

QUETTA VOICE

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A view of the under construction Western Bypass in Quetta: Photo Daily Quetta Voice

Chronic Project Delays Reflect Governance Woes in Balochistan

Syed Ali Shah:

In the wake of persistent project delays plaguing Quetta City, the recent setback in meeting the November 30th deadline for ongoing initiatives has raised concerns over governance and project management. Commissioner Quetta Division, Hamza Shafiqat, has openly acknowledged the challenges faced by the engineering teams, attributing the delay to encroachments and the intricate process of relocating essential utility services.

Why Projects Faced Such Chronic Delays?

While the efforts to address the obstacles are commendable, it is crucial to recognize that these challenges have been a longstanding issue, lingering for

past four years. The announcement of a revised completion target by December 31st indicates a commitment to overcoming hurdles, but the question arises: why have these projects faced such chronic delays in the first place?

A broader perspective reveals a concerning pattern of inefficiency in project execution, raising questions about governance and institutional efficacy in Balochistan. Notably, the failures to meet deadlines are not isolated incidents. Former Chief Secretary Balochistan, Abdul Aziz Uqaili, and former Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Qudus Bizenjo, also struggled to meet project deadlines during their tenures, reflecting a systematic issue rather than isolated instances of mismanagement.

Growing Sentiment Of Frustration Among The Public

The consequences of these delays are not insignificant. The people of Quetta continue to grapple with under-construction roads and collapsed bridges in suburban areas, highlighting the tangible impact of prolonged project timelines on the daily lives of citizens.

This has led to a growing sentiment of frustration among the public, who rightly expect timely completion of vital infrastructure projects. Comparisons with other regions in Pakistan, where projects worth billions are completed within a few months, only intensify the concerns about the efficiency of governance in Balochistan. The stark difference

Govt Should Move Beyond Mere Lip Service

in project execution timelines suggests a need for a thorough evaluation of the processes and mechanisms in place within the province. It is imperative that the government moves beyond mere lip service and takes concrete actions to ensure the timely completion of development projects in Quetta. The people deserve better, and the province cannot afford to be left behind in terms of infrastructure development. A comprehensive review of institutional frameworks, project management practices, and accountability measures is necessary to address the root causes of these delays and establish a more effective and responsive governance system in Balochistan.

Transporters Block Highway Against Customs In Lak Pass Quetta

Staff Reporter:

QUETTA: Transport owners in Lakpas and Dasht Tera Mill areas have taken to the highway in protest following a recent Customs and Frontier Corps (FC) raids. The situation escalated as demonstrators blocked traffic by burning tires near prominent landmarks such as Lakpas Toll Plaza and Dasht, leading to extensive traffic disruptions on both sides of the road and the formation of long queues of vehicles.

There was no response from the customs and FC regarding the protest. A video obtained by This Daily shows the angry protesters smashing the glasses of customs vehicles in the Lak Pass area of Quetta.

The core grievance voiced by the protesters revolves around the alleged seizure of their goods and vehicles by FC and customs officials during a raid conducted the previous night. Asserting their demands, the protesters have vowed to persist with their



demonstration until their confiscated vehicles and goods are returned.

Economic Concerns Fueling The Protest

Adding to the complexity of the situation, the business community has expressed discontent

with the closure of the Chaman border, emphasizing that Turbat does not offer employment opportunities comparable to those in Gwadar.

This sentiment underscores the broader economic concerns that are fueling the protest.

At the heart of the dispute is the claim that the seized vehicles,

representing assets worth millions for traders, have historically transported goods across the border without systematic checks in place. The protesters argue that conducting raids within residential areas is an unjust form of treatment against traders and transport owners, as highlighted in their joint statement.

Protesters Demand Return Of Their Confiscated Goods

The demonstrators remain resolute in their commitment to the cause, insisting that the protest will endure until their goods and vehicles are released. The unfolding situation at Lakpas and Dasht Tera Mill serves as a poignant reflection of the tensions between the business community, transport owners, and authorities, with the outcomes of the protest poised to have significant ramifications for the local economy.

Sabotage Strikes Dam Construction Site in Bolan: Tractor Targeted

From Our Correspondent:

In a shocking incident, unknown miscreants planted explosives at the construction site of a dam in Laghari, Rind Ali area of Bolan, causing significant damage to a company tractor. The explosive device detonated with force, leaving the tractor in ruins.

Preliminary reports indicate that the tractor, a crucial asset for the dam construction company, has been severely damaged in the explosion. However, details regarding casualties, if any, remain undisclosed at this time.

Authorities To Determine The Motive Behind This Act Of Sabotage

Authorities are currently investigating the incident to determine the motive behind this act of sabotage and to assess



the full extent of the damage caused.

The security and safety protocols at the construction site are under scrutiny as law enforcement agencies work to secure the area.

The incident raises concerns about the safety and security of vital infrastructure projects and highlights the challenges faced by construction companies working on such projects. Residents and workers are anxiously awaiting further information as the situation develops.

Police Lodge FIR Against CTD Personnel In Connection With Alleged Killing Of Balach

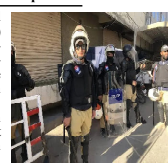
From Our Correspondent:

TURBAT: Police lodged a first information report (FIR) against four Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) personnel in connection with the alleged killing of Baloch Balach.

Police lodged the FIR on the directives of the district and session judge Kech on Saturday.

Family members of the young man Balach Balach accused the CTD personnel of the killing. The charge was vehemently denied by CTD. The CTD said that Balach was killed while carrying explosive materials in Turbat.

The court directed the police to lodge the FIR on a con-



stitutional petition seeking the registration of a case against CTD officials.

The registration of the FIR has come after the provincial government established an inquiry committee to probe into the incident. Protests erupted in Turbat after the alleged extra-judicial killing of Balach Mola Bakhsa.

COAS General Asim Munir Embarks On His First Official Visit To US

Dawood Ahmed:

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir left for the United States on Sunday, the military's media wing said. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), this is the first official visit of General Syed Asim Munir to the US as the COAS.

