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QUETTA VOICE

Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Munir, Ishaq Dar arrive in Turkiye ahead of first Makkah defence pact meeting

NEWS DESK:

Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Asim Munir and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar arrived in Turkiye on Sunday, where Pakistani, Turkish and Saudi officials are set to hold a meeting tomorrow under their trilateral defence pact.

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), in a brief statement issued in the evening, said CDF Munir arrived "in Turkiye on an official visit".

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office (FO) earlier in the day said Dar, who is also the foreign minister, reached Istanbul after concluding his visit to the United Kingdom.

The Turkish foreign ministry confirmed that the first meeting of the "Strategic Political and Defence Committee" established under the defence pact will be held in Istanbul on August 31 (Monday).

On its side, Turkiye said its Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Defence Minister Yasar Guler and Chief of Turkish General Staff Gen. Selcuk Bayraktaroglu will participate in the meeting.

While FO did not share specific details of Dar's visit — saying "official engagements" were on his itinerary — the Turkish ministry said "officials" from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were to attend the meeting.

Upon his arrival in Istanbul, Dar was received by Turkish Deputy Chief of Staff for Administration Brig. General Senol Varol, Pakistan's Ambassador to Turkiye Dr Yousaf Junaid, Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Ambassador to Turkiye Dr Yousaf Junaid, Ambassador to Turkiye Dr Yousaf Junaid, and other senior officials of the Turkish foreign ministry, and other senior officials of the Turkish foreign ministry, and other senior officials of the Turkish foreign ministry.



Photo of Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Asim Munir and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar

Officials of the Turkish government, the FO said.

The deputy premier later visited the shrine of Hazrat Abu Ayyub Ansari (RA) to pay his respects.

He offered prayers for the peace and prosperity of Pakistan and its people, as well as for the Muslim community's unity, the FO said.

Separately, Turkiye's Fidan had also invited Dar to

the Regional-4 meeting in Istanbul, which includes the three countries part of the defence pact, along with Egypt.

Dar had confirmed his participation in the meeting, which was scheduled to take place in August.

FO had said.

The R-4 group has been focused on regional security and emerged in March amid efforts for mediation between

the US and Iran.

The last R-4 meeting was held on August 5 in Amman, where the ministers "reaffirmed the importance of continued consultation and close coordination among the four countries in advancing regional stability", according to FO.

Prior to that, a Cairo meeting held in June welcomed the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understand-

ing between the US and Iran.

The first and second R-4 meetings — both held in March — took place in Riyadh and Islamabad, respectively.

UK visit wrapped up

In an earlier statement, FO said Dar "concluded a successful official visit to the UK", where he met several officials including UK Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband, Minister of State for Pakistan

Stephen Doughty, National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell, International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Secretary General Arsenio Dominguez and Commonwealth Secretary General Shirley Ayorkor Botchway.

During the visit, Dar also interacted with British parliamentarians including UK Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband, Minister of State for Pakistan

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia aim to boost agricultural, food exports to \$3 billion

NEWS DESK:

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia agreed to work towards increasing Pakistan's agricultural and food exports to the Kingdom to \$3 billion within the next two years, as the two countries seek to deepen cooperation in food security and agriculture, according to a joint statement released by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on Sunday.

The statement noted that significant progress in agricultural cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia was achieved due to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's patronage and personal interest.

PMO said that at the government's invitation, a Saudi delegation led by Eng. Abdulrahman A. Alfadley, Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture, and comprising senior officials from the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, the General Food Security Authority, and related entities, visited Islamabad from August 26 to 28.

According to the joint statement, the Pakistani side was led by Minister for National Food Security & Research (MNFSR), Rana Tanveer Hussain and included senior government officials and private-sector representatives, including Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul, Secretary Ministry of MNFSR Amer Ali Ahmed, PM's Coordinator on Agriculture & Food Security Ahmad Umar, and private-sector representatives of Pakistan's rice, red meat processed-food fruit-concentrate, and green fodder sectors.

The statement also



Photo of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meets a Saudi delegation led by Eng. Abdulrahman A. Alfadley, Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture.

noted that PM Shehbaz met the Saudi delegation and discussed potential areas of bilateral cooperation. According to a joint statement issued after the visit, rice, red meat, fruits and fruit concentrates, green fodder and water-efficient agricultural technologies had been identified as priority areas for expanding trade and investment, particularly through cooperation with Saudi Arabia's private sector.

PMO stated that Pakistan supplied about 169,000 tonnes of rice worth \$163 million to Saudi Arabia in 2025, adding that the Saudi side expressed interest in further increasing imports of rice. The statement noted

that the two sides also reviewed Pakistan's annual exports of around 30,000 tonnes of red meat valued at approximately \$167 million, adding that the Saudi side expressed interest in gradually doubling its imports of Pakistani red meat.

