

DAILY MIRROR

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Govt making every effort to provide further relief to lower and middle classes: PM

INP

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that the government was making every effort to provide further relief to the poor and middle-income classes, and vowed not to abandon them in this challenging time.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the impact of the Middle East situation on petroleum products, availability of current stocks, and public relief measures, said that by using digital systems, public relief would be delivered directly to the common man.

He said that government expenditures and the development budget had been slashed, and 60% of official vehicles had been grounded to initiate austerity from within.

The prime minister said that the proposals to hike fuel prices had been repeatedly rejected, and the funds saved through austerity measures were being utilised for public relief.

He said that owing to the timely decisions, the disruption in the supply of fuel had been averted despite the global crisis. The prime minister told the participants

of the meeting that Pakistan was making vigorous diplomatic efforts to restore regional peace.

A detailed briefing was given to the participants on the implementation of government measures for fuel conservation, future course of action, and the current stock position.

It was told that the coordination was underway with the provincial governments to expedite the ownership registration of motorcycles and rickshaws to provide them with swift relief.

An Intelligence Bureau audit report was also presented to the meeting regarding the implementation of the prime minister's fuel-saving and austerity campaign.

It was informed that the strict implementation of the prime minister's austerity and simplicity drive was being ensured.

The meeting was told that sufficient stocks of fuel were available to meet the country's needs, and arrangements were also being made for the future. Despite an increase in the levy on the high-octane fuel used in the luxury vehicles, the prices of the jet fuel remained unchanged.



President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a meeting in Islamabad.

ME crisis: President orders unified measures to protect economically vulnerable people

APP

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has directed the state institutions to adopt coordinated measures to ease the burden of rising energy and essential goods costs on economically vulnerable citizens amid supply pressures due to Middle East tensions. The president chaired an expanded consultative meeting at Aiwan-e-Sadr in which Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and leadership of provinces as well as Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) also participated.

The meeting was briefed on the steps being taken by governments of the four provinces, as well as of Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK, to manage price pressures, ensure availability of essential supplies and mitigate impact on public, enabling a coordinated national response, President Secretariat Media Wing said in a statement.

The meeting also reviewed the broader regional situation and its potential effects on Pakistan's security environment, economic outlook and food security. The participants were assured that, despite the global crisis, timely decisions have ensured no disruption to fuel supply, and that adequate fuel stocks are currently available to meet the country's needs, with arrangements for the future also underway.

It was informed that proposals to increase oil prices had repeatedly been rejected by the prime

minister, and that funds saved through austerity measures were being channelled towards public relief. It was noted that the spirit of austerity had begun with the government cutting down its own expenditure, including cuts to the development budget and the immediate grounding of 60% of official vehicles.

President Zardari reiterated that the economically vulnerable people would not be left alone in this difficult time.

He directed that coordinated decision-making should be done, with alignment between economic management, energy planning, food security measures and security preparedness.

The president also asked for the need for public awareness efforts, focusing on reducing fuel consumption, encouraging the use of public transportation and promoting shared mobility practices as part of a broader demand management approach.

Other participants of the meeting included Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar; Defence Minister Khawaja Asif; Interior Minister Senator Mohsin Naqvi; National Security Advisor Lt Gen Asim Malik; PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari; Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb; Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik; other ministers, and senior officers of concerned ministries and divisions.

SC directs to make school admission drive more effective in remote areas of Balochistan

APP

Quetta: Balochistan Chief Secretary (SC) Shakeel Qadir Khan on Monday directed the concerned authorities to make the school admission campaign more effective and faster, especially in rural and remote areas, so that no child is deprived of the right to education.

He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting regarding the school admission campaign for children in the new academic year to achieve target of the drive in the province.

The meeting discussed in detail various suggestions and strategies to increase the enrollment of students in schools across the province, include out-of-school children in the educational stream and reduce the dropout rate.

The meeting was attended by Secretary

Education Lal Jan Jaffer, Special Secretary Schools Abdul Salam Achakzai and other concerned officers.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary emphasized that special steps should be taken to provide educational opportunities to such children who are unable to go to school for any reason.

The Chief Secretary directed the concerned authorities to make the school admission campaign more effective and faster, especially in rural and remote areas, so that no child is deprived of the right to education. He said that the school admission campaign should be run as a regular campaign and monitored at all levels. The Chief Secretary clarified that this campaign is being launched to provide educational inclusion opportunities to children deprived of education in the backward areas of the province.



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhel in a meeting with Sardarzada Umair Muhammad Hassani.

Indus Water Treaty: Pakistan will take all possible diplomatic and legal steps to protect water rights: Mashhood Ahmed

APP

Lahore: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Program Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan has said that the violation of the Indus Water Treaty is Indian stubbornness. The water dispute can lead to tension between the two countries and instability in the region. Pakistan will take all possible diplomatic and legal steps to protect its water rights. He expressed these views while talking to "APP" exclusively on Monday. Terming India's violation of the Indus Water Treaty as stubbornness, he said that this agreement is an important international agreement to ensure fair distribution of water between Pakistan and India, which is mandatory for both countries

to abide by.

He said that in 1960, the Indus Waters Treaty was signed between India and Pakistan under the mediation of the World Bank. Under the treaty, India's right over the eastern rivers Sutlej, Beas and Ravi was recognized, while Pakistan's right over the western rivers Indus, Jhelum and Chenab was recognized, and neither party has the authority to unilaterally terminate it. He said that India's violation of the treaty could increase tensions in the region and this move is also against international laws.

He said that the unilateral suspension of the agreement is a major threat to Pakistan's water security, food production and energy stability, which cannot be allowed at all.

FM Ishaq Dar to embark on official visit to China on March 31: FO

APP

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar will embark on an official visit to China on March 31 at the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, according to a statement issued by the Foreign Office (FO) on Monday.

The FO said that Pakistan and China enjoy an all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, characterised by "close coordination and regular consultations" on regional development and international issues. "In this context, the upcoming visit will provide an opportunity for both sides to hold in-depth discussions on regional developments, as well as bilateral and global issues of mutual interest," said the FO statement. It added that "FM Dar's decision to undertake the visit, despite medical advice to rest following a hairline shoulder fracture sustained yesterday, reflects the importance Pakistan attaches to its relationship with China".

Earlier on Friday, Dar held a telephone call with Wang Yi, during which they exchanged views on the evolving regional situation and broader global developments. Initiating peace talks in the war involving Iran "is no easy task," Wang said, but noted that such efforts would be "conducive to restoring normal navigation through the Strait of Hormuz".

