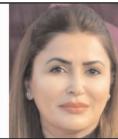




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PM Shehbaz condemns attack on Kuwait, vows Pakistan's constructive role for regional peace, stability

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif received a telephone call from Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al Khaled Al Hamad Al Sabah on Friday and assured him that Pakistan would continue to play a constructive role for bringing peace and stability in the region. During their warm and cordial conversation, the prime minister reiterated Pakistan's strong condemnation of the attacks on Kuwait and once again, expressed Pakistan's solidarity and support for the people of Kuwait, in these challenging times. He also offered condolences on the loss of precious lives and

prayed for recovery of the injured.

The prime minister also apprised the Kuwaiti leadership of Pakistan's sincere diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the war in the Middle East. While expressing deep appreciation of the prime minister's leadership, the Crown Prince of Kuwait fully endorsed Pakistan's efforts for mediation between Iran and the U.S. He also thanked the prime minister for Pakistan's support to Kuwait in the current crisis. He thanked the prime minister for his recent letter of solidarity addressed to the Kuwaiti leadership and also expressed his desire to visit Pakistan, as soon as the situation improves.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held meeting with Federal Minister for Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Amir Muqam.

Iranian military says 800 US troops killed, 17 bases destroyed

PEAK POINT



TEHRAN: An Iranian military spokesperson claimed significant casualties and damage inflicted on US and Israeli forces since the start of the ongoing conflict.

The spokesperson said 800 American soldiers have been killed and 5,000 injured, while 1,321 Israeli troops have also lost their lives.

The spokesperson said that 17 US military bases have been destroyed and described the relocation of US personnel to hotels as a humiliating retreat.

"The failure of the US military strategy has damaged its credibility. We will not allow the Americans to leave until our demands are met," the spokesperson said.

Earlier statements from the Iranian military advised Gulf states to expel US forces from their bases. "If they do not, we will inflict further damage on these bases," the spokesperson added. Iranian forces are reportedly tracking US soldiers who have taken shelter in hotels, which Tehran considers U.S.-occupied locations.

The spokesperson also claimed that US F-35 fighter jets are no longer secure and that the strategic Strait.

Pakistan playing 'pivotal role' in ending US-Iran war: Khawaja Asif

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on Friday that Pakistan was playing a very "pivotal role" in ending the war between the United States and Israel.

Speaking in an interview on programme 'Naya Pakistan' on a private media outlet, he said Egypt, Turkiye and Pakistan were involved in the effort to stop the war and prevent further destruction in the region. "It is a matter of honour for us for Pakistan's leadership to be playing an important and pivotal role in ending a conflict in which our brotherly Muslim community is involved."

Earlier, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi accused the US and Israel



of waging an "illegal" and "ruthless" war against Iran, during remarks at an emergency session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) today, according to a post shared by Press TV on X.

Addressing the session convened in response to the deadly strike on the Shajarah Tayyeb school in Minab, Araghchi said Iran was facing "an illegal war imposed by the United States and Israel, two nuclear-armed aggressor regimes."

"This war is unjustified and brutally ruthless," he added. The UNHRC session was called after the February 28 strike on the school in southern Iran, which reportedly killed scores of civilians, most of them children, drawing widespread international concern and calls for an investigation. Iran has consistently blamed the

United States and Israel for the attack, while both countries have denied deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure and say investigations are ongoing.

The United States and Iran have already held indirect contacts and are preparing for direct talks, according to German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl, Al Jazeera reported on Friday. Talking to Deutschlandfunk radio, Wadepuhl said preparations are underway for a meeting between representatives from both sides, expected to take place soon in Pakistan. "Based on my information, there have been indirect contacts, and preparations have been made to meet directly," he said.

