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Traffic problems: Remove barriers in front of govt offices, orders LHC

City government told to devise suitable strategy during protests.

By Rana Tanveer

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LAHORE: Some of the city's top officials were in court on Friday for another case but the Lahore High Court used it as an opportunity to come down hard on them for not removing barriers in front of their offices erected in the name of security.

The Out Fall Road, in front of Operations SSP office, and the road in front of inspector general's office have been blocked for more than three years. There are also barriers placed in front of Qila Gujjar Singh police lines and city police's investigation headquarters. Police officials have already been told twice to remove the roadblocks by the court but only the barriers from the road in front of the CCPO's office have been removed so far.

On Friday, Justice Manzoor Ahmed Malik directed Capital City Police Officer Ahmad Raza Tahir, DIG (Operations) Ghulam Mahmood Dogar, SSP (Operations) Sarfaraz Falki, and District Coordination Officer Ahad Cheema, to remove the roadblocks that were inconveniencing the public.

The officers had been summoned in a petition that asks that a murder case be registered against the people who were responsible for the death of a woman who died on her way to the hospital after the ambulance carrying her got stuck in a traffic jam owing to a protest staged by Punjab Paramedical Alliance. The judge asked them to fix responsibility for the death.

Justice Malik reprimanded the officers for failing to maintain smooth traffic flow during demonstrations. The judge observed that though protesting was every citizen's right, the court could not allow the traffic system to be derailed because of them. The judge directed the police and district administration officers to devise a policy for protests that was "acceptable to all stakeholders".

The judge then asked that a detailed report on how smooth traffic flow would be maintained during protests be submitted by March 2.

CCPO Ahmad Raza Tahir told the court that they had tried to negotiate with the protesting doctors but they had refused to disperse. He requested that the court allow the police to register cases against the protesters but the court turned it down.

Petitioner-lawyer Mian Asad Mahmood, while arguing his case, said that the barriers erected in front of government offices also caused traffic problems. Mahmood, in his petition, has contended that protests caused problems for commuters and disturbed routine life. He has requested that the Punjab government be directed to devise a strategy to regulate the protests.

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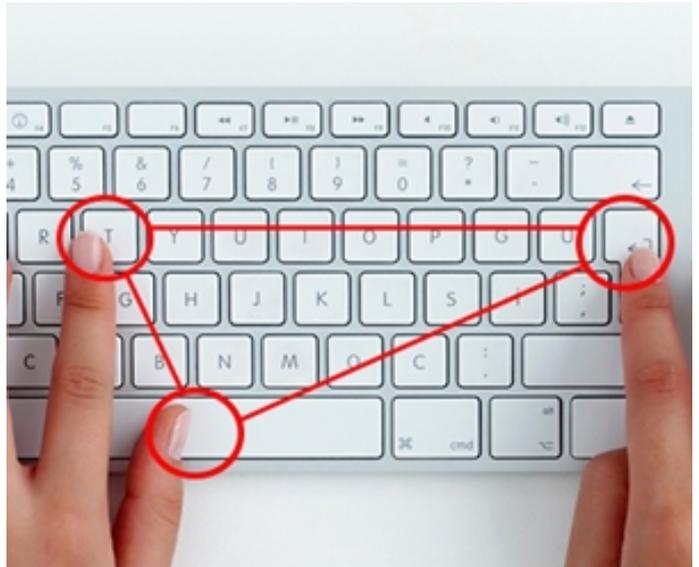
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