

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

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File photo: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti speaking during the assembly session: Photo provided by the DGPR

Breaking News: Blast Rocks Liaquat Bazar in Quetta, One Killed 6 Injured

Manan Mandokhail:
QUETTA: A blast in the Liaquat Bazar area of Quetta has left one person dead and six people injured on Tuesday.
The explosion, which occurred in the bustling commercial hub, sent shockwaves through the city as authorities rushed to the scene.
Emergency responders swiftly transported the injured to the Trauma Center at Civil Hospital Quetta, where they are currently receiving medical treatment. The condition of the injured individuals is not yet known.
Security forces have cordoned off the area and launched an investigation into the cause of the blast. The incident has sparked concern among residents, and additional security measures are being implemented across the city.
Further details are awaited as the situation develops.

Sarfaraz Bugti, Vows to Eradicate Terrorism Following Mastung Attack

Syed Ali Shah:

QUETTA: Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti, presided over a high-level meeting to assess the law and order situation in the province, particularly in the wake of the recent terrorist attack in the Khad Kocha area of Mastung. The meeting was attended by Provincial Home Minister Mir Zia Langove, Chief Secretary Balochistan, Additional Chief Secretary Interior, senior officials, IG Police Balochistan, and the Director General of the Levies Force.
During the meeting, the Home Department provided a comprehensive briefing on the overall security situation and the specifics of the Mastung incident. The Chief Minister instructed the Additional Chief Secretary Interior to submit a detailed report on the Mastung attack and emphasized the importance of reviewing and strictly enforcing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) during the transportation of officers.

Chief Minister Bugti, while addressing the officials, vowed to bring the terrorists to their "logical end," stating that the blood of the martyrs would not go in vain. He stressed that the fight against terrorism is not just the responsibility of the military and bureaucrats but a collective effort of every member of society.
He called on the Levies Force to play an active role, as they have done in the past, to track down the elements involved in terrorism. The Chief Minister urged an immediate and strong response to any terrorist incident, underlining the need to strengthen both the police and Levies Force with necessary equipment, weapons, and vehicles to combat sabotage effectively.
Furthermore, CM Bugti highlighted the importance of closely monitoring anti-state activities on social media, declaring that such platforms must not be allowed to become tools for terrorism. He reiterated that the war against terrorists is not confined to any single organization but is the collective responsibility of the entire nation.
In conclusion, Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti reaffirmed his commitment to fighting terrorism at every level, promising that both the terrorists and their facilitators would be brought to justice.

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Daily Quetta Voice Proudly Congratulates the Nation on Our 77th Independence Day!

Army's internal matter': Imran distances PTI from ex-DG ISI Faiz Hameed after arrest

NEWS DESK: PTI founder Imran Khan has distanced the party from former intelligence chief Lt Gen (retired) Faiz Hameed, with whom he had close ties, a day after the latter's arrest and termed the issue the "army's internal matter", a PTI lawyer said on Tuesday.

In an unprecedented step, the army on Monday announced Gen Hameed's arrest, the previous head of the premier Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, on allegations of violating the Army Act. According to a source, Gen Hameed was taken into custody a few days back from Rawalpindi when he was summoned for a meeting by a senior military official.

that 'it is the army's internal matter' and that whatever action the army has taken has nothing to do with the PTI or Khan sahib.
Gen Hameed's background is equally significant in the political landscape of Pakistan. He served as the director general of the ISI from 2019 to 2021 and was frequently criticised by the PTI's opposition for his alleged support of and ties with Imran. His removal from the ISI chief position in 2021 is believed to have resulted in the rift between Imran and the military establishment, which culminated in the ex-prime minister's ousting in 2022 through a vote of no-confidence. Questioned about