PPAF playing vital role in improving lives of poor in rural areas of Balochistan: Governor

APP

QUETTA: Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhel on Monday said that the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) is playing a vital role in improving the lives of poor and vulnerable communities in Balochistan province, especially in rural areas.

He expressed these views while talking to Dr. Abdul Rehman Khan, Provincial Coordinator of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund.

The Governor said that all efforts to provide access to resources and services to help people recover from poverty deserve appreciation, saying that in addition, the province is yielding very positive results in

improving value chains and market linkages in the agriculture and livestock sectors.

Governor Mandokhel urged the PPAF to support the provision of basic amenities in remote and backward areas of the province so that poverty and backwardness could be eradicated. He said that the land of Balochistan is more beneficial for livestock and the livelihood of a large part of our total population is associated with livestock, but due to lack of rains and drought for the past several decades, livestock has suffered a lot. The Governor said that as a result of global warming, the major responsibility for the gradual increase in the average temperature of the entire planet Earth and the harmful aspects that are occurring lies with the developed.



The Ramat Hovav industrial zone south of Beersheba in southern Israel is pictured on Monday after an Iranian missile attack.

At least 17 killed as heavy rains trigger roof collapses in K-P

MONITORING DESK

PESHAWAR: At least 17 people, including 14 children, have been killed and 56 others injured after heavy rains triggered roof and wall collapses in parts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa since March 25, according to a report released by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Monday.

Intermittent rainfall is expected to continue until Tuesday.

Bannu recorded the highest casualties, with eight deaths, including seven children and one woman, and 42 injured. Abbottabad reported five deaths, including four children. Kohat saw two fatalities, North Waziristan one, and in Battagram one woman was killed.

The report also noted that 11 houses were damaged in the rains, five of which were in Bannu.

Several incidents of roofs collapsing were recorded in Bannu. In the village of Dad Kachlot, a roof collapsed in the house of Sher Muhammad Khan, killing three children: nine-year-old Asif, six-year-old Umrah, and three-year-old Javeria. At Kotka Ghulam Qadir, the roof of a veranda at a community centre collapsed, killing two people and injuring 39.

In Mama Kheil, a house wall collapsed, killing two children, 11-year-old Abu Sufyan and eight-year-old Wajahatullah. In Shandi Khel, Miryan Road, the roof of a room in the house of Iqbal collapsed, killing Iqbal's mother.

Iran denies role in attack on Kuwait desalination plant, blames 'depravity of Zionist regime'

MONITORING DESK

TEHRAN: Iran denied any role on Monday in the attack on a power generation and water desalination plant in Kuwait, casting the apparent blame for the attack on Israel.

A worker was killed and major material damage was caused after an Iranian attack late on Sunday on a service building at the power generation and water desalination plant in Kuwait, the country's Electricity Ministry said earlier today. The ministry said the fatality was an Indian national.

It said the strike caused extensive damage to the infrastructure at the facility. Technical and emergency teams were immediately dispatched under emergency plans to deal with the aftermath of the attack and ensure operations continue normally, the ministry said. It added that authorities are coordinating with security agencies and relevant bodies to secure the damaged site. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Khatam al Anbiya Central Headquarters rubbish any role in the incident. A statement issued today said: "The brutal aggression of the Zionist regime against Kuwait's desalination plant under the pretext of accusing Iran, which occurred in recent hours, is a sign of the depravity."

Govt to ensure uninterrupted availability of petroleum products at all costs to public in Balochistan: Commissioner

APP

Quetta: Commissioner Quetta, Division Shahzeb Khan Kakar on Monday said that the provincial government would ensure the provision of facilities to the public and uninterrupted availability of petroleum products at all costs, and advance measures to be taken to deal with any emergency situation.

He said this while chairing a meeting regarding the availability of petroleum products in view of the current situation in the city.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehrullah Badini, Assistant Commissioner (Revenue) Quetta Division

Bahadur Khan Kakar, petrol pump owners and representatives of various oil companies.

During the meeting, a detailed review was taken of the current situation of petroleum products in Quetta city, the possible effects of smart lockdown, and the demand and supply system.

While giving a briefing, the officials said that there is no shortage of petrol in the city yet and it is available in ample quantity.

The meeting was informed that in any emergency situation, additional supply could be made possible from Karachi within one to two days.

Iran confirms navy commander's death as Trump says deal may be reached 'soon'

> American president says regime change in Iran has been achieved: US-Israel attacks hit Iran energy sites, cutting power to Tehran: UN peacekeeper killed in Lebanon: Iran parliament speaker accuses Washington of using diplomacy as 'smoke screen', planning ground operation: Iran missile strike on Kuwait power station kills an Indian worker: Iran's cruise missile destroys Israel's industrial zone

MONITORING DESK

TEHRAN: US President Donald Trump has said that the US-Israel war against Iran has achieved regime change and a deal could be reached "soon" with Tehran.

Iran on Monday confirmed the death of Revolutionary Guards Navy Commander Alireza Tangsiri following severe injuries. Iranian media reported, based on a statement by the guards. Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said on March 26: "In a precise and lethal operation, the IDF eliminated the commander of the IRGC Navy, Tangsiri, along with senior naval command officials."

Iran launched strikes on Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, meanwhile after Iranian electrical facilities came under attack, cutting power to parts of Tehran and surrounding areas.

As Israel continued to press its offensive against Iran-backed Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, the UN Force in Lebanon said a peacekeeper had been killed on Sunday and another critically injured by a projectile that hit a UNIFIL position.

UNIFIL said they did not know the origin of the projectile but were investigating.

Trump, citing the number of Iranian leaders who have been

killed in the month-long US-Israeli war against Iran, said regime change has already been achieved and the new leadership is "much more reasonable".

"We've had regime change," he told reporters aboard Air Force One. "We're dealing with different people than anybody's dealt with before. It's a whole different group of people. So I would consider that regime change."

Asked whether there could be a deal with Iran this coming week, Trump said: "I do see a deal in Iran. Could be soon."

Trump said that Iran has accepted "most" of a 15-point proposal put forward by Washington to end the ongoing conflict, with the framework conveyed through Pakistan in indirect negotiations.

Trump indicated that Tehran had largely agreed to the demands. "They gave us most of the points. Why wouldn't they?" he said, adding that the US may still push for "a couple of other things" as discussions progress.

In Pakistan, the government is looking to capitalise on its links with Tehran and the Gulf states, as well as a budding rapport with Trump, to broker peace talks.

"Pakistan is very happy that both Iran and the US have expressed their confidence in Pakistan to facilitate the talks,"

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said.

