

## PM reaffirms commitment to sports

Lahore (News Desk) Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday emphasized Pakistan's commitment to leveraging sports as a powerful tool for national growth and global harmony.

In his message on the occasion of the International Day of Sports for Development and Peace, the premier stated that Pakistan stands in solidarity with the international community in recognizing the transformative power of sports to promote positive change, eliminate barriers, and foster unity beyond borders. Shehbaz says Pakistan backs global recognition of games' transformative power. He elaborated that the Na-

tional Sports Policy is centered on grassroots participation, talent discovery, gender equality, and inclusivity. Citing initiatives like the Arshad Nadeem / Shehbaz Sharif High-Performance Academy he said the goal is to equip young athletes with scientific training, financial backing, and modern facilities to help them meet future challenges.

Highlighting the role of sports in youth empowerment and national development, he said, "Sports serve as an effective medium for advancing our society and projecting Pakistan's identity on the world stage. This is why our government has declared sports a key pillar of

its developmental agenda." He elaborated that the National Sports Policy is centered on grassroots participation, talent discovery, gender equality, and inclusivity. Citing initiatives like the Arshad Nadeem / Shehbaz Sharif High-Performance Academy, he said the goal is to equip young athletes with scientific training, financial backing, and modern facilities to help them meet future challenges.

The prime minister stressed the importance of good governance in sports, stating, "We believe that strong governance is the foundation of successful sports institutions." He added that the government is implementing

reforms to enhance transparency, accountability, and professionalism within national sports federations, ensuring merit-based athlete selection and ethical conduct.

He further mentioned Pakistan's preparations for the 14th South Asian Games in 2026 and efforts to organize nationwide training camps as part of its vision to establish the country as a regional hub of sports excellence and tourism.

Concluding his message, the Prime Minister urged all stakeholders including civil society and development partners to integrate sports into policies related to education, health, development, and peace.



Security personnel are stationed outside the Lakpass Tunnel on Sunday, which is blocked with shipping containers to prevent BNP-Mengal protesters from marching towards Quetta

## Ring leader among 9 terrorists killed in Dera Ismail Khan: ISPR

Dera Ismail Khan (News Desk) Security forces killed nine terrorists during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Takwara area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan district, the military's media wing said on Monday. Pakistan has witnessed an uptick in terror activities over the past year, especially in KP and Balochistan, after the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire with the government in November 2022.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), security personnel carried out the IBO on the night of April 6-7 on the reported presence of khawarij. Fitna Al Khawarij is a term the state uses to refer to the banned TTP. The statement said, "During [the] conduct of the operation, [our] own troops effectively engaged the khawarij location and after an intense fire exchange, nine khawarij including HVT (high-value target), kharji ring leader Shireen were sent to hell."

## Shutter-down strike observed in various parts of Balochistan on BNP's call



Karan (News Desk) Various cities across Balochistan observed a shutter-down strike on Monday in response to the BNP-M's call as the party's sit-in at the Lakpass area of Mastung entered its 11th day.

The BNP-M had begun a "long march" from Wadh to Quetta on March 28 to protest the arrests of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leaders and activists, including Mahrang Baloch and Sammi Deen Baloch, as well as a crackdown on their sit-in in Quetta. Sammi was released on Tuesday.

BNP-M chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal had announced that the party would march on Quetta on April 6 after three rounds of negotiations had failed to make any progress. A day earlier, the police stopped protesters from entering the provincial capital using tear gas and shelling to disperse them.

Earlier that day, the provincial government also warned Mengal that he would be arrested under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) if his party's march entered Quetta. Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind asserted that Mengal would be arrested if he "moves towards Quetta".

A strike was observed today in Gwadar, Turbat, Pasni, Panjgur, Khuzdar, Kharan, Mastung, Kalat, Dalbandin, Noshki, Sorab and Hub.

