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# QUETTA VOICE

## National Party Leadership Meets PM Shehbaz: Push for Makran Development and Praise for Global Diplomacy

Haseeb Khan:

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a high-level meeting with National Party central leaders, Senator Jan Muhammad Buledi and Member of National Assembly (MNA) Phulain Baloch, to review the political landscape and fast-track critical infrastructure projects in Balochistan.

The discussion centered heavily on the socio-political situation and public welfare initiatives in the Kech and Panjgur districts.

During the meeting, the National Party delegation extended an official invitation to the Prime Minister to visit the

calating international tensions and giving the country a renewed, respected identity on the world stage.

Accelerating Development and Agricultural Growth

Turning to local grievances, Senator Buledi and MNA Phulain Baloch briefed the Prime Minister on pressing public issues, infrastructural gaps, and the status of ongoing welfare schemes in Makran.

Responding to their concerns, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed relevant authorities to accelerate construction on both the Turbat Daanish School and the Panjgur Chidgi Road to ensure their timely completion.

The leaders also explored



**National Party delegation led by Senator Jan Muhammad Buledi meeting PM Shehbaz Sharif**

region to lay the foundation stones for the landmark Chidgi Road project in Panjgur and the upcoming Daanish School in Kech.

Commending Pakistan's Peace Diplomacy

A major highlight of the meeting was the delegation's appreciation of Pakistan's recent diplomatic efforts.

The National Party leaders highly commended the Prime Minister's proactive leadership in playing a constructive, stabilizing role during the recent US-Iran conflict.

They noted that Pakistan's balanced approach successfully projected the nation as a responsible global actor, contributing significantly to de-

strategic economic interventions, particularly under the Green Pakistan Initiative. Discussions focused on:

Providing accessible loans to local landowners and farmers in Kech and Panjgur.

Modernizing the regional agricultural sector to boost crop yields.

Generating sustainable employment opportunities for local youth.

Concluding the meeting, the federal government reaffirmed its ironclad commitment to enhancing

financial and administrative support to ensure sustainable development and long-term prosperity across Balochistan.



**Vessels at the Strait of Hormuz, as seen from Musandam, Oman, June 18, 2026.**

## Trump says Iran has told US no tolls being sought at Strait of Hormuz

NEWS DESK:

United States President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that Iran has told the US "that no tolls were being sought from ships travelling through the Strait of Hormuz."

The "two countries, which ended a first 'round of negotiations in Switzerland on Monday, have offered conflicting accounts about 'financial incentives for Iran, control of 'the Strait of Hormuz and Israel's parallel war in Lebanon — all major aspects of their 'framework deal signed last week, aiming 'to end the war."

Trump has faced criticism over 'the 'deal domestically, including from hardliners in his Republican Party.

Iran's Ghalibaf says deal to end war 'declaration of US defeat."

Iranian Parliament Speaker and chief negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on Wednesday that the deal between Iran and the United States to end the war is "America's declaration of defeat."

"The Islamabad understanding was not the result of pressure and coercion, but rather the result of the resistance and authority of the brave Iranian nation," Ghalibaf said at a conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, on an

Azerbaijani broadcast on Iranian television.

"That is why the Islamabad memorandum of understanding became a declaration of America's defeat."

Ghalibaf added that regional countries alone "should determine the Middle East's 'security structure."

"We consider the withdrawal of foreign military forces from the region a strategic objective. We see the future of the region not in confrontation, but in interaction. [Military] bases of extra-regional forces in West Asia are a source of instability," he said.

Ghalibaf said Iran is ready to cooperate with nations in the Middle East based on "non-interference in internal affairs and respect for sovereignty."

He reiterated Iran's stance that Israel must halt its attacks and occupation of southern Lebanon.

"We have not abandoned our friends and strategic partners in the most difficult and complex conditions... A ceasefire and an end to the war in Lebanon is just as important to us," Ghalibaf said.

He also said that "the Iranian nation has shown that the era of imposing will on independent nations is over."

"Although this war imposed heavy costs on our nation, it revealed the fundamental truth that

the people's resistance and resistance as the real power in the most difficult conditions disrupts the calculations of the aggressors."