The move, prompted by allegations of misconduct levelled by the owner of a private housing society, shattered the long-standing perception that spy chiefs were untouchable in the country where generals have long wielded unparalleled influence. The army cited a November 2023 directive from the Supreme Court of Pak-istan, which instructed Khan-war Moez Khan, owner of Islamabad's Top City housing society, to seek redressal of grievances against Gen Hameed through relevant channels, including the Ministry of Defence, as the basis for initiating action against the former spymaster. PTI lawyer Intezar Panjutha held a meeting with the incarcerated party founder today in Adiala Jail and briefed the media regarding the talks, as well as the former premier's thoughts on Gen Hameed's arrest. "Khan sahib said just this

the former spymaster's arrest related to the housing society and whether the PTI would be linked to it. Panjutha said Imran was "clear on this matter and has said: 'We never had a political relationship with Gen Faiz or anyone. My relationship with him was till October 2021 when he was changed [as ISI chief]'. At this, Panjutha said Imran alleged that former army chief Gen (r) Qamar Javed Bajwa "changed him (Gen Hameed as ISI chief) for the sake of his extension in a deal with Nawaz Sharif". The lawyer reiterated that Imran said: "I only had a professional relationship with Gen Faiz till he was working under me as the DG ISI and I had no other association apart from that." The PTI lawyer further said: "Khan sahib said just one thing that 'if these developments are connected with May 9 then it is a very good opportunity."

Punjab CM Maryam visits Arshad Nadeem, hands him Rs100m reward for Olympic win

NEWS DESK: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Tuesday visited javelin star Arshad Nadeem in his hometown of Mian Channu and awarded him a cheque worth Rs100 million for his Olympic gold medal.

Arshad at his home, where she was greeted by the javelin star and his family.
The chief minister congratulated Arshad and awarded him a cheque worth Rs100 million, which she had announced previously, along with a Honda Civic car with a special registration number PAK-92-97 to commemorate the athlete's winning throw.
The chief minister also handed Arshad's coach Salman Iqbal Butt a cheque worth Rs5m, commending him for the training he provided to the javelin superstar. "Arshad Nadeem has brought unprecedented happiness to the nation," Maryam was quoted as saying in the press release.

Arshad made history in Paris last week, not only winning Pakistan's first Olympic gold in 40 years but also setting a record in the Games with his monstrous 92.97-metre throw.
Arshad's Olympic win was Pakistan's first individual gold medal, first track and field medal as well as the second time a South Asian has had a podium finish in track and field.
The nation has since then been joyous — with the athlete arriving to a hero's welcome back at his hometown Mian Channu and government leaders announcing the Hilal-i-Imtiaz award and cash prizes worth more than Rs155m for him.
CM Maryam arrived in Mian Channu via a helicopter today to visit

Senior Punjab minister Murrizuni Aurangzeb, provincial sports minister Faisal Ayub Khokhar, special aide to CM Zeeshan Malik, MPA Sana Ashiq

پہلوان اعظم عالمی شان
پہلوان بلوچستان خوشحال پاکستان
وزیر اعلیٰ بلوچستان میر سر فاروق بیگ کی زیر قیادت
حکومت بلوچستان سوید میں یکساں ترقی و خوشحالی اور عوامی فلاح کیلئے پُر عزم

ایمان، اتحاد و تنظیم کو مشعل راہ بنا دینا
ترقی و خوشحالی کی نئی منزلوں کی جانب جاری ہے سڑ
صحت اور تعلیم کے اجالوں سے روشن ہے اب ہر گھر
عقی شاہراہوں کی گھیر سے ناطے بنا رہے ہیں
ترقیاتی منصوبوں کی پیمائش سے مستحکم بلوچستان بنا رہے ہیں

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VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Balochistan Needs Action, Not Another Failed Polio Campaign

Editorial:

The news of a children in Chaman and Dera Bugti contracting polio, in Balochistan after three years, is a damning indictment of the provincial health department and donor agencies entrusted with this critical public health mission. While a targeted vaccination campaign is a welcome response, it's a mere bandage on a gaping wound.

Imported Solutions Don't Work

For far too long, a top-down approach relying on imported solutions has dominated our fight against polio. We, the people of Balochistan, have the indigenous knowledge and cultural understanding necessary to effectively combat this disease. Yet, our voices and workable solutions are consistently sidelined.

The presence of poliovirus in environmental samples since last August is a glaring failure of our health department. This isn't just a recent oversight; it exposes a systemic weakness in surveillance and outreach programs.

Where are the culturally sensitive campaigns that cater to communities in the local languages? Where are the efforts to address vaccine hesitancy through dialogue and trust-building with local leaders? We need an overhaul of the health department's approach, one that leverages the strengths of our community over imported health initiatives.