PM, Amir Muqam discuss projects in AJ&K, GB, KPK

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan and President of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engineer Amir Muqam Monday held meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

The minister briefed the Prime Minister about the progress of public welfare projects in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Pak shut Torkham border again for deported Afghans

PEAK POINT

KHYBER: In reaction against cross-border firing, the Pakistani officials closed the Torkham crossing again for repatriated Afghan citizens on Thursday night, border officials said. It is to be stated here that the Torkham border was resumed on Thursday for deportation of Afghan nationals illegally living in Pakistan. The forces official said that last evening the Afghan regime targeted a Frontier Corp (FC) soldier identified as Subedar Sherzada with a sniper gun shot who was performing his duty at Awal Khan post on the border. As a result the troop got seriously injured and was rushed.

IHC to hear Imran, Bushra's pleas seeking suspension of sentences in £190m graft case on March 31

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday fixed the hearing for PTI founder Imran Khan and his spouse Bushra Bibi's petitions against their conviction in the £190 million Al-Qadir Trust corruption case on March 31. According to the cause list issued by the IHC registrar's office, a division bench — comprising IHC Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif — will hear the pleas seeking suspension of Imran and his spouse's sentences on March 31. An accountability court in Islamabad had sentenced Imran and Bushra to 14 and seven years in prison, respectively, on



Jan 17, 2025, in the £190m graft case, also known as the Al-Qadir Trust case. At the last hearing of the case, held on March 11, the IHC imposed a fine of Rs100,000 on the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for employing "delaying tactics" in the case. However, a later written order did not include any direction regarding the imposition of a fine. The court had directed the

anti-graft body to come prepared on the next date of hearing, with the defence team pushing for a swift resolution. The defence team had urged the court to dispose of the petition early, requesting a decision before the Eid vacations. The appeals and suspension pleas have faced numerous procedural hurdles. The IHC registrar's office had previously raised objections to the petitions, citing issues such

as unsigned pages and the absence of a certificate confirming the case wasn't being heard elsewhere. On February 26, the high court had cleared these objections and scheduled the March 11 hearing after defence lawyers pressed for an early date, highlighting Imran's eye condition. SC to hear Imran's appeals in defamation case At the same time, the Supreme Court is also set to resume hearing on March 31 over the appeals filed by Imran against the Lahore High Court's (LHC) April 23, 2025 rejection of his plea to implicate the Punjab government in the Rs10 billion defamation suit brought by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

India's Jaishankar faces backlash over undiplomatic remarks on Pakistan amid US-Iran mediation

PEAK POINT

NEW DELHI: India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is facing strong criticism at home following his recent remarks about Pakistan, which critics have described as undiplomatic and inappropriate. The controversy comes at a time when Pakistan is playing an active role in diplomatic engagements involving the United States and Iran, highlighting shifting regional dynamics. Leaders from India's opposition, particularly the Indian National Congress, have sharply criticized both Jaishankar and the government led by Narendra Modi.



They argue that the remarks reflect poorly on India's diplomatic conduct and raise serious questions about its foreign policy approach. Party spokesperson Shama Mohammed called the statement a diplomatic failure, noting that Pakistan's involvement in talks with Iran while India remains sidelined underscores shortcomings in the Modi government's foreign policy.

Another Congress leader, Supriya Shrinete, questioned India's earlier claims of offering mediation in the Russia-Ukraine War, asking how such claims align with the current situation.



SPORTS



PSL 11: Hasan Ali's four-wicket burst powers Karachi Kings to victory over Quetta Gladiators



PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Karachi Kings secured a commanding victory over Quetta Gladiators in the second match of Pakistan Super League season 11 at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium, with Hasan Ali's four-wicket haul sealing the result after a competitive first-innings total. Put into bat, Karachi Kings posted 181 for seven in their allotted 20 overs, with contributions spread across the batting order but no individual half-century. The innings was anchored by Moeen Ali, whose unbeaten 48 off 29 deliveries provided the late impetus needed to push the total towards a challenging mark.