No program to access attacked facilities, nuclear materials: Iranian Deputy FM

Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi stated in a post on X that despite IAEA chief Rafael Grossi's request, no meeting was held with him in Switzerland, and that "there is also no program for access to the attacked facilities and nuclear materials."

"These issues will solely be examined and resolved within the framework of the final agreement," he said.

"You cannot advance the 'sit up and take over' policy with media hype," he added.

Israel's defence minister says military will not withdraw from Lebanon, even if US demands it.

Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said Israel will not pull its forces out of southern Lebanon "even if there is an American demand", according to Al Jazeera.

"200,000 residents will not return," said Katz, referring to the Lebanese forcibly displaced by Israel's invasion and attacks, in comments carried by The Times of Israel.

"What happened in the past in security zones, where there was

also a civilian population [present], was roadside bombs and attacks against the soldiers, and therefore we will not allow that," added Katz. "We are not withdrawing."

US-Iran Islamabad pact sends 'positive signal', be jointly safeguarded, implemented: China

The US-Iran Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding has sent a "positive signal" and should be jointly safeguarded and implemented, China said on Wednesday.

China "advocates" dialogue and negotiation in addressing regional issues and differences among parties and "opposes the threat or use of force," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Gao Feng told reporters in Beijing.

Beijing "always upholds a just position, supports all efforts conducive to peace, supports the Iranian side in defending sovereignty, security, and territory, and national dignity, and supports Iran in improving its relations with Gulf states and regional countries," he said.

Rubio "reaffirms" security commitment with UAE president

Secretary of State Marco Rubio discussed the US-Iran deal with the leader of the United Arab Emirates and renewed the US's commitment to its security on his first leg of a tour of the Gulf, as per Al Jazeera.

## Deadly Collapse in Harnai Highlights Perilous Reality for Balochistan's Coal Miners

Hanif Tareen:

HARNAI A tragic mine collapse in the Khost area of Harnai district has claimed the lives of two more coal miners, once again exposing the lethal reality facing laborers working deep beneath the surface in Balochistan.

The fatal incident occurred inside a mine owned by contractor Mehrullah, where the victims were working deep underground when the structure caved in.

Following the collapse, a large number of fellow miners and local residents rushed to the scene, launching a frantic, community-led rescue effort to re-



trieve the trapped workers under incredibly harrowing conditions. Despite their bravery, the incident underscores a harrowing trend: hazardous working conditions in Balochistan's coal mines continue to claim precious human lives almost daily, largely going unnoticed by regulatory bodies.

Lashing out at the authorities, prominent labor leader Peer Muhammad Kakar heavily criticized the provincial Mines and Minerals Department.

Kakar fiercely condemned the department's failure to enforce existing labor laws and safety regulations, accusing officials of leaving vulnerable workers entirely unprotected in dangerous, sub-standard pits.

# QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

## South-West Asia and the War Against Narcotics: Where Does Pakistan Stand?

**By Dr. B. Sultan:** Lady Macbeth once remarked that "a little water clears us of this deed" after the assassination of the King. Yet, with time, she remained haunted, obsessively rubbing her hands in an attempt to cleanse the imagined stains of blood. The persistence of narcotics production and trade in South-West Asia resembles this unending struggle—a dark reality that cannot be easily washed away.

Afghanistan has long been recognized as the world's largest producer of opium, with its roots tracing back to the early 1900s. Over the decades, the repercussions of this industry spilled into neighboring Pakistan and Iran. In the late 2000s, Taliban leader Mullah Omar imposed a strict ban on poppy cultivation through threats, forced eradication, and severe punishments. However, as revealed by the UNODC Opium Survey 2007, the ban primarily targeted cultivation while the trade continued. After the fall of the Taliban, opium again became a major source of funding for logistics, weapons, and militia payments.

