

Islamabad (News Desk) A sit-in of the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) demanding the release of arrested Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leaders continued on Sunday, after the provincial government's talks with the party yesterday failed to reach a solution. BNP-M President Sardar Akhtar Mengal had announced a "long march" from Wadh to Quetta to protest the arrests of BYC chief organiser Dr Mahrang Baloch and other leaders as well as police crackdowns on a sit-in. However, the Quetta administration had denied the party permission for the rally.

On Saturday evening, a provincial government delegation comprising Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Bakht Muhammad Kakar and Sardar Noor Ahmed Bangulzai met Mengal and other BNP-M leaders at the party's sit-in site in Mastung, Mengal. Nawab Muhammad Khan Shahwani, Sajid Tareen and other leaders participated in the talks on behalf of the sit-in participants. Speaking to the media after the talk, Mengal said: "This sit-in will continue until our women are released."

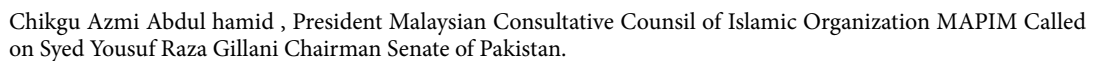
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the rally. On Saturday evening, a provincial government delegation comprising Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Bakht Muhammad Kakar and Sardar Noor Ahmed Bangulzai met Mengal and other BNP-M leaders at the party's sit-in site in Mastung. Mengal, Nawab Muhammad Khan Shahwani, Sajid Tareen and other leaders participated in the talks on behalf of the sit-in participants. Speaking to the media after the talk, Mengal said: "This sit-in will continue until our women are released."

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mand that Mahrang and Sammi Deen Baloch be freed. He also claimed that a BYC leader and his relatives were taken away from their house in the wee hours of Sunday. Mengal alleged: "BYC's Shahji Baloch, his brother Dr Sanaullah and nephews Dr Aftab and Shams were abducted after three separate raids on their residence. The first raid was conducted at 1:15am, the second one was for the arrest, and the third was to seize mobile phones and electronic [devices]." "This isn't law but abduction. We demand the immediate release of Shahji, Dr Sana, Dr Aftab and Shams,

as well as of Dr Mahrang and Sammi Deen Baloch who were only imprisoned for raising their voice for human rights," he added. "Till when will this war against Baloch voices continue?" the BNP-M president asked. Marchers and motorists from different political parties had started their journey to Quetta from Mengal's native town of Wadh at around 9am on Friday. On Saturday, after the BNP-M claimed that over 250 of its activists were detained as its march was met with police action near Mastung, Mengal and other party workers also survived a suicide bombing.



Islamabad(News Desk) The head of the UN's refugee agency in Pakistan on Sunday expressed concern as the departure deadline for Afghan Citizenship Card (ACC) holders draws closer, warning that the decision has "shaken" the Afghan community.

As part of the government's plan to repatriate all illegal foreigners, March 31 was officially set as the deadline for ACC holders to leave Pakistan voluntarily, with a renewed warning by the interior ministry that mass deportations would commence afterwards.

In an Eidul Fitr message, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative for Pakistan Philippa Candler expressed her concerns as Pakistani officials have ruled out any change in the deadline.

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The World Bank has approved a \$300 million International Development Association (IDA) loan for the 'Punjab Clean Air Programme' (PCAP) to strengthen air quality management and combat air pollution in the province. The PCAP, approved by the World Bank Group's board of directors on Friday, will support the Punjab government's 'Smog Mitigation Action Plan' (SMAP) in tackling the pressing issue of smog and air pollution with the launch of several comprehensive initiatives aimed at improving air quality and public health across the province.

It will cover key sectors such as transport, agriculture, industry, energy, and municipal services, a press release issued by the WB mission in Islamabad said on Saturday. "The Punjab Clean Air Programme supports the province's Smog Mitigation Action Plan and is a landmark initiative to significantly improve air quality and enhance the health and well-being of millions of residents," said WB Country Director for Pakistan Najy Benhassine. "Cleaner air will reduce the incidence of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and contribute to a healthier, more livable environment." The Punjab Clean Air Programme aligns with the new World Bank Country Partnership Framework and aims to reduce PM2.5 levels by 35 per cent over the next decade, significantly decreasing the incidence of respiratory illnesses and other pollution-related health issues for the 13 million residents of Lahore division.