Early setbacks

The Kings endured an early blow when opener Muhammad Waseem was dismissed for a three-ball duck by Alzarri Joseph in the opening over with just three runs on the board. Salman Ali Agha then joined captain David Warner to stabilise the innings, adding 41 runs for the second wicket before Agha was trapped lbw by Ahmed Daniyal.

Agha made a brisk 22 off 10 balls, striking four boundaries and a six. Warner continued to build, forming another useful stand of 43 runs with Saad Baig. However, both fell in quick succession, leav-

ing Karachi at 100 for four in 10.3 overs. Warner contributed 35 off 22 balls with four fours and a six, while Baig added 30 from 23 deliveries, including six boundaries.

Middle phase

The Kings' progress slowed further when Azam Khan was dismissed by Usman Tariq in the 14th over after scoring 14 off as many balls. A brief collapse threatened to derail the innings before Moeen Ali steadied the effort.

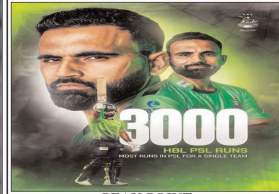
He combined with Khushdil Shah for a 39-run partnership for the sixth wicket. Khushdil scored 12 off eight deliveries before falling in the 17th over, but Moeen

carried on, finishing unbeaten with a composed and impactful knock that included four fours and three sixes. Ahmed Daniyal led Quetta Gladiators' bowling attack with figures of three for 36, while Joseph claimed two wickets. Tariq and Abrar Ahmed picked up one each.

Decisive spell

In response, Quetta Gladiators struggled to build sustained partnerships against a disciplined Karachi Kings bowling attack. Hasan Ali emerged as the standout performer, delivering a match-defining spell to claim four crucial wickets and break the backbone of the chase.

Fakhar Zaman earns another PSL milestone



PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Fakhar Zaman, opener of Lahore Qalandars, achieved another milestone in the opening match of PSL 11 by scoring a half-century against debutant Hyderabad Kingsmen.

Fakhar Zaman played an innings of 53 runs off 39 balls, smashing 10 fours, and was also declared Player of the Match.

With this half-century, Fakhar became the second batter in PSL history to reach 3,000 runs. He has scored 3,017 runs in 98 matches at an average of 31.10 and a strike rate of 141.90, including two centuries and 24 half-centuries. He also became the first batter in PSL history to score 3,000 runs for a single team, achieving the feat while representing Lahore Qalandars.

Babar Azam, captain of Peshawar Zalmi, leads the run-scoring chart with 3,792 runs in 100 matches at an average of 44.51 and a strike rate of 127.50, including two centuries and 36 half-centuries. Mohammad Rizwan stands third on the list with 2,770 runs in 93 matches, including two centuries and 21 half-centuries. Fakhar Zaman also holds the record for the most sixes in PSL history with 128, followed by Asif Ali and Rilee Rossouw with 95 and 92 sixes respectively.

Shaheen Afridi backs Qalandars' depth after opening win in PSL 11



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Defending champions Lahore Qalandars opened their HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 campaign with an emphatic win over Hyderabad Kingsmen, with skipper Shaheen Afridi expressing confidence in his effort while acknowl-

edging there is still room for improvement. "We've had slightly in the middle of the past week, and it's showing on the field," he said after the match.

The Qalandars built their innings on a blistering start from Fakhar Zaman and Muhammad Naeem, whose aggressive approach in the powerplay put immediate pressure on the Kingsmen.

Afridi highlighted the importance of that early momentum, noting it allowed his side to dictate terms from the outset. "Fakhar and Naeem gave us an excellent start. We slowed slightly in the middle of the game. It's early in the tournament, and we have plenty of firepower to cover those phases," he added.

On the bowling front, the Qalandars skipper emphasised the value of experience and combinations, particularly his partnership with Mustafizur Rahman and the consistency of Haris Rauf. He noted that the team's flexibility in adjusting the playing XI has already begun to pay dividends.