PMO said that both countries agreed to facilitate business-to-business linkages and matchmaking in the fruit and fruit concentrate sectors and encouraged steps towards mutual recognition of quality certifications.

The press release stated that green fodder was also identified as a promising sector for expanding trade and establishing long-term supply partnerships.

It added that the two sides welcomed the completion of the first phase of a water-efficient irrigation programme in Bhakkar, Punjab, and expressed interest in a second phase aimed at small farmers.

PMO said that the Saudi delegation also encouraged Pakistan to join the International Dates Council, a proposal welcomed by Islamabad.

According to the press release, the two sides reviewed investment proposals from Pakistan's private sector in livestock, agri-food processing and the rice value chain, agreeing to maintain coordination to advance the projects.

Plot to Deploy Minor Girls Intercepted in Southern Balochistan, Says Interior Minister



Photo of Balochistan Interior Minister Mir Ziaullah Langau

MIRSALAM JOGEZAI:

QUETTA: Balochistan Interior Minister Mir Ziaullah Langau stated on Saturday that security forces in the southern region of the province have foiled a plot by the outlawed Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) to use two underage girls in potential violent attacks.

"Speaking at a news conference alongside the recovered minors—identified by officials as 16-year-old Zainab and 12-year-old Fatima—Langau said the briefing aimed to highlight the tactics used by the banned group. The minister asserted that state intelligence institutions actively work to intercept and disrupt planned operations by such banned factions before they can be executed.

"According to details shared

during the press conference, the minister stated that the girls were manipulated by the outlawed group and held in an undisclosed location for around 40 days, where they faced physical and emotional pressure to participate in militant activities.

"During the briefing, Zainab stated that following the death of her husband, a local BLA commander attempted to convince her to seek revenge by attributing his death to security institutions, subsequently involving her cousin Fatima as well.

"The minister stated that security forces acted on targeted intelligence while the girls were being transferred between safehouses, taking them into protective custody. During the session, the two minors expressed relief over their rescue and requested forgiveness from the public and provincial authorities.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Soil Erosion in Bolan, Balochistan: When the Land We Depend On Begins to Disappear

By Ayesha Tanveer:

In the valleys of Bolan, the land tells a story that is easy to miss if we only look at the surface. The mountains stand tall, the valleys stretch across the landscape, and farmers continue to work the soil as their families have done for generations. But beneath this familiar picture, something is changing. Little by little, the soil that supports agriculture and rural life is being washed away by sudden floods, carried off by strong winds and weakened by years of pressure on the land. Soil erosion may not happen overnight, and it rarely makes headlines. Yet for the people who depend on the land, its effects are real. A field that once produced a reasonable harvest may gradually become less productive. A farmer who once relied on rain and traditional methods may find that the same approach no longer works. For communities in Bolan, soil erosion is becoming more than an environmental concern—it is increasingly a threat to agriculture, livelihoods and the future of rural life.

A Fragile Land Under Pressure

Balochistan is Pakistan's largest province by area, covering nearly 44 percent of the country's land. Yet only a small portion of this vast region is suitable for cultivation. In places like Bolan, farming has always depended on a delicate relationship between soil, rainfall, water availability and traditional knowledge.

That relationship is now under growing pressure. Bolan lies in an arid to semi-arid region where rainfall is limited and unpredictable. Farmers can experience long dry periods followed by sudden and intense rainfall. Instead of slowly soaking into the ground, heavy rain can rush through valleys and fields, creating flash floods that carry away

the most valuable layer of soil. This is one of the greatest problems with soil erosion: the soil that disappears first is often the soil that agriculture needs the most.

The topsoil contains organic matter and nutrients essential for healthy crops. Once it is washed away, rebuilding it can take years, sometimes decades. When Rain Becomes a Threat Rain is essential for life and agriculture, but in Bolan, the way rain arrives can sometimes be as important as how much rain falls.

After months of dryness, the soil may become hard and vulnerable. When intense rainfall suddenly arrives, water can move rapidly across the surface instead of being absorbed into the ground. In the mountainous terrain of Bolan, steep slopes make this runoff even faster. The result can be devastating. Water cuts through fields, carries soil downhill and deposits it in streams and irrigation channels. What begins as erosion on a hillside can eventually contribute to blocked waterways, increased flood risks and damage to agricultural land.

This creates a difficult cycle: dry conditions weaken the land, intense rainfall removes the soil, and the loss of soil makes the land even more vulnerable the next time heavy rain arrives.

Human Activities Are Making the Problem Worse

Nature is not the only factor behind the changing landscape. Human activities have also played an important role.