During his visit, General Syed Asim Munir is scheduled to meet the senior military and other government officials of the USA, the ISPR said in a



statement issued to the press on Sunday.

Commissioner Quetta Addresses Setbacks: Project Deadline Shifts to December 31st

News Desk:

QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division, Hamza Shafiqat, has addressed the recent challenges hindering project completion, acknowledging the persistent efforts of engineering team.

Despite their dedication, the original deadline of November 30th could not be met due to a series of obstacles.

Delay Attributed To 16 Encroachments

The delay was attributed to 16 encroachments, which included both mosques and residential properties. Additionally, the intricate process of shifting essential utility services, such as gas, PTCL, and QESCO, contributed to the setback.

It's noteworthy that these projects had been lingering in a state of delay for the past four years. However, we are pleased to announce that all impediments have now been successfully resolved.

Commissioner Shafiqat expressed regret for any inconvenience caused by these unforeseen challenges and extended his gratitude for the community's patience.



Revised Target Of Completion Is Now 31st Of December

The engineering teams are now working diligently to make up for lost time, and a revised target of completion by December 31st has been set. This extension follows exhaustive efforts to overcome the obstacles that have plagued the projects for an extended period.

We understand the importance of adhering to deadlines and acknowledge the community's understanding during these unavoidable delays. Our commitment to delivering successful projects remains unwavering. We appreciate the continued support and patience of the community as we work towards the revised deadline.

Raziq Sanjrani Removed after 15 years as MD Saindak

Dawood Ahmed:

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has ousted Raziq Sanjrani, brother of Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani, from the Managing Director role at Saindak Metals Limited. The removal, approved by the caretaker Prime Minister, marks a significant political setback for Sadiq Sanjrani, who wielded considerable influence over the past five years.

This move comes amid a series of changes within key positions as the new government asserts its authority. Raziq Sanjrani's removal has sparked discussions about the impact on the Saindak Project and its future direction. The decision underscores



the evolving political landscape, with potential implications for other appointments shortly.

Khuzdar Attack: Claims Life Of SHO, 2 Injured in CTD Vehicle Blast

From Our Correspondent:

KHUZDAR: A blast targeted the vehicle of the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in the Khuzdar district of Balochistan on Sunday. The Station House Officer (SHO), Murad sustained serious wounds and succumbed to injuries on the way to the hospital.

Police sources said two security personnel were injured in the attack.

The injured were rushed to the Khuzdar district headquarters hospital for medical treatment. Police and senior administration officials reached the spot and started an investigation into the incident.

Panic prevailed in the city in the aftermath of the blast. The vehicle was also damaged in the



attack.

Chief Minister Balochistan, Ali Mardan Daulti strongly condemned the attack and ordered an inquiry into the incident. In a statement soon issued after the attack, the Caretaker CM said the perpetrators of the blast would be brought to justice.

The Caretaker CM vowed to protect the lives and properties of the masses across the province.

EDITORIAL

Editor: Asim Khan

Healthcare Crisis in Balochistan Favors Karachi as Patient Destination

Editorial:
The recent exodus of Congo virus patients from Quetta to Karachi has unveiled the alarming state of government-run hospitals in Balochistan. The tragic loss of Dr. Shakanullah Baloch, who succumbed to the deadly virus en route to Karachi, serves as a poignant reminder of the dire situation.

11 Doctors Tested Positive For Congo Virus
Most of the nearly dozen patients, including 11 doctors, have sought refuge in private hospitals in Karachi in their desperate fight for survival.

This raises a crucial and deeply troubling question: when healthcare professionals themselves lack confidence and trust in Balochistan's healthcare system, how can we expect the general public to place their faith in it?

Investigation Into Outbreak of Congo Virus Is Imperative
First and foremost, a comprehensive investigation into the outbreak of the Congo virus within the Civil Hospital's trauma center is imperative. It is vital to understand how and why approximately twenty dozen healthcare professionals fell victim to this deadly virus.

We must examine whether standard operating procedures for treating Congo virus patients were followed and determine whether the government has initiated an inquiry to address this critical matter.

Furthermore, the destination for Congo virus patients was intended to be the Fatima Jinnah Chest and TB Hospital, yet the patient was inexplicably admitted to the trauma center of the Civil Hospital. These discrepancies warrant a thorough review.

Time Has Come For Complete Overhaul of Health Care System
It is disheartening that despite a substantial investment of over Rs. 50 billion in Balochistan's healthcare sector and a significant number of medical professionals, patients continue to be referred to Karachi for medical treatment.

This trend underscores a lack of trust in the healthcare system within the province, and corrective measures are urgently required.

The time has come for a comprehensive evaluation and overhaul of Balochistan's healthcare system to regain the trust of both healthcare professionals and the general public.

Only by addressing these critical flaws can we hope to build a robust and dependable healthcare system that serves the needs of the people.

The big picture

By Muna Khan:

HAVE you watched a show, movie, press conference and then heard someone talk about it and wondered whether you both saw the same thing? It is not about having different perceptions as much as it is about different realities. Or, as I like to ask, what did I miss?

I witnessed it play out recently after watching a two-episode town hall-style TV show hosted by Talat Hussain wherein he invited students and politicians from various parts of Punjab, ie, not just my Karachi-based liberal arts students.

I enjoyed the show because of the interaction between students — a large voting demographic and the participants (always men!) aspiring for their votes. Election coverage in the media doesn't go beyond the ever-jabbing jabs so this town hall format made for a refreshing change from the screaming that the small masquerades as analysis on prime time. Here, you heard directly from students as opposed to hearing about them. I am sure it provided many teaching moments to po-

litical leadership who, I'm convinced, are disconnected from young voters.