Noor Zaman storms into Optasia Championships quarter-finals

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Noor Zaman delivered an impressive performance to reach the quarter-finals of the Optasia Championships in England, a Gold-level event offering a prize purse of US \$130,000.

The tournament, being held from March 24 to 29, has attracted top-ranked players from around the world, but Noor Zaman stood out with a commanding display in his second-round encounter.

Facing Mexico's Leonel Cardenas, who is ranked World No. 14 and seeded eighth in the tournament, Noor Zaman, currently World No. 31, produced a clinical



performance to secure a 5, and 11-7 in 32 minutes. From the outset, Noor dictated the pace of the match with aggressive shot-making and tight control, giving his higher-ranked opponent little opportunity to settle.

Islamia College University Triumphs in Pak-China Friendship Hockey Match



PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: Local hockey players in Peshawar marked the 75th anniversary of Pak-China friendship with great enthusiasm, as Baghdad Hockey Club Mardan defeated Islamia College University Peshawar 4-2 in an exhibition match organized by the China Window. The Vice Chancellor of Islamia College of China on the 75th anniversary of Pak-China friendship, describing China as a time-tested and trusted friend of Pakistan. He said the enduring relationship between the two nations remains a source of pride for the Pakistani people. He also extended an invitation to university sports teams from China to visit Pakistan, assuring them of warm hospitality and enhanced sports cooperation. Players and spectators at the match praised the Pak-China friendship as everlasting. Afsar Khan, captain of the Islamia College University team.

Assistant Commissioner Saeed Manan Unveils Plan to Transform Matni into a Sports Hub for Youth Development

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: Assistant Commissioner Matni, Saeed Manan, has announced an ambitious plan to transform Tehsil Matni—particularly the area of Pishaktra and its surroundings—into a model zone for healthy and positive youth activities. Speaking to the media on the previous day, he revealed that a comprehensive strategy has already been devised and practical implementation will begin soon. On the occasion, Managing Director of Malik Farman Ali, was also present. Saeed Manan emphasized that steering young people away from negative influences and engaging them in sports and recreational activities has become a pressing need of the time. He highlighted that sports serve as a powerful and effective tool in building a constructive



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COMSATS ranks first in Pakistan in Mathematics in QS Subject Rankings 2026

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) has been ranked first in Pakistan in Mathematics (global rank 111) and secured placements across multiple disciplines in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026.



COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) has been ranked first in Pakistan in Mathematics (global rank 111) and secured placements across multiple disciplines in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026. The University is ranked globally in several subject areas, including Engineering & Technology (221), Computer Science (180), Economics (201-250), Physics (251-300), Environmental Sciences (301-350), and Accounting and Finance (301-375).

In Economics, COMSATS shares the 201-250 band with Lahore University of Management Sciences, while in Environmental Sciences it appears in the same range as National University of Sciences and Technology and Quaid-i-Azam University. Rector CUI, Prof. Dr. Raheel Qamar said that "Achieving top national position in Mathematics and maintaining visibility across multiple disciplines reflects a deliberate shift towards high-impact research and measurable academic performance. Our focus is not only on rankings, but on building depth in core scientific areas where Pakistan can compete globally."

PEC conducted digital balloting for 2nd Batch of GET Program; 1,700 fresh engineering graduates selected

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) conducted the digital balloting for the second batch of its flagship Graduate Engineer Trainee (GET) Placement Program, selecting 1,700 fresh engineering graduates for six-month industry training across the country. The ceremony was held at the PEC Regional Office Lahore, where Chairman PEC Engr. Waseem Nazir inaugurated the process, while senior officials from PEC Headquarters and PEC Governing Body members joined online.



A total of 5,300 candidates applied online for the program, out of which 3,982 were shortlisted after screening, and 1,700 were finally selected through a transparent digital balloting mechanism. PEC officials highlighted that the program is being implemented through dedicated online portals for both employers and engineers, with partnerships established with leading public and private sector organizations nationwide to provide structured training opportunities.