## LHC summons AGP again for assistance in case over implementation of Anti-Rape Act

Lahore (News Desk) The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday again summoned Attorney General of Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan on April 14 for assistance in a case pertaining to the implementation of the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act 2021. The Anti-Rape Act 2021 sought to establish special courts and use of modern devices during the investigation and trial of rape cases. A special committee had been formed that year to oversee the implementation of the Act and reach out to any federal

or provincial ministry, division office, agency or authority for effectual compliance. Today's proceedings were heard by a three-member bench headed by LHC Chief Justice Aalia Neelum. Justice Farooq Haider and Justice Ali Zia Bajwa were the other members of the bench. Additional Attorney General (AAG) Mirza Nasr Ahmed, Punjab Prosecutor General Syed Farhad Ali Shah and Advocate General of Punjab Amjad Parvez appeared before the bench. In the previous hearing of the case, Justice Neelum de-

plored that no effective measures had been taken to keep the victims' identity confidential in sexual assault cases and stressed that protecting them was of utmost importance. She had observed that the preservation of evidence was crucial, and video/audio recordings and other evidence must be legally secured under the Qanun-i-Shahadat (the law of evidence). The bench also heard a petition of suspect Salman Tahir, who was booked in a case over allegedly sexually assaulting a 10-year-old girl and had pleaded that a doctor

had issued a bogus and illegal medical certificate. He contended that the victim's medical examination, including a two-finger test that was banned in 2021, was not conducted under the Anti-Rape Act. The petitioner requested the court to approve his bail application. Hearing at the outset of the hearing, Justice Neelum asked, "Has the AGP come to the court today?" "The AGP is busy in the Supreme Court," AAG Ahmed responded. "The previous hearing was also postponed because of the AGP," Chief Justice Neelum remarked.

## Three 'most-wanted' terrorists' arrested in Karachi by Rangers and CTD

Karachi (News Desk) Three terrorists belonging to the proscribed Fitna al Khawarij group were arrested in Karachi by Sindh Rangers and Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) during a joint operation based on intelligence information, an official statement said on Monday.

In July last year, the government, through an official notification, designated the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as Fitna al Khawarij, while mandating all institutions to use the term khariji (outcast) when referring to the perpetrators of terrorist attacks on Pakistan. A statement today from the Sindh Rangers said they had arrested Inamullah alias Lala, Naeemullah alias Umar Zali and Muhammad Taib alias Muhammad from Korangi. "The arrested terrorists have been involved in several attacks and acts of terrorism on security forces," the Rangers said. "The three terrorists belong to the Fitna al Khawarij Hafiz Gul Bahadur group." The statement added that arms, ammunition and explosives have also been recovered from the terrorists.

## Farmers plan countrywide rallies against corporate farming

LAHORE: (News Desk) Farmers have decided to launch a nationwide protest on April 13 against corporate farming being introduced under the Green Pakistan Initiative (GPI).

According to a decision taken by a joint sitting by the Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee, Anjuman Mazareen Punjab, Hari Jedojehad Committee, Crofter Foundation and others, rallies and conventions will be held in various towns and at public sector farms on April 13 (next Sunday).

The participants will demand an end to corporate farming and the eviction of peasants from the lands they have been cultivating for generations.

They will also seek a ban on construction of controversial canals in southern Punjab, and will demand all public sector agricultural lands distributed among the peasants, withdrawal of notices to tenants for payment of outstanding dues worth millions of rupees, and that wheat purchase price should be fixed at Rs4,000 per 40kg during the ongoing harvesting season.

## Govt keeps BNP-M long march to Quetta at bay

QUETTA: (News Desk) The Balochistan National Party's (BNP-M) long march to Quetta could not move towards the provincial capital — despite the expiry of its April 6 deadline to allow the marchers to proceed — while a large contingent of law enforcers were deployed around the protest camp to arrest party leader Akhtar Mengal.

In light of the government's action to stop his party's march, Mr Mengal announced a shutter-down strike across the province today (Monday), while vowing to continue the sit-in at Lakpass — on the outskirts of Quetta — until the acceptance of their demands.