But the speaker of Iran's parliament has accused Washington of using diplomacy as a smoke screen.

"The enemy publicly sends messages of negotiation and dialogue while secretly planning a ground attack," Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said in a statement carried by the official IRNA news agency.

"Our men are waiting for the arrival of the American soldiers on the ground to set them on fire and punish their regional allies once and for all," he added.

Weeks of unrelenting strikes have taken a heavy toll on ordinary people in Iran.

"I miss a peaceful night's sleep," an artist in Tehran told AFP, saying night-time strikes were "so intense it felt like all of Tehran was shaking".

The war has escalated into a regional conflagration as Tehran retaliates with attacks on Gulf states and virtually seals the critical Strait of Hormuz oil shipping lane, sending energy markets into a tailspin and threatening the world economy. An Iranian strike on a power station and water desalination in Kuwait killed one Indian worker and damaged a building at the site, the Gulf state's electricity ministry said Monday.

Governor KP, US Consul General, discuss bilateral ties and sister city initiative

APP

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi hosted a special luncheon in honor of United States Consul General Thomas Eckert and members of the consulate's diplomatic staff at his residence here on Monday.

During the meeting, both sides discussed Pakistan-US bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest. Detailed deliberations were held on the regional situation, particularly the law and order scenario in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, promotion of sports activities, and progress on the initiative to declare Peshawar and New York as sister cities.

The Governor expressed concern over the reported proposal to close the US Consulate General in Peshawar, saying that the consulate serves as an important diplomatic facilitation center for the people and government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He emphasized that its services should continue and urged the US Consul General to take up the matter with the US Embassy and Congress.

Welcoming the decision to designate

Peshawar and New York as sister cities, the participants agreed that the initiative should be implemented at the earliest so that people from both regions could benefit from each other's experiences and opportunities.

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor highlighted the importance of promoting sports activities, saying that the development of playgrounds is essential for ensuring peace and progress in any region.

He added that police and security forces were actively performing their duties to maintain law and order in the province.

The US Consul General appreciated the Governor's vision for the sister city initiative and said that work was underway between the governments of New York and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in this regard.

He reiterated that the US government and people were committed to advancing partnership initiatives aimed at the development and prosperity of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Thomas Eckert also thanked the Governor for the warm hospitality and the luncheon hosted in honor of the visiting delegation.



Chairman Prime Minister Youth Programme Rana Mashood Ahmed Khan Presides Over Meeting on Walk Pakistan Initiative in Islamabad.

Issue of video recording during surgery and a security guard administering anesthesia at Lady Willingdon Hospital

By Maqsood Khalid

Lahore: Regarding the incidents at Lady Willingdon Hospital involving video recording during surgery and a security guard administering anesthesia to a patient, the Punjab Health Department has appointed two senior officers to conduct hearings against those responsible.

Secretary Local Government, Shakeel Ahmed Mian, has been appointed as the inquiry officer to hear show-cause notices related to the incident of video recording during surgery.

Secretary Law & Parliamentary Affairs, Asif Bilal Lodhi, has been appointed as the inquiry officer to hear show-cause notices related to the incident of a security guard

administering anesthesia.

Show-cause notices under Section 7(B) read with Section 5(1)(A) of the PEEDA Act 2006 have been issued to:

Prof. Dr. Uzma Hussain (BS-20), former Head of Gynecology Department

Dr. Farah Inam (BS-19), former Medical Superintendent

Dr. Iqra Hafeez, former WMO

Iqra Zahid, former Charge Nurse (BS-16)

Fauzia Rashid, former Charge Nurse (BS-16)

Haseeb ur Rauf, former cook (BS-02)

Khawaja Salman Rafique stated that the act reflects serious corruption, incompetence, and administrative failure, damaging public trust in

the healthcare system. According to the video,

a security guard was allegedly allowed to administer anesthesia inside the operation theatre—an act that is a grave violation of hospital rules, medical ethics, and legal frameworks, as anesthesia is a specialized procedure restricted to qualified professionals only.

Punjab Health Secretary Azmat Mahmood stated that after reviewing the facts under the PEEDA Act 2006, action will be taken against all those responsible.

The incident reflects gross negligence, lack of supervision, administrative failure, and misconduct, endangering the patient's life and damaging the reputation of a public healthcare institution.

NA Speaker Announces Panel of Chairpersons for Ongoing Session

APP

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq,

on Monday announced the Names of members who will serve on the Panel of Chairpersons for the ongoing session of the National Assembly.

The panel will preside over the proceedings of the House in the absence of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker.

The Speaker named Ali Zahid, Nuzhat Sadiq, Abdul Qadir Patel, Syeda Shehla Raza, Shahida Begum, and Syed Ameen-ul-Haq as members of the panel.

PPPP disowns Imtiaz Ahmed, denies any official party role

APP

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Monday clarified that a man identified as Imtiaz Ahmed Chaudhry, son of Nawab Ali, does not hold any official position within the party at any level.

According to a statement issued from the office of PPPP Secretary General Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari, the party spokesperson said that Imtiaz Ahmed Chaudhry has been falsely issuing notification letters regarding appointments of party office-bearers at the tehsil, district, and divisional levels.

The statement emphasized that he neither holds any authority nor is authorized under party rules to make such appointments.

It further said that these actions amount to forgery and have caused political damage and serious confusion within the party's organizational.

DC Mulakhail Reaffirms Transparency in Ramadan Ration Distribution

APP

QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Musakhail Abdul Razzaq Khajjak has said that the distribution of ration among deserving families during the holy month of Ramadan was carried out in a highly transparent manner, setting an example across the district.

According to a press release, Abdul Razzaq Khajjak said the district administration utilized all available resources to ensure fair distribution of essential food supplies, with transparency maintained as

the top priority.

He emphasized that the initiative was implemented in line with the directives of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

Responding to recent allegations, the Deputy Commissioner noted that a certain individual had deliberately made baseless accusations against the administration.

He clarified that claims of unfair distribution were contrary to the facts.

Abdul Razzaq Khajjak urged that if anyone possesses concrete evidence of irregularities, they should present it to the district administration.



Technicians Conduct CCTV Maintenance for Enhanced Security in Quetta's Kandhari Bazaar.



"Commuters Demand Urgent Action from Authorities on Baleli Road Construction in Quetta".



Karachi Kings edge past Lahore Qalandars in PSL thriller

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Karachi Kings pulled off a tense four-wicket victory over traditional rivals Lahore Qalandars in a low-scoring HBL Pakistan Super League encounter at the Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday, successfully chasing a modest 129 with three balls to spare.