Vegetation is one of the land's natural defenses against erosion. Trees, shrubs and grasses help hold soil together through their roots and reduce the speed at which rainwater flows across the ground. When vegeta-



tion is removed, the soil is left exposed.

In many areas, trees and shrubs are cut for fuelwood and construction. Over time, the loss of vegetation leaves hillsides and open land more vulnerable to wind and water.

Livestock grazing is another important part of life in Bolan, but too much grazing can place enormous pressure on fragile rangelands. Goats, sheep and cattle depend on these lands for food, while local families depend on livestock for income and survival. The problem arises when grazing becomes excessive and vegetation does not have enough time to recover.

Without sufficient grass and shrub cover, the soil is exposed. Repeated movement of animals can also compact the ground, making it harder for rainwater to enter the soil. More water then flows across the surface, taking soil with it. Farming Practices and the Loss of Fertility

Farmers in Bolan are working under difficult circumstances. Water is scarce, rainfall is uncer-

tain and access to modern agricultural resources can be limited. Many farming practices have developed out of necessity rather than choice.

However, some traditional and intensive practices can unintentionally contribute to soil degradation. Repeated deep ploughing can disturb soil structure,

while limited crop rotation and a lack of organic matter can gradually weaken the soil.

In areas where farmers struggle to find enough fodder for livestock, crop residues may be removed from fields instead of being left to protect the soil. As a result, fields can not be exposed for long periods.

The consequences become visible over time. As fertile topsoil disappears, the soil loses nutrients and organic matter. Crops may grow less vigorously, and harvests may decline. For a small farmer, this is not simply a number on a production chart. A smaller harvest can mean less food for the family, less income

and greater difficulty paying for seeds, fertilizer and other agricultural expenses.

The Hidden Cost of Declining Soil Fertility

Healthy soil does more than provide nutrients to crops. It also acts like a natural reservoir, holding water and making it available to plants during dry periods.

When erosion removes organic matter and damages soil structure, the land becomes less capable of retaining moisture. In a dry region like Bolan, this can be particularly damaging.

Farmers may then turn increasingly to chemical fertilizers to compensate for declining fertility. Fertilizers can help crops in the short term, but they can not replace the lost structure and organic matter of healthy soil.

They can also increase production costs for farmers who are already financially vulnerable. This can create a difficult cycle: Soil erosion reduces fertility, crop yields decline, farmers spend more on inputs, production costs increase, household in-

come falls, poverty and economic pressure grow.

Breaking this cycle requires restoring the health of the soil itself rather than relying only on short-term solutions.

The Problem Does Not Stop at the Farm

The effects of erosion do not remain within the boundaries of agricultural fields.

When soil is washed away, it often ends up in rivers, streams and irrigation channels. Over time, this sediment can reduce water storage capacity and interfere with irrigation systems.

Sedimentation can also increase flood risks during heavy rainfall. At the same time, the loss of vegetation can damage natural habitats and reduce biodiversity.

If degradation continues for years without intervention, productive land may gradually become severely degraded and increasingly difficult to cultivate. For Balochistan, where cultivable land is already limited, losing even more agricultural land could have serious consequences.

A Crisis That Af-

fects People, Not Just Soil Perhaps the most overlooked aspect of soil erosion is its human cost.

For many families in rural Bolan, agriculture and livestock are not simply occupations. They are a way of life. When the land becomes less productive, the effects reach directly into people's homes.

Lower crop yields can reduce household income and increase food insecurity. Families may become more dependent on outside food supplies or government assistance. As farming becomes less reliable, young people may leave villages and move toward urban areas in search of better opportunities.

Over time, environmental degradation can therefore contribute to social change and migration.

This is why soil erosion should not be treated as an isolated environmental issue. It is connected to poverty, food security, employment, migration and the long-term stability of rural communities.

There Is Still Time to Act There are practical steps that can make a difference. Farmers can adopt conservation agriculture techniques such as reduced tillage, crop rotation and retaining crop residues. Adding organic matter to the soil can improve its structure and help it retain moisture.

Restoring vegetation is equally important. Planting native trees, shrubs and grasses can help stabilize slopes and protect the land from erosion.

Grazing also needs to be managed carefully. Controlled grazing systems can give damaged rangelands time to recover while still allowing communities to maintain their livestock.

Water management offers another important opportunity. Small check dams, rainwater harvesting systems and im-

proved irrigation methods can slow down runoff, capture water and reduce soil loss. These measures can be particularly valuable in areas where every drop of water matters.

But no solution will work without the involvement of the people who live on the land.

Farmers, livestock owners and local communities must be part of the decision-making process. They understand their environment, its challenges and its changing conditions. Government institutions, agricultural experts and development organizations can support them with technical knowledge, training and resources, but long-term success will depend on local participation.

