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# Govt taking steps to ease burden on lower and middle-class amid fuel price hike: PM Shehbaz

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The government is undertaking efforts to provide relief to the lower and middle classes amid a fuel price hike triggered by the global fuel crisis due to the Iran war, Prime Minister Shehbaz said on Monday.

Over the past few weeks, the government has rolled out a series of austerity measures to minimise fuel consumption and announced significant cuts in development spending and restrictions on non-essential expenditures.

In a meeting chaired by the premier to review the impact of the Middle East war on petroleum stocks in Pakistan and public relief measures being taken, he was informed that the government was working in collaboration

with the provincial government to "finalise the process of registration for motorcycle and rickshaw owners so they could benefit from the government's schemes," a statement via the Prime Minister's House (PMO) said.

On March 17, the government announced it was planning a subsidised fuel scheme for motorcyclists and rickshaw drivers to cushion the impact of a massive hike in oil prices.

"We will not leave the economically weaker section of the society alone in this hour of difficulty," the premier vowed.

Detailing further measures, the prime minister said the government has significantly reduced its expenses, including budget cuts in the development sector, as well as foregoing the use of 60 per cent.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting to review implementation of fuel conservation and austerity measures.

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

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: 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 rubbished any role in the incident. A statement issued today said: "The brutal aggression of the Zionist regime against Kuwait's desalination.

# FM Dar suffers 'hairline fracture' after fall while hosting Egyptian counterpart

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar suffered a "hairline fracture" in his shoulder after slipping and falling while welcoming Egypt's foreign minister in Islamabad, his son Ali Dar said late on Sunday.

In a post on X, Ali Dar said his father continued to fulfill his "official duties" despite the injury.

"Ishaq Dar sahib, despite sustaining an injury during the reception of the Egyptian Foreign Minister today, completed all highly important meetings throughout the day on pain killers, Alhamdulillah, in the best possible manner," he wrote.



He added that kind wishes," Ali Dar around 9pm, following said.

The incident occurred on Sunday, during a four-country meeting focused on promoting dialogue and diplomacy as the path to ending hostilities in the Gulf region.

The meeting brought together foreign ministers from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt as part of a coordinated regional push to de-escalate a

conflict that has now completed its first month, raising fears of wider spillover and disruption to global energy supplies.

In a joint review of the situation, the ministers expressed concern over the "devastating impact on lives and livelihood" and agreed that the war "is not in favour of anyone and would only lead to death and destruction," Dar said.

They reaffirmed the need for an immediate end to hostilities, stressed unity among Muslim countries, and backed efforts to create conditions for structured negotiations between Washington and Tehran.

# Australia to halve fuel tax to keep prices within reach of citizens amid Iran war

PEAK POINT

AUSTRALIA: Australia will halve a fuel tax to help motorists experiencing soaring petrol prices due to war in the Middle East, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Monday. Albanese announced the step after meeting with the leaders of Australia's states and territories on Monday, agreeing a plan to tackle fuel shortages as the war in the Middle East continues. Australia charges a sales tax of 52 cents on each litre of petrol.

# Another anti-narcotics court established in Rawalpindi to address case backlog

PEAK POINT

RAWALPINDI: Authorities have decided to establish a new anti-narcotics court in order to tackle increasing backlog of cases. The court will be housed in a designated chamber at the old district courthouse. Currently, the existing anti-narcotics court has 653 pending cases, prompting the need for the additional judicial setup. The new court will be officially named Anti-Narcotics Special Court No. 2, Senior District and Sessions Judge Raja Ghazanfar has been appointed to preside.

# Security forces retaliate 'vigorously' after Afghan Taliban open fire in KP's Bajaur sector: sources

PEAK POINT

RAWALPINDI: Pakistani and Afghan forces exchanged fire in the Bajaur sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday, said security sources.

They added that Pakistan's security forces "retaliated vigorously" after Afghan Taliban fighters opened fire with "small and large weapons" along different areas of the border district.

Security sources further said retaliatory fire by Pakistani forces silenced the enemy's guns and "Afghan posts from which Pakistan was being fired at were also destroyed".

According to local security officials, Pakistan "did not target any civilian population,



but only targeted those weekly press briefing posts from which continuous firing was being done".

The Foreign Office (FO) on Thursday said that the temporary pause in Operation Ghazab lillah against the Afghan Taliban over Eidul Fitr had concluded, and the operation will continue "until its objectives are achieved".