Donor agencies must also shoulder some of the blame

Have they critically evaluated the effectiveness of their funding, or have they simply perpetuated a cycle of dependence on external solutions? We urge them to invest in building the capacity of our local healthcare system and empower Balochistanis to take charge of their health outcomes.

The upcoming vaccination campaign is crucial, but it cannot be a one-off effort. We need a sustained, multi-pronged approach that integrates local knowledge, strengthens healthcare infrastructure, and prioritizes community engagement. Only then can we truly eradicate polio from Balochistan and safeguard the health of future generations.

This is a wake-up call. Let Balochistan not be known for this resurgence of a preventable disease. Let's work together, with our own solutions at the forefront, to banish polio for good.

Economic revival

By Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry:

IN 1992, Bill Clinton ran his campaign for US presidency on three slogans, one of which was "It's the economy, stupid!". In the backdrop of the economic downturn of the early 1990s, Clinton's focus on economic revival resonated well with his voters, and within three years, economic growth picked up. Ever since, the phrase "It's the economy, stupid!" has been used extensively to emphasise the pivotal role of economic management in a nation's prosperity.

In Pakistan today, the imperative of economic revival can hardly be overemphasised. For decades, we have been living beyond our means, collecting a mountain of debt along the way. Interest payments consume the bulk of our revenues, and perpetual loans are sought to run the government. Effectively, that means much of what the government does is with borrowed money.

This is unsustainable; either we increase our revenues, or reduce our expenditures — preferably both. Pursuant to the agreement with the IMF, the government plans to tax the retail sector as part of its efforts to document the informal economy. This would certainly

help broaden the tax base. Opposite my house is a supermarket frequented by so many customers that I have rarely seen the cashier desk without a queue before it. Yet, when it comes to paying taxes, this shop, like many retailers, is reluctant to enter the tax net.

Our people need to realise that the roads we travel on, the public services we avail of, and the higher quality of life we desire can only be available if we pay taxes. An argument often made in response to the topic of increasing the tax net is that the revenue collected from the common man is used by high officials to finance their over-extended lifestyles. It is, therefore, important that while broadening the tax base, the government make an equally robust and visible effort to cut wasteful public expense.

We have yet to see any concrete proof of belt-tightening. Meanwhile, the 18th Amendment, which devolved several subjects to the provinces, was a step in the right direction, but its implementation has left much to be desired. First, the federal ministries dealing with the subjects already devolved to the provinces have not been dissolved. Second, resources were not devolved by the provinces to local governments. Since living conditions in tehsils and villages have not improved, the common man is dissatisfied with the way the economy works in our country. In a related issue, the NFC award adopted in 2010 increased the share of provinces from the net proceeds of divisible pool taxes to 57 per cent (2011-12 onwards) up from 45 per cent (2009-10). As debt obligations have continued to rise,

Ghulam Ali Baloch:

In the landscape of Balochistan's higher education, several challenges have emerged, casting shadows over the educational prospects of its youth. These challenges, if not addressed promptly, could impede the region's progress and development. Here's an exploration of some pressing issues and potential avenues for reform:

1. Imbalance in Staffing Ratios: Investigations into the staffing levels following the 18th amendment reveal a concerning ratio of non-teaching staff to faculty members. The purported ratio of 8 non-teaching staff for every teaching faculty member is highly unrepresentative and warrants immediate attention.

2. Disbalance in Budget Allocation: The proliferation of new departments and the consequent increase in budget demands has led to a significant reduction in per-student expenditure. This has resulted in inadequate infrastructure, outdated textbooks, and a general decline in the quality of education.

3. Lack of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Funds: Contrary to global best practices, there is a notable absence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund management for sponsoring higher education initiatives in Balochistan. Major investors and entities have made negligible contributions towards the advancement of higher education, posing a significant barrier to educational progress.

4. Inadequate Resource Management: Internal disorganisation and mismanagement of resources, coupled with a lack of decision-making processes, hinders the effective utilisation of available funds and personnel.

5. Absence of Internal Consultation: The lack of internal consultation exacerbates the mismanagement of resources, leading to decisions that do not align with the needs and aspirations of the student body.