In 2022, the Taliban leadership once again announced a ban on poppy cultivation, with Hibatullah



Akhundzada officially declaring significant reductions. Some Western reports, supported by satellite imagery, showcased declining poppy fields in southern Afghanistan. However, this raises critical questions: Can Afghanistan realistically abandon such a central economic resource while facing

sanctions? And what consequences does this shift have for Pakistan? While certain international outlets hastily claim that Pakistan has become a new hub for narcotics, such narratives ignore key realities. The issue is not a simple matter of "shifting sands" but a complex regional security challenge. The

porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, coupled with cross-border networks of drug traffickers, means temporary shifts in cultivation are often strategic rather than permanent. Moreover, Afghanistan's pivot towards methamphetamine production—highlighted by satellite

evidence of expanded ephedra processing hubs—reflects adaptive strategies of traffickers rather than genuine eradication. In Pakistan, however, the situation is markedly different. Since 2001, the country has largely maintained its "poppy-free" status, despite sporadic spillovers from

Afghanistan. Following the Taliban's 2022 ban, some illicit cultivations did emerge in border areas, particularly within Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Yet, these were swiftly addressed through Pakistan's Poppy Elimination Campaign (PEC-2025). This multi-agency effort,

led by the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and provincial administrations, successfully destroyed thousands of acres of illegal poppy fields. Over 250 FIRs were registered, dozens of arrests were made, and awareness campaigns were launched across educational institutions. Importantly, in-

dependent surveys after March 2025 confirmed the effectiveness of these eradication drives.

Pakistan's determination to combat narcotics often remains under-reported internationally, overshadowed by outdated or selective portrayals.

The fact remains: Pakistan continues to fight this menace not only for its own stability but also for global security.

What is urgently needed is greater recognition of these efforts by the international community and enhanced cooperation from agencies such as the UNODC.

As South-West Asia remains at the heart of global narcotics trade routes, Pakistan's role is both frontline and decisive. Balochistan, in particular, holds the potential to transform from a vulnerable transit zone into a hub of opportunity, stability, and resilience. Just as Lady Macbeth's imagined guilt could not be washed away with water, the global community cannot absolve itself of responsibility by ignoring Pakistan's sacrifices and achievements in this ongoing struggle. The fight against narcotics requires collective recognition, support, and action—not selective narratives.

## Hypertension: The Silent Threat We Continue to Ignore

**By Dr Rubaba Khan Buledi:**

Every year, World Hypertension Day reminds us of a health crisis that continues to grow quietly across the globe. Unlike many diseases that arrive with immediate warning signs, hypertension often develops silently. A person may appear healthy, continue family routines, and feel physically normal while high blood pressure gradually damages the heart, kidneys, brain, and blood vessels. This is why medical experts across the world describe hypertension as the silent killer.

In Pakistan, the burden of hypertension is increasing at an alarming pace. Rapid urbanisation, unhealthy eating habits, physical inactivity, smoking, stress, and lack of routine medical checkups have created conditions where cardiovascular diseases are becoming more common among both older and younger populations. Unfortunately, many individuals only discover they have high blood pressure after suffering from serious complications such as stroke, heart disease, or kidney failure.

**Women Neglect Their Own Health, Prioritise Family**

What makes hypertension particularly dangerous is the lack of awareness surrounding it. In many households, people still consider blood pressure problems to be temporary



conditions caused only by stress or fatigue. Self-medication and delayed medical consultation remain common practices.

A large number of patients discontinue medicines once they start feeling better, without understanding that hypertension often requires lifelong management and regular monitoring.

The challenge before us in developing regions where access to healthcare facilities remains limited. In rural and remote areas, many people are unable to undergo routine health screenings due to economic difficul-

ties, long travel distances, or lack of awareness. Women, especially in conservative societies, frequently neglect their own health while prioritising family responsibilities.

As a result, hypertension often remains undiagnosed until it reaches dangerous stages.

Another worrying trend is the increasing prevalence of hypertension among younger people. Fast food consumption, excessive use of digital devices, reduced physical activity, and rising mental stress are contributing significantly to this issue. The modern

lifestyle has distanced many people from healthy daily habits that once naturally supported physical wellbeing. Walking has been replaced by prolonged sitting, home-cooked meals by processed food, and social interaction by constant digital engagement.

**Public Awareness Campaigns are Essential**

Mental health also plays an important role in blood pressure related illnesses. Economic uncertainty, unemployment, work related pressure, and social stress contribute heavily to anxiety and chronic tension. When stress becomes a per-

manent part of life, it directly affects the cardiovascular system. Unfortunately, mental health awareness remains weak in many societies, where emotional wellbeing is often ignored or misunderstood.

