

## Jaffar Express hijacking: State media 'reports 190 rescued, 2nd day of operation underway in Balochistan

Balochistan (News Desk) Security forces have rescued at least 190 passengers and killed 30 terrorists as a rescue operation continues into its second day after terrorists hijacked the Jaffar Express train near Balochistan's Bolan district, state media said on Wednesday. The unprecedented hostage situation began on Tuesday near the Mashkaf Tunnel, about 157 kilometres from Quetta, when terrorists attacked the Jaffar Express and took more than 400 passengers hostage, includ-

ing numerous security personnel. What we know so far: Train carrying around 450 people, including security personnel, hijacked; BLA claims responsibility; Security forces launch operation, kill 30 terrorists; 70 to 80 terrorists were involved in the incident, according to interior ministry; 190 passengers; including 37 injured, rescued; 57 of rescued passengers shifted to the provincial capital; Terrorists in contact with their facilitators in Af-

ghanistan, as per state media. Help desk and emergency cell set up for families of travellers. Condemnations pour in from US, China, UN, Iran, and Germany. Security forces claimed to have rescued around 190 passengers so far — including women and children — from the attackers, state-run Radio Pakistan reported today, citing security sources. The security sources added that 30 terrorists had been killed by security forces so far, while the

operation to eliminate the remaining assailants was continuing. The report further said 37 injured had been sent for medical treatment. "The terrorists responsible for the cowardly attack on Jaffar Express are in contact with their facilitators in Afghanistan," Radio Pakistan further said. "The terrorists have positioned suicide bombers very close to some innocent hostages. The suicide bombers are wearing explosive vests," the report quoted security sources as saying.



Federal Minister For IT and Telecom, Shaza Fatima Khwaja, chaired a meeting with senior officials from Dgpays, to discuss investment opportunities in Pakistan Digital Economy on March 12, 2025

## Sehwan high school caught in crossfire

Sehwan (News Desk) Panic gripped Sehwan city when an armed group of people attacked a government boys high school on Wednesday, according to police. Hyderabad Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police Tariq Dharejo confirmed to Dawn that two groups of the Rind community were involved in some dispute, and one of them resorted to firing on the school to settle their score with rivals. He said no casualty was so far reported. "They attacked a teacher, Pir Mohammad Rind, but he remained unhurt. His motorbike was damaged, and the attackers fled away," DIG Dharejo added. Jamshoro Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Zafar Siddiqui reached the scene, and police from Dadu also arrived there. In December of last year, 14 people had suffered wounds when rival groups of the Pararo community armed with sticks and iron rods clashed with each other over a land dispute in the Kachi Abadi area, Sehwan town. DIG Dharejo said that according to the latest reports, the firing was the result of a land dispute amongst the Rind community.

## Laws passed by 'incomplete parliament' illegal



ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The opposition in the Senate on Tuesday challenged the legality of legislation passed by an incomplete parliament, raising concerns over constitutional violations and procedural irregularities. Speaking on a point of order on the last day of the Senate's parliamentary year, Leader of the Opposition Syed Shibli Faraz criticised what he called a series of constitutional defiance that had created legal complications and controversies. Mr Faraz pointed out that under Article 59 of the Constitution, the Senate must consist of 96 members, each serving a six-year term. However, the house had remained incomplete for over a year due to the non-holding of Senate elections for 11 seats from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "The house is incomplete, yet key legislative actions, including the election of the Senate chairman and deputy chairman, have been carried out. How can these elections be valid when the house itself is not duly constituted?" he questioned. Reading Article 60, he said that "the term of the office of the chairman or deputy chairman shall be three years from the day on which he enters in his office".

## Legality of super tax comes under SC Constitutional Bench scrutiny

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court, hearing a set of challenges to the imposition of super tax, was informed on Tuesday that the cess was initially introduced as a one-time measure for a specific purpose in 2015 but continued to be enforced until 2022. Senior counsel Makhdoom Ali Khan, representing a number of companies, argued that this prolonged implementation raised questions about its legitimacy. A five-judge CB, headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan,

had taken up a number of petitions filed by different taxpayers assailing the constitutional vires of the amended Section 4C of the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 implemented for the tax year 2023. The tax was initially imposed in 2015 under a money bill on wealthy individuals and companies, with the stated purpose of rehabilitating the areas affected during the Operation Zarb-i-Azb against terrorism. The counsel argued that while the government estimated collecting approximately Rs80 billion

through the super tax, the exact amount collected remains undisclosed. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail questioned whether the government had prepared a PC-1 (Project Concept-1) or a detailed plan for rehabilitating the affected areas. He also inquired about the estimated cost of rehabilitation and whether the collected funds were used as intended. The judge emphasised that the rehabilitation of affected areas was a local or provincial matter, raising concerns about using national funds without

provincial consent. He also questioned whether taxes on services could be implemented through a money bill. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar questioned the indefinite continuation of the super tax, asking whether a tax, once imposed, could last forever. The counsel argued that the recovery and expenditure of the super tax were never mentioned in any speeches by the finance minister and that the government should be asked to disclose how much tax had been collected and spent.