Conclusion

Soil erosion in Bolan is a quiet crisis, but its consequences are anything but small. Every layer of fertile soil that disappears represents a loss of agricultural potential. Every degraded field puts additional pressure on a farmer. Every damaged hillside increases the vulnerability of communities to floods and land degradation.

The challenge is becoming more urgent as climate change, water scarcity and extreme weather place additional pressure on already fragile landscapes.

Protecting Bolan's soil therefore means protecting much more than farmland. It means protecting the food security and livelihoods of families who depend on agriculture. It means preserving the natural environment and reducing the risk of future land degradation.

The soil beneath our feet may seem ordinary, but for the people of Bolan, it is the foundation of their lives.

Saving that soil is not just an environmental responsibility. It is an investment in the future of Bolan and the people who call it home.

BUIITEMS Organizes Open Day to Inspire Students Across Balochistan

Syed Dara Shikoh Amir:

Quetta, September 2025 – The Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIITEMS) opened its doors to thousands of college students

from across the province by hosting a vibrant "Open Day," showcasing its modern academic facilities, innovative programs, and lively campus culture.

Delivering a special message, BUIITEMS Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Khalid Hafeez reaffirmed

the university's mission of inclusive education and knowledge sharing. He stated,

"BUIITEMS is the university of every student in Balochistan. Our classrooms, research opportunities, and resources are open for all so that no



young learner in the province remains deprived of quality education. The event at-

tracted an enthusiastic response, with more than 1000 students from 18+ colleges at-

Visiting students and their teachers explored BUIITEMS' facilities, interacted directly with profes-

sors, and participated in detailed career guidance and counseling sessions designed

to help them choose the right academic path. Special awareness stalls, departmen-

tal exhibitions, and program presentations provided students with insights into BUIITEMS' wide-

range of programs, research prospects,

and campus life. Many participants praised the initiative, calling it a valuable opportunity to connect with higher education and future career options.

Prof. Dr. Khalid Hafeez applauded the organizing team for successfully conducting the Open Day, adding that such outreach efforts strengthen

the bridge between the university and youth across Balochistan.

By holding this large-scale Open Day, BUIITEMS has further solidified its reputation as a center of excellence in higher education.

Innovation, and student empowerment in Balochistan, encouraging young learners

to strive for academic success and contribute to the province's development.

Zahid Gul Reaches Second Round of World Masters Squash Championship 2026

NEWS DESK: Pakistan's Zahid Gul has advanced to the second round of the 2026 World Masters Squash Championship in Perth after defeating Patrick Williams of the United States in his opening-round match.

Zahid Gul to Face Top Seed Joshua Larkin

Gul now faces a much tougher challenge in the second round against Australia's top seed Joshua Larkin.

Larkin is a former PSA World Tour player who reached a career-best world ranking of No. 60.

He has also built a strong record in Australian and interna-



tional Masters squash competitions.

The match will present Gul with an opportunity to cause an upset against the tournament's top seed and continue his run at the World Masters Squash Championship in Perth.

Pakistan Squash Player Makes Strong Start

Gul's progress to the second round is a significant achievement and another strong performance against Larkin and secure a place in the next round.

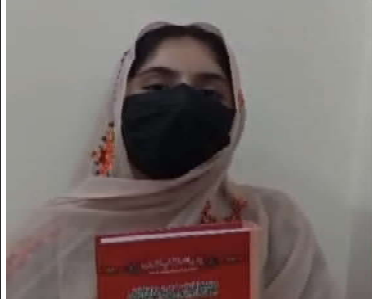
The Zahid Gul vs Joshua Larkin clash is expected to be one of the closely followed matches as the Pakistani player looks to extend his journey at the 2026 World Masters Squash Championship.

Multiple Suspects Arrested in Asma Jattak Case Raid Near Khuzdar, Key Suspect Remains at Large: DIG Kalat

From Our Correspondent: KHUZDAR: Police have detained several suspects during a raid linked to the Asma

forcement agencies have not yet apprehended the principal suspect in the case, identified as Zahoor Jamali, who managed to evade

during the targeted raid. Investigation officers are currently interrogating the detained individuals to gather further leads. Authorities as-



Jattak case in the Anjerea area of Khuzdar, DIG Kalat Range Wazir Khan Nasir confirmed while speaking to reporters. However, law en-

forcement agencies have not yet apprehended the principal suspect in the case, identified as Zahoor Jamali, who managed to evade

during the targeted raid. Investigation officers are currently interrogating the detained individuals to gather further leads. Authorities as-

Three Brothers Killed, One Injured in Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Blast in Dukki, Balochistan

Hussain Zarkoon: DUKKI: Three brothers were killed and another person was critically injured on Sunday when a roadside improvised Explosive Device (IED) targeted a vehicle in the Dukki district of Balochistan.