Students asked questions about job security, their mental health, suicide, about what to do after getting a degree, who they should vote for, why minorities are treated badly, about the media, and also about the elections. I was surprised then to see the PTI and its leaders throw clips from that show and package it as an endorsement for Imran Khan. While there were questions and questions about Khan as well as the absence of PTI leaders on stage to ask how the media must raise awareness on how to spot 'fake news' and not spread it. All political parties are guilty of playing dirty games and stooping to new lows in a quest to grab power.

What surprises our friends is that the country was once a rising star in the developing world. In the 1960s, we were building dams, vitalising our agriculture, and creating development plans that were the envy of emerging economies. Sadly, those days are gone. However, we certainly take inspiration from the fact that we created an economic miracle once, and should be able to recreate it.

Another lens through which the world views Pakistan is terrorism and extremism. Since 9/11, when the US launched its 'war on terror', and Pakistan got dragged into it, we have lost thousands of lives and suffered huge financial losses. But we bravely confronted the menace of terrorism and recovered the ground lost to terrorism. Remarkably, despite these successes and sacrifices, the threat of terrorism continues to loom over us, most recently in the form of TTP, which is using Afghan soil to attack targets in Pakistan.

To make matters worse, India has launched a relentless campaign to isolate Pakistan, using the mantra of cross-border terrorism. This is ironic. A country that has suffered from terrorism and has spent all its energies fighting it is being accused of cross-border terrorism by a country which is in the news lately for targeted assassinations on foreign soil. The world also views Pakistan as a country that has not sufficiently focused on its human resource development. Our population is growing at a much faster pace than the economic resources available to sustain them. We are lagging behind in education, health, and other development indices, and rank embarrassingly low on the UN Human Development Index. Pakistan is situated in a tough neighbourhood with unresolved conflicts and low intra-regional connectivity. The Kashmir dispute continues to fuel tensions with India, which is seeking to transform itself into a Hindu state. On the western front, peace in Afghanistan remains tentative.

I've watched the world view us differently. The top priority is to put our political and economic house in order. Some experts have argued that resources are not an issue as enough savings can accrue by

By Muhammad Amir Rana:

LAST week's heinous attack on a passenger bus traversing the Karakoram Highway in Gilgit-Baltistan's Chilas area is a reminder of the escalating terrorist threat that casts a long shadow over Pakistan. This tragic incident, coupled with a series of high-intensity attacks on the Mianwali training base, a cross-border incursion in Chitral, and the assault on the Zohb Cant military installation in recent months, prove that terrorists have gained the confidence and the capabilities which they had lost before the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

The militant landscape is turning increasingly similar to that of the pre-2014 era when multiple religiously motivated groups were active in various parts of the country. While the authorities remain hesitant to acknowledge the Chilas bus attack as sectarian, citing the diverse backgrounds of the victims, unconfirmed reports circulating on social media suggest that the banned Lashkar-i-Tahreek (LT) has claimed responsibility.

If true, this would substantiate the concerns of counterterrorism practitioners regarding the regrouping of LT in parts of the country, particularly Chilas, where previously held a scattered support base.

The outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban presence in the area also raises concerns due to the presence of Chinese

firms working on the Damul project.

Notably, the TTP conducted an attack on a Chinese workers' bus in November 2022. These terrorist organisations historically employed the tactic of firing at passing vehicles, believing that a majority of the passengers belonged to rival religious sects.

The resurgence of LT is a dangerous sign for internal security. The Punjab and Sindh counterterrorism departments have claimed the arrest of several LT suspects, but the confidence and capabilities of the militant group are not necessarily diminished. The LT is not merely a sectarian terrorist group; it also has a counterterrorism department providing skilled foreign fighters, and a local support group like LT or an offshoot of a banned militant group.

AI Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban were employing sophisticated techniques similar to those used by insurgents in Iraq.

These tactics were utilised, among others, in three major terrorist attacks between 2008 and 2012: the attack on the Federal Investigation Agency building in Lahore and attacks on the Danish embassy and Marriott Hotel in Islamabad. In 2009, these groups further refined their operational strategies. They successfully replicated the Mumbai attacks in four major assaults in Pakistan: the attack on GHQ in Rawalpindi, the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore, and two

attacks on the Manawan Police Training School in Lahore. Additionally, 2009 marked the year when militants began targeting cities through repeated strikes to amplify the impact of terror. A trend that continues to this day. For instance, they targeted Peshawar in 2009 and Lahore in 2010 and focused on Karachi, Quetta, and Peshawar in 2011-12.

The terrorist attacks in 2023 indicate that a similar alliance has come into being, or the TTP has transformed itself into an organisation that can conceive and launch AI Qaeda-style collaborative attacks.

The Tehreek-i-Jihad Pakistan claimed responsibility for the Mianwali base attack. This group is considered a subsidiary of the TTP. Suspicions also exist that the TTP may have

recruited militant recruits from south Punjab, Zohb, and Dera Ismail Khan districts in Balochistan and KP.

The TTP's ability to recruit fighters in border Punjab, KP, and Balochistan districts would be difficult without sufficient local support or an established organisational network. Consequently, LT and other banned organisations like Jaish-e-Mohammad are suspected of providing such support due to their adequate infrastructure in these areas.

Further investigation is needed to determine whether AI Qaeda remains involved in Or-

chestrating terrorist attacks like those executed by the TTP in recent months. While AI Qaeda's presence in the region is weakened, it has not been completely eradicated. Therefore, they may be supporting the TTP under the guise of the TTP.

So far, a crucial feature that has emerged is the possibility of the LT's revival.

This organisation had been absent from the terrorist nexus for the past six to seven years, as law-enforcement agencies had almost dismantled its network. Its re-emergence would complete the missing piece of the terrorist puzzle. While the militant and sectarian organisations could provide an alternative, the LT remains a

possibility.

It has historically served as an ideological inspiration for radical youth, particularly those with a madrassa background. The LT also gains narrative power from its participation in organisations such as the banned Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, towards which state institutions continue to have a soft approach. Radical madrassas with a history of association with militant and sectarian groups cannot be ignored either.