FO spokesperson Tahir Andrabi made these remarks while responding to questions during his

terrorist organisations".

Relations between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban are at their lowest point in the four years since the group came to power.

Last year in October, border clashes had erupted between Pakistan and Afghanistan across their 2,600-kilometre frontier. Following those clashes, Turkey and Qatar had stepped in to mediate.

The first round in Doha produced a fragile ceasefire, while the second, also in Doha, ended with only a general agreement to develop a mechanism for verifying compliance and a decision to continue talks. The third round concluded without any concrete agreement.

# Trump hints at seizing Iranian oil as US boosts military presence



WASHINGTON: Donald Trump has suggested that the United States could take control of Iran's oil resources, including its key export hub on Kharg Island, as Washington deploys thousands of additional troops to the Middle East, Financial Times reported on Monday. In an interview, Trump said his preferred option would be to "take the oil," drawing a comparison to US plans in Venezuela, where he claims Washington aims to control the oil sector long-term following the removal of Nicolás Maduro. The remarks come amid an escalating conflict involving the US, Israel, and Iran that has driven global oil prices sharply higher, with Brent crude rising more than 50% in a month. Trump indicated that capturing Kharg Island.

# SPORTS



## Pak coach, captain confident ahead of football clash against Myanmar

## PCB charges Fakhar Zaman with ball-tampering in PSL match



PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Lahore Qalandars batter Fakhar Zaman has been charged with ball-tampering in Sunday's Pakistan Super League (PSL) match against Karachi Kings, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said in a statement.

The incident occurred in the final over with Karachi needing 14 runs to win. Fakhar, Lahore captain Shaheen Afridi and fast bowler Harris Rauf were involved in a brief discussion, during which Fakhar and Rauf passed the ball between them.

The umpire then approached Rauf and asked to see the ball. Following consultations with the square-leg umpire, the officials awarded five penalty runs to Karachi and ordered the ball to be changed.

The penalty proved costly as Karachi went on to chase down a target of 129 with three balls to spare, Abbas Afridi hitting a four and a six to seal a four-wicket victory.

"Fakhar denied the charge levelled against him during a disciplinary hearing led by the match referee Roshan Mahanama," the PCB said. "Another hearing is set to take place within the next 48 hours after which the match referee will share his verdict." Afridi said they would look at video footage of the incident.

**PEAK POINT**  
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan head coach Nolberto Solano has expressed confidence in his team's preparation and long-term vision ahead of their crucial 2027 AFC Asian Cup Qualifier against Myanmar, stressing that the national side is steadily laying the foundation for future success.

Addressing the media during the official pre-match press conference, Solano highlighted both the immediate challenge posed by Myanmar and the broader developmental strategy guiding Pakistan football.

Solano said, "It is always

exciting when matches like this come around. We know it will be a difficult game. Myanmar are a strong side and have shown their quality recently. But we are prepared, and the players are looking forward to the challenge."

The fixture comes at a significant stage for Pakistan, with the coaching staff using the current international window not only to compete but also to evaluate emerging talent, particularly from the domestic circuit.

Solano reaffirmed that 2026 is a key year in building a competitive squad capable of progressing

continentally. "We have

a clear plan for this year," he explained.

"That is why you see many local players in the squad. They deserve the chance to represent the country and show what they can do. There is real quality here, and this is an opportunity for them to step up."

Pakistan captain Alamgir Ghazi echoed his coach's optimism, underlining the squad's determination and unity heading into the match. "The boys are motivated and ready," Ghazi said. "We will fight until the last whistle. Everyone understands the importance of this game, and

we are prepared to give our best."

Solano also addressed recent injury concerns, revealing that a number of players had been forced out after picking up knocks during training. He emphasized that the physical demands of international football require players to adapt quickly to higher intensity levels. "At this level, the intensity is completely different," he noted. "Some players were training very well but unfortunately suffered injuries. It is part of the game. What matters is that we continue building depth and giving opportunities to others."

## PCB fines Naseem Shah Rs20M over contract and social media violations



Nawaz Sharif at Gaddafi Stadium. The post quickly gained traction online before being deleted. Naseem later claimed that his account had been hacked.

Despite his clarification, the PCB proceeded with disciplinary measures, stressing that centrally contracted players are responsible for their public and online conduct at all times.

