

PM Shehbaz departs for two-day official visit to Belarus

Islamabad(News Desk) Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif departed on Thursday departed for a two-day official visit to the Republic of Belarus at the invitation of President Aleksandr Lukashenko.

He was accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, Information and Broadcasting Minister Attaullah Tarar and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi.

During his visit from April 10-11, the prime minister will hold talks with Pres-

ident Lukashenko to review progress in areas of mutual interest.“Over the past six months, a series of high-level bilateral engagements —including the 8th Session of the Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) in February 2025 and a subsequent visit by a high-powered mixed ministerial delegation to Belarus in April 2025 — have laid the groundwork for a productive visit,” the Foreign Office said in a statement today.“The two sides are expected to sign several agreements to further strengthen cooperation.”The Prime Minister’s visit underscores the strong and ongoing

partnership between Pakistan and Belarus,” the FO said.In November last year, Pakistan and Belarus signed a three-year, wide-ranging ‘Roadmap for Comprehensive Cooperation’ agreement, aimed at strengthening economic ties between the two countries.The Roadmap for Comprehensive Cooperation between Pakistan and Belarus for 2025-27, described by the Pakistani government as a “key outcome” of the visit, was among 15 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements signed during talks between PM Shehbaz and the Belarusian president. These

were followed by a delegation-level meeting.Other MoUs signed on the occasion covered cooperation in e-commerce, science and technology, accreditation, auditing, vocational education, health services, and halal trade.The two countries also agreed to collaborate on intelligence sharing related to money laundering and terrorism financing, customs statistics on bilateral trade, international road transport, and disaster management. Additionally, agreements were reached on environmental and climate change cooperation, along with an extradition treaty to bolster legal frameworks.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif departs for a two-day official visit to Belarus.

Indus drying up before our eyes, says Sherry

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday expressed concern over unprecedented water crisis in the Indus River system which is experiencing a historic 100-year low.In an urgent call to action, the former climate change minister stressed that the situation is now a national emergency and it must not be politicised.“The Indus River is drying up before our eyes,” warned Senator Rehman, who heads the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination.“Rainfall has dropped by 40pc due to accelerating climate change. The Sukkur Barrage is experiencing a 71pc decline in water levels, while overall shortages across all three barrages have reached 65pc. These are staggering numbers,” she said. Ms Rehman criticised the current response to the crisis, pointing out that instead of conserving the rapidly depleting water resources, canal extractions were being carried out which is further draining the Indus water.

SC asked to throw out overseas Pakistanis’ plea for vote



ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday urged the Supreme Court to reject petitions seeking right to vote for overseas Pakistanis by challenging an amendment to Section 94 of the Elections Act, 2017.

The request has been moved on behalf of ECP Secretary Omar Hamid Khan highlighting that the overseas Pakistanis’ right to vote was very much recognised and the ECP was working tirelessly to extend this right, but a blanket and unqualified right cannot be claimed. There is no denial of the right in question as it was merely subject to regulation and modalities which need to be fixed by the law, the ECP pleaded, adding that obligations being proposed through the petitions cannot be imposed on the state when no violation of any fundamental right has been made out.

Several petitions are pending before the court challenging amendments to the Elections Act 2017 filed by PTI founder Imran Khan, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed and others.

On Aug 24, 2022, the apex court had ordered removing objections raised by the registrar office with an observation that the Pakistani expatriates should be extended facilities on a priority basis since they contribute around \$30 billion of badly needed foreign exchange to the country.

Schools in Punjab mull early summer vacation if heat persists

LAHORE: (News Desk) Schools across Punjab have been advised to alter working hours or declare early summer holidays if excessive heat persists.

The Punjab Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has issued urgent directives to educational institutions and district administrations across the province in view of heatwave threat, warning of a potential temperature surge of 4 to 7 degrees Celsius.

The institutions have been advised to take immediate measures to

protect students and staff from extreme heat.

The advisory includes schools should alter working hours or declare early summer holidays if excessive heat persists, all outdoor sports and activities should be suspended immediately, schools must ensure uninterrupted availability of clean, cold drinking water and maintain functional ventilation, fans, and cooling systems and students should wear loose, light-colour clothing, while schools must set up first aid counters with staff trained in

heat-related emergencies.

A letter in this regard was sent by PDMA Director General Irfan Ali Kathia to school education and higher education departments.Earlier, PDMA and the Environment Department held a joint meeting chaired by Environment Secretary Raja Jahangir Anwar and the PDMA DG. Officials from agriculture, health, irrigation and education departments participated via video link, alongside commissioners and deputy commissioners from Bahawalpur division.

DG Kathia warned that Punjab’s plains would face rising temperatures starting this month, increasing the likelihood of heat strokes and dehydration. “Extreme heat can be life-threatening; preventive measures must be enforced without delay,” he stressed. District administrations were instructed to coordinate with PDMA and ensure real-time updates through disaster management authorities. Citizens have been advised to stay hydrated and avoid unnecessary sun exposure.



LAHORE: Former Balochistan chief minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch and PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif exchange views during a meeting at the latter’s Jati Umra residence.