The evolving terrorism threat necessitates vigilance and keen monitoring of changing structures within sectarian and terrorist organisations. This is crucial to avert a situation similar to pre-2014.

Pakistan's image

By Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry:

THE world around us is changing at a rapid pace. The world is now South Asia. Global and regional geopolitics are profoundly impacting Pakistan's relevance to today's world. Domestic political, economic and societal changes have also affected Pakistan's global standing. Critically, the country has a serious image problem, which needs the world view it with deep concern.

The world is worried about Pakistan's ability to suffer from political instability, and lives beyond its means even when it is in a state of shambles. Foreign and domestic investors are nervous about the weakening of law and order, consistent policies in Pakistan. All this can change by mustering sufficient political will. However, for now, our economic future remains uncertain.

What surprises our friends is that the country was once a rising star in the developing world. In the 1960s, we were building dams, vitalising our agriculture, and creating development plans that were the envy of emerging economies. Sadly, those days are gone. However, we certainly take inspiration from the fact that we created an economic miracle once, and should be able to recreate it.

Another lens through which the world views Pakistan is terrorism and extremism. Since 9/11, when the US launched its 'war on terror', and Pakistan got dragged into it, we have lost thousands of lives and suffered huge financial losses. But we bravely confronted the menace of terrorism and recovered the ground lost to terrorism. Remarkably, despite these successes and sacrifices, the threat of terrorism continues to loom over us, most recently in the form of TTP, which is using Afghan soil to attack targets in Pakistan.

To make matters worse, India has launched a relentless campaign to isolate Pakistan, using the mantra of cross-border terrorism. This is ironic. A country that has suffered from terrorism and has spent all its energies fighting it is being accused of

cross-border terrorism by a country which is in the news lately for targeted assassinations on foreign soil. The world also views Pakistan as a country that has not sufficiently focused on its human resource development. Our population is growing at a much faster pace than the economic resources available to sustain them. We are lagging behind in education, health, and other development indices, and rank embarrassingly low on the UN Human Development Index. Pakistan is situated in a tough neighbourhood with unresolved conflicts and low intra-regional connectivity. The Kashmir dispute continues to fuel tensions with India, which is seeking to transform itself into a Hindu state. On the western front, peace in Afghanistan remains tentative.

I've watched the world view us differently. The top priority is to put our political and economic house in order. Some experts have argued that resources are not an issue as enough savings can accrue by curbing wasteful subsidies, exemptions, and by broadening the tax net, and adopting home-grown solutions. It has been argued that capacity, too, is not a hindrance, provided incentives are aligned with national priorities.

Secondly, Pakistan has a young population. The youth bulge can be an advantage at a time when several leading economies have ageing populations. However, the youth are not equipped with education and the appropriate skills, this advantage could turn into a liability.

Third, Pakistan has a formidable military and nuclear deterrence that deters any external aggression. This provides ample space for the leadership to focus on emerging development.

Fourth, our rich cultural heritage and tourism potential can be leveraged to put Pakistan on an economic growth path. Pakistan has an ancient civilisation and a rich historical heritage. In M e h r g a r h, M o h e n - j o d a r o, Harappa, and Gandhara.

We are a bastion of several faiths — Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Sufi Islam. And we are home to mighty mountains that attract international mountaineers. If we build our tourism around these treasures, Pakistan's international image will be associated with tourism rather than extremism.

Fifth, Pakistan can also be a hub of connectivity for several vast regions: Indo-Pacific, Central Asia, and West Asia. To optimally utilise this economic geography, Pakistan would need to develop infrastructure and trade connectivity, both north-south and east-west.

Finally, a word about the battle of narratives. The world's detractors have run campaigns on media and social media spreading hatred. Our academia, think tanks and media houses should be co-opted by the government as partners to project an image of Pakistan that blunts the stereotypes being created deliberately to distort the reality of this country and its people.

Dump all degrees?

By Pervez Hoodbhoy:

A COLLEGE or university degree — preferably the highest possible industry is sometimes indispensable. Anyone treated by a degenerate cardiologist or neurosurgeon is not stupid or reckless. Flying in a plane designed by engineers who failed their math-physics qualifying exams puts your life at risk. High-level formal education will remain valuable both tomorrow and into the foreseeable future.

But the topsy-turvy hi-tech world up ahead presents us with a paradox. AI is already displacing humans from many jobs. Setting aside Pakistan for later discussion, demand for college and university education particularly less than

top-level technical fields — is already plummeting downwards. Key capitalists and global industries are openly sceptical about formal degree programmes.

Tesla and SpaceX places specific skills and problem-solving abilities above theoretical knowledge. He says that college is basically for fun and to prove you can do your chores, but doesn't necessarily teach you what to do in the real world".

Peter Thiel, co-founder of PayPal, is famously offering \$100,000 fellowships encouraging young people to drop out of universities and start their own businesses. Thiel accuses American higher education of stifling creativity and independent thinking — and also claims that real-world experience is more valuable than education.

These two American capitalists are mania for extreme views. One is tempted to discount them as victims of the high pressure and chronic feverishness endemic to Silicon Valley. Nevertheless, others far away are also saying such things and so one must pay at least some attention.

More and more employers in advanced countries — and now even India — are looking mostly for skills, learning agility, work ethic, and creativity. Companies like Apple and Tesla no longer re-

quire a college degree for an interview. Most have devised their own tests for assessing candidates. One must not, however, rush to conclusions. Behind today's high technology is the core knowledge transmitted and produced in a million university classrooms and laboratories around the world. High-class universities have historically been the engines of social change, founts of new ideas, and concentrations of high brain power. Musk and his arrogant ilk would be nothing without that.

We're all too familiar with the skills Pakistani universities, let's look at the present and future worth of the degrees and graduates.

