

Army chief urges youth to focus on their duties instead of engaging in 'baseless criticism'

Islamabad (News Desk) Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir has urged the country's students to be "self-responsible" and urged them to focus on their duties instead of engaging in "baseless criticism", state-run Radio Pakistan reported on Sunday. In recent statements, the military has taken a harsh line against online campaigns aimed at the army, with Gen Munir himself warning that social media was being used as a tool to spread anarchy and false information targeting

the armed forces. COAS Munir inaugurated the CMH Institute of Medical Sciences (Cims) in Punjab's Bahawalpur, where he engaged with students from various universities, according to a statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) issued on Friday. During his interaction with students at Cims, Gen Munir stressed the "importance of self-responsibility, saying each of us must focus on our own duties and performance instead of engaging in baseless criticism", Radio Pakistan reported. Accord-

ing to the ISPR statement, the army chief underscored the army's commitment to nurturing the nation's youth and lauded its role in shaping Pakistan's future. He reaffirmed the "army's support for initiatives that empower young talent", the ISPR added. It further said that Gen Munir encouraged students to pursue academic excellence with dedication and equip themselves with the skills necessary to contribute meaningfully to national development. The army chief had addressed a gathering of university

and college students last month in Rawalpindi, where he emphasised the need to imbibe "Pakistani". Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir addresses students at the CMH Institute of Medical Sciences in Bahawalpur, Punjab on March 1, 2025. — Photo courtesy ISPR "As long as great mothers continue to sacrifice their children for Pakistan and the youth stand united with the armed forces, nobody can harm the country," Radio Pakistan quoted COAS Munir as saying.



Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir addresses students at the CMH Institute of Medical Sciences in Bahawalpur, Punjab on March 1, 2025.

Two soldiers martyred in North Waziristan explosion

NORTH WAZIRISTAN / LAKKI MARWAT: (News Desk) Two soldiers were martyred when a suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden car into their convoy in the Eidak area, North Waziristan, on Saturday, according to sources. At least 10 people, including two civilians, were injured in the attack. The vehicle was completely destroyed in the attack. The martyrs and injured were moved to a hospital as security forces launched a search operation in surrounding areas to track down the perpetrators. On Friday, ISPR said that security forces gunned down six terrorists during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Ghulam Khan village of North Waziristan. Lakkhi attack separately, a militant was killed and a police official injured in an exchange of firing in Abbasa Khat-tak, Lakkhi Marwat, on Saturday.

A police official said the gunfight ensued after a police patrol party came under attack in the trans-river belt area. The terrorists had ambushed the police van between Abbasa Khat-tak and Wanda Shahabakhel.

Rawalpindi markets witness unusual rush of buyers day before Ramazan



RAWALPINDI: (News Desk) A day before the start of Ramazan, people thronged bazaars and markets in the garrison city on Saturday. The rush of shoppers in the business centres added to the traffic gridlocks already caused by ongoing construction work on different roads. The Mall has been closed for traffic for the last two days due to the construction of an underpass with traffic diverted to alternative roads. Besides a flyover on Adiala Road, construction work is ongoing on many roads, including Railway Road from Bakery Chowk to Raja Bazaar, Girja Road and Ch. Bostan Khan Road from Chaklala Scheme-III to Lahore High Court. Before Ramazan, mostly people thronged bazaars for purchase of grocery, clothes and other items to avoid the traffic rush during fasting. Traders said they were expecting relatively poor turnout of shoppers due to inflation and subsequent economic recession in the country, but markets had been witnessing more buyers than expected. However, Mohammad Nasir, a shopkeeper at Nirankari Bazaar, said, "People mostly tend to start their shopping before Ramazan, particularly a day before the start of the holy month." He said mostly people visited main bazaars for monthly shopping at the weekend or on the first day of a month.

220 'non-essential posts' abolished in NA to save money after MNAs' pay hike

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The National Assembly has abolished 220 "non-essential posts" to cut expenditures, official documents revealed weeks after parliamentarians hiked their salaries and other remunerations by around 300 per cent. In its annual report published at the end of the parliamentary year, the National Assembly Secretariat said "220 non-essential posts" were abolished during three phases of "rightsizing" to save Rs1 billion annually. "Under the leadership of

Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, the National Assembly Finance Committee has approved a series of policy initiatives aimed at optimising the Secretariat's operations", the report said, adding the rightsizing was being carried out in three phases. In the first two phases, "non-essential posts" within grades 1 to 19 were abolished, which reduced the assembly's expenditure by over Rs563m. Annual report says move part of 'rightsizing' policy. The third phase of reforms is being rolled out to save

Rs1bn each year. In the first phase, 90 "non-essential posts" were abolished, which would save Rs255.84m each year. The second phase saw the abolishment of 130 posts, which would cut Rs30.75m from expenditures. An NA official also confirmed that the process of "rightsizing" the NA Secretariat was underway in three phases. "As of now, the first two phases have been successfully implemented, resulting in the abolition of 220 non-essential posts within grades 1 to 19." The official contin-

ued: "This reform has led to significant cost savings, with an annual reduction of over Rs563m in expenditure." Speaker Sadiq has also set ambitious targets, envisioning savings of Rs1bn annually as the third phase of the reforms ia [being] rolled out." The report didn't mention the recent increase in the remuneration of MNAs whose basic salary was increased from Rs180,000 to Rs519,000. It was also unclear how the salary hike for MNAs would offset the anticipated savings from the "rightsizing".



COAS General Syed Asim Munir inaugurates Integrated Combat Simulator Arena at the CMH Institute of Medical Sciences in Bahawalpur, Punjab on March 1, 2025.