6. Irrational Construction Projects: The High Education Department's inclination towards constructing large buildings for Research Centers (BRCs) and Cadet Colleges at exorbitant costs further strains the funds allocated for higher education. These expenditures compete with essential agricultural lands under-sold by the sector's overall progress.

7. Need for Institutional Re-alignment: Several institutions under the Higher Education umbrella require re-alignment to improve the quality of both school and college education. Outdated practices, such as the establishment of Intermediate Colleges, need to be re-evaluated in favor of modern educational structures that align with contemporary needs.

8. Modernization of Curriculum and Institutions: Many colleges struggle to adapt to the new curriculum introduced under the BS program, leading to redundancy and inefficiency. Transforming these colleges into centers for skill development or upgrading them to universities could better serve the educational needs of Balochistan's youth.

In conclusion, Balochistan's higher education sector faces multifaceted challenges that demand immediate attention and reform. By addressing staffing imbalances, reallocating budgets effectively, fostering corporate partnerships, enhancing resource management, promoting internal collaboration, rationalizing construction projects, realigning institutions, and modernizing curriculum and institutions, Balochistan can pave the way for a brighter educational future for its youth.

The author is a senior bureaucrat in the government of Balochistan

Challenges and Reforms in Balochistan's Higher Education

Targeting Chinese nationals

By Muhammad Amir Rana:

THE Shingla terrorist attack on the Chinese engineers' vehicle is having serious implications for the region. The same is the case for the recent Shingla attack. The names of all three groups are circulating in the media after the attack. The TTP has been projected as the prime suspect, as it is the only group that has declared the mastermind behind a similar attack on the Chinese in Karachi in 2012. The names of a few TTP commanders who have orchestrated the attack are circulating in the media. Quickly jumping to conclusions distracts investigation and impacts the state's ability to tackle the security situation comprehensively.

The state's history of dealing with militant groups has emboldened them. Pakistan's militant landscape is not as diverse as it once was. Ideologies, sociopolitical factors, and local conditions are more important than broader ideological and political motivations. The region is divided into upper and lower Kohistan, and Battagram districts of the Hazara region in KP and the adjoining Diamer district in Gilgit-Baltistan share religious, social, tribal, ethnic, and cultural ties. The region has been frequently in the news due to 'honour' killings, burning of girls' schools, and the killing of Shia travellers. Recently, it has gained notoriety for attacks on Chinese workers involved in development projects in the area.

The Deobandi school is dominant in the region and blends with conservative social targeting foreign climbers — and an end to the women's sporting activities in GB for the minister's release. They and modernists blocked the road because the state failed to honour a 2019 agreement, and issued a ultimatum for the government to meet their demands.

Although a prominent local and weapon resource, it is not the only one in the region. The MGB and other local militant groups reportedly maintain close links with the TTP and sectarian outfits based in Punjab.

These external groups appear to support local militants, as evidenced by the TTP's involvement in perceptions about the 2022 Baluch Pass blockade. The state's history of compromise with militant groups has emboldened them. For instance, in the kidnapping incident, the administration agreed to ban girls' sports in the region. Similarly, a 2019 agreement had reportedly allowed for implementation of some Islamic laws to resolve them through local jirgas and by involving religious scholars. This can result in leniency towards extremists and elements taking the law into their own hands.

The Mujahideen Gilgit-Baltistan and Kohistan (MGB) are a prime example. The group claimed responsibility for several incidents in the region, including the killing of Diamer districts.

In October 2022, it held a GB minister hostage. They demanded the release of terrorists — some of them had been involved in the 2013 terrorist attack on the Nanga Parbat base camp targeting foreign climbers — and an end to the women's sporting activities in GB for the minister's release. They and modernists blocked the road because the state failed to honour a 2019 agreement, and issued a ultimatum for the government to meet their demands.

While anti-development sentiments are not that high in the area, and wider roads will trigger urbanisation, women's emancipation, and modernisation, which they perceive as threats to their religion and culture. The dominant group suggests that most people are happy with the compensation money and employment prospects.

However, this doesn't diminish the level of religious extremism present. Some residents may sympathise with the Uighur community in Xinjiang and others may dislike the presence of foreigners on their land. These factors could be nurturing negative perceptions about Chinese nationals in the region.