Research in these institutions exists only in name. Over the last 20 years, they have produced tons of so-called research papers and theses but not a single significant piece of new knowledge, invention, process, or patent that has added to the world. Even top Pakistani universities produce graduates whose careers generally start — and end — in maintenance, sales, and management. Almost none do what's expected of real engineers, ie, conceptualise and design new technologies or make radical

improvements. Except-tions aside, the i n f e r i o r mathematics and problem-solving skills of our graduates cannot handle unmet needs and challenges.

Here's a recent example. The Black Hole, a scientific conceptualisation organisation in Islamabad, initiated a stipend-intensified high school math-physics teachers training programme. A total of 120 applicants, 80 from age 22 took the entrance test. Candidates variously had BSc, BS, MSc and PhD degrees in institutions in several cities.

Although test questions were set at 12th grade school level or

lower, they did test reasoning capacity. Sadly, just 27 of the 120 graduates scored over 50 per cent. Those holding higher degrees did no better than the ones with lower degrees showing that real learning stops early on. When we interviewed the top 27 to check for conceptual clarity, only six could survive. Their superior performance manifestly was due to rote study, not to the institutions they had studied in.

Notwithstanding poor teaching quality, degrees will shrink further to the institutions they had studied in. Pakistan's junk universities — which means practically all of them — will remain in demand. We all know the reason. A degree in what path should your child follow?

So, what is the way out? For a brighter future, what path should your child follow?

So, what is the way out? For a brighter future, what path should your child follow?

Punjab Health Dept issues alert for possible spread of Nipah virus

ISLAMABAD (INP): The threat of the onslaught of another dangerous virus called Nipah has started looming throughout Punjab including Lahore, it was learnt on Sunday.

In this regard, the Punjab Department of Health has issued a letter to all the provincial Chief Executive Officers (CEO) while issuing a high alert in view of the possible threat and spread of the Nipah virus and guidelines were also issued in the past.

According to the post of the health department, Nipah was declared as a dangerous virus, with a mor-

tality rate of 74 per-

cent. Nipah virus (NiV) infection is an emerging zoonosis that causes severe disease in both animals and humans and is endemic in South-East Asia Region. NiV was initially isolated and identified in 1999 in Malaysia and Singapore during an outbreak of encephalitis and respiratory illness among pig farmers and people with close contact with pigs.

In May 2018, confirmed cases of Nipah virus (NiV) infection including fatalities have been reported in the southern state of Kerala, India. As of 25

May 2018, a total of 36 cases including 11 confirmed deaths have been reported.

Infection with Nipah virus is associated with encephalitis. After exposure and an incubation period of 5 to 14 days, illness presents with 3-14 days of fever and headache, muscle pain, nausea and vomiting, followed by drowsiness, disorientation and mental confusion.

According to the WHO, Nipah virus infection in humans causes a range of clinical presentations, from asymptomatic infection (subclinical) to acute respiratory infection and fatal en-

cephalitis. The case fatality rate is estimated at 40% to 75%. This rate can vary by outbreak depending on local capabilities for epidemiological surveillance and clinical management.

Nipah virus can be transmitted to humans from animals (such as bats or pigs), or contaminated foods and can also be transmitted directly from human-to-human. Fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family are the natural host of Nipah virus. There is no treatment or vaccine available for either people or animals. The primary treatment for humans is supportive care.



MACH: Additional Chief Secretary Home Zahid Saleem is visiting Mach Jail

Israeli forces push into southern Gaza as world demands cease-fire

GAZA (INP): Israeli forces pushed Sunday into southern Gaza, where hundreds of thousands of civilians have fled in search of shelter from bombardments and intense fighting with Hamas militants.

Aid groups have sounded the alarm on the "apocalyptic" humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territory, warning it is on the brink of being overwhelmed by disease and starvation.

Hamas, which runs Gaza, said Sunday that Israel had launched a series of "very violent raids" targeting the southern city of Khan Yunis and the road from there to Rafah, near the border with Egypt.

A source close to Hamas and Palestinian militants' Islamic Jihad told a foreign news agency that both groups were involved in "fierce clashes" with Israeli forces on Sunday near Khan Yunis.

At least 17,700 people, mostly women and children, have died in two months of fighting in the narrow strip of territory, according to the latest figures from Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry. Israel has vowed to eradicate Hamas after the group's unprecedented attacks on October 7, when its fighters broke through Gaza's militarised border, killed about 1,200 people,

and seized hostages, according to Israeli officials.

Israel on Saturday said 137 captives remained in the Palestinian territory.

With few options for safety, people across the Gaza Strip sought refuge in hospitals on Saturday.

In the northern Gaza City, thousands were sheltering in the Al-Shifa hospital, which is no longer functioning and partly destroyed following an Israeli raid last month.

Hundreds of makeshift tents fashioned from scraps of fabric and plastic filled the hospital's courtyards and garden amid collapsed walls.

Suhail Abu Dalia, 56, from the city's Shejaya district, said he had fled heavy bombardment by Israeli planes and tanks.

"It was madness. A shell hit the house and wounded my 20-year-old son," he told reporters.

"We fled to the Old City, everything was just strikes and destruction, we didn't know where to go," he said.

In central Gaza, Hamas health authorities said Saturday that 71 dead bodies had arrived at the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah over 24 hours.

And in the south of the territory, 62 dead bodies had arrived at Nasser hospital in Khan

Yunis, the health authorities said.

An eyewitness said he saw a child on a makeshift stretcher and others waiting for care on the floor, while firefighters outside tried to douse a burning building hit by an Israeli strike.

The situation "is not just a catastrophe, it's apocalyptic," said Basma Khaldi of Oxfam. An estimated 1.9 million of Gaza's 2.4 million people have been displaced.

Blocked from leaving the narrow territory, they have turned Rafah, near the crossing with Egypt, into a vast camp.

The United Nations children's agency said Saturday that nearly one million children had been forcibly displaced by the conflict.

Hundreds of others gathered in what has come to be known as Hostages Square, calling for action to save the captives held by Hamas with signs bearing messages such as "They trust us to get them out of hell".