According to Superintendent of Police (SP) Dukki, Mansoor Ahmed Buzdar, the victims were traveling in a car toward their farm for daily agricultural work.

The explosion occurred as the vehicle was crossing a seasonal riverbed near Killi Bakhtyar Khan in the Loni sub-division.



The blast destroyed the vehicle, killing three brothers on the spot. Authorities identified the deceased as Muhammad, Rahmatullah, Durrani,

and Niamatullah—all sons of Sultan. The injured passenger was identified as Atiqullah, son of Maulvi Naik Muhammad. Emergency services and

security personnel rushed to the scene shortly after the explosion, shifting the bodies and the wounded individual to a nearby hospital for medical

treatment. Security forces have cordoned off the entire area and launched a comprehensive search operation to track down the perpetrators.

Police officials confirmed that initial investigations point to a targeted IED blast, though forensic experts are continuing to gather evidence from the site to determine the precise nature of the device. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far. Security has been tightened across the district as investigations continue.

Balochistan Chief Secretary Reviews Departmental Performance, Annual Targets and Future Priorities



QUETTA: A high-level meeting was held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakil Qadir Khan to review the performance of provincial departments, progress on annual targets, and future priorities of the provincial government.

Secretaries of various departments gave detailed briefings on their respective departments' performance, achievement of annual targets, major accomplishments, challenges, and future strategies. The meet-

ing was attended by the secretaries of Planning and Development (P&D), Agriculture, Colleges, Public Health Engineering (PHE), Irrigation, Local Government, Fisheries, and Excise and Taxation departments.

They briefed the meeting on their departmental performance and future plans.

Chief Secretary Shakil Qadir Khan emphasized that the fundamental objective of government policies and development projects is to provide

practical and timely relief to the people. He directed all departments to align their performance with public service delivery and measurable results. While reviewing departmental performance, the Chief Secretary instructed officials to accelerate efforts to achieve annual targets, ensure effective monitoring of development projects, and guarantee the transparent and optimal utilization of available public resources.

He said that good governance, transparency, merit, institutional discipline, and public service are among the top priorities of the provincial government.

He directed all departments to overcome challenges through better coordination and an integrated strategy so that the benefits of government initiatives reach the public directly.

The Chief Secretary instructed the departmental secretaries to establish measurable performance targets, regularly review progress against those

targets, and take timely corrective measures wherever obstacles or delays are identified.

Shakil Qadir Khan reaffirmed that efficiency, accountability, and public interest will remain central to the administrative affairs of the provincial government.

He said all departments would be encouraged to move more rapidly toward a results-based governance system focused on effective service delivery and tangible outcomes for citizens.

Balochistan Health Minister Orders Strict Action Against Absentee Staff in Quetta Hospitals

QUETTA: A detailed review of the attendance records of human resources at all government hospitals and the District Health Office in Quetta was conducted under the chairmanship of Balochistan Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar. The attendance data was recorded and monitored through the AIFRAMS digital attendance system.

The meeting was attended by Special Secretary Health Sheikh Baloch, Director General Health Services Balochistan Dr. Amin Mandokhail, Medical Superintendents, Chief Executive Officers and Executive Directors of government hospitals in Quetta, the Principal of Bolan Medical College, and other relevant officials. During the meeting,



Provincial Coordinator of the Balochistan Health Information and Service Delivery Unit, Dr. Abaghar Baloch, presented a comprehensive report compiled through AIFRAMS.

The report covered staff attendance, absenteeism, institutional compliance, and a com-

parative assessment of the performance of various hospitals and health offices. Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar directed the authorities to take strict and indiscriminate action against absent employees and staff members who fail to attendance through

AIFRAMS. He made it clear that salaries of employees should not be released without verified attendance on AIFRAMS. He further directed heads of relevant institutions to ensure complete compliance within the digital attendance record while preparing monthly sal-

ary bills. The Health Minister said that ensuring the timely presence of medical staff, effective monitoring, and uninterrupted healthcare services in government hospitals is among the top priorities of the Balochistan government. He warned that negligence in official duties, absenteeism, and deliberate avoidance of the digital attendance system would not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Bakht Muhammad Kakar directed all heads of healthcare institutions to ensure 100 percent implementation of AIFRAMS. In cases of non-compliance, he said responsibility should be fixed not only on the concerned employee but also on the relevant administrative officer.

Open Court Held in Bakhtiarabad to Address Public Grievances and Local Issues

S I B I / BAKHTIARABAD: An open court was held in Bakhtiarabad on the division of clean drinking water, installation of electricity transformers, availability of basic healthcare facilities, and teacher absenteeism in schools.