In a related move, the board also took action against the individual handling Naseem's social media accounts. The adviser has been removed and blacklisted from working with any PCB-contracted players in the future, following findings of involvement in the account's management during the controversy.

**PEAK POINT**  
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board has imposed a hefty fine of Rs20 million on fast bowler Naseem Shah after determining that he breached clauses of his central contract and violated the board's social media policies.

According to an official statement, the board initiated disciplinary action by issuing

a show-cause notice on March 27. A panel found sufficient grounds to confirm multiple violations of contractual obligations and digital conduct, and the player's explanation before reaching its conclusion.

The issue arose during the early stages of the Pakistan Super League when a post from the player's official X account criticized the protocol given to Punjab Chief Minister Maryam

## Tayyab, Anas reach Punjab Squash Championship semis



## Australia boss Popovic calls on players to prove they are worthy of World Cup

**PEAK POINT**  
MELBOURNE: Australia coach Tony Popovic has called on the new faces in his squad to seize their chance with a performance against Curacao as he looks to bed down his World Cup roster.

Tuesday's friendly at Melbourne Rectangular Stadium is the Socceroos' last warmup on home soil before the June 11-July 19 finals and follows a laboured 1-0 win over Cameroon in Sydney last Friday.

While the Cameroon win did little to ease concerns around Australia's attacking fluency, right back Jacob Italiano and 18-year-old debutant centre back Lucas Herrington impressed with their poise in defence.

Popovic hoped others would add to his selection burden with a good showing against Curacao, the smallest nation to qualify for the World Cup, which is being

co-hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States.

"Obviously (we're) having a look at a few of the other boys that have been here in camp who have now settled and are more accustomed to the environment,



and hopefully they can get some minutes tomorrow," Popovic told reporters on Monday. "It's a World Cup, and anyone that's here now feels they're so close, they're in the final camp before we go to the World Cup to prepare. "So you have to believe, as a player, you're in the mix. And then they have to obvi-

ously try and perform to their maximum and really show that they deserve to be on that plane."

That may mean a chance for uncapped Croatia-born striker Ante Suto, who plays for Scottish side Hibernian

and had never set foot on Australian soil until this camp. Cardiff City midfielder Alex Robertson, whose father and grandfather both represented Australia, may also hope to add to his two caps with a first appearance under Popovic, having last played under Graham Arnold in 2023.

## Juniors shine bright at J.A. Zaman Ace Junior Golf League Match



# Senate exposes major tax evasion scandal behind 'Stolen' cigarettes case

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: A major financial and regulatory scandal has surfaced in Pakistan as a Senate sub committee declared that the disappearance of 2,828 cartons of cigarettes from Federal Board of Revenue warehouses is not a case of theft but clear tax evasion, exposing deep rooted loopholes in the system and raising serious questions about institutional accountability. The issue came under intense scrutiny during a meeting of the Sub Committee of the Senate Standing Committee on Interior and Narcotics Control, chaired by Senator Saifullah Abro, where lawmakers expressed strong dissatisfaction over the handling

of the case and the performance of key enforcement agencies. Senator Saifullah Abro openly challenged the narrative of theft, stating that the matter points towards organized tax evasion rather than a simple security breach. He raised serious concerns over the role of Pakistan Customs, particularly highlighting the absence of effective monitoring mechanisms for goods originating from tax free zones in the erstwhile FATA region. Lawmakers revealed that certain companies have established manufacturing units in tax exempt areas but are allegedly distributing their products across the country, bypassing tax regulations and exploiting concessions meant for underprivileged regions. The

committee observed that instead of supporting local communities, these incentives are being misused for large scale commercial gain. The investigation also exposed glaring administrative lapses. Officials from the Federal Investigation Agency informed the committee that the warehouse security guard denied any involvement and claimed he never had possession of the keys. More alarmingly, the warehouse in charge was reportedly not formally appointed by the department, indicating a serious breakdown in internal controls. The role of Paramount Tobacco Company also came under scrutiny, with the committee seeking detailed documentation regarding its machinery

imports. FBR officials disclosed that the company had declared machinery worth only Rs. 3.5 million in its 2018 returns, noting that such firms often rely on refurbished second hand equipment, raising further questions about valuation practices and operational transparency. The committee expressed frustration over incomplete and delayed information from the FIA, warning that lack of cooperation is hampering progress. It was revealed that the owner of Paramount Tobacco Company has avoided appearing before investigators and instead approached the High Court, alleging harassment. Senator Abro directed that individuals failing to comply with FIA sum-