Out of the total placements, 300 seats were exclusively allocated for engineering graduates from Balochistan, all of which have been filled by candidates from the province. The remaining 1,400 candidates were selected from Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan. Chairman Engr. Waseem Nazir stated that the dedicated allocation for Balochistan graduates has been introduced to expand opportunities for the province's youth, address longstanding socio-economic disparities, and promote their effective mainstreaming into the national engineering workforce. Addressing the ceremony, Chairman PEC Engr. Waseem Nazir described the GET program as a transformative initiative aimed at equipping young engineers with practical, industry-oriented skills.

DRAP Set to Streamline Payments for Pharma Industry with State Bank Integration

NADEEM TANOLI
ISLAMABAD: In a major step to enhance the "ease of doing business," the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) is on the brink of launching a groundbreaking initiative to integrate its fee collection system with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The new

system, based on ILink, will allow pharmaceutical and medical device companies to directly make payments via banking apps, simplifying the process and reducing administrative burdens. Speaking at DRAP's 34th E-Kachehri session on Facebook, senior officials revealed that the system is in the final stages of approval with SBP, and once operational, it will enable quicker and more efficient payment processing, similar to the convenience offered by the Pakistan Single Window (PSW) portal. "This integration will drastically reduce the time required for fee submissions, making the process more streamlined

for businesses in the pharmaceutical and medical device sectors," a senior DRAP official commented. The E-Kachehri also highlighted ongoing efforts to integrate medical device import and export functions with the PSW portal. Although certain categories, like donations and specific items, were added to the portal in February, full integration for registered medical devices is expected by August 2026. Moreover, in an effort to improve institutional transparency, DRAP CEO Dr. Obaidullah announced that summaries and Q&A transcripts of Khuli Kachehri sessions would be publicly available on the

official DRAP website, ensuring continuous access for stakeholders to regulatory decisions and clarifications. The DRAP's new initiatives are poised to significantly reduce red tape and increase transparency, offering substantial benefits to the pharmaceutical and medical device industries.

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New dawn in the Gulf Free speech jokes

Hassan Aslam Shad
IN a significant shift in Middle Eastern geopolitics, a quadrilateral meeting was convened in Riyadh on March 19 on the sidelines of the consultative meeting of foreign ministers of Islamic countries to discuss Iranian attacks on Gulf countries. This quadrilateral meeting was held between the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Turkiye, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Steered by Ankara, this meeting explored a quadruple alliance between Pakistan, Egypt, Turkiye and Saudi Arabia — a proverbial 'Green Nato' designed to retire the era of external dependency. This quartet represents more than a mere diplomatic overture. It could be the shattering of the Western aegis and the coming of age of an indomitable security architecture in the region.

For more than half a century, the geopolitical architecture of the Middle East rested upon a singular assumption: the American security umbrella. This was the silent pact that underpinned the region. It was a promise that in exchange for the strategic alignment of the Gulf states, the US would serve as the ultimate guarantor against existential threats. However, as the current war between Israel and Iran spirals into a relentless cycle of kinetic exchanges, that long-trusted aegis has not merely cracked, it has effectively been eviscerated. The Riyadh assembly serves as the autopsy of that defunct protectorate.

The contemporary landscape is one of strategic shock. The Gulf capitals now find themselves as the unwilling front row to a military conflagration that defies traditional containment. As American and Israeli strikes target Iranian soil and Tehran retaliates with attacks that bypass sophisticated defences, the realisation has dawned from Riyadh to Kuwait City that the protector is no longer protecting.

The current conflict has exposed a terrifying vulnerability. For years, the Gulf nations invested billions of dollars in high-end Western hardware, believing that integrated air defence and a local American presence would deter regional aggression. Yet, as the war has intensified, this umbrella has proven to be porous. The US has appeared increasingly hesitant to shield its Arab partners from the inevitable blowback.