One possible explanation of the local dynamics is seen in the blasphemy accusation against a Chinese official during the 2018-19 year. The incident highlighted that tensions could erupt.

While local groups may lack the capability to carry out large-scale attacks independently, the presence of Shia passengers and the attack on tourists at Nanga Parbat demonstrate their capacity for violence. Their ability is amplified by support from like-minded groups within Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The government's strategy of outsourcing the means of access to local and external religious figures needs to be revised to address these sentiments. A more comprehensive approach is needed to calm tensions.

By Hassan Nawaz Sheikh:

PAKISTAN'S ailing economy is undergoing a process of revival. The economic wizards have placed a lot of bets on IT in the hope that the enormous potential of this sector can help alleviate our economic woes. There have been claims by former federal IT ministers that Pakistan's IT exports would reach between \$10 billion to \$20 billion from the existing mark of \$2.6 billion within the next few years. The premise on which these claims are being made is that the IT sector has been recording consistent upward growth since the last few years.

The IT industry has gained further focus when it was picked up by the newly christened Special Investment Facilitation Council as one

of the five core areas on which Pakistan's economic revival is predicated. Under the auspices of SITC, investment opportunities are available for setting up special technology zones (STZs) at seven prime locations including Lahore, Peshawar, Swat, Abbottabad, Haripur, Islamabad, and Karachi. The Ministry of Information Technology & Tele-communication also has a prospectus for the establishment of 25 software technology parks (STPs) through Pakistan by converting public/private owned dilapidated or non-operational office buildings/factories into STPs. However, these are just infrastructural develop-

ments at best, whereby, a conducive environment for setting up businesses is being provided. The term 'digital trade' has no clear definition, yet it is believed to refer to 'commerce and services' through digital means in both goods and services'. The Digital Trade Principles, as agreed upon by the G7, cover five areas: (1) open digital markets; (2) data free flow with trust; (3) safety and consumer protection; (4) digital trading systems; and (5) far-reaching digital governance. While there is no clear measurement of this sector, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development estimates it to constitute approximately 10 per cent of the entire world trade. How-

ever, given how quickly this sector is expanding, the domestic regulatory environment will become increasingly complex, making it more difficult for consumers and businesses to seize some of the opportunities. How are these problems to be tackled? How would a digital trade environment not be hampered by such problems? How will our domestic businesses survive in the conventional form of an FTA model? The digital trade policy and regulatory requirements as violations thereof might restrict their ability to compete with their customers? For all these key problems and other related issues, the government needs to have a robust and dynamic digital trade policy for sustainable growth in this sector. Digital economy trade agree-

ments: While digital trade policy would bring a holistic and competitive edge to our IT entrepreneurs so that they're able to compete at the international stage, digital trade agreements would be a more bilateral and preferential market access. DTAs are just a niche market for the traditional free trade agreements. Whilst Pakistan is struggling to gain benefit from the European Union's trade policy and every modern trade agreement that EU has concluded in the past, digital trade dedicated digital trade chapter. Pakistan should, thus, aim to have a DTA with the EU that is the world's largest exporter and importer of digitally deliverable services. Singapore can be taken as another example that has a trade agreement included negotiations on digital economy agreements with Chile, New Zealand, Australia, the UK and South Korea. So, the trend of digital economy and trade agreements is definitely picking up. If our IT entrepreneurs can have direct and preferential access to developed economies — through the medium of DTAs — then we can keep our hopes high that sustainable and continued business will come our way and that would then justify our current high-growth of STZs.

Pakistani exhibitors tap into potential at inaugural Lhasa Imports Expo

BEIJING (INP): Lhasa, the capital of the Xizang Autonomous Region, China, was abuzz with excitement as it hosted the first-ever Lhasa Shoton Imports Expo on the recent week.

The event featured 246 enterprises from 31 countries and regions, marking it the largest expo of imported goods in the region in over a decade.

Among the diverse range of participants showcasing over 1,000 types of goods, Pakistani exhibitors stood out with four handicraft enterprises presenting their exquisite creations to a captivated crowd, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday.

Pakistani stalls decorated with intricate jade pieces, ornate copperware and other handcrafted items attracted significant attention from local residents and international visitors.