Karachi traffic plan devised to prevent congestion in Ramazan

Karachi (News Desk) The Karachi administration has decided to take special measures to improve traffic flow and prevent congestion during Ramazan, particularly during Iftar hours. The development emerged on Saturday as Karachi Commissioner Syed Hasan Naqvi chaired a meeting to

review traffic management plans for Ramazan, which began on Sunday. The meeting was attended by Transport Secretary Asad Zamin, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Traffic Peer Muhammad Shah, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) Municipal Commissioner Afzal Zaidi, and senior of-

officials from town administrations, municipal corporations, and cantonment boards. DIG Shah informed the meeting that the traffic police would deploy special staff to maintain the flow of vehicles on all busy roads between 2pm to 7pm. "Help desks will also be set up in markets to im-

prove traffic management during Eid shopping," DIG Shah added. It was also decided that various deputy commissioners would hold meetings with market associations to review parking and traffic arrangements in markets in anticipation of the rush during Eid shopping.

Accused in Rangers officials' hit-and-run case gets bail

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) has approved the post-arrest bail application of the accused in the hit-and-run case of Rangers personnel during the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's (PTI) November 26, 2024, protests in Islamabad.

The case against Hashim Abbasi was registered at Ramna police station under terrorism and other charges. The court presided over by Judge Abul Hasanat Mohammad Zulqarnain announced its decision following the completion of arguments from both the prosecution and defence. According to the prosecution, the accused was involved in a deliberate act of violence during the PTI demonstration. However, the defence argued that the charges were politically motivated and lacked substantial evidence.

Unknown attackers hurl firecrackers at cops near Islamabad's Lal Masjid

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) An Islamabad police team narrowly missed a firecracker attack near Lal Masjid in the federal capital while on special duty, police said on Saturday.

Around 11 members of the police team including two lady constables were deployed at Gali No 2, G-7/3 to ward off any untoward incident during a down-played stand-off between the clerics and students of Jamia Hafsa following the arrest of Ume Hassan, the wife of cleric Maulana Abdul Aziz.

The police said an applied for Passo car appeared from Al-Habib Market G-7/3 and tried to run over the police personnel on duty.

However, the police officials reportedly avoided any harm. Video featuring cleric Maulana Abdul Aziz hurling threats at law enforcement personnel goes viral on social media. Meanwhile, two occupants from the back-seat of the moving vehicle allegedly hurled crackers at the police team. Fortunately, the police said, no one was hurt despite the fact that the cracker went off dangerously close. After carrying out the attack, the assailants reportedly fled the scene. Police said the unidentified individuals were aged between 20 to 25 years.

Police enter Quetta Press Club, arrest protesters

QUETTA: (News Desk) Police barged into the Quetta Press Club on Saturday, arresting some individuals who had arrived for a press conference to air their grievances against the authorities after they appeared in a test for jobs in Balochistan Education Department. The shortlisted candidates wanted to register their protest against delays in the issuance of appointment letters.

The police action drew a strong reaction from the Balochistan Union of Journalists and the Quetta Press Club (QPC).

A heavy police contingent was deployed in front of the Quetta Press Club since early morning, along with prisoners' vans and water cannons, to deter demonstrators.

Police arrested a number of protesters who had gathered outside the QPC.

When some of the protesters went inside the QPC for addressing a press conference, police barged into the club's premises, allegedly manhandled journalists when they tried to stop them from entering the building, and detained the candidates.

In a joint statement, the BUJ and the Quetta Press Club management condemned the police action, calling it "a blatant attempt to curb freedom of expression".

They called for the immediate suspension of the officials involved and an impartial investigation into the matter. "This is an unprecedented and intolerable incident. First, the district administration targeted press freedom, and now the police have emulated them.

Centre, Punjab row deepens over polio detection

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: (News Desk) The country has reported the sixth polio case of the year, this time from Sindh, amid an ongoing controversy over the detection of a case in Punjab. Prime Minister's Focal Person on Polio Ayesha Raza Farooq defended the country's polio eradication efforts, particularly in Punjab, which she said leads in routine immunisation and vaccination coverage. "Given Punjab's impressive vaccination efforts, it is difficult for health au-

thorities in the province to believe that a polio case could emerge despite such measures," she told Dawn. The controversy arose after a polio case was reported in Mandi Bahaudin last month. Punjab's Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare Khawaja Imran Nazeer held a press conference on Friday, disputing the case. He claimed that a special team of paediatricians examined the child and found no neurological defects, concluding that the case should not be classified as poliomyelitis.

Punjab health authorities also challenged a polio case in Chakwal last year, saying the child was healthy. Mr Nazeer played videos of children previously suspected of suffering from polio playing and running and asserted that cases were being reported without proper verification. The minister also claimed that the percentage of underperforming union councils had been reduced from 6pc to 2pc in Punjab. However, a senior official of the National Institute

of Health (NIH), speaking on condition of anonymity, dismissed the debate over the Punjab case as unnecessary. "The fact of the matter is that a qualified doctor suspected the patient as a possible polio victim using standard case definition, and the National Reference Lab isolated wild poliovirus from her stool sample confirming an infection," the official said. "For all practical purposes, it's a confirmed polio case and needs to be tackled accordingly." He added, "While at



tempting for the eradication (not control), it's imperative to maintain optimally sensitive surveillance system that is capable of picking the polio virus both in humans (Acute Flaccid Paralysis

AFP surveillance) as well as the sewage samples (environmental surveillance). It is indeed reassuring to see Pakistan maintaining eradication level surveillance capable of picking atypical.