The Israeli army says it has lost 93 soldiers in the campaign, with two others injured in a failed bid to rescue hostages on Thursday night. Hamas said a hostage, 25-year-old Sahar Baruch, was killed in the operation, later confirmed by his kibbutz community in Beer, one of the worst hit on October 7.

"They are now being pushed further and further south into tiny, overcrowded areas without water, food, or protection, putting them at increased risk of respiratory infections and waterborne disease," said Adele Khodr of UNICEF.

"The restrictions and challenges being placed on the delivery of lifesaving aid going into

and across the Gaza Strip are another death sentence for children."

An alarm grew over Gaza's worsening humanitarian situation, Israeli army chief Herzl Halevi urged his forces to "press harder" in their campaign.

"We're seeing more and more terrorists killed, more and more terrorists wounded, and in recent days we're seeing terrorists surrendering - this is a sign their network's falling apart," he said at a ceremony in Jerusalem.

National Security Advisor Itzchi Hanegbi told Israeli TV that 7,000 "terrorists" had been killed, without elaborating on the source of the figure. In Tel Aviv, some Israelis held a pro-peace demonstration.

Hundreds of others gathered in what has come to be known as Hostages Square, calling for action to save the captives held by Hamas with signs bearing messages such as "They trust us to get them out of hell".

The Israeli army says it has lost 93 soldiers in the campaign, with two others injured in a failed bid to rescue hostages on Thursday night. Hamas said a hostage, 25-year-old Sahar Baruch, was killed in the operation, later confirmed by his kibbutz community in Beer, one of the worst hit on October 7.

"They are now being pushed further and further south into tiny, overcrowded areas without water, food, or protection, putting them at increased risk of respiratory infections and waterborne disease," said Adele Khodr of UNICEF.

"The restrictions and challenges being placed on the delivery of lifesaving aid going into



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar giving a laptop to the youngest candidate in the entry test of the IT Initiative Program in Balochistan.

DG Customs robbed at gunpoint in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a brazen daylight robbery, armed men snatched mobile phone of the Director General (DG) of Customs while he was on a walk near the Ramna police station in Islamabad on Sunday. This incident has sparked concerns over the rise of robberies and thefts in the federal capital.

According to reports, the DG parked his car on the roadside and went for a walk when two armed men on a motorcycle approached him. They threatened him with a gun and took away his mobile phone before fleeing the scene.

The DG's employee registered a case at the Ramna police station, demanding immediate action to apprehend the culprits and recover the stolen phone. This incident comes amidst con-

flating reports from the Ministry of Interior regarding crime statistics in Islamabad. One reply claims no robbery occurred in 2022 while another acknowledges 18 cases. Additionally, a separate report contradicts these figures, stating 3058 theft cases registered in the same year.

The Ministry's report further highlights the prevalence of other crimes in Islamabad, with 177 murders, 68 cases of adultery, 673 vehicle thefts, and 2524 general thefts reported in 2022. Notably, 3276 bicycle thefts and 1470 cases of illegal weapon possession were also recorded during the year.

The recent robbery of the DG of Customs further underscores the need for immediate action to address public safety concerns in the capital city.

KU introduces BS degree programme in Digital Media Marketing

KARACHI (INP): The University of Karachi (KU) has launched a new four-year BS degree programme in Digital Media Marketing.

The KU is offering admissions in the BS in Digital Media Marketing course for the academic year 2024.

The new BS degree programme was launched by KU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood during the ceremony held in the Sarwar Naseem Hall of the Department of Mass Communication

on Friday. Addressing the audience, Iraqi said that Digital Media Marketing is one of the degree programs which have a lot of scope around the globe and this is one of the ideal courses for youngsters.

The world has changed dramatically and technological proficiency is crucial for global reach," he stated.

He further shared KU's commitment to introducing new programs, citing recent additions like BS in Poultry Science, Public Health, Human

Nutrition and Dietetics, Medical Laboratory Technology, and Sports Business Management launched in 2023.

In a groundbreaking move, Dr Iraqi announced that students with a Bachelor's degree will be eligible for admission to the BS Digital Media Marketing program, alongside intermediate graduates.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Asmat Ara, Chairperson of the Department of Mass Communication, said the four-year new degree program will equip students with the

skills to become entrepreneurs and create their own content.

"KU is the first public university in Pakistan to offer BS Degree Program in Digital Media Marketing," she added.

Dr Asif Iqbal, President of the Digital Marketing Association Pakistan, praised the program design and expressed his willingness to contribute in any capacity.

He emphasized the need to adapt to the rapidly changing world and encouraged students to embrace constructive criticism for professional growth.

Pakistan's Asif Ali leads to victory of New York Strikers in final of Abu Dhabi T10

ABU DHABI (INP): New York Strikers wiped away the pain of last edition's loss to Deccan Gladiators in the final and crowned themselves as the new champions of the Abu Dhabi T10 in the 7th edition at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium by recording a seven-wicket win.

Pakistan's Asif Ali, known for his power-hitting skills, and skipper Kieron Pollard, put on an unbeaten 56 runs partnership for the fourth wicket in 29 balls.

Ali remained unbeaten on 48 off 25 balls with four sixes and two boundaries while Pollard scored an unconquered 21 off 13 balls with one boundary and a six to win the final with four balls to spare.

They thus lifted the trophy and received the prize money of \$100,000.

It was a creditable show from New York Strikers that had become part of the Abu Dhabi T10 only in the last edition and have reached the final in both the editions and now won the title too.

Gladiators, who were hoping to record a hat-trick of title triumphs having won the earlier two editions, received the runners-up prize money of \$50,000.

Their plans to post a big total was squashed by Sunil

Narine who bagged two wickets for six runs from his two overs and restricted Deccan Gladiators to 91 for 5.

It was the same total that New York Strikers were restricted to in the last Zayed Cricket Stadium by recording a seven-wicket win.