Preventing hypertension does not always require expensive treatment. In many cases, small but consistent lifestyle changes can significantly reduce health risks. Balanced diets, reduced salt intake, regular exercise, proper sleep, and avoidance of smoking can greatly improve cardiovascular health. Even simple daily hab-

its such as walking for thirty minutes, drinking enough water, and managing stress levels can make a noticeable difference.

Public awareness campaigns are essential in this regard. Governments, healthcare institutions, educational organizations, and media platforms must work together to educate people about the dangers of uncontrolled blood pressure.

Schools and colleges should also encourage health education programs that teach young people the importance of nutrition, physical activity, and preventive healthcare. Technology can

also become an effective tool in tackling hypertension. Telemedicine, mobile health applications, and digital awareness campaigns can help reach communities that lack direct access to medical professionals.

Regular blood pressure monitoring devices are now more accessible and can help individuals take responsibility for their own health. However, technology alone cannot solve the problem without public willingness to adopt healthier lifestyles.

**A Healthier Society Cannot be Built Through Hospitals Alone**

Healthcare systems must shift their focus from treatment alone to prevention and early diagnosis.

Preventive healthcare is not only more effective but also more affordable in the long term. Hospitals across Pakistan continue to face increasing pressure from patients suffering from preventable cardiovascular complications. Investing in awareness and early intervention can reduce this burden significantly.

Public awareness campaigns are essential in this regard. Governments, healthcare institutions, educational organizations, and media platforms must work together to educate people about the dangers of uncontrolled blood pressure.

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Nasirabad Deputy Commissioner Reviews Education Development Projects, Directs Timely Completion Before Schools Reopen

NASIRABAD: Deputy Commissioner... Nasirabad Virender Lal chaired an important meeting of the District Education Group to review the progress of on-going education sector development projects and discuss measures aimed at improving educational infrastructure across the district.



The meeting was attended by the District Education Officers (Male and Female) along with other relevant officials from the Education Department.

During the session, participants provided a comprehensive briefing on various development initiatives, including the construction of new school buildings, additional classrooms, rehabilitation of dilapidated educational facilities, and other key projects currently underway in the district.

Loralai Commissioner Reviews Education Recruitment Objections, Reaffirms Commitment to Merit and Transparency

LORALAI: Commissioner Loralai Division Wali Muhammad Bareeh chaired an important meeting of the Complaint Redressal Committee (CRC) of the Education Department to review objections, complaints, and grievance petitions submitted by candidates from various districts regarding the ongoing recruitment process.



The meeting was attended by Divisional Director Education Syed Arif Shah, District Education Officer Loralai Muhammad Bahi, District Education Officer Musa Khel Jamaluddin, District Education Officer Duki, Principal Degree College Professor Sardar Khan, the committee superintendent, and other members of the CRC.

The candidates presented their concerns, objections, and requests for redress, all of which were carefully heard and examined by the committee. Under the leadership of Commissioner Wali Muhammad Bareeh, committee members conducted a detailed review of the candidates' grievances and thoroughly scrutinized their academic credentials, degrees, certificates, and other relevant documents to ensure a fair assessment process.

Harnai Administration Inspects Hindu Cremation Ground Development Project, Reaffirms Commitment to Minority Welfare

HARNAI: The district administration of Harnai has intensified efforts to promote the welfare of minority communities and improve facilities at their religious and cultural sites. In this regard, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Harnai Muhammad Saleem Tareen conducted a detailed inspection of the ongoing Hindu cremation ground (Shamshan Ghat) development project being executed under the Balochistan Special Development Initiative (BSDI) Phase-II.



The inspection was attended by prominent members of the Hindu community, including Mukhi Babu Lal, Dewan Chand, and Ramesh Kumar, who accompanied the district administration during the visit. Speaking on the occasion, Muhammad Saleem Tareen emphasized that standards are maintained at every stage of the project.

The project is aimed at serving local communities most in need, and the district administration is committed to protecting minority rights. The community leaders also thanked senior government officials, the Deputy Commissioner Harnai, the district administration, 12 Corps, and FC 81 Wing for facilitating the project and supporting minority welfare initiatives.