The win was built on a disciplined bowling display and a gritty chase that survived a middle-order wobble before Abbas Afridi's explosive finish.

Opting to bat first on a surface that offered assistance to spinners and some seam movement, Lahore Qalandars never found rhythm. They were restricted to 128 for 9 in 20 overs, a total that always looked under par on a ground where chasing has often been straightforward.

Karachi's varied attack, led by Adam Zampa's economical spell and Moeen Ali's craft, dismantled the Qalandars' top order and middle order with clinical efficiency.

The home side's innings got off to a shaky start when Fakhar Zaman was stumped off Moeen in the first over for just one.

Mohammad Naeem provided some early impetus with a six off Mir Hamza but fell for 13, caught and bowled by the same bowler. Abdullah Shafique looked fluent, stroking 33 off 24 balls, but his dismissal to a half-tracker from Zampa triggered a collapse. Parvez Hossain Emon (12) and Sikandar Raza (19) could not accelerate sufficiently.

Haseebullah Khan waged a lone battle at the top, finishing with 28 off 30, but the lower order crumbled under pressure. Shaheen Shah Afridi (7) and Usama Mir fell to lbw decisions, while Haris Rauf managed only four.

Lahore lost wickets at regular intervals, managing just 20 runs in the last five overs — a telling statistic on a pitch that demanded careful accumulation rather than reckless hitting.

Karachi's bowling was a textbook display of variety. Zampa was the standout with figures of 2-11, proving once again why he remains one of the world's most effective wrist-spinners on helpful surfaces. Moeen claimed 2-31, while Hamza and Hasan Ali chipped in with two and one wicket respectively. Salman Ali Agha and Abbas also contributed to the stranglehold. Lahore's decision to bat first, perhaps hoping to post a defendable total on a spin-friendly track, backfired spectacularly.

Karachi's chase began cautiously. Sha-heen, leading from the front, gave Karachi an early jolt by removing Dav-id Warner (8) and Salman in the space of two deliveries in the third over.

Saad Baig (19) and Mohammad Waseem (38) then steadied the ship, but Mustafizur Rahman's clever variations accounted for Saad, leaving Karachi at 39 for 3.

Waseem and Moeen (18) added 43 crucial runs, but Shaheen returned to strike twice in the 15th over, removing both set batters. At 88 for 5, the game hung in the balance. Azam Khan and Khushdil Shah then played sensibly, rotating strike and keeping the required rate under control.

With 23 needed off 12 balls, tension peaked. Mustafizur conceded 14 runs in the 19th over, including a five-run penalty for ball tampering after the ball was changed, which shifted momentum decisively.

Khushdil fell to a superb catch by Raza off Haris, but Abbas walked in and delivered the knockout punch.

The all-rounder smashed a boundary and a towering six off Haris in the final over, sealing victory with a six that sailed into the night sky. His unbeaten 10 off just two balls turned a nervy finish into a statement. Azam remained not out on 14.



BELARUS' Aryna Sabalenka poses with the winner's trophy after defeating Coco Gauff of the US in the Miami Open final at the Hard Rock Stadium.

Sabalenka sinks Gauff to clinch second straight Miami Open title

SPORTS DESK

MIAMI: Aryna Sabalenka won her second straight Miami Open title beating Coco Gauff 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 to complete a "Sunshine Double" Indian Wells-Miami sweep.

The world number one from Belarus, fresh off her first triumph in the California desert, became the fifth woman — and the first since Iga Swiatek in 2022 — to win both of the elite early season hardcourt WTA 1000 titles.

"It means a lot," Sabalenka said after joining Poland's Swiatek, German great Steffi Graf, Belgian Kim Clijsters and fellow Belarusian Victoria Azarenka on the list of women to win both titles in the same year.

"My goal always been to put my name in the history, and I just did it."

Sabalenka underscored her WTA dominance in a season in which her only defeat to date was her Australian Open final loss to Elena Rybakina — who she went on to beat in the Indian Wells title match and in the semi-finals here.

She handed Gauff her first career defeat in a hardcourt final. The American had won her first nine, including a triumph over Sabalenka in the 2023 US Open championship match.

Gauff had also beaten the Belarusian for the title on the red clay of Roland Garros last year.

So Sabalenka said she wasn't surprised to see Gauff dig in, even after the Belarusian pocketed the first set with a ruthless display of power and precision.

She broke Gauff to open the match and, after Gauff saved three break points in a gritty fifth game, broke the American again in the seventh before serving it out in 37 minutes without facing a break point herself.

In a tense second set, Gauff's first break point chance — from a blistering backhand passing winner in the second game — sparked a jubilant reaction from the crowd at Hard Rock Stadium, home of the NFL's Miami Dolphins that is just about an hour away from Gauff's Delray Beach home.

But Gauff couldn't convert, slamming a forehand into the net on the next point as Sabalenka held.

It needed another gutsy hold from Gauff to keep it on serve in the fifth game.

Up 40-0, she wasted three game points with a pair of errors off the ground and a double fault then had to save a break point before taking the game.

But Gauff was finding more depth on her returns and broke Sabalenka for the first time to take the second set.

"I knew that she's going to try her very best to fight in this match," Sabalenka said. "I was just trying to keep a positive mindset going into the third set. I'm super happy how well I handled my emotions how well I stayed focused from the very beginning to the very end."

And the third set, again, was virtually all Sabalenka.

She broke to open the final frame and broke again when Gauff sailed a backhand long on Sabalenka's first match point.

"What a month," said Sabalenka, who along with two prestigious titles acquired a new puppy and got engaged to boyfriend Georgios Frangulis. Gauff was also feeling grateful after a rocky March that saw her withdraw from her third-round match at Indian Wells with a nerve issue that caused "scary" pain in her left arm. She had said after a dominant semi-final win over Karolina Muchova that she was making progress with the inconsistencies in her serve and forehand, although seven double faults hurt her cause against Sabalenka.

India's JioStar terminates Bangladesh IPL cricket broadcast deal, letter shows

SPORTS DESK

Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani's entertainment venture JioStar has terminated its broadcast deals in Bangladesh for the Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket tournament, saying its local partner defaulted on payments, according to a document seen by Reuters.

Bangladesh in January banned IPL broadcasts after one of its teams, Kolkata Knight Riders, dropped Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman at the Indian cricket board's instruction, just as tensions rose between the two countries following the killing of a Hindu man in Bangladesh.

Though Bangladesh is reviewing the ban and had on Saturday said any further steps will depend on the opinion of its sports ministry, the termination by JioStar means there will be no local broadcaster for the IPL season, even if the country were to change its stance.