Faisal Rasheed, a seasoned participant in Xizang's exhibitions, expressed his enthusiasm for the event. "I love Xizang, and this is my third visit," he said. "In May, I participated in an exhibition here and

achieved sales of 300,000 yuan.

This time, I have brought millions of yuan worth of goods and I am very confident about our sales prospects. The Xizang market has a unique appreciation for quality craftsmanship, and our Pakistani handicrafts resonate well with their aesthetic sensibilities," Kamil Muhammad, a first-time visitor to Xizang and representative of another Pakistani handicraft enterprise, shared similar sentiments. "I'm grateful to the organizer for inviting us to this exhibition," he

said. "It's a wonderful opportunity to introduce Pakistani handicrafts to the people of Xizang. I hope this platform will not only enhance the visibility of our craftsmanship but also foster a deeper appreciation for our rich cultural heritage."

With over 600 international merchants in attendance, the event fostered a vibrant atmosphere of networking and collaboration, providing a unique platform for exhibitors to showcase their products and explore new markets.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) Secretary General Owais Noorani.

Police back on Bangladesh capital's streets as strike ends

DHAKA (INP): Bangladesh police resumed patrols of the capital Dhaka, ending a week-long strike that left a law and order vacuum following the abrupt

ousting of autocratic ex-premier Sheikh Hasina. Officers vanished from the streets of the sprawling megacity of 20 million people last week after Hasina's resignation and flight abroad ended her 15-year rule. Police were loathed for spearheading a lethal crackdown on the weeks of protests that forced her departure, with 42 officers among the more than

450 people killed.

Police had vowed not to resume work until their safety on duty was guaranteed, but they agreed to return after late-night talks with the new interim government, helmed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus.

"The police association ended its strike last night," the force's national spokesman Enamul Haque Sagor told.

"Police officers have returned to work today," he added. "You can see them managing traffic in Dhaka's streets." Student-led protests against Hasina's government

had been largely peaceful until police attempted to violently disperse them. Around 450 of the country's 600 police stations were targeted in arson and vandalism attacks over the past month, according to the national police union.

Some began reopening late last week under guard by the army, an institution held in higher esteem for largely refusing to participate in the crackdown.

In the police's absence, the students who led the protests that toppled Hasina volunteered to restore law and order after

looting and reprisal attacks in the hours after her departure. They acted as traffic wardens, formed overnight neighbourhood watch patrols and guarded Hindu temples and other places of worship, quickly settling the unrest.

Yunus's "council of advisors", the de facto cabinet now administering the country, said it had noted with "grave concern" some attacks on Hindus and other minorities. In its first official statement on Sunday night, the cabinet said it would work to "find ways to resolve such heinous attacks".

Helicopter crashes into hotel roof in northeast Australia

SYDNEY (INP): A helicopter crashed into the top of a Hilton hotel in northeastern Australia on Monday, killing the pilot and igniting a fiery explosion on the building's roof.

Hundreds of patrons were evacuated from the Double Tree by Hilton in the tropical tourist hub of Cairns after the twin-engine helicopter crashed around 1:50 am local time.

Mangled pieces of the helicopter's propeller landed in the hotel's pool, an emergency services official said. Witness Amanda Kay said her assistance dog woke her up before the crash, which she watched from her balcony nearby.

"There was a light chopper and it was flying super low, with no clearance lights on," she told reporters.

"There was this huge explosion because it had crashed into the building. It was a big bang."

Police said the pilot, who was the sole passenger in the helicopter, died at the scene.

Two people who were staying in a room close to where the aircraft crashed were hospitalised for smoke inhalation.

Images showed a bright plume of fire blazing on the hotel's roof. "They just flew into that building," a female voice says in a video shared on social media that captured the aftermath. "Madness, man," she adds as

sirens blare in the background.

"Shivers. People were living in that. It smashed right in."

Queensland Ambulance supervisor Caitlin Denning said the aircraft's propellers had "disintegrated".

"One landed on the Cairns Esplanade and there was a second propeller located in the hotel pool on the bottom floor and it was on fire," she told local media.

"There were reports of it sounding like a bomb, and seeing the fire and smoke, a lot of the occupants of the hotel were unsure of the situation."