mons should be arrested after seven days in accordance with the law. Attention also shifted towards identifying the ultimate beneficiaries of the missing cigarette cartons, with FBR officials stressing that tracing financial gains could be key to uncovering the full scope of the operation. Pakistan Customs informed the committee about ongoing anti smuggling efforts but acknowledged that a large portion of smuggling activities continues to originate from Balochistan. The committee subsequently directed Customs to provide a detailed record of seized goods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan from 2012 onwards, along with informa-

tion on individuals benefiting from smuggling networks. Further concerns were raised regarding inflation pricing in tax exempt areas such as Malakand and former FATA regions, where goods meant for local consumption are allegedly being sold at higher prices and distributed nationwide, undermining the very purpose of these concessions. A senior official, speaking anonymously, described the situation as a "systemic failure where tax concessions, weak enforcement and administrative negligence have combined to create a parallel untaxed market." Another observer noted that "without identifying beneficiaries, such cases risk being buried without accountability."

## Heavy rain continues in Islamabad; officials deploy pumps, advise limited travel

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Heavy rain continued in Islamabad, prompting field operations by district teams and traffic authorities, while residents were advised to avoid unnecessary travel. According to the district administration, all officers remained present in the field to manage the situation caused by ongoing rainfall. Sanitation staff used water pumps and other equipment to ensure drainage in affected areas. Assistant commissioners monitored low-lying areas and stormwater drains to prevent water accumulation. Officials also worked with the traffic police to maintain the flow of vehi-



cles on main roads. Efforts were made to manage congestion and guide commuters through alternate routes where needed. A spokesperson for the district administration said that drainage work was underway in different parts of the city. The use of pumps and machinery aimed to remove standing water and restore normal conditions. The administration urged citizens to avoid unnecessary movement during the rain. Residents were advised to stay indoors unless travel was required and to follow updates issued by authorities. Rainfall continued at intervals, and monitoring remained in place across Islamabad to respond to any emerging situation.

# Opinion & Editorial

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## Safeguarding Medical Education: Questions Over the Provisional Recognition of Colleges



By Alyna Jannat (Alynajannat00@gmail.com)

The foundation of a robust public healthcare system lies in the unquestionable quality of its medical colleges. Back in 2007, the Supreme Court of Pakistan (PLD 2007 SC 323) seemingly set a clear and profound precedent regarding medical education. The apex court observed that the "provisional" recognition of medical and dental colleges should not be granted, as such ad hoc measures jeopardize the future of thousands of students. Yet, looking at recent regulatory developments, one must ask a critical question: have our regulatory bodies, specifically the Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) and its successor, the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PM&DC), strictly adhered to these judicial guidelines? Official documents, such as the audit observations for the year 2020-21, paint a concerning picture that warrants public debate. The Auditor General's report noted the reportedly irregular issuance of provisional certificates to multiple medical and dental colleges. The audit explicitly questioned whether allowing institutions to conduct MBBS and BDS students based on a "partial fulfillment of recognition criteria" compromises the overall quality of medical education. If the apex audit body itself asserts that such practices violate regulatory acts and put students' futures at stake, why has this alleged practice

still listed as "recognized" on official regulatory web portals. Does this discrepancy not risk misleading prospective students and their parents, who rely entirely on the regulator's website to make life altering educational and financial investments? Furthermore, the audit reports also highlighted a reported failure to enforce Section 19(7) of the PMC Act, which mandated the public declaration of fixed tuition and all ancillary fees prior to admissions. The audit observed that due to alleged negligence by the authorities, there was no effective mechanism to monitor and stop the practice of seeking direct or indirect payments in the form of donations. Are students and their families being left vulnerable to financial exploitation due to this reported absence of regulatory controls? In light of these official audit observations and FIA inquiries, one must ask about the role of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination. Can the parent ministry afford to remain a silent spectator while questions swirl around the mushroom growth of allegedly inadequately inspected medical colleges? Is it not time for the federal government to proactively intervene and constitute a high level, independent commission to thoroughly review the recognition and inspection processes of the past few years? Addressing these questions and ensuring absolute transparency in how medical colleges are approved is not merely an administrative necessity. It is a moral obligation to protect the students who aspire to heal this nation, ensuring they are trained in institutions that fully meet the highest standards of the law.

