival of the last batch of eight survivors at Islamabad airport on Saturday. A senior official of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Gujranwala, told Dawn that some 15 survivors of the Mauritania-Morocco boat tragedy had been brought back during the last couple of days. The official said that out of the eight survivors who arrived on Saturday, four each hailed from Gujranwala and Gujrat regions. They were taken to Gujranwala anti-human trafficking cell straight from Islamabad airport for questioning. FIA Gujranwala Zone Director Abdul Qadir Qamar said all the previous 15 survivors had been allowed to return home after being questioned by the relevant investigation teams.

Two awarded death for rape, murder of minor girl in Thatta

THATTA: (News Desk) In a landmark verdict, Thatta sessions court on Saturday sentenced two accused to death after finding them guilty of abducting, sexually assaulting and murdering a seven-year-old girl in Gharo in December 2019. The incident had sent shockwaves through the area's residents as one of the convicts was the victim's close relative. The accused Irshad Mallah, the victim's own uncle, and Sikandar Shah kidnapped Dua Wasayo Mallah, took her to a jungle where they subjected her to sexual assault and then murdered her in the jurisdiction of Gharo police station. The victim's body was later found in a banana field, stripped of clothes. The victim's father, Altaf Wasayo, registered the case and its investigation was led by former Thatta SSP Shabbir Ahmed Sethar. The accused were eventually arrested and remained in custody at Badin jail throughout the trial period. Judge Mushtari Khanam delivered verdict on the case on Saturday after a prolonged legal battle. In addition to the death penalty, the accused were sentenced to seven years in prison for concealing evidence and attempting to cover up the crime. The case was closely monitored by human rights organisations and public, who hailed the verdict as a significant step toward justice for victims of sex crimes in general and child abuse in particular.

12 remanded in FIA custody for filing 'fake' documents to get US visa in Karachi

KARACHI: (News Desk) A judicial magistrate on Saturday remanded 12 suspects in the custody of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in a case pertaining to providing fake educational documents to obtain US visas. The FIA produced Nisaar Khan, Malik Muhammad Asfand Nisar, Huzaifa Malik, Umar Hayat, Zeeshan Ali, Syed Wasi Ahmad, Qurat-ul-Ain Fatima, Shahroz Babar, Aqib Afridi, Usama Imtiaz, Abdul Basit and Muhammad Furqan Ahmad before a judicial magistrate (South) and sought their custody for interrogation. The magistrate handed them over to the investigating officer (IO) on five-day physical remand and directed the IO to produce them at next hearing along with a progress report. The FIA stated that, based on a complaint from the US Consulate in Karachi, the suspects were intercepted for their involvement in providing fake or forged educational documents to secure US visas. According to the FIR, an official at the US Consulate had sent a reference to the FIA, stating that the overseas criminal investigations unit at the US Consulate in Karachi had an open investigation against Nisaar Khan, allegedly the head of a delegation and students at the University of Lahore, for providing fraudulent documents and guidance to support the visa applications of eleven purported students from the university.