Gawadar(News Desk) The Balochistan government has banned night-time travel — mostly for public transport — on major highways in several districts amid a deteriorating security situation, it emerged on Sunday.

The move comes amid a rise in terrorist attacks across Balochistan, including multiple incidents this year where passengers were targeted and gunned down.

The deputy commissioners of Gwadar, Kachhi, Zhob, Noshki and Muzaffargarh districts issued notifications banning travel at night time. The Quetta

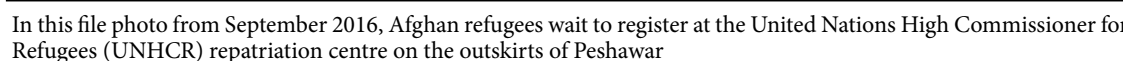
administration also ordered that public transport departing from the city be barred from plying the roads at night. Quetta Commissioner Hamza Shafqaat told Dawn.com that he chaired a meeting where "it was decided that public transport would be prohibited from travelling on the Karachi-Quetta highway (N-25), also known as the RCD Highway, at night, disconnecting Balochistan from Sindh."

It was also stressed to ensure that buses and coaches depart in a timely manner to avoid delays in the journey.

“Trackers and CCTV cameras in all buses and coaches would be kept functional, while transporters have been told to cooperate with the government directives,” Shafqaat said.

In a notification issued on March 28, Gwadar DO Hamoodur Rehman said that all public transport on the Makran Coastal Highway (N-10) would be banned at night till further orders. It further said that keeping the "passengers' security" in mind, the administration and the private transport association had decided to also restrict the departure timings from

Karachi, Gwadar and Quetta to ensure that they arrive at their destination before night falls. All transport heading from Karachi or Quetta to Gwadar would depart between 5am and 10am, while those setting from the port city to the two cities would do so between 6am and 1pm. In a similar notification by Kachhi DC Jahanzaib Langove, all public and private transport was directed not to travel on the Quetta-Sukkur highway (N-65) between 5pm and 5am from March 28 till further orders, disconnecting the province from Sindh at night.



MARDAN: (News Desk) At least 11 people were killed in Mardan in what locals insisted was a drone strike, but officials said it was an operation carried out against militants. The incident took place in the Shamozai area of Katlang tehsil in Mardan district in the early hours of Saturday.

According to locals, the deceased were civilians including women and

children, working as sheep herders. A press note issued by the provincial government early on Saturday also acknowledged the death of civilians but called it collateral damage. The statement said a counter-terrorism operation was conducted in the remote hilltop area of Katlang based on intelligence regarding the presence of armed militants using the

location as a hideout and transit point. It said the intelligence-based operation was against militants in which “non-combatants” also died. The operation “successfully neutralised” several high-value targets allegedly involved in militant activities in the region, as per the official version. “Unfortunately subsequent reports confirmed the presence of non-combatants, includ-

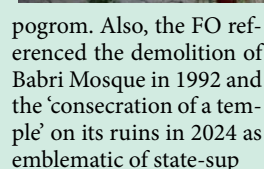
ing women and children at the periphery of the target zone, resulting in tragic civilian casualties," added the press note. The government blamed complex terrain and militants' tactics to embed within civilian populations for the collateral damage. While calling the deaths "painful and regrettable," the provincial government extended condolences to the affected families.