## Dera court orders exhumation of body of Vani girl's father

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: (News Desk) The district and sessions judge here on Tuesday ordered the exhumation of the body of a man for postmortem after his alleged death by suicide following a Vani decision by a panchayat about his daughter. DSJ Syed Anees Badshah announced the verdict following a request by the prosecution branch, after which the judicial magistrate of Paharpur was directed to complete the exhumation and postmortem process. In its petition, the prosecution branch stated that it was crucial to determine the actual circumstances surrounding Adil's death. The court accepted the request and issued orders for the exhumation and medical examination to uncover the real causes behind his demise. Additionally, the Paharpur police have formally requested a forensic analysis of the audio message that Adil allegedly recorded.

## Divorced women are entitled to a share in late father's monthly pension, rules SHC

KARACHI: (News Desk) The Sindh High Court has ruled that divorced daughters are also entitled to receive a share from the monthly pension of her deceased father until she marries again. The SHC also noted that realising the miseries and hardships faced by divorced and widowed daughters of deceased pensioners, the finance ministry had liberalised the pension rules in 1983 and thereafter, the status of divorced daughters had also been made equal to unmarried daughters. While allowing a petition of a divorced woman, a two-judge constitutional bench comprising Justice Mohammad Karim Khan and Justice Nisar Ahmed Bhanbhro directed the respondent authorities to disburse an amount of the monthly pension of deceased pensioner to petitioner Sarwat Ghazi Uddin being divorced daughter and other unmarried/widowed daughter(s) according to their shares preferably within a period of four months. The petitioner had moved the SHC against the provincial authorities last year and submitted that her father was retired as an assistant professor in the college education department in 1990 and passed away in January 2023.

## PAC questions award of Rs1.8bn contract to NLC by NDMA sans bidding

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The controversial award of a Rs1.89 billion contract by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) directly to the National Logistics Cell (NLC) for constructing the National Emergency Operations Centre came under detailed discussion during the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) meeting on Tuesday. Questions were raised by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), chaired by Junaid Akbar Khan, about the transparency of the bidding process, as only military-affiliated institutions were considered. The PAC was convened to review audit reports of the NDMA and the Ministry of Communications. Discussions centered on the financial and operational aspects of disaster management and relief efforts in the country. The Auditor General of Pakistan's office noted that during the financial year 2022-23, bid invitations were extended to three military-affiliated entities — the National Logistics Cell (NLC), Frontier Works Organisation (FWO), and Railcop. However, only NLC submitted a bid, which was subsequently accepted, leading to a single-bid contract award. The audit report highlighted that no mechanism was in place to assess price reasonability, raising concerns over compliance with public procurement rules. It also questioned why only military-affiliated organisations were deemed suitable for development projects in the country.



A paramilitary soldier stands guard at a railway station in the Sibi district of southwestern Balochistan province on March 12 during a security operation against militants a day after they hijacked a passenger train.

## Pakistan denounces fresh round of India curbs on Kashmiri organisations: FO

Islamabad (News Desk) Pakistan on Wednesday denounced Indian authorities' decision to declare two organisations of Indian-occupied Kashmir as "unlawful associations", according to a Foreign Office statement. A day earlier, the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs declared the Jammu

and Kashmir Awami Action Committee (AAC), headed by Kashmiri chief cleric and Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, and the Jammu and Kashmir Itihadul Muslimeen (JKIM), headed by Maulana Mohammad Abbas Ansari, as "unlawful association" for the next five years, The Hindu reported.

Last year, Indian authorities had declared several political parties as "unlawful associations" as well, bringing the total of banned political parties to 14 in the occupied region. The decision was denounced by the FO at the time as well. "Pakistan denounces the Indian authorities' deci-

sion to declare the AAM and JKIM as 'Unlawful Association' for a period of five years," the statement said. "The AAM is led by a prominent political and religious leader, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq. The JKIM was also founded by another notable political and religious leader.

## Bilawal wants Council of Common Interests to decide canals' fate

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) A day after President Asif Ali Zardari expressed concerns over a proposed canal project on the Indus River in Punjab, PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Tuesday suggested the controversial project be referred to the Council of Common Interests (CCI). Speaking to media persons at his chambers in the National Assembly, the PPP leader said the one-sided policies made

by the Centre without consensus have put the government under strain, and it should be reviewed and resolved. The PPP chief said that Sindh's ruling party (PPP) has continuously demanded a CCI meeting. "Even in his last speech to the Assembly, the late Nawab Yousuf Talpur raised the water issue, and so did other members of the PPP. The Sindh CM, his ministers, and the provincial bureaucracy also

raised the issue on every forum," he said. Mr Bhutto-Zardari endorsed the Green Pakistan project, under which canals are planned. "...as far as the Green Pakistan project and garnering investment for agriculture, the PPP not only owns it, but it is the very philosophy of the party. We do not only want relief for our farmers, but wish for them to flourish," he said. "We believe that we have

to work hard in two phases, one aspect of which is collective farming. To maximise results for the first phase, the areas of Punjab and Sindh that contribute to the agricultural economy need to be prioritised," he added. If the provincial governments utilised the public-private partnership model to introduce smart irrigation, and the federal government funded this transition, then collective farming could become a



revolutionary measure, he said, adding that the PPP was working on pilot projects across Sindh, including bio-saline agriculture experiments in Thar. "We do not oppose for the sake of opposing but have alternate solutions to propose in the wake of crises".