## A world gone mad

Daud Khan

We have the technology and the resources to meet all our needs and to lead a life of ease and comfort. We produce enough food to provide everyone with a healthy and nutritious diet. We have medical know-how that can help avoid or cure many diseases, and reduce pain and suffering when it cannot. We also have satellites orbiting the earth that make communication instantaneous and virtually free. We have the means to provide education, culture and entertainment to young and old. And we have transportation that can take us across the globe in less than a day or to the next city or country in a matter of hours. And, on the horizon, we have AI, which, if properly handled, could make life even easier by liberating us from many dull and boring tasks. Good sense would require us to fall to our knees and thank fate, fortune and the collective hard work of millions of fellow humans who helped develop the knowledge and the technology to get us where we are today. Instead, we seem to be hell-bent on destroying each other. Conflicts rage around the globe, and there is terrifying talk of a third world war and the use of nuclear weapons. Social and public media carry images of rockets, drones, and missiles, and of flames and smoke from explosions. Images of buildings reduced to rubble, homeless people carrying meagre belongings, and desperately seeking a safe shelter. Images of hospitals destroyed or left without electricity and medicines. And, images of dead bodies – lots of dead bodies – showing parents grieving over tiny shrouds containing the corpses of their children. And, the madness is not just restricted to the increasing incidence of war and conflict. Through the patient and hard work of scientists, we realised the importance of living responsibly and sustainably on our planet, making drastic cuts in the use of fossil fuels, and moving as fast as feasible to using energy from the sun, wind and water. Courtesy Tribune

## Cheating in exam

The credibility of public examinations in Sindh has long been fragile, with cheating common across centres and enforcement often uneven. The government is now introducing a novel system of watermarking examination papers to curb cheating, an intervention that acknowledges the scale of the problem but will ultimately be judged by how firmly it is enforced. The measure is designed to trace any paper leak back to its source. If implemented properly, it could close one of the most persistent loopholes in the system. Yet experience offers reason for caution. Reforms in the past have faltered not because they lacked design, but because they lacked consistency in execution. This year's examination cycle is significant in scale. More than 1.35 million students will appear across over 1,600 centres, many in areas where administrative control is uneven. In such conditions, malpractice thrives since oversight is weak and those responsible for enforcement face little consequence for failure. Thus, these measures will only carry weight if they operate without interference. A system that identifies wrongdoing but hesitates to act against it risks reinforcing the very culture it seeks to dismantle. Basic arrangements at examination centres also matter more than they are often allowed to.

## Pakistan, Afghanistan trade fire as Islamabad prepares to host US-Iran talks



PEAK POINT

KABUL: Pakistan and Afghanistan have traded heavy fire, both sides said, days after they announced a temporary pause in fighting, escalating tensions in the volatile region as Islamabad said it hopes to host potential talks between the US and Iran.

The border clashes came on Sunday, the day Pakistan hosted regional powers to discuss de-escalation in the war in the Middle East, with an announcement that Islamabad could host the talks in coming days.

Both sides used artillery and heavy weapons to hit locations in Afghanistan's Kunar province and its bordering district of Bajur in Pakistan, officials said.

Pakistan resumes military operations against Afghanistan Pakistan's fire killed at least one person and injured another 16, most of them

women and children, claimed Hamdullah Fitrat, a deputy spokesperson for Kabul's Taliban administration.

Pakistan only responded to shelling from Afghanistan, security officials said, denying that it targeted any civilian locations.

A Pakistani government official said the Afghanistan claim was exaggerated. "Some minor violations took place from the Afghan side and we responded to it in the same sector," he said.

The officials declined to be identified as they were not authorised to speak to media. The Pakistani military did not respond to a request for a comment. Peace jirga to be held tomorrow Pakistan and Afghanistan's worst fighting in years erupted last month, claiming heavy human losses on both sides. Kabul claimed more than 400 people were killed in a Pakistani air strike on a drug rehabilitation centre.

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

PEAK POINT

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 has 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."

## PPPP disowns Imtiaz Ahmed, denies any official party role

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Peoples Party (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 structure at various levels. The PPPP announced that a formal complaint will be lodged with the relevant authorities, and legal action.