They also highlighted other public problems and difficulties being faced in the area. Assistant Commissioner Mir Bahadur Khan and in accordance with the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Sibi Major (Retd.) Ilyas Kabzar, to hear and address the problems faced by local residents. The open court was led by Assistant Commissioner Bakhtiarabad Mir Bahadur Khan and attended by SDPO Muhammad Asif Khajjak, Union Council Chairman Mir Muhammad Akbar Solangi, and officials and representatives of various government departments. During the session, residents

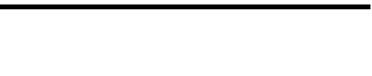
brought several issues before the administration, including the provision of clean drinking water, installation of electricity transformers, availability of basic healthcare facilities, and teacher absenteeism in schools.

They also highlighted other public problems and difficulties being faced in the area. Assistant Commissioner Mir Bahadur Khan and in accordance with the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Sibi Major (Retd.) Ilyas Kabzar, to hear and address the problems faced by local residents. The open court was led by Assistant Commissioner Bakhtiarabad Mir Bahadur Khan and attended by SDPO Muhammad Asif Khajjak, Union Council Chairman Mir Muhammad Akbar Solangi, and officials and representatives of various government departments. During the session, residents

Commissioner said that the purpose of holding open courts is to listen to public grievances and take necessary measures for their resolution.

He assured residents that the issues raised during the open court would be forwarded to higher authorities for necessary action. He also directed the concerned officials to ensure immediate progress on public complaints presented during the session and submit reports on the steps taken to the district administration.

He emphasized that timely action on public grievances is essential to ensure relief for citizens and improve the delivery of government services in Bakhtiarabad.



'They can come to Pakistan today': Khawaja Asif disputes claim of Imran's sons of expired Nicops

NEWS DESK: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Sunday said that PTI founder Imran Khan's sons — Qasim and Sulaiman Khan — could visit Pakistan "today if they wished", citing the validity of their National Identity Cards for Overseas Pakistanis (Nicops).

The government has consistently maintained that Imran's children can enter the country based on their Nicops with no visa required.

However, the sons claimed earlier this month that their Nicops have expired and accused the government of denying them visas.

In a post on social media platform X, the defence minister recalled that the premier's sons had last travelled to Pakistan on November 2022, when the PTI founder got injured in an assassination attempt.

"They can visit Pakistan today if they wish. Both Nicops are valid," Asif stated.

He also shared partially censored Nicop numbers for both Kasim and Sulaiman, stating that the document was valid until Nov 8, 2032 for Kasim and Jan 6, 2030, for Sulaiman.

The minister dis-

missed the perception that the government was denying them visas as "incorrect", accusing Imran's family and PTI of concocting the narrative.

"Holders of Nicops can travel to Pakistan

to Pakistan to meet Imran, who is imprisoned at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail.

In December 2025, Kasim had said that he and his brother had applied for their visas. However, in Feb-



wherever they wish. There is no need for a visa," he maintained.

A day earlier, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MOIB) had addressed the potential arrival of Imran's sons, noting that they may enter the country through their Nicops, but that access to the country may not guarantee access to prison visitation.

As Kasim and his older brother Suleiman live in London with their mother and Imran's former spouse Jemima Goldsmith, they will have to travel

visas and held that they also did not have their renewed Nicops.

Imran was sent to jail on August 5, 2023, in the Toshakhana case. However, he is also serving a 14-year sentence in a \$190 million corruption case, was convicted in another Toshakhana case in December 2025 and also faces pending trials in terrorism cases related to the May 9, 2023 riots. The premier's sons, along with his party and family, have been visiting him before the tragedy. Civil Defence inspections in 2024 and 2025 had identified the ab-

Gul Plaza fire probe leaves blame unresolved

NEWS DESK: The Gul Plaza tragedy was not simply a story of a devastating fire but of known dangers left unaddressed, delayed emergency response and rescue opportunities that slipped away, a 78-page judicial commission report has found, exposing a systemic failure involving government agencies and the building management that turned a fire into a mass-casualty disaster.

On January 17, 2026, a fire at the Gul Plaza shopping mall in Karachi killed 80 people and injured over 20. The Sindh government formed a single-member judicial commission, led by Sindh High Court's Justice Agha Faisal, on February 4 to probe the cause of the tragedy.

The commission prepared a report on the conflagration, which the Sindh Home Department has released. According to the report Gul Plaza had continued to operate as a commercial building despite being hazardous and in violation of fire-safety requirements. It concludes that responsibility cannot be pinned on a single institution or government, but lies in the collective failure of systems meant to identify risks, enforce safety rules, fight fires and rescue people in emergencies.