TENDER NOTICE: THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER BUILDING PISHIN invites bids from eligible bidders for supply of following items. TSE-25260619187491. Only electronic bid will be submitted. No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. Tender Fee 2000 PKR.

UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND: Cancellation of Project (ID) OFC-UC-PB-L0T114V. 1. Reference USF Tender ID: USF/SP/OPTICFIBER/2025-26/03 titled 'Notice for Inviting Bids for USF Next Generation Optical Fiber Network & Services Projects FY25-26' published on 29th April 2026. 2. It is hereby informed that project related to District Attock with Project ID OFC-UC-PB-L0T114V stands cancelled.

Assistant Commissioner Reviews BSDI Development Project in Usta Muhammad, Orders Replacement of Substandard Tuff Tiles

USTA MUHAMMAD: Acting on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Usta Muhammad Ramzan Palal, Assistant Commissioner Ramzan Ishaq, accompanied by Assistant Director Local Government Muhammad

construction work. During the visit, officials thoroughly reviewed the overall progress of the project, construction standards, and the quality of materials being used. According to officials, concerns were



identified at certain locations regarding the quality of tuff tiles and the methods used for their installation. Taking immediate notice of the issue, the Assistant Commissioner directed the contractor and concerned staff to remove all substandard tuff tiles without delay and re-

place them with new materials that fully comply with the specifications outlined in the approved PC-project document. Speaking on the occasion, Assistant Commissioner Ramzan Ishaq emphasized that no compromise would be tolerated on the quality of development projects being executed under the BSDI initiative. He stated that ensuring transparency, efficiency, and proper utilization of public funds remains a top priority of the district administration.

Deputy Commissioner Kalat Meets Public Delegations, Reviews Civic Issues, Healthcare Performance, and Development Projects

KALAT: Deputy Commissioner Kalat Munir Ahmed Durrani held meetings with public delegations and citizens from various parts of the district to hear their concerns and discuss issues affecting local communities. During the meetings, residents briefed the Deputy Commissioner on a range of public grievances and issued necessary directives to relevant officials on various applications and complaints to ensure the timely and effective resolution of public issues. In addition to meeting public delegations, Deputy Commissioner Munir Ahmed Durrani also held separate discussions with several government officials, health professionals, and community representatives.

The administration remains committed to conducting the recruitment process with complete transparency and accountability. The meeting also discussed mechanisms for the timely resolution of objections, fair handling of complaints, and the completion of recruitment procedures on a merit-based foundation. All candidates appearing before the CRC were given a full opportunity to present their viewpoints, and the committee agreed to take every possible step to address their concerns. The administration is committed to ensuring the timely and effective resolution of public issues. In addition to meeting public delegations, Deputy Commissioner Munir Ahmed Durrani also held separate discussions with several government officials, health professionals, and community representatives. Among those who met him were Director Oilseed Balochistan Haji Muhammad Yahya Baloch, Medical Superintendent Teaching Hospital Dr. Nasrullah Langove, Sports Officer Mir Asghar Langove, Deputy District Health Officer Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Noorzai, Balochistan National