Match: Asif Ali Player of the Tournament: Akeal Hosein

Deccan Gladiators 91 for 5 in 10 overs (Andre Russell 20n.o, David Wiese 20n.o, Sunil Narine 2 for 6)

New York Strikers 94 for 3 in 9.2 overs (Asif Ali 48n.o, Kieron Pollard 22n.o)

UAE Player of the Tournament: M o h a m m a d Jawadullah

Brief scores:

Registrar NEPRA
NEPRA Tower, Attark Avenue, (East), G-5/1, Islamabad
Tel: 051-42065000 Fax: 051-2800026, Email: registrar@nepra.org.pk

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KACHHI: Assistant Commissioner Dhader Imran Khan is addressing the meeting held regarding Maukhel Aman Warana

Prince Ali Ahmadzai Inspires National Resolve Against Corruption

Staff Reporter:

QUETTA: Provincial Minister of Industry and Commerce, Excise and Taxation, and Energy, Prince Ahmad Ali Ahmadzai, emphasized the significance of self-accountability and the court of conscience as the best means of ensuring transparency. Speaking as the special guest on International Anti-Corruption Day at a seminar, he asserted that tackling corruption is not the sole responsibility of individuals or institutions but requires a collective effort from the entire nation.

NAB Plays Key Role In Eliminating Corruption

Prince Ahmad Ali Ahmadzai lamented the existing disparity where the privileged lack hope and the deprived face insurmountable challenges. He underscored that eradicating corruption demands the active participation of governments and institutions alongside individual commitment. Acknowledging the role of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), he stressed the need for society to be conscientious about the prevalence of corruption.

The seminar, attended by high-ranking officials and students, featured Additional Chief Secretary Interior and Tribal Affairs Zahid Saleem, Director General NAB Zafar Iqbal Khan, DIGAIF Dr. Munir Marwat, Vice Chancellor Biotms Professor Dr. Khalid Hafeez, former provincial minister Rosh Khurshid Brocha, and Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shaafaq.

The provincial minister urged the young generation to actively combat both financial and moral corruption, emphasizing the

role of thought, language, and a genuine lifestyle.

Addressing Corruption Begins At Home: Zahid Saleem

Zahid Saleem, Additional Secretary Interior and Tribal Affairs, highlighted the interconnectedness of moral and financial corruption, asserting that addressing corruption begins at home by instilling ethical values in children.

He expressed optimism in the youth's potential to contribute to societal betterment, emphasizing their future role in governance. Saleem called for a return to values such as thrift and contentment, attributing corruption to the disappearance of the middle class, the backbone of economic and social life.



QUETTA: Director General NAB Balochistan Zafar Iqbal Khan presenting a check worth 2.4 billion rupees to Additional Chief Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs Zahid Saleem in an event organized on the occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day.

Govt denounced for not keeping check on foreign exchange market

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Businessmen Panel (BMP) of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has denounced the government for not keeping a check on foreign exchange market, as the State Bank's foreign exchange reserves dropped by \$27 million to \$7 billion in the week ending Dec 1, because debt servicing on foreign loans continues to eat up SBP's holdings.

FPCCI's former president Mian Anjum Nisar said that the exchange rate looks stable, but increasing debt servicing costs without significant inflows have put the economy at risk, as that Pakistan's economy was stuck in a low-growth trap with poor human development outcomes and increasing poverty.

The country's total liquid foreign reserves stood at \$12.1bn, including \$5.09bn held by commercial banks, the central bank said. The SBP has now lost more than \$1.7bn since mid-July.

Mian Anjum said the economic conditions leave Pakistan highly vulnerable to climate shocks with insufficient public resources to finance development and that international experience suggests that domestic debt reprofiling did not always work unless associated with sharp and sustained structural reforms. He said the IMF had identified the need for reforms over three to four decades ago, but they were still pending.

With the formation of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the government aims to bring up to \$100bn in investments in the next three to five years, particularly from the Middle East. Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) have been signed with the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for billions of dollars, which has helped stabilise the domestic market while the stock exchange has been strong for one milestone after another. However, the anticipated \$700m from the IMF is yet to materialise.



PISHIN: The suspects arrested in various operations of Pishin police are being presented in front of the media.

While these funds could bolster the SBP's reserves, ongoing debt servicing may continue to erode them.

The BMP Chairman pointed out several times that the State Bank has been buying dollars for debt servicing and to keep the reserves at the current level. This buying has resulted in a tight grip over imports, which fell by 17.3 per cent year-on-year to \$21.5bn during the first five months (July to November) of the current fiscal year.

This steep decline in imports with a slight improvement of exports by 1.9pc reduced the trade deficit by 33.6pc, or \$9.4bn.

Not only are the importers in trouble, but the State Bank has grossly restricted the profits outflows, he said.

In July-October, the outflows for profits and dividends were \$485m compared to just \$71m in the same period a year ago.

The outflows of profits were relaxed before the IMF talks, he said, adding that this could again hurt the foreign direct investment inflows. Pakistan received just \$524m in FDI during July-October, an annual increase of just 7pc.

Adding to the concerns, the country's foreign debt and liabilities rose by \$3.48bn, reaching \$128.09bn in the first quarter of FY24. Mian Anjum Nisar said the economic conditions leave Pakistan highly vulnerable to climate shocks with insufficient public resources to finance development and that international experience suggests that domestic debt reprofiling did not always work unless associated with sharp and sustained structural reforms. He said the IMF had identified the need for reforms over three to four decades ago, but they were still pending. The monthly headline consumer inflation remains high but is projected to drop over the next several months.

The exchange rate is no longer deteriorating as it was until the end of August, thanks to the army-sanctioned actions

against illegal dollar trade and unchecked smuggling to Afghanistan. The current account deficit is contained, and the haemorrhage of foreign exchange reserves stopped — for now.

The primary surplus target for the first quarter of the present financial year has been achieved. Nevertheless, this reduction in volatility has come at a heavy cost to economic growth, public and private investments, and jobs.