The commission found that the dangers at the plaza were known well before the tragedy. Civil Defence inspections in 2024 and 2025 had identified the ab-

sence of fire-safety equipment, the presence of inflammable commercial material and deficiencies in exit routes. Yet the identified shortcomings were not rectified and no effective legal action followed.

The Sindh Building Control Authority, too, could not escape responsibility by relying on the position that inspections were con-

ducted only on complaints, the commission said. The Sindh Building Control Ordinance gave the authority powers to take corrective action against dangerous buildings, while Gul Plaza's incomplete records and ineffective fire-safety oversight also reflected institutional failure.

The report found failures at the scene of the fire as well. There was an "extremely unwise" delay in informing the fire brigade itself arrived later than its prescribed response standard. Effective firefighting began only after approximately 35 to 40 minutes.



danger, but a failure to enforce action against a known danger.

The building's management was also held responsible for failing to rectify known defects. Its regularised plan provided for 1,102 shops, while 1,153 shops were actually operating in the building, with large quantities of inflammable commercial goods stored inside.

The commission also questioned the role of the district administration, finding that Gul Plaza was not subjected to a joint audit despite a three-tier fire-audit mechanism established on the directions of the Sindh High Court. The

delayed deployment of critical firefighting equipment reduced the chances of rescuing people who remained accessible inside the building.

The decision to disconnect electricity created another deadly obstacle: darkness inside the building further reduced the chances of people escaping from the upper floors. Although a speaker system was installed in the building, it was not used to issue evacuation instructions or guide those trapped inside. The commission also highlighted a missed rescue opportunity involving Rescue 1122.

had been killed or seriously injured by the security forces.

The HRCP cautioned that it could not independently establish the full scale or circumstances of civilian casualties, particularly because it was unable to access Rawalakot, one of the main centres of violence. It therefore called for an independent and impartial investigation into all deaths and serious injuries since June, including whether the use of force was lawful, necessary and proportionate. The report also raised concerns at the

No fire hydrants at any government hospital in Rawalpindi division

NEWS DESK: Following the fire incident at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims), the divisional administration of Rawalpindi has realised that there are no fire hydrants at government hospitals in five districts of the division, and directed authorities concerned to install them on an emergency basis.

There is the need of 49 hydrants in and around the government hospitals in the division, including Rawalpindi, Murree, Attock, Chakwal and Jhelum.

Officials at a meeting chaired by Commissioner Salman Ghani

claimed that fire wardens and managers should be nominated in all hospitals.

He said fire extinguishers in all hospitals should be 100 per cent functional and usable. Moreover, regular inspection, pressure checking and maintenance of fire extinguishers should also be ensured. He said responsible officers and relevant staff should be immediately available in any emergency situation.

The meeting was informed that hydrants in the hospitals were being connected to underground water, tubewells

on an emergency basis, work on the installation of hydrants was being launched. He said two hydrants each were being installed around Holy Family Hospital, Rawalpindi Teaching Hospital and Benazir Bhutto Hospital. He said Waseem launched a survey to lay new water supply lines in the hospitals and after that four hydrants will be installed next month.

Meanwhile, the commissioner visited various departments and reviewed risk assessment measures, fire safety equipment and arrangements as well as staff attendance.



claimed that 21 hydrants had been installed.

The meeting was held to review public health, fire safety and emergency response measures in hospitals. Additional Commissioner Coordination Zehra Humayun, Director Health Dr Ijaz, MS Holy Family, BBH, DHQ hospital and heads of relevant departments attended the meeting.

The deputy commissioners of Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Murree, Attock and Chakwal attended the meeting via video link. 49 hydrants needed in hospitals in Rawalpindi, Murree, Attock, Chakwal and Jhelum, meeting informed.

A total of 49 hydrants were required in the hospitals of Rawalpindi division, while 21 have been installed, said the commissioner. He said the installation of the remaining hydrants will be com-

and water storage to ensure 24-hour water availability. It was informed that 98pc of fire extinguishers in the hospitals of Attock district were in the usable condition.

Emergency training of all medical and other staff is underway in the hospitals of Attock.

Fire safety and building audit of all hospitals in Chakwal have been completed, while 21 hydrants were required in the hospitals of Chakwal.

Electric wiring review and building audit have been completed in all hospitals in Jhelum. New hydrants have been installed in the Teaching Headquarters Hospital Murree while work on installing the remaining required hydrants was underway. Mock exercises of all hospital staff of Murree have also been completed.

On the other hand, an official of Waseem informed the meeting that

the commissioner directed the hospital administration to identify locations where IR cameras should be installed to ensure the prompt detection of smoke. He also inspected the emergency exit routes and access to all times. He stressed that no obstruction or storage of equipment should be allowed around emergency routes.