POSITIONS VACANT: APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY PROJECT DIRECTOR (PPD-II). The Government of Balochistan, School Education Department, invites applications from dynamic, experienced, and result-oriented professionals domiciled in Balochistan for appointment to the position of Deputy Project Director (PPD-II) on a contract basis for the Project Management Unit (PMU) - Danish Baleshwar Project. Position: Deputy Project Director (PPD-II). No. of Positions: Four (04). Place of posting: Sra. Mita Sushilika, Sukler, Chera Bagh II, Mubalhat. Qualification & Registration: Minimum sixteen (16) years of Education with specialization in BSSE in Civil Engineering from HEC recognized institution. Candidates with professional certification will be given additional preference. Experience: Minimum Ten (10) years of professional experience in project management. Must have intermediate or advance knowledge of project management fundamentals, particularly the government of Pakistan's project planning and management processes and procedures. Previous work experience in Balochistan will be an added advantage. Age Limit: Minimum 35 years and Maximum 62 years on the closing date of application. Terms of Contract: one (1) year extendable on year to year subject to satisfactory performance and requirement of the project on the recommendation of Sponsoring Department. Salary Package: As per PPS - II in accordance with Finance Division (Regulation Wing) order No. F-18/18-10288 dated 16/06/2022 and Project Director's Policy Notification No. P.D.-CEP/Production/1025/2025 dated 31st December 2025 issued by Govt. P.S.D. Department. Terms of Reference (TOR): The Deputy Project Director shall ensure effective monitoring to prevent time and cost overruns, establish procedures for progress review, identify risks with mitigation plans, and submit prescribed reports with actionable recommendations. He/she will work harmoniously with stakeholders, maintain custody of project documents, prepare PC, ITRs, reports, and provide timely information on prescribed parameters. The DPO will be accountable for all administrative, functional, and financial decisions, supervise project activities, resolve day-to-day issues within delegated powers, and seek assistance from relevant authorities when required. Interested candidates meeting the above criteria should submit their application along with: i. Dated/Compliant Visa (CV) ii. Two (2) recent passport size photographs. iii. Copy of CNIC. iv. Local Government Certificate. v. Attested copies of educational and experience credentials. vi. NOC from current department (in case of Government employees). Applications must be submitted within 10 days of publication of this advertisement at the following address: ADDRESS: Section Office, (Schools), School Education Department, Office No. 41, First Floor, Block No. 2, Civil Secretariat, Danesh Road, Quetta. Only shortlisted candidates will be called for interview. The date of interview will be communicated subsequently. No TADA will be applicable. PPO No. 5640/24-06-2026. SECTION OFFICER (SCHOOLS) School Education Department Government of Balochistan.

### SHO among 8 cops kidnapped by armed men in Upper South Waziristan: police

NEWS DESK: UPPER SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: Eight police personnel, including a station house officer (SHO), were allegedly kidnapped by unidentified armed men in Upper South Waziristan on Wednesday, officials said.

District Police Officer (DPO) Arshad Khan confirmed the incident to Dawn, stating that those allegedly abducted included Sararogha SHO Ahmad Shah and two members of the Bomb Disposal Unit (BDU).

He said the abducted personnel had been deployed to the remote Partogha area in Sararogha tehsil to neutralise a suspected unexploded ordnance (UXO) — a large-scale search operation across the area.

DPO Arshad said search operations immediately began efforts to trace the abductors and recover the kidnapped police officials safely.

Checkpoints and blockades have been established along key mountain routes, entry and exit points, and other sensitive locations to restrict the movement of the kidnappers.

The safe recovery of the abducted personnel remains our top priority. All available resources are being utilised, and investigations are underway from every possible angle," the DPO said.



He added that an initial report has been entered into the daily police register, while further legal proceedings are in progress.

Local sources reported growing concern among residents following the incident. Tribal elders, community leaders, and civil society representatives have called on the authorities to take immediate and effective measures to secure the release of the abducted personnel.

The kidnapping comes amid a noticeable rise in terrorism and security-related incidents in Upper South Waziristan over the past two weeks.

Several shooting incidents were reported in recent days, resulting in multiple casualties and injuries.

According to police and local administration officials, security chal-

lenges in the region have intensified, contributing to a growing sense of insecurity among residents.

Observers note that such incidents pose serious challenges to law enforcement agencies and disrupt normal life in the region.

Residents have urged both the federal and provincial governments to take urgent steps to improve law and order and curb the increasing wave of violence in Upper South Waziristan.

After two consecutive months of improvement, Pakistan's security situation deteriorated sharply in May 2026, driven primarily by escalating terrorist violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, according to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies.

Asif had subsequently taken to X to clarify that "Kashmir is defined by the sacrifices and struggles waged over almost eight decades by Pakistanis, including Kashmiris and all others, not by birth certificates".

Speaking in the National Assembly on Wednesday, PPP's Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said that such a "sweeping statement" should not be given under any circumstances, especially from such a "senior" official.

He said that Asif's remarks had hurt the sentiments of several people, adding that Azad Kashmir was a "sensitive area" and care needed to be taken before making remarks about it.