"The agreement stands terminated with immediate effect," JioStar said in a letter dated February 17 to Bangladesh broadcaster TSports, which had sublicensed the rights from JioStar for IPL seasons from 2023 to 2027.

The company cited its partner's "continued failure and default in adhering to the payment timelines stipulated under the agreement". JioStar, a joint venture of Ambani's Reliance and Walt Disney, did not respond to Reuters queries. TSports and Bangladesh's sports and information ministries also did not respond to requests for comment.

IPL, the world's richest cricket league, valued at \$18.5 billion, enjoys huge popularity among the cricket-viewing public in Bangladesh, where the game is an obsession like it is in the rest of the subcontinent. Its latest season started on March 28.

India-Bangladesh relations have been strained since a political transition in Dhaka in August 2024 disrupted previously close ties under former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who fled to New Delhi after a mass uprising.

But there are signs of a thaw in the relations after Tarique Rahman, the newly formed government's prime minister, said in February that Bangladesh would engage on the basis of mutual respect and shared interests with its neighbours.



Mumbai Indians' captain Indian cricket player Hardik Pandya celebrates after winning the 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL) T20 match between Mumbai Indians and Kolkata Knight Riders at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.

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Afghan truce

AFTER a temporary pause during Eidul Fitr, Pakistan says that Operation Ghazab lil-Haq, which began in late February, striking terrorist sites in Afghanistan as well as Afghan Taliban positions, has resumed. Earlier, the Foreign Office had said that a temporary truce had been initiated "in deference to" Eid, and on "requests from our brotherly Islamic countries".

Not long after the truce expired, there were reports last Thursday of cross-border fire from the Afghan side at Torkham, in which a Pakistani official was injured. The truce had largely held over the Eid holidays, and it would be in the interest of both states to see how a longer-term cessation of hostilities can be worked out, while keeping in mind Pakistan's legitimate demand that cross-border terrorism from Afghanistan be halted permanently.

Many of Pakistan's friends are interested in seeing a long-term truce take effect between Islamabad and Kabul. Afghan Taliban officials had said the Eid truce had been achieved due to the efforts of Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Qatar. Moreover, China, which is an ally of Pakistan, and which also maintains open channels with Afghanistan, has also suggested that the path of dialogue be pursued in order to resolve differences.

Commenting on the Eid truce, the Chinese foreign ministry's spokesperson said that "China hopes that both countries will ... resume peace talks promptly" and "resolve differences through dialogue". The spokesperson added that Beijing was "playing a constructive role" in mediating the conflict. Meanwhile, the FO has said the operation will continue "until the objectives are achieved" and Kabul reviews its support for terrorism.

Pakistan's hand was forced by the Afghan Taliban as they had stubbornly refused to act against terrorist groups such as the banned TTP, which has been waging a bloody campaign inside this country, resulting in the loss of many lives.

However, now that deterrence has been established, and hopefully the message understood in Kabul, it would be wise to find an off-ramp, and get guarantees from Afghanistan at the negotiating table. The flames of war are consuming the wider region, and it would be in Pakistan's interest for calm to be established along the Afghan border.

Clerics from both Afghanistan and Pakistan had recently called for extending the Eidul Fitr ceasefire to Eidul Azha — which falls at the end of May.

This could be a worthwhile proposal to pursue; common Muslim friends, as well as China, can be approached to see if a longer truce can be worked out. Pakistan's concerns about terrorist groups in Afghanistan are genuine, and the interlocutors must make clear to the Afghan Taliban that if they are interested in permanent peace, they must act against violent groups seeking to harm Pakistan.

By Barrister Usman Ali, Ph.D.

From Judicial Failure to Constitutional Truth

On April 4, 1979, Pakistan witnessed the silencing of one of its greatest sons, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto: a towering statesman, a leader of rare vision and charisma, founder of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and former Prime Minister, executed pursuant to a judgment long regarded as a judicial murder. Its legal legitimacy was never accepted by the people of Pakistan. Yet, for decades, certain quarters, guided more by political prejudice than constitutional principle, continued to invoke that verdict as lawful and justified. The central question endured: was the decision correct, or was it a grave miscarriage of justice cloaked in judicial authority?

That question received its most authoritative answer in March 2024, when the Supreme Court of Pakistan, deciding a long-pending presidential reference, held unequivocally that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had been denied his fundamental right to a fair trial. A nine-member bench, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, declared that the proceedings leading to Bhutto's execution were neither transparent nor consistent with the Constitution or the law. The Court could not undo history, but it did something equally consequential: it set the constitutional record right.

History does not forget. It may fall silent for decades, even generations, but it neither absolves injustice nor spares those who enable it. Nations are ultimately judged not by how power is exercised in moments of strength, but by how injustice is confronted when truth can no longer be deferred. Few episodes in Pakistan's constitutional history illustrate this more starkly than the trial and execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and the reckoning that followed.

In 1979, under the shadow of military rule, Pakistan's highest court upheld the death sentence of a democratically elected prime minister. That ruling was not merely a legal error; it was a collapse of judicial conscience. Judges entrusted with defending the Constitution yielded to executive pressure and personal bias. A trial marked by procedural irregularities, questionable evidence, and a divided bench became a defining symbol of judicial submission to authoritarian power, inflicting lasting damage on the credibility of the judiciary.

For decades, the Bhutto case occupied an uneasy place in national memory, widely

regarded as unjust, yet insulated by doctrines of finality. Political leaders condemned it, scholars dissected it, and lawyers debated it relentlessly, but the institution responsible for the wrong remained silent. That silence was not neutrality; it was part of the injustice. History, however, is patient. It waits.

That wait ended with the Supreme Court's opinion on the presidential reference authored by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa. Without attempting the impossibility of reversing an execution long carried out, the Court undertook a more meaningful task: restoring constitutional truth. Justice Isa held that Bhutto had not received a fair trial and that the process culminating in his execution was fundamentally flawed. For the first time, the judiciary itself acknowledged what generations had long known.

Justice Isa reframed the case not as a closed criminal matter, but as a profound constitutional failure. His opinion laid bare how judicial independence collapsed under authoritarian rule, how due process was compromised, and how the right to an impartial tribunal was denied. It reaffirmed a foundational principle: legality divorced from justice cannot command legitimacy. Courts forfeit moral authority when they become instruments of power rather than guardians of fundamental rights.

Among the most consequential aspects of the judgment was its rejection of the familiar claim that judges operating under authoritarian regimes have "no choice." By refusing to legitimize judicial surrender, Justice Isa dismantled the jurisprudence of necessity that has long distorted Pakistan's constitutional order. The message was unambiguous: constitutional fidelity is not conditional, even in the face of coercion.