He directed that all fire safety equipment must remain fully functional and ready for use at all times. He also said adequate staff must be available round the clock in emergency department and all other critical sections.

He said once the first 100 days of Gillani's tenure, the post said, adding that it was aimed at strengthening health, education, cleanliness, infrastructure and other sectors.

NEWS DESK: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has attributed the recent unrest in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) to longstanding political and socio-economic grievances, institutional distrust and governance deficits, saying an increasingly confrontational state response, including the disproportionate use of force, further deepened polarisation and eroded public trust.

The HRCP fact-finding report, Civic Spaces under Strain in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, (a copy available with Dawn), stated that the dispute over implementation of a 2025 agreement with the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), coupled with controversy over 12 seats reserved for Kashmiri refugees in Pakistan, had become central to the political confrontation.

The report said negotiations between the government and JAAC failed on May 30, after which the government proscribed the organisation on June 5 under the AJK Anti-Terrorism Act 2014 and imposed restrictions on

movement and communications, including a critical of AJAC's use of mobile internet services. The ensuing unrest coincided with the AJK Legislative Assembly elections, which were eventually held in phases because of security concerns.

The HRCP mission, which conducted fact-finding and election observation from Aug 8 to 10 after a special consultation in Islamabad on July 31, said it received sharply conflicting accounts about the scale of violence, JAAC's methods



and the conduct of security forces. However, it found broad agreement among political and

community stakeholders, including people critical of JAAC's underlying dispute should have been resolved through political dialogue rather than coercion. HRCP fact-finding report calls for investigation into deaths, injuries during protests. The commission expressed particular concern at the allegations of lethal and excessive use of force against protesters. It said the AJK police chief had reported around 38 security personnel killed and 742 police personnel injured since June

had been killed or seriously injured by the security forces.

The HRCP cautioned that it could not independently establish the full scale or circumstances of civilian casualties, particularly because it was unable to access Rawalakot, one of the main centres of violence. It therefore called for an independent and impartial investigation into all deaths and serious injuries since June, including whether the use of force was lawful, necessary and proportionate. The report also raised concerns at the

activists. It said at least 147 JAAC activists were initially placed on the Fourth Schedule, while a series of notifications issued between June and August reportedly brought the total number of political workers, journalists, residents and activists listed under anti-terrorism legislation to at least 157.

The HRCP urged authorities to ensure due process for everyone arrested in connection with the protests, including their production before courts, access to lawyers and information about the grounds for arrest. It called for independent review of cases against protesters, activists, journalists and political workers, with cases withdrawn where individuals had been detained or prosecuted solely for peaceful political activity or lawful assembly.

It also criticised restrictions on journalism and access to information, saying journalists had faced arrests, legal action, restrictions on access to affected areas and special security requirements while the prolonged communications shutdown severely constrained independent reporting.

In meeting with Gillani, PML-N leadership stresses 'immediate resolution' of AJK issues

NEWS DESK: Azad Jammu and Kashmir's newly elected Prime Minister Barrister Syed Iftikhar Ali Gillani called on his party's leadership in Lahore on Sunday, with the latter stressing the need for the "immediate resolution" of issues of the Kashmiri people.

The huddle included PML-N President Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and AJK Legislative Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Tariq Farooq, according to a post on the party's X account.

During the meeting, Nawaz shared a "reform plan for the first 100 days" of Gillani's tenure, the post said, adding that it was aimed at strengthening health, education, cleanliness, infrastructure and other sectors.

He instructed Gillani to set AJK on the course of development, similar to Punjab, it said. Gillani and Farooq expressed gratitude to the party's leadership in Lahore on Sunday, with the latter stressing the need for the "immediate resolution" of issues of the Kashmiri people.

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his government would restore internet services at educational institutions and remove restrictions on road links with Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within the next few days.

PM Gillani had also expressed concern over the situation in Rawalakot, saying his government would make every effort to bring it under control.

AJK has been gripped by protests, including in Rawalakot, staged by the now-proscribed Joint Awami Action Committee that had announced a boycott of the recently held elections in the region over its demand for abolishing 12 seats reserved for the assembly for families displaced from occupied Kashmir.

The protests have

been marred by violence while AJK continues to face internet disruptions.

Against this backdrop, the elections in the region originally scheduled for July 27, were delayed into phases over security concerns amid unrest in the region. The first phase was held on July 27, the second on Aug 2 and the third on Aug 10.

Meanwhile, the third phase was originally meant to cover all of Poonch Division, which comprises 11 constituencies, including three in Bagh, one in Haveli, five in Poonch district and two in Sudhnoti district.

