

Ayeza , Danish Taimoor
decide to keep their kids
away from public eye

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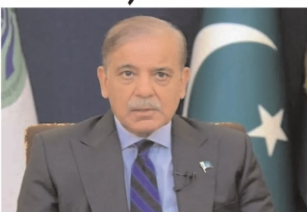
PM reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to a cleaner, healthier, sustainable future

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable future, stressing that it was imperative that they moved beyond the linear "take-make-dispose" economy and embrace a circular model focused on waste reduction and resource efficiency. "Waste pollution is a pressing crisis that threatens our environment, public health, and economy. Plastic and hazardous waste are

adversely affecting our rivers, landfills and air, exacerbating climate change. With rapid urbanization and industrial growth, Pakistan must adopt sustainable waste management solutions that protect our environment and drive economic and social development," the prime minister said in a message on International Day of Zero Waste being observed on Sunday, March 30.

This year's theme, 'Towards Zero Waste in Fashion and Textiles,' highlighted the urgency of sustainability in an



industry that generates massive waste, he said, adding as a major textile producer, Pakistan was committed to promoting eco-friendly manufactur-

"The Government has taken decisive steps to

combat waste pollution. Our Circular Economy Policy, under its revolutionize waste management. The Living Indus Initiative works to restore the Indus River Basin by reducing pollution and promoting conservation. We will also launch advocacy campaigns like Clean Green Pakistan Movement to empower communities to enhance waste management at the grassroots level," PM Office Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the prime minister as saying. Additionally, the prime minister said their

Waste Management Action Plan was eliminating single-use plastics, encouraging biodegradable alternatives, and expanding recycling efforts. They were also advocating Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to ensure manufacturers take accountability for the entire lifecycle of their products, integrating waste management into production and packaging, he observed. However, the prime minister underscored that achieving a zero-waste society required collective action.

Shawwal moon sighted: Pakistan to celebrate Eidul Fitr today

KOMAL BUTT

ISLAMABAD: The Central Ruet-i-Hilal Committee on Sunday announced that Eidul Fitr would fall on Monday (March 31) as the Shawwal moon sighted in Lahore, Islamabad and other parts of the country. The announcement came after a meeting of the Central Ruet-i-Hilal Committee in Islamabad, while meetings of zonal and district Ruet-i-Hilal committees were held at their respective headquarters concurrently. The meeting was chaired by Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad and attended by the members of the Ruet-i-Hilal Committee, as well as officials from the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), Suparco, and the Ministry of Science and Technology. Addressing a press conference after the meeting, Maulana Khabir Azad said testimonies of moon sightings were received from majority of the country and hence Eid would be celebrated tomorrow (Monday). Last month, the Pakistan Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) forecasted the visibility of the Ramadan and Shawwal crescents using scientific assessments.

Mohsin Naqvi chairs second meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee

SAMRA ATHAR

ISLAMABAD: The second meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee was held under the chairmanship of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, Federal Secretary for Interior, DG FA, DG Passport, National Coordinator NACTA, Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Coordinator National Action Plan, and representatives of security agencies. Law Minister Punjab Malik Sohaib Ahmed, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Advisor for Information

Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Sindh Interior Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar, Interior Ministers of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Balistan also participated in the meeting. The Home Secretaries and Inspectors General (IGs) of all provinces, including Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Balistan, attended via Zoom.

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, while addressing the meeting, stated that the Prime Minister, Army Chief, and all stakeholders are on the same page in combating terrorism. He emphasized that no decision would be made



without consulting the provinces. The meeting reviewed the progress on enhancing the capacity of Counter-Terrorism Departments in provinces. Federal Interior

Minister Mohsin Naqvi stated that it is essential to fully activate the Counter-Terrorism Departments at the provincial level for an effective counter-terrorism response, and in this

regard, all possible assistance will be provided to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan in view of their challenges. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also emphasized that the Counter-Terrorism Wing of the FIA will be fully activated at the federal level. The meeting also reviewed progress on the establishment of National and Provincial Intelligence Fusion and Threat Assessment Centers.

The meeting also agreed to make explosive materials a federal subject to ensure effective monitoring. Furthermore, it was decided to effectively raise the issue of terrorism with the Afghan government through the Foreign Ministry.

Security Forces kill 6 terrorists in IBO in Kalat

AYESHA REHAN

RAWALPINDI: On reported presence of terrorists, the security forces killed six terrorists in an intelligence based operation (IBO) in Kalat district of Balochistan. According to news released by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), during the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the terrorists located near an intense fire exchange, six terrorists were successfully neutralized. The killed terrorists remained actively involved in recent terrorist activities in the area against the law enforcement agencies as well as the innocent civilians. "Sanitization operation is being conducted in the area to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area as the security forces of Pakistan, in step with the nation, remain determined to thwart attempts at sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Balochistan," it further said.

BNP's Mengal remains unmoved even as Balochistan govt tries to placate him