The roof fire was extinguished later in the morning.

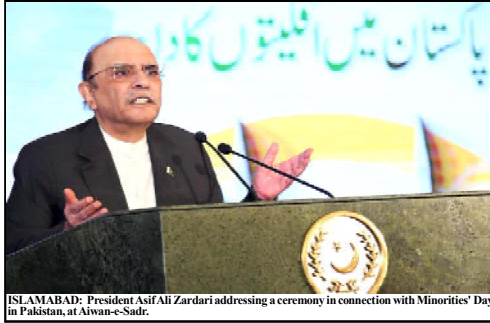
Cairns is a popular tourist hub that offers a gateway to Australia's famed Great Barrier Reef.

Australian Transport Safety Bureau commissioner Angus Mitchell said flying conditions were tricky at the time of the crash, with poor visibility and possibly rain.

"Our job now is to look at the facts that we can gather over the next couple of days, and to establish the sequence of events," he told reporters.

"We want to understand, what the helicopter was doing at the time, and the nature of the flight."

A team of government experts from the Australian Transport Safety Bureau have been dispatched to the crash site. The safety bureau



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari addressing a ceremony in connection with Minorities' Day in Pakistan, at Awan-e-Sadr.

Two migrants lose lives in channel crossing to Britain

LONDON (INP): Two migrants died in the Channel off the northern coast of France trying to reach Britain by boat, French maritime authorities said.

The new drownings near the French city of Calais mean nine people have lost their life attempting the dangerous sea crossing this month alone, and 25 since the start of the year.

A boat was signalled as being in distress on Sunday morning at sea between Calais and Dunkirk and "two people were declared dead", the maritime authorities said.

The vessel in trouble 10 kilometres (6 miles) north of Calais had 56 migrants on board, said Jacques Billant, prefect of the Pas-de-Calais department.

Among the 54 surviving passengers, and another 50 people from

another boat who were rescued, five were receiving medical care, he said.

In 2023, 12 migrants had died at sea trying to reach what they hoped would be a better life in Britain, according to the French authorities.

The death toll this year has already surpassed that with 25 migrants who have lost their lives since January, Billant said.

He said those crossing the sea often did so "without a lifejacket", on "vessels of very poor quality because not inflated enough and often without a solid bottom... or decent engine".

A non-governmental organisation called L'Auberge des Migrants ("The migrant hostel") on X mourned the deaths.

"This border kills in the greatest of silences," it said.

As of August 8, 17,639 people had

crossed the sea on so-called "small boats" to Britain this year, according to an AFP tally of British government figures.

That is very close to the figure for the same period in 2022, a year of record crossings.

After the Labour party's victory in the British general election in July, Prime Minister Keir Starmer and France's President Emmanuel Macron pledged to strengthen "cooperation" in handling the surge in undocumented migrant numbers.

Starmer has cancelled a plan by the former Conservative government to send irregular migrants to a holding camp in Rwanda. French authorities seek to stop migrants taking to the water but do not intervene once they are afloat except for rescue purposes, citing safety concerns.

Meanwhile, both governments are seeking to crack down on the people-smuggling gangs who organise the crossings and are paid thousands of euros by each migrant for the risky trip.

Billant said more than 350 people have been arrested and 15 "smuggler networks" dismantled since the start of the year.

The new migrant deaths come as the United Kingdom has been rocked by anti-migrant unrest, following a knife attack on July 29 that killed three children and was falsely linked on social media to a Muslim immigrant. Thousands of anti-racism demonstrators rallied across the United Kingdom on Saturday against the riots that targeted mosques and hotels linked to immigration.

Fire breaks out at cooling tower of Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant

MOSCOW (INP): Kyiv and Moscow traded blame on after a fire broke out at a cooling tower of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, under the control of Russian forces.

Ukraine, Russia and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said there had been no detected spike in radiation levels or any impact on nuclear safety.

A Moscow-installed official, Vladimir Rogov, said the blaze at a cooling tower has been "completely extinguished" in a Telegram post Monday.