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The Foreign Office on Saturday called on India to focus on improving the treatment of its own minorities rather than expressing concern over minority rights in Pakistan. "India is in no position to champion minority rights, as it remains a serial violator of those very rights," said the FO in a statement issued in response to remarks made by India's Minister for External Affairs S. Jaishankar in the Lok Sabha regarding the

state of minorities in Pakistan. Mr Jaishankar had alleged that minorities in Pakistan faced persecution, including incidents of intimidation, forced conversions, and violence. Rejecting Mr Jaishankar's assertions, the FO said, "Rather than feigning concern for minorities elsewhere, the Indian government would do well to address its own failures. It must take concrete steps to ensure the safety, protection, and well-being of

minorities — including Muslims — and safeguard their places of worship, cultural heritage, and fundamental rights.” The statement emphasised Pakistan remains committed to protecting the rights of its minority communities. “In Pakistan state institutions actively work to safeguard minorities as a matter of policy. In stark contrast, incidents targeting minorities in India frequently occur with the tacit approval — or even complicity — of

elements within the ruling dispensation.” The FO pointed to several instances of religious and ethnic persecution in India, highlighting what it called “egregious and systemic violations of minority rights.” Pakistan cited India’s discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act, the bulldozing of homes of minority communities, and large-scale violence against Muslims, including the 2002 Gujarat massacre and the 2020 Delhi



ported religious discrimination. The statement also condemned cow vigilantism, mob lynchings, and attacks on mosques and other religious sites.

Lahore(News Desk) The Utility Stores Corporation (USC) is going to introduce its new utility ghee brand for citizens on cheaper rates as compared to local market for which tendering process has been completed.

Talking to APP on Sunday, USC Zonal Manager Shahzad Khan said that applications had been sought from ghee mills and firms as tenders opened on April 4 at the USC head office for the procurement of 65,000 metric tonnes of vanaspati and 32,500 metric tonnes of cooking oil.

"The ghee and cooking oil would be provided to various zones across the country as per demand," he added. He hoped the new ghee brand would be available at stores after Eidul Fitr, adding that the restructuring of 150 stores was being carried out across the zone. He said that sugar was being sold at stores at a price Rs15 per kilogramme less against the open market while dates, beverages, special gram flour, rice, ghee, and other items were also available. "Efforts are being made to reduce the expenses and increase the sales," he said.

KARACHI: (News Desk) The Sindh government has come to the rescue of thousands of commercial establishments operating illegally in residential neighbourhoods across the city by amending the existing building regulations to allow them to continue using houses for financial gains.

However, while the controversial move may save some existing businesses, it could also wreak havoc on the already deteriorated city infrastructure as every residential area would soon be flooded with commercial activities including shops, schools and clinics.

The use of residential plots for commercial and recreational purposes has been allowed by the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) that has amended the Karachi Building and Town Planning Regulations (KBTPR) 2002.

RAHIM YAR KHAN: (News Desk) Three people were shot at and killed by dacoits in the Jamaldin Wali area of tehsil Sadiqabad near the Indus River, about 60 km from here, on Saturday noon.

Reports said Umar Lund and his two nephews were passing through the main bazaar of Shahpur when they were ambushed near Dodhay Wali Pulli. The attackers, alleged accomplices of deceased YouTuber dacoit Shahid Lund, opened fire, killing them on the spot. According to local residents, Umar Lund had killed Shahid Lund in early November 2024 during a Lund clan gathering, and this attack was a revenge killing carried out by Shahid's accomplices. The incident has left residents in shock, as dacoits once again brazenly took the law into their own hands in a populated rural area near Jamalain Wali. Meanwhile, in a video message, two accomplices of deceased Shahid Lund claimed responsibility for killing Umar Lund. Holding a G3 rifle of Umar Lund, the dacoits were seen in Katcha area and they said that they avenged the murder of Shahid Lund. Jamalain Wali is the hometown of PPP south Punjab President Makhdoom Ahmed Mehmoodee and PPP MPA Mumtaz Chang has repeatedly raised concerns in the Punjab Assembly over the worsening law and order situation in the district. Last week, police killed several dacoits near Katcha Machka who were involved in the killings of policemen. According to a police spokesperson, the victims were identified as Umar Lund, Huzaifa Lund, and Khalid Dhanwani. Rahim Yar Khan District Police Officer (DPO) Rizwan Umar Gondal took notice of the incident and deployed a heavy police contingent to the area.