The judgment was further strengthened by the concurring observations of Justice Manzoor Ahmad Malik, who emphasized the institutional cost of judicial failure. When courts lend themselves to political ends, the damage extends far beyond individual cases, it corrodes public trust and weakens the rule of law itself. Crucially, he distinguished between the finality of judgments and their correctness, clarifying that while finality may serve legal stability, it cannot confer moral or constitu-



tional legitimacy.

This distinction allowed the Court to acknowledge historic injustice without unsettling the present legal order. It affirmed that constitutional courts bear not only the duty to decide cases, but also the responsibility to speak when past decisions have undermined fundamental rights. The concurrence of the remaining judges transformed the ruling into a collective act of institutional introspection.

The correction of history in the Bhutto case could not restore a life unjustly taken, nor erase decades of institutional damage. But it achieved something indispensable: it restored constitutional conscience. It affirmed that even delayed justice has meaning, and that acknowledging past wrongs strengthens, rather than weakens, the legitimacy of judicial institutions.

This judgment remains operative, and the principles it articulates remain urgent. The questions it raises, about judicial independence, executive overreach, and constitutional courage, are not confined to the past. They continue to define the present. Courts derive legitimacy not from power or precedent alone, but from an unwavering commitment to justice.

History has now written two chapters in the Bhutto case. One belongs to those who surrendered the Constitution to expediency, allowing fear and bias to eclipse justice. The other belongs to those who, decades later, had the courage to name injustice for what it was.

In the final accounting, that distinction will endure. By correcting the judicial record of one of Pakistan's darkest constitutional moments, Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa demonstrated that courts may err, but they are not condemned to remain silent. When they find the courage to confront their own past, they do more than correct history, they restore the moral foundation on which justice itself depends.

If history remembers Shaheed Bhutto as a great leader unjustly hanged, it will remember Justice Faez Isa as the judge who removed a dark stain from Pakistan's higher judiciary, ensured that history spoke the truth, and ended the fiction that injustice could be mistaken for law.

By Huma Yusuf

Forgotten victim

CUBA is next. Iran and Lebanon continue to burn. Conflicts from Gaza to Sudan to the DRC persist, though they are yesterday's news. The humanitarian, societal and economic toll of proliferating conflict is difficult to fathom. No wonder then that one silent victim of the perma-war is repeatedly overlooked: the planet.

Conflict destroys the environment and exacerbates climate change. Such 'environmental' is understandably sidelined amidst the panic of war. Until it becomes impossible to ignore, as it did in Tehran recently, when the city was cloaked in acid rain, resulting from the bombing of fuel depots, which spewed oil particles and sulphur compounds. The air quality deteriorated sufficiently for our own Met Office to warn that the continued targeting of polluting sites in Iran would worsen air quality in our western provinces.

The environmental impact of today's conflicts will plague communities for decades to come.

Missile strikes and drone attacks produce toxin- and particle-laden debris, and destroy industrial and sanitation infrastructure that leaks chemicals, plastics and other poisons into water systems and the air. Military scrap piles up and leaches polluting materials into the soil, leading to chronic health risks.

War also leads to mass displacement and the eruption of refugee camps, which are hugely disruptive to the environment. Think of the waste produced by IDP camps lacking sanitation or rubbish disposal services, or the deforestation caused by camp residents resorting to firewood for cooking and warmth. Military movement and the construction of security bar-

riers also affect wildlife movement and migratory patterns.

The assault on the climate is terrifying. The assault on the climate in the form of GHG emissions is also terrifying to consider. The destruction of oil and gas reserves, the mass destruction of buildings, and the burning of fuel by aircraft and vessels led to five million tonnes of carbon dioxide being released within the first 14 days of the Iran war — the equivalent of 84 countries' emissions — according to a Guardian analysis.

And this is just the immediate toll. The indirect effects are harder to comprehend. Military activities (including training exercises, maintenance and disposal of weapons, development of infrastructure such as bases, etc) are estimated to contribute 5.5 per cent of all GHG emissions (though the true scale is unknown as militaries are not required to report transparently to the UN climate change convention that tallies climate data).

High military expenditure also diverts resources away from sustainability initiatives. Consider how most Western countries have dramatically cut development aid budgets to beef up defence capacity, with climate finance commitments being an early victim.

The Iran conflict is having a particularly regressive effect on global efforts to tackle climate change. As oil and LNG prices surge due to the targeting of energy facilities in Iran and the Gulf, and the energy supply chain is disrupted, many Asian countries, Pakistan included, have ramped up coal-fired power generation despite green transition commitments. Persistent conflict also stymies local preservation

efforts as stretched local governments and activists struggle to access, monitor and manage environmental destruction. Within Pakistan, for example, KP's invaluable forests are rapidly being lost to corruption and mismanagement. A most dire example is Arandu Gol in Chitral, which runs along the border with Afghanistan. By some estimates, 35pc of its forest cover has been lost since 2000, with billions of rupees worth of timber being smuggled into Afghan-is-tan. The timber mafia is not a consequence of conflict, but it has certainly taken advantage of the collapse of environmental governance in the context of persistent violence and insecurity.

Since 2022, the UN International Law Commission has been calling for greater recognition of the environmental impact of conflict, and demanding that militaries plan better to protect the planet. There are also campaigns to get the International Criminal Court to recognise ecocide as a criminal offence. Though valiant, such efforts may have little traction against the backdrop of global securitisation and the right-wing backlash against the Paris Agreement and related climate and environmental commitments.

But we ignore war pollution at our own peril. As one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, which is also ranked among the top 15 global military powers by the Global Firepower index, Pakistan is uniquely positioned to show leadership in the urgent space of climate- and environmentally conscious militarism. Let's seize the opportunity, as we have recently proved ourselves to be pragmatic diplomatic interlocutors, putting our country in the headlines for the right reasons.

DAILY MIRROR

Kuwait assures full facilitation of diesel, jet fuel supplies to Pakistan

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Kuwait has assured full facilitation in the supply of diesel and jet fuel to Pakistan, which has been stalled due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz due to the ongoing US-Israeli war on Iran.

The assurance for the revival of oil exports to Pakistan came after Tehran allowed 20 cargoes with Pakistani flags to pass the Strait of Hormuz, as announced by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Saturday.

Pakistan imports more than 60 per cent of its diesel from Kuwait under a long-term contract between state-run oil giants of the two countries — Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and Pakistan State Oil.