The major structural challenges — how to control debt accumulation and current account deficit without suppressing growth, increase one of the world's lowest tax-to-GDP rates of less than 9pc, boost industrial and agricultural productivity and exports, manage haemorrhage of resources through public sector entities, settle circular debt in the power sector without further raising the electricity prices and so forth — remain unaddressed.

Mian Anjum Nisar was of the view that Pakistan should resist the temptation to use short-term measures like domestic debt restructuring and attracting one-time investment without addressing the country's big picture issues through reforms aimed at improving the larger business climate, taxation, human capital and business competitiveness.

He told that such steps could help once or twice, but it was no solution to Pakistan's challenges, which could only be addressed by improving the business climate, providing a level playing field and removing distortions and tax exemptions. His remarks were in line with an earlier International Monetary Fund (IMF) advice to the government against creating a group of preferred investors.

The business leader said that he hoped his institution could disburse up to \$2 billion to the country during the current fiscal year, provided elections were held on time, and the present and new governments remain committed to reforms and deliver on promised efforts.



QUETTA: Balochistan Caretaker Minister for Information Jan Achakzai and Balochistan Caretaker Minister Minerals Umeer Muhammad Hani distributing shields on the occasion of International Human Rights Day organized by Youth Forum for Kashmir.

PPP mulls seat adjustment with ANP in Karachi, KP

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leadership have contacted Awami National Party (ANP) on forming an electoral alliance and seat adjustment in Karachi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) for the upcoming general elections. Sources said on Sunday that PPP has discussed seat adjustment with ANP on Karachi's two National Assembly (NA) seats.

Moreover, the two parties also discussed forming an electoral alliance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the upcoming

elections. PPP and ANP are likely to make a seat adjustment in Peshawar, Swabi, Charsadda, Malakand, Mardan, Karak, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan (DI Khan), say sources.

The latest development comes a day after ANP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) President Aimal Wali Khan met PPP Parliamentarians President Asif Ali Zardari and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at the Zardari House Islamabad. They discussed on elec-

torial alliance and seat adjustment in KP province for the forthcoming general elections. They discussed that both parties have strong vote bank in 20 constituencies in KP. They agreed on holding more meetings to null over electoral alliance, sources said.

Earlier in the month, Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) leadership decided not to make seat adjustments with Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) in the upcoming general election 2024 and termed it a 'loss trade'.

Pakistan poised for \$100 billion export target: CEO-PFC

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has the potential to significantly increase its exports, aiming for a target of \$100 billion, according to furniture industry leader Mian Kashif Ashfaq.

He emphasized the crucial role of the private sector in achieving this goal and urged the government to provide a comprehensive incentive package for exporters.

Ashfaq, CEO of the Pakistan Furniture Council, met with a delegation of exporters led by Chandruy Areeb Aman on Sunday.

He stressed the importance of utilizing the full potential of the private sector, which

he believes is key to driving economic and commercial development.

"To achieve this export target, it is imperative to offer a consolidated, comprehensive, and easily accessible incentive package to exporters," Ashfaq stated. He expressed confidence in Federal Trade Minister Gohar Ijaz's ability to provide a clear framework for exporters to leverage and promote domestic exports.

The furniture leader highlighted Pakistan's capacity to fulfill global requirements across various sectors, from textiles and agriculture to technology and manufacturing. He

emphasized the need for investment in infrastructure, technology, and skills development to enhance the competitiveness of Pakistani exports on the international market.

"By overcoming logistical challenges and improving the quality of products and services, Pakistan can position itself as a reliable and attractive trading partner to the world," Ashfaq concluded.

The government's focus on promoting an environment conducive to export trade, coupled with active private sector participation, suggests a promising outlook for Pakistan's export ambitions.



NASERABAD: Deputy Commissioner Batul Asadi is inspecting the under-construction Chhatr.

Founder of "The Frontier Post" Rehmat Shah Afridi passes away

PESHAWAR (INP): The founder of English-language daily The Frontier Post, Rehmat Shah Afridi, passed away on Saturday. He was 74.

According to his son Bilal Afridi, his funeral prayer was offered on Sunday in Bagh-e-Nisar, Hayatabad, Peshawar at 11 am.

He is survived by four sons — Mahmood Ullah Afridi, Jalil Afridi, Bilal Afridi and Ahmad Shah Afridi.

Bilal Afridi, in his message, said "It is with a heavy heart that we bid farewell to a true pioneer of English journalism in the frontier part of Pakistan, Rehmat Shah Afridi, who departed from our midst just moments ago. A luminary in the field of journalism, Afridi's legacy as the founder Editor-in-Chief of The Frontier Post has left an indelible mark on the landscape of media in the region.

"Afridi was not just a journalist; he was a visionary, a

mentor, and a trailblazer who paved the way for countless aspiring journalists, myself included, to find their voice and purpose in the world of news reporting. As the architect of The Frontier Post, he created more than a newspaper; he fostered a university of journalism, a place where knowledge was shared, skills were honed, and a commitment to truth and integrity was instilled in every journalist who passed through its doors.

His mentorship was a beacon that guided us through the complex landscape of media, inspiring a generation to uphold the principles he held dear.

"Beyond his professional achievements, Afridi was known for his unwavering dedication to the truth and fearless pursuit of justice. He was not one to shy away from challenging the status quo, and his journalistic endeavors often played a pivotal role in shaping public

opinion and discourse. His courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the ideals of journalism will be remembered as a benchmark for generations to come.

"As we mourn the loss of Rehmat Shah Afridi, let us also celebrate the rich legacy he leaves behind.

The Frontier Post, under his stewardship, remains a testament to his vision and commitment to excellence. His passing is not just a loss for the journalistic community but for the entire region that benefited from his tireless efforts to bring forth the truth.

In the spirit of the journalistic values he championed, let us continue to honor Rehmat Shah Afridi's memory by upholding the principles of integrity, truth, and fearlessness in our pursuit of knowledge and justice. May his soul rest in peace, and may his legacy inspire countless others to follow in his footsteps."