This is not a theoretical crisis. The region is currently pulverised by a war that threatens its very survival. The Gulf leadership, long characterised by its reliance on Washington, is now gripped by consternation. They see themselves as caught between an expansionist Israeli military mandate and an Iranian revolutionary apparatus that views Gulf soil as a legitimate target.

The Gulf leadership, long characterised by its reliance on Washington, is now gripped by consternation. Amidst this, Saudi Arabia

has positioned itself as a proponent of assertive national sovereignty. Under a leadership that has prioritised its domestic transformation over foreign entanglements, Riyadh has taken a definitive stand. By categorically refusing to allow its territory to be used for strikes against Iran, the kingdom has signalled that the era of dependency has been replaced by an era of uncompromising autonomy.

This refusal is a calculated act. Riyadh understands that in the absence of a credible US shield, the only way to avoid being consumed by the flames is to secure its future through a new and more reliable sentinel. It sought a partner that shares its cultural values and understands the stakes of regional collapse.

As the tectonic plates of alliances shift, a new focal point has appeared on the strategic horizon: Pakistan. In September of last year, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan entered into a historic Strategic Mutual Defence Pact. This agreement, which stipulates that an attack on one is an attack on both, has fundamentally altered the security calculus of the Middle East. As the only Muslim country possessing nuclear weapons, Pakistan's military muscle provides a level of strategic depth that conventional Western interceptors simply cannot replicate. By entering this pact, Pakistan has positioned itself at the centre stage of a nascent security architecture.

Courtesy Dawn

Erasing Muslim identity

The far-right Indian government is still working overtime to otherise Muslims, not just by attacking and silencing the living, but also erasing the dead. While secular India had already died the moment the Butcher of Gujarat became prime minister in 2014, the 12 years since have seen concerted practical efforts to ensure that it is impossible to see Muslims as anything but a drain on society. Now, many people hold more negative views of Muslims than they do of violent criminals. This is because all they see and hear about Muslims is negative propaganda, while the achievements of living Muslims are given little to no airtime, and even the historical achievements of Muslims are either being erased or falsified to credit upper caste Hindus. A recent example is the recommendation by a panel at Jammu University to drop Muhammad Ali Jinnah and several Muslim thinkers from the syllabus because the student wing of the extremist RSS was 'upset' by their inclusion in curricula. Even members of the panel were unable to offer any good academic reasons for removing Jinnah and his politics — the man was one of the architects of the partition and is thus automatically one of the most important people ever in the history of South Asia. Without him, the history of participation is incomplete.

Senate chairman approves surrender of over Rs200m to national exchequer to support govt's austerity drive



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani on Friday approved the surrender of the Rs265 million to the national exchequer in efforts to support the government's austerity drive.

On March 9, the government announced a host of austerity measures to conserve fuel in view of the global fuel crisis triggered by the US-Israel war on Iran.

In a post on its X account, the Senate said that the chairman has approved the surrender of Rs265m as an "immediate measure" to the

Finance Division, adding that efforts were also underway to "identify additional savings by curtailing expenses in the coming weeks to deposit in the national exchequer".

According to the statement, he directed the Senate Secretariat to ensure the implementation of the austerity drive announced by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Gilani emphasised that "the Senate, as a key constitutional institution, fully recognises the importance of fiscal discipline in the current economic circumstances and remains committed to supporting the government's efforts for economic stability".

He issued instructions for "strict" adherence to austerity measures, including "rationalised expenditures, reduction in operational costs and efficient utilisation of resources while ensuring parliamentary functions, legislative responsibilities & oversight mechanisms remain fully effective".

He expressed faith that the "responsible financial management and collective institutional efforts" will yield positive results for the economy.

"Senate Secretariat will continue to uphold transparent and accountable financial practices while safeguarding public funds and ensuring the smooth functioning of parliamentary affairs," the statement added.