He and Yevgeny Baltitsky, the Moscow-

installed governor of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region, blamed "Ukrainian armed forces" for the incident.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a social media post that "Russian occupiers have started a fire" at the plant, accusing them of trying to "blackmail" Kyiv. "Currently, radiation levels are within the norm," he added. Baltitsky also reported that "Russian occupiers have started a fire" at the plant, accusing them of trying to "blackmail" Kyiv. "Currently, radiation levels are within the norm," he added. Baltitsky also reported that "Russian occupiers have started a fire" at the plant, accusing them of trying to "blackmail" Kyiv. "Currently, radiation levels are within the norm," he added.

It said the plant had reported to them an "alleged drone attack today on one of the cooling towers".

In a later statement, the IAEA said it had requested that its team get "immediate access to the cooling tower to assess the damage".

Kyiv has accused Russia of purposefully starting the fire. "Russia must be held accountable for this. Only Ukrainian control over the

Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant can guarantee a return to normalcy and complete safety," Zelensky said.

Zelensky's interior minister said Kyiv was "intensively monitoring" radiation levels from nearby meteorological stations. All six of its reactors are currently in cold shutdown, the plant's press service said after the incident. "There is no threat of a steam explosion or any other consequences," Baltitsky said. A video published by Zelensky showed black smoke billowing out of one of the station's cooling towers as red flames licked around the bottom.



BALUCHISTAN INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT PROJECT



Happy 77th Independence Day, Pakistan! United, we build a prosperous future. -Mir Sadiq Umrani



Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti

"The BIWRMP is a crucial initiative for Balochistan, addressing our most pressing issue—water scarcity. This project represents a commitment to the sustainable development of our province. By involving local communities, we ensure long-lasting benefits. Together, we are building a resilient future for our people. Balochistan's prosperity depends on the success of this project."



Irrigation Minister, Mir Sadiq Umrani

"Efficient water management is vital for our agricultural and economic growth. The BIWRMP is transforming traditional practices into modern solutions, ensuring water availability throughout the year. This project empowers our farmers with the tools they need to thrive. It's a game-changer for irrigation and water conservation in Balochistan. We are proud to lead this effort, socio-economic development. Our commitment to this cause is unwavering, and we are dedicated to seeing it through."



Secretary Irrigation, Hafiz Abdul Majid

"Water is the lifeblood of Balochistan, and the BIWRMP is our strategic response to its scarcity. By integrating modern irrigation techniques and community involvement, we are safeguarding our water resources. This project is about more than infrastructure—it's about empowering people. Our aim is to create sustainable systems that will benefit generations to come. Together, we can secure Balochistan's future. Improving the standard of living for many. Our focus remains steadfast on delivering these benefits to the people of Balochistan, ensuring a brighter and more sustainable future."



Engineer Barakatullah Khan Kakar

"The BIWRMP is an engineering marvel tailored to Balochistan's unique challenges. From constructing water storage facilities to introducing efficient irrigation systems, we are making every drop count. This project exemplifies how technology and local knowledge can work hand in hand. It's a blueprint for sustainable water management. We are setting new standards for water resource management in the region."



TRANSFORMING BALUCHISTAN'S WATER FUTURE

Balochistan, a region challenged by arid landscapes and water scarcity, is witnessing a transformation through the Balochistan Integrated Water Resources and Management Project (BIWRMP). This initiative addresses long-standing issues of water mismanagement and inefficient agricultural practices with a comprehensive, sustainable approach.

REVOLUTIONIZING WATER MANAGEMENT FROM TRADITIONAL TO INTEGRATED APPROACHES:

BIWRMP marks a shift from outdated water management methods to a modern, integrated approach that covers the entire water cycle—from conservation and distribution to efficient utilization.

WATER STORAGE SOLUTIONS:

The project focuses on constructing and rehabilitating vital water storage structures, including check dams, reservoirs, and ponds. These innovations help capture rainwater, reduce runoff, and recharge groundwater, ensuring year-round water availability even during dry seasons.



Secretary Irrigation, Hafiz Abdul Majid (center) with other officials during a meeting.



Collage of images showing various irrigation schemes and water storage structures.



Images of modern irrigation systems like drip and sprinkler irrigation.



Images of water storage structures like check dams and reservoirs.



Large collage of images showing various water management infrastructure including automatic weather stations, irrigation systems, and storage structures.