PPP stages protest in NA after canals resolution omitted from agenda, says spokesperson

Karachi(News Desk) Pakistan People’s Party lawmakers on Thursday staged a protest in parliament over a resolution against the six canals project was not included in the National Assembly agenda, a statement from party central spokesperson Shazia Marri said.Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and Chief of the Army Staff Gen Asim

Munir inaugurated the ambitious Cholistan project to irrigate south Punjab’s lands on February 15 amid public uproar and strong reservations in Sindh.The Sindh Assembly unanimously passed a resolution against the construction of six new canals on the Indus River in March, demanding an immediate halt to any plans, activities or work

until an agreement was reached with all provincial governments.According to Thursday’s statement published on X, the resolution opposing the construction of canals was submitted on April 7 and did not receive support from either the PML-N or the MQM.“Despite the response of the PML-N in the House, the PPP is continuously de-

manding the approval of a resolution against the construction of canals on the Indus River,” Marri wrote, adding that the PTI “caused a ruckus” during today’s proceedings.She continued that the PPP blamed Punjab ministers for “provocative and divisive” statements on the issue, whilst chastising the PTI for disrupting the session.

AGP seeks time to answer whether May 9 convicts can move other courts

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan on Wednesday requested the Supreme Court’s constitutional bench — hearing cases related to the military trial of civilians — to propose any additional conditions for judicial review under the Pakistan Army Act, 1952, beyond those established in the 2015 Rawalpindi District Bar Association case.Though the AGP sought time to consult the government on a key question raised by the seven-judge bench — whether convicts in the May 9 attacks should have the right to appeal before an independent court — he affirmed that the bench could suggest further conditions for judicial oversight.Headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, the CB had taken up 38 intra-court appeals moved by the governments as well as the Shuhada Forum Balochistan against the Oct 23, 2023 judgement. While deciding challenges to the 21st Amendment under which nine special courts manned by military officers were set up, the SC in 2015 held that any sentence awarded in such trials will subject to judicial review on the grounds of coram non iudice.

KP govt under fire over proposed changes to law on mines and minerals

PESHAWAR: (News Desk) The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Bill, 2025, has stirred up a firestorm of criticism, with PTI founder Imran Khan’s sister Aleema Khan calling for putting the proposed legislation on hold.

The criticism, which came mostly from the ruling PTI’s leaders and social media activists, was so harsh that Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur had to put out a statement on Tuesday night, dismissing “rumours and misconceptions” regarding the proposed amendments.Aleema Khan told reporters in Rawalpindi on Tuesday that there had been huge public uproar over the bill, so the government should not table it in the assembly until PTI founder Imran Khan approved it after release from jail.The bill, which was tabled in the provincial assembly on April 4, was ripped apart by both ruling and opposition lawmakers.

10,000 women in Pakistan die of complications during pregnancy every year: health minister

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Health Minister Mustafa Kamal on Wednesday said every year 10,000 women in Pakistan lose their lives due to complications during pregnancy.

He revealed these figures while speaking at an event held in connection with World Health Day in the office of World Health Organisation (WHO).

“These are silent tragedies happening across the country, with little to no public outcry,” the minister said, adding that “if such a high number of deaths occurred due to any other cause, our national response would be very different. We cannot afford to lose even a single life due to maternal causes.”

He stressed the urgent need for both individual and collective efforts to prevent these avoidable deaths, saying, “every life is precious and must be protected. These women can be saved.”

Highlighting the weaknesses of the healthcare system, Mustafa Kamal said: “Pakistan’s health system is not in a healthy state. But we are hopeful with systemic reforms, we can save lives. I do not consider this position a privilege, but a test. I want to pass this test with honesty and commitment.”He also addressed the issue of child stunting, stating that 38pc of children in Pakistan suffered from stunted growth, a condition that threatened their ability to play an active role in the country’s future.“Without investing in the health and nutrition of our children today, our dreams of national progress will remain unfulfilled,” he added.

Nationalist parties call for halting Afghans’ deportation

QUETTA: (News Desk) The deportation of Afghan refugees who spent more than four decades in Pakistan back to their country should be stopped, leaders of Pakhtun nationalist parties demanded on Wednesday. Speaking at a joint press conference, ANP Balochistan president Asghar Khan Achakzai, PkNAP’s Nasarullah Zerey, National Democratic Movement’s Ahmed Jan Khan and Noor Bacha of PTM said the Afghan refugees were protected under the Citizenship Act and have

rights. They said Pakhtun nationalist parties have always opposed terrorism. They expressed their serious concern over the ongoing economic crisis and political situation. ANP, NDM, PkNAP leaders express concern over ongoing economic, political situation. The political leaders protested the expulsion of Afghan refugees, many of whom were generation born and raised in Pakistan. They highlighted that both the Federal Shariat

Court and the Peshawar High Court have ruled in favor of Afghan refugees, urging the government to immediately halt its crackdown against them. Leaders of the Pakhtun nationalist parties attended a meeting at Arab House, the office of ANP in Quetta, and condemned the deteriorating law and order in the province. One of them are refugees settled all across the country under the UN-HCR mandate. Being a signatory to the Geneva Convention, Pakistan is bound to grant

them legal protection, he said, adding that those are not being repatriated as per the international commitments. They said blaming Afghan refugees for the country’s problems was fallacious and called for the withdrawal of “false cases” against Pakhtun leaders, including Ali Wazir, the release of all missing persons, and the removal of political figures from the Fourth Schedule. A five-member committee has been formed to coordinate with political parties and devise a future



course of action against the deportations. They also opposed the merger of Levies into police and the integration of Balochistan Constabulary into the Frontier Corps, terming it a violation of t

he 18th Amendment. The leaders concluded that “oppressive policies” only fuel resistance and that true peace could only be achieved through justice and equal rights for all.