On March 17, Gilani directed the implementation of "wide-ranging austerity measures", projecting a reduction of more than 50 per cent in the Senate Secretariat's remaining budgetary utilisation for the current fiscal year, which is believed to translate into savings of around Rs700-750m.

A day earlier, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) approved a Rs100 billion supplementary grant for the prime minister's austerity fund created to finance the petroleum pricing subsidy.

Govt plans targeted fuel subsidy via tech-based system amid fiscal constraints

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The government has moved to introduce a targeted subsidy on petroleum products through a technology-driven mechanism, as it operates within limited fiscal space.

The development was discussed at a high-level meeting on the petroleum products situation, chaired by Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, on Friday at the Finance Division.

The meeting commenced with a detailed presentation by the Petroleum Division on the current status of petroleum products' availability in the country, according to an official statement. It was noted that the fuel supply situation in Pakistan remains stable and adequate. The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication also gave a comprehensive presentation on



proposed technological solutions to facilitate a targeted subsidy mechanism for petroleum products, with a focus on transparency and efficient delivery.

The provincial leadership shared their views on the prevailing situation and policy options. Chief Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah, appreciated the efforts of the federal government in maintaining uninterrupted fuel availability, while emphasising the importance of behavioural measures to promote fuel conservation. Motorcycles, rickshaws and small cars' Mobile app-based fuel quota system finalised.

Devolution remains unfinished without strong LGs: Ahsan Iqbal

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Devolution remains unfinished without strong local governments, provincial capitals alone cannot effectively address challenges of remote areas: Ahsan Iqbal, Islamabad, March 27, 2026 () Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal on Friday said that governance is the face of a state that citizens encounter daily at federal, provincial, district and grassroots levels, thus strengthening these tiers of democracy is essential to bring about meaningful reforms. He was addressing a high-level policy dialogue titled "Strengthening Governance: Lessons and Pathways from SNG-II," jointly organized by United Nations Development Programme Pakistan (UNDP) and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). The minister stressed that governance is the decisive factor between transformation and stagnation in Pakistan, urging stakeholders to translate evidence-based reforms into

action to improve service delivery and institutional performance across provinces and districts. Felicitating SDPI for conducting what he described as an important evidence-based evaluation exercise, the minister said Pakistan does not lack plans but suffers from weaknesses in implementation, policies and institutions. "Governance is not a technical discussion for seminars alone; it is the difference between plans that move forward and files that gather dust," he remarked. He explained that for ordinary citizens governance is reflected in everyday experiences such as whether teachers reach schools on time, whether Basic Health Units function properly and whether roads are repaired efficiently. Highlighting Pakistan's current regional and economic challenges, he said the country stands at a critical point of inflection and stability remains the "runway" required for national take-off. He described governance as the first pillar of the government's Uraan Pakistan framework.



ISLAMABAD: Caption: L-R Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director SDPI, Duleman Ghani, Team Lead, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Samuel Rizk, Resident Representative UNDP Pakistan at launching of SNG-II Report.

Marri slams Imran Khan's son over 'irresponsible' remarks on GSP plus

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Central Information Secretary of Pakistan Peoples Party, Shazia Marri Friday strongly criticized the son of former prime minister Imran Khan for giving an "irresponsible and regrettable" remarks regarding Pakistan's European Union GSP Plus status. In a statement, Marri said that treating a sensitive issue like GSP Plus in a casual or non-serious manner was against Pakistan's national interest.

She said that such statements could adversely affect the country's exports and undermine its global reputation at a time when economic stability remains a top priority. "National interest and the livelihoods of millions cannot be sacrificed for political point-scoring," she emphasized, saying that GSP Plus is closely tied to Pakistan's trade advantages and employment across multiple sectors. Recalling past political messaging, Marri said that during difficult times, President Asif Ali Zardari had promoted unity through the slogan "Pakistan Khappay," urging national cohesion. "Making such statements today,

Naqvi and Chinese envoy agree on special protection unit, business conference for investors

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong here Friday. Upon arrival at the Chinese Embassy in the Diplomatic Enclave, the Ambassador warmly received the Interior Minister.