He said the sit-in at Lakpass would continue until the government allowed the long marchers to enter Quetta. The BNP president also asked the party workers and supporters to block all highways in the province and stage sit-ins wherever they are stopped by the security forces. Meanwhile, the Balochistan government said Mr Mengal would risk arrest under the Maintenance of Public Order if he marched on Quetta. "Security personnel encircled the sit-in camp of BNP at Lakpass for the arrest of Sardar Akhtar Mengal, who refused to surrender to the police when informed about the decision of the provincial authorities," said Shahid Rind, spokesman for the Balochistan government. Sardar Akhtar Mengal also confirmed reports about the encirclement of the party sit-in. "We are completely encircled and we decided to continue our protest sit-in at Lakpass and also asked the party workers and supporters who were stopped by the authorities in different towns and cities for joining the march towards Quetta to stage sit-ins and block all roads," he added. Meanwhile, BNP-M supporters and the police clashed in Sona Kahn, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Quetta, leading to over two dozen arrests.



Journalist Farhan Mallick is presented before a court in Karachi in March 2025.

## Karachi courts grant bail to journalist Farhan Mallick in 'anti-state', 'call centre' cases

Karachi (News Desk) Two separate Karachi courts on Monday granted bail to journalist Farhan Mallick in as many cases against him — pertaining to allegedly "anti-state" content and data theft through a call centre.

Mallick, the founder of media agency Raftar and a former news director at

Samaa TV, was arrested on March 20 in Karachi and booked under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca) as well as the Pakistan Penal Code in a case related to alleged anti-state content on his YouTube channel. The arrest was met with widespread criticism from media bodies as well as rights activists.

District and Sessions Judge (East) Dr Chaudhry Wasim Iqbal approved Mallick's appeal against a judicial magistrate's denial of bail in the "anti-state" content case, while Judicial Magistrate (Malir) Piyar Ali Khoso granted him bail in the call centre case. The bails were approved against surety

bonds worth Rs100,000 in each of the two cases. The journalist's lawyer, Abdul Moiz Jaferi, told that Judge Iqbal took up the appeal against Judicial Magistrate Yusra Ashfaq's March 28 order. Mallick's outlet Raftar hailed the bail in the anti-state content case as a "small victory in a long journey".

## Have Imran's blessing to open channel for talks, claims Swati

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Imran Khan is still ready to come to the table, if the establishment is prepared to negotiate, party leader Azam Khan Swati has claimed, adding that he had the PTI founder's blessing to initiate talks to secure his freedom.

In a lengthy video message released to — in his words — clear the air following his recent meeting with the party founder in Adiala jail, Mr Swati criticised "certain vloggers and anchors for selling a false story",

without naming anyone. In the midst of a widening rift between the party's ranks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr Swati also backed KP CM Ali Amin Gandapur, PTI KP leader Junaid Akbar and party general secretary Salman Akram Raja, saying that they were "picked by Imran Khan himself".

Recounting his interaction with Mr Khan and Bushra Bibi in prison, he said he had repeatedly told the party founder he had "khotay sikay" (counterfeit coins) in his pocket.

He also recounted a meeting with Mr Khan where, he claimed, the party leader had tasked him to reach out to Gen Asim Munir — following the latter's appointment in Dec 2022 — to open the door for negotiations.

Mr Swati claimed that after this meeting, he had reached out to someone close to Gen Munir, a renowned anchorperson and a certain "Dr Tanveer" (thought to be a reference to Pakistani-American businessman Tanveer Ahmed), but to

no avail. "Give me permission to work with Dr [Arif] Alvi and others to open the doors for talks," Mr Swati claimed to have asked the PTI chief in their latest meeting, adding that Mr Khan gave him his blessing to do so. The former minister claimed that the PTI founder reposed trust in his efforts, as he had stood with him through thick and thin.

"If they are ready for talks, I am willing — like I was from day one," he quoted the jailed ex-



PM as saying. Beseeching vloggers and anchorpersons to stop sowing discord and work towards securing Imran Khan's r

lease, he also said that a negative campaign had been started against PTI USA leaders.