Alternative routes, following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, have resulted in additional freight costs for Pakistan.

On Monday, Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik held a meeting with Kuwait's Ambassador to Pakistan Nassar Abdulrahman Jasser Almutairi to discuss bilateral relations, energy cooperation, and regional developments.

According to an official statement, Malik expressed gratitude to KPC for assuring full facilitation to Pakistani-flagged vessels for any likely lifting of diesel and jet fuel from Kuwait.

It said that the petroleum minister acknowledged Kuwait's "continued support for Pakistan despite global and regional challenges and expressed deep appreciation for Kuwait's contribution toward Pakistan's energy security".

Malik also requested the ambassador to convey his fondest regards to Kuwait's Oil Minister Tariq Suleiman Ahmed Al-Roumi and KPC Chief Executive Officer Sheikh Nawaf Al Sabah, it added.

"During the meeting, the federal minister highlighted the historic and brotherly ties between Pakistan and Kuwait, stating that the relationship between the two countries is not only longstanding but also connected by hearts," it said.

The minister noted that for the past five decades, Pakistan had been purchasing petroleum products, particularly diesel, from Kuwait, reflecting the enduring trust and partnership between the two nations, the statement said.

"Pakistan wishes to see all brotherly countries remain peaceful and secure," the statement quoted Malik as saying. He also emphasised that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was actively working to facilitate the peaceful resolution of conflict and was "personally overseeing efforts aimed at facilitating the supply of food and essential commodities as required by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries". The Kuwait envoy expressed his sincerest gratitude for Pakistan's constructive role in promoting peace, the statement said. He appreciated the efforts of the people, government, and armed forces of Pakistan, noting that Pakistan had "demonstrated leadership in rejecting the use of force and in promoting peaceful solutions during difficult times". "Kuwait is proud of Pakistan's efforts and prays for their success," the statement quoted Ambassador Jasser as saying, adding that he underscored Kuwait's commitment to supporting Pakistan. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen bilateral relations, particularly in the energy sector, and agreed to remain closely engaged to expand cooperation in areas of mutual interest and shared benefit, the statement concluded.



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Chairs Meeting on Fuel Conservation and Austerity Measures Implementation at PM House in Islamabad

NA offers Fateha for Ali Larijani, Sherry Rehman's daughter

APP

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Monday offered Fateha for former Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani and the daughter of Senator Sherry Rehman.

The House also offered prayers for the fathers of Muhammad Miqdad Ali Khan, Awais Haider Jakhar, and Saadullah Khan Baloch. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said he had known Ali Larijani for 15 years, adding that several other members had also met him.

He added that Ali Larijani had served as Speaker of the Iranian Parliament three times. The Fateha was led by Hafiz Mian Muhammad Numan.

Heavy rain, floods kill 22 people in Afghanistan

MONITORING DESK

KABUL: Heavy rain that triggered severe flooding and caused buildings to collapse has killed 22 people and injured 32 in Afghanistan over the last two days, the country's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said on Monday, as it warned of continued risk due to bad weather.

Most of the deaths were reported from the central and eastern provinces of the war-shattered South Asian nation, including Parwan, Maidan Wardak, Daykundi and Logar, where torrential rain triggered flash floods and caused houses to collapse in rural and mountainous regions, the authority said.

Conditions remained "unstable" in parts of the country on Monday, with continued risk of further rain and flooding in some areas, it said.

"Twenty-two people were killed, 32 injured and 241 houses damaged in flooding and other weather-related incidents across 13 provinces over the past two days," an NDMA official, who did not want to be named because he was not authorised to speak to the media, told Reuters.

Afghanistan is prone to natural disasters, and the United Nations lists it among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. With international aid, which formed the backbone of the government's finances, slashed since the Taliban seized power in 2021.

Pakistan Railways working on upgrading infrastructure: NA

APP

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly was informed today that Pakistan Railways is working on upgrading its infrastructure to increase transport capacity fivefold.

Responding to a question during Question Hour in the House, Parliamentary Secretary for Railways Muhammad Usman Awaisi said that 820 new high-capacity freight wagons and 230 passenger coaches are being inducted. He further said the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul train service is planned to resume by the end of this year.

The Parliamentary Secretary informed that the private sector is being encouraged to invest in the freight sector through track access and terminal development.

He added that Pakistan Railways has successfully auctioned two cargo train operations running between Karachi-Lahore and Karachi-Multan-Faisalabad.

Replying to another question, Muhammad Usman Awaisi said ticket vending machines have been installed at

fifty-seven major commercial stations for passenger facilitation. He said the facility for payment through bank cards will be made available by the end of the current financial year.

Responding to another question, Parliamentary Secretary for Health Nelson Azeem said that the government has adopted a comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategy for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS. He stated that 84,421 registered HIV patients are currently living in the country. He informed the House that free antiretroviral therapy is being provided through a network of 98 centers nationwide.

Five bills were introduced in the House today.

These include; "The Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2026", "The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2026", "The Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation (Amendment) Bill, 2025", "The Regulation of Generation, Transmission and Distribution of Electricity Power (Amendment) Bill, 2026" and "The Financial Institutions (Recovery of Finances) (Amendment) Bill, 2025."

HSA, Balochistan govt seal twin MoUs to train over 350 paramedics, nursing graduates

APP

ISLAMABAD: The Health Services Academy (HSA) and the Project Management Unit (PMU-HSRMU), Government of Balochistan, have signed two strategic agreements aimed at strengthening the provincial healthcare workforce and improving service delivery in underserved areas.

The Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed in Quetta by HSA Project Coordinator Nadeem Sajjad Kayani and PMU Project Director Saqib Kakar.

Under the first agreement, titled "Capacity Building Program for Paramedics & Allied Healthcare Providers," as many as 352 in-service paramedics from across Balochistan will receive specialized training.

The program focuses on critical care disciplines, including ICU, NICU, emergency care, anesthesia, and cardiac care, utilizing a model that combines classroom instruction, simulation based learning, and supervised clinical practice.

The second agreement, the "Nursing Internship Program," is designed to provide fresh nursing graduates from the province with structured opportunities to enhance their clinical skills and professional readiness.

Following the specialized training at the Health Services Academy in Islamabad, the participants will return to their respective districts to provide quality healthcare at the grassroots level.

Speaking on the occasion, representatives from both organizations termed the initiatives a major step toward building a skilled healthcare workforce for Balochistan.

They noted that the programs would significantly address the shortage of trained human resources and improve the functionality of healthcare facilities in remote areas. HSA Director Nadeem Sajjad Kayani reiterated that under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Dr. Shahzad Ali Khan, the Academy remains committed to strengthening the national health system through training, research, and policy support.

APNS annual general council meeting on 31st

PRESS RELEASE

KARACHI: "The Annual General Council of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society will meet on Tuesday, March 31, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. at APNS House, Gulistan-e-Jauhar, Karachi", stated a press release of the APNS.

The Annual General Council will discuss the conditions prevailing in the newspaper industry and take decisions to address the problems faced by the member publications and will finalize its recommendations on the issues pertaining to the Govt. - Press relations, freedom of press and the future of the industry. The members will consider and adopt the report of the Executive Committee for the year 2025-2026, approve audit report of Annual Accounts for the year 2025 and elect members to the Executive Committee for the year 2026-2027. The new Executive Committee will elect its office bearers for the new term. The meetings of the General Councils will be attended by full members only.

The Secretary General, APNS has requested publishers of full member publications to attend the above Council meeting positively."

ECP postpones by-election in NA-256 Khuzdar

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) decided to postpone by-election in NA-256 constituency due to security threats.

According to details, the polling for the NA-256 constituency was scheduled for April 5, 2026. The Election Commission of Pakistan made it clear that the decision to postpone the election was taken on the request of the provincial government.

The new date for the polling will be announced soon.

Earlier on March 8, 2026, the Balochistan government has formally requested the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to postpone the by-election in NA-256 Khuzdar, citing a deteriorating security situation and heightened risks to voters and polling staff. In a letter sent by the provincial Home Department, authorities urged the ECP to defer the by-poll scheduled for April 5, warning that prevailing law and order conditions in Khuzdar and surrounding areas have become "highly alarming".

The request follows detailed assessments by the district administration, law enforcement agencies and intelligence bodies, all of which flagged serious security concerns. Election Commission of Pakistan also summoned Chief Secretary Balochistan and Inspector General of Police in personal capacity for briefing on security situation.

In phone call with PM Shehbaz, EU Council chief hails Pakistan's Mideast peace push

By Zahid Ahmed Khan

ISLAMABAD: European Council President Antonio Costa on Monday praised and expressed support for Pakistan's efforts to help end hostilities in the Middle East, stressing that dialogue and diplomacy remain the only path to peace and stability in the region.

Costa conveyed these views during a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The two leaders also discussed Pakistan-EU relations, including the importance of the GSP+ status.

In a post on X, PM Shehbaz confirmed the call, saying he briefed Costa on Islamabad's ongoing efforts to promote peace and stability in the Middle East.

"We exchanged views on the ongoing hostilities in the Middle East and agreed that dialogue and diplomacy must prevail in order to restore regional peace and stability," he wrote.

The prime minister added that they also discussed the upcoming Pakistan-EU Business Forum, sched-

uled for the end of April in Islamabad.

"I look forward to visiting Brussels at a mutually convenient date. I also conveyed good wishes for EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen," he added.

Pakistan has emerged as a key facilitator between Iran and the United States amid the ongoing conflict, serving as an intermediary for messages between the two sides.

These efforts have included direct contact involving Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir and US President Donald Trump, confirmed by the White House.

Islamabad intensified its diplomatic push on Sunday, hosting a quadrilateral meeting on the conflict attended by foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Egypt.

Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar said Pakistan was ready to host potential talks between Iran and the United States, adding that both sides had expressed confidence in Islamabad's role as a mediator.



Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Loralai, Muhammad Ismail Mengal, is visiting patients at the Teaching Hospital, inquiring about their health and listening to their concerns.

Sufficient fertilizer stock available for Kharif crops: Tanveer

APP

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain has assured there is no shortage of Urea or DAP in the country.

He was chairing a weekly meeting of the Fertilizer Review Committee in Islamabad today to review the availability, distribution, and pricing of key fertilizers, particularly Urea and DAP, in the lead-up to the Kharif season.

The Minister categorically said that sufficient stocks are available to fully meet the requirements of the upcoming Kharif cropping season.

He emphasized that the Government is maintaining a vigilant and proactive monitoring mechanism to ensure unin-

terrupted supply and prevent any artificial disruptions in the market.

The Committee was informed that substantial Urea stocks will remain available throughout the Kharif season, with carryover reserves expected to stand at around five hundred seventy thousand tonnes by the end of the Kharif season.

Similarly, DAP buffer stocks are projected to remain stable, with approximately ninety six thousand tonnes available until the end of July, ensuring smooth availability during peak sowing months.

The Minister directed all stakeholders to ensure that fertilizers are distributed efficiently and reach farmers without delay.

High-level meeting held in the Punjab Home Department to review arrangements for the 327th Vaisakhi Festival

By Maqsood Khalid

Lahore: A high-level meeting was held in the Punjab Home Department under the chairmanship of Provincial Minister and Chairman Cabinet Committee on Law and Order, Khawaja Salman Rafique, and Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs, Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, to review arrangements for the 327th Vaisakhi Festival.

The meeting conducted a detailed review of preparations for the 327th International Vaisakhi Festival. Secretary Home Punjab, Dr. Ahmad Javed Qazi, attended the meeting. Additional Secretary Shrinves, Nasir Mushtaq, briefed participants that the Vaisakhi Mela will be held from April 10 to April 19.

Sikh pilgrims will visit Lahore, Nankana Sahib, Hasan Abdal, Eminabad, Ferozabad, and Kartarpur (Narowal). The festival is expected to host 20,000 local pilgrims, 3,000 pilgrims from India, and 3,000 from other parts of the world.

Khawaja Salman Rafique stated that the Punjab government has made fool-proof arrangements for the 327th Vaisakhi Festival. Guests from around the world will be hosted in accordance with their traditions. Special arrangements are being made for the safety and comfortable stay of pilgrims, and all

transport vehicles will be required to have valid fitness certificates.

Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora stated that the Chief Minister Punjab has set a historic example by participating in fes-



tivals of all religious minorities. He emphasized the need for teamwork to present a positive image of Pakistan. He added that Vaisakhi is a global festival in which diplomats will also participate, and instructed that officials accompanying Sikh pilgrims must respect religious sensitivities.

The provincial ministers directed that senior citizen counters, additional bathrooms, heavy-duty generators, and extra counters for the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) be arranged. They also emphasized ensuring large-scale langar (community meals), medical facilities, and ambulance services.

Luxury buses will be provided to ensure timely and comfortable transportation of pilgrims to all locations. Officials of LESCO were directed to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply during the festival.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik, held a meeting with Nassar Abdulrahman Jasser Almutairi, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Pakistan.