During the meeting, discussions were held on counter-terrorism, security cooperation, police exchange programs, and other important matters. The overall regional situation also came under discussion.

It was decided to organize a business conference to address the security concerns faced by Chinese investors in Pakistan. In the first phase, meetings will be held with the Chinese busi-



ness community currently present in Pakistan. In the second phase, engagements will take place with investors interested in investing in Pakistan.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi stated that a 'Special Protection Unit' is being established to ensure the security of foreign nationals.

The unit will specifically ensure the safety of Chinese citizens in Islamabad. Personnel of the Special Protection Unit.

"Bannu Aman Pason" holds Peace march

ABDUL SALAM BAITAB

BANNU: A large peace march was held in Bannu under the banner of "Bannu Aman Pason" against the rising insecurity in the region. The march was attended by a large number of leaders from various political and social parties, elders, and members of the public. The march was led by Jamaat-e-Islami South Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ameer Professor Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, Awami National Party leader Baz Muhammad Khan, Dr. Pir Sahib Zaman, and other local elders. The march started from Lakki Gate and passed through various قارواں (markets) of ريش (city), finally reaching Preeti Gate, where it turned into a large public gathering. Participants chanted slogans in



favor of peace and against lawlessness, while expressing serious concern over the increasing crime rate in the city. Addressing the gathering, speakers announced that a grand peace jirga would be held on April 2 at the Jamaat-e-Islami Bannu office, where a future course of action would be decided. They said that representatives from all schools of thought, political parties, tribal elders, and civil society would be invited to develop a joint strategy.

Pakistan well positioned to play important role in resolving conflict between Iran, US: Ambassador Rizwan



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Rizwan Saeed Sheikh has said that based on its longstanding and friendly relations with the US, Iran, and Gulf states, Pakistan is well-positioned to play an

important role in resolving the conflict between US and Iran.

"Pakistan's diplomacy for promoting peace worldwide is not new but a continuation of its historical role," Ambassador Rizwan Sheikh said while addressing a joint press conference along with Chairman of the Pakistan Caucus, Congressman Tom Suozzi in Washington, according to a press release issued by the Pakistan Embassy in Washington on Friday.

Regarding the peaceful resolution of the current con-

flict, Ambassador Rizwan said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has clearly presented the country's position.

He recalled that in the past, Pakistan also played a key role in establishing diplomatic relations between the United States and China.

The ambassador pointed out that the expression of trust by all parties in Pakistan is a source of pride and gratitude for the country.

"Pakistan will continue its facilitation efforts for reconciliation in consultation and cooperation with other friendly countries," he

stressed. However, he said that the primary responsibility for resolving the issue lies with the concerned parties.

"Pakistan hopes for positive outcomes from its ongoing efforts toward resolving the current conflict," he added.

The congressman Tom Suozzi expressed the US' desire to establish strong bilateral relations and increased American investment in Pakistan.

He said terrorist activities in Balochistan have hindered development in the region.

Over the past year, he

said there has been significant improvement in Pakistan-US bilateral relations, and this positive progress needs to be further strengthened. "Economic investment is the best way to improve security."

Congressman Suozzi said due to its unique geographical location and importance, Pakistan can play an effective role at the international level.

In the recent US-Iran conflict, he said Pakistan is playing a very important role as a friend of both sides.

Ambassador Rizwan Sheikh Saeed said Pakistan

has consistently played a frontline role in the global war against terrorism and is the most affected country.

"The people of Pakistan are still fighting the war against terrorism today. The Pakistani people are paying the price for terrorism originating from Afghanistan with their blood," he added. The ambassador said Pakistan emerged as an Asian Tiger in the region; however, multiple regional challenges have affected its economic growth and potential. During the press conference, a question was raised.