## 'Walk Pakistan' drive to unite youth through cross country cultural march

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan on Monday chaired a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office to launch the nationwide "Walk Pakistan" initiative, aimed at engaging young people across the country through a 14 to 18 day cross country walk from Lahore to Islamabad to promote national unity, cultural integration and healthy lifestyles.

The meeting brought together key stakeholders from government, semi-government and service sectors, with both in-person and virtual participation to ensure wide engagement.

Naveed Sherwani, Sabhat Rafique and Kamran Lashari were appointed to a working group responsible for coordi-



nating and executing the programme.

Officials said the initiative would feature participants from all provinces, including women, students, sports personalities and media representatives, ensuring broad based national participation. The walk will commence from Minar-i-Pakistan in Lahore and conclude in Islamabad, passing through major cities where cultural events and youth engagement activities will be held to highlight Pakistan's diversity and heritage.

## Kundi, US Consul General discuss investment, peace efforts

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi Monday hosted a luncheon in honour of US Consul General Thomas Eckert and members of the consulate's diplomatic staff at his residence in Islamabad. During the meeting, both sides held detailed discussions on Pakistan-US bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest, said a news release issued here by the party secretary. The regional situation, particularly law and order in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, promotion of sports activities, and progress on declaring Peshawar and New York City as sister cities, also came under review. The governor expressed concern over reports



regarding a proposal to close the US Consulate General office in Peshawar, saying that the facility serves as an important diplomatic and facilitative center for the people and government of the province.

He emphasized that its services should continue and urged the US consul general to raise the matter with the US Embassy and Congress.

Welcoming the initiative to grant sister-city status to Peshawar and New York.

## 17 killed in roofs and walls collapse due to heavy rains in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: At least 17 people lost their lives in different rain-related incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Sunday. Rainfall — ranging from light to heavy — was recorded in several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Swat, Bannu, Hangu, Nowshera, Tank, Bajaur, Karak, Parachinar, Malakand, as well as North and South Waziristan. In Abbottabad, five people were killed when the roof of a house collapsed, while a woman was seriously injured. Among the deceased were four young girls. According to a report by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), ongoing



rains since March 25 have caused roofs and walls of houses to collapse, resulting in 17 deaths and 56 injuries. Among the deceased were 14 children, one man, and two women. According to the report, 11 houses were damaged due to the rains, with most of the incidents occurring in Bannu and North Waziristan. Meanwhile, the Pakistan Meteorological Department.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik and Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Pakistan Nassar Abdulrahman Jasser Almutairi.

## PWD closure decision made in consultation with provinces: Dr. Tariq Fazal

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry told the National Assembly on Monday that the decision to close the Public Works Department (PWD) was made in consultation with all provinces, not unilaterally by the federal government.

Responding to a question during the Question Hour, the minister said provincial representatives were fully involved in deliberations, including meetings of the Central

Development Working Party (CDWP) held on 13th August 2024.

He added that the decision was finalized after thorough consultations with all stakeholders. He explained that PWD employees had been divided into two categories. Technical staff, mostly civil servants, were being adjusted through options such as the surplus pool or transfers to other departments, while a golden handshake scheme was also under consideration.

He assured the House that employees' salaries and pensions would remain unaffected. The minister added that maintenance staff from grades 1 to 13 had been accommodated into relevant departments, including provincial institutions where required.

Development and maintenance responsibilities previously handled by PWD had now been reassigned to the institutions such as the Capital Development Authority (CDA) in Islamabad and other provincial entities.

Tariq Fazal Chaudhry

said ongoing Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) projects were being executed by the relevant federal and provincial departments, including the Pakistan Infrastructure Development Company Limited (PIDCL), particularly in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He acknowledged some initial challenges during the transition but expressed confidence that concerned institutions were being strengthened to effectively carry forward development projects. He assured the

House that any specific complaints would be addressed promptly through the appropriate mechanisms.

The minister reiterated the government's commitment to ensuring transparency and efficiency in executing development projects nationwide. Replying to another question, he said the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) did not allot plots to federal employees who have already received plots from federal institutions such as

the CDA or any other federal entity. However, he clarified that if a federal employee has been allotted a plot by a provincial authority, no centralized record exists with FGEHA, which might lead to possible duplication in such cases. He assured the House that within the federal system, no duplication occurs due to proper record-keeping and verification procedures, while highlighting the need for improved coordination with provincial authorities to address such gaps.