He said that "water needed to be poured onto the fire" to address the problems of the Kashmiris. He acknowledged that the government and establishment were trying their best to address the issues of the

### Khawaja Asif comes under fire in NA for 'sweeping statement' regarding Kashmiris

NEWS DESK: The PPP on Wednesday took exception to a "sweeping statement" by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif regarding the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

In an interview on a TV show, the minister had said that Rawalakot — which has been in the grip of protests by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAC) — is "not Kashmir" and that he did not consider people from there Kashmiris.

Asif had subsequently taken to X to clarify that "Kashmir is defined by the sacrifices and struggles waged over almost eight decades by Pakistanis, including Kashmiris and all others, not by birth certificates".

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He said that Asif's remarks had hurt the sentiments of several people, adding that Azad Kashmir was a "sensitive area" and care needed to be taken before making remarks about it.

He said that "water needed to be poured onto the fire" to address the problems of the Kashmiris. He acknowledged that the government and establishment were trying their best to address the issues of the

region. He said that giving such "irresponsible remarks" was detrimental to the Kashmir cause. He tendered an apology on Asif's behalf to the people of Rawalakot.

However, the defence minister pointed to his post on X regarding the matter, saying that he had "presented an argument that no one be-

geopolitically". He said that voting for the prime minister twice, he acknowledged his work ethic, his efforts, his manners, his intentions, the way he positively engages with the coalition partners and the opposition to bring the country out of difficulties," he said.

"However, some ministers create issues to tolerate these words when they are uttered by a defence minister, let alone a senior minister?" Bilawal questioned.

"How do we justify that the minister is still in the position and has not agreed to tender an apology?" he asked.

"Apart from Kashmir's endemic problems and political difficulties, is it not true that

the minister's statement was similar to igniting the fire already burning in Kashmir, instead of extinguishing it?"

He argued that such statements had paved the way for the protestors to create the prevailing conditions in AJK.

The former foreign minister alleged that the federal government and the PPP, since it has attained power in AJK, could be held responsible for the faults. However, he said that the time has come to extinguish the fire.



for him. They always create hurdles in the work of the prime minister rather than helping him," Bilawal said.

Bilawal acknowledged that the present government and all political parties had tried to resolve the issues in AJK politically.

"The coalition parties, the opposition, and every Pakistani should ask why a minister is still part of the [federal] cabinet after saying, without backing off, that Kashmiris of Rawalakot are not Kashmiris."

"How is it possible

the minister's statement was similar to igniting the fire already burning in Kashmir, instead of extinguishing it?"

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### 6 'most-wanted terrorists' killed in Lower Dir operation: CTD

NEWS DESK: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and Lower Dir police killed six suspected terrorists during operations in the district's hilly areas on Wednesday, according to an official statement.

The statement, issued by the CTD, said the slain individuals were "most-wanted terrorists" who had been involved in a recent attack on the Badwan Bridge checkpoint in Lower Dir, in which Constable Muhammad Ismail was martyred.

According to the statement, the CTD and district police had cordoned off the area after the attack on the Badwan Bridge checkpoint.

It said that the CTD and district police received information about the presence of a group of Fitna-al-Khawarij terrorists in the hilly areas of Lower Dir and tried to arrest them.

when they came out of their hideouts in the area. "But, the terrorists opened indiscriminate fire on police personnel," the statement said, adding that law enforcers fired back in retaliation.

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KP Inspector General of Police (IG) Zulfiqar Hameed commended the district police and CTD and affirmed that the operations "will continue with full force until terrorism is eradicated from the province and that the writ of the state will be maintained".

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also commended the CTD and police for the "successful operation" by the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

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### Telecom bill won't infringe on private rights: minister

NEWS DESK: Trying to allay the controversy surrounding Pakistan Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (PTC) Bill (Amendment) Bill over proposed night-of-way reforms, the minister

claimed the bill was not controversial and blamed the media for "blowing it out of proportion". But he also said further clarifications would be incorporated in the legislation to safeguard property rights while supporting digital development and connectivity.

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the attorney general, MNA Javed Hanif, three lawyers, Barrister Zafarullah Khan, Dr Daud Munir, and Ms Bayyannah Shah.

The National Assembly passed the bill on June 11, but the Senate did not approve it. The Senate Standing Committee on IT and Telecom raised objections to the inclusion of 'telecom towers and equipment' in the bill aimed at enhancing fibreisation. The committee members had noted

controversy surrounding right-of-way reforms. They believe that the debate around Section 27B overshadowed the broader objective of the proposed reforms.

The said provision proposes penalties of up to Rs50 million for those who obstruct or delay the implementation of a lawfully granted right of way.

"We understand the concerns that have been raised and believe parliament's review process provides an oppor-

unity to further refine the legislation where needed," Telecom Operators Association Chairman Aamir Ibrahim told Dawn.

According to him, the proposed amendments seek to create a clearer and more predictable framework for telecom infrastructure deployment, particularly for fibre networks that will be critical for supporting future digital services and technologies. He added that much of the current debate has been driven by concerns that the reforms could affect individual homeowners and private property rights.

"It is important that any legislation contains appropriate safeguards and protections. The parliamentary process exists precisely to examine such concerns, strengthen the language where necessary.

perceptions, telecom operators do not face a shortage of private landowners willing to host telecom infrastructure through mutually agreed commercial arrangements. The more common challenges relate to obtaining permissions and navigating administrative processes in certain housing societies, gated communities, and other jurisdictions where infrastructure deployment can face significant delays," Ibrahim, who is also the Jazz CEO, told Dawn.

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### CCD kills alleged prime suspect in seven-year-old girl's murder case in Sargodha

NEWS DESK: The prime suspect in the alleged rape and murder of seven-year-old Muntaha Zahra was killed in an encounter in Sargodha on Wednesday, District Police Spokesperson Khurram confirmed while speaking to The Express Tribune.

Muntaha had allegedly been raped and murdered inside a grocery store building a day earlier. Police later arrested four suspects and produced them before Senior Civil Judge Chaudhry Inayat Ali, who remanded them to police custody for six days for physical interrogation. Police officials said preliminary investigations suggested that a store employee had allegedly attempted to assault the girl. When she resisted and raised an alarm, the suspect allegedly killed her.

According to Khurram, the encounter took place when officials of the Crime Control Department (CCD) were taking the main suspect to recover the weapon allegedly used in the crime.

Khurram said his associates opened fire near the Jhal Chakian Canal bridge while the suspect was accompanying the CCD team.



Footage showed Muntaha entering the grocery store but not exiting it. Acting on the lead, law enforcement officials searched the grocery store building and found the child's body. Police collected the evidence from the crime scene to apprehend the suspects.

The City Police Station registered a case based on the complaint filed by the victim's father, naming four individuals, including the prime suspect.

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### Caught in fighting between security forces and terrorists, residents in KP's Bara are forced to leave their homes

NEWS DESK: Scores of families from the Bara tehsil of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Khyber district have been compelled to vacate their homes due to fighting between terrorists and security forces in recent days, in which the residents say they feel vulnerable to drone strikes and artillery shelling by both sides.

The displaced families are from the Sturikhel area, which is located near the border of Khyber and Orakzai districts. Sources in the area told Dawn that they were left with no option but to vacate their homes and move to safer localities.

They said the residents of Meroo Durr Sal Gazi, Sawi Kot and Parwan villages, in particular, were forced to leave their homes due to the artillery shelling and drone strikes that were

conducted day and night. Speaking on condition of anonymity, the newly displaced residents told Dawn that the displaced residents told Dawn that terrorist groups had come to Bara from the Tirah valley in recent days.

In late 2025 and early 2026, Tirah's residents also had to leave their homes in anticipation of a military operation against terrorists, who were holed up in various parts of the valley at the time.

Sources in Bara said that clashes between terrorist groups and security forces erupted in the Sturikhel area after the latter launched intelligence-based operations.

According to Bara residents, while most of the Sturikhel residents have opted to relocate to their relatives' houses in Bara, some also went to Peshawar, where they have their own houses or are living on rent.

Meanwhile, a jirga of Sturikhel tribal elders met officials of the Khyber administration in Bara and informed them about their plight. The elders demanded that district administration officials register them as internally displaced persons and provide them with adequate official assistance.

Jirga members said they intend to meet security officials in the Lakar Baba village, located near the Sturikhel area, to discuss the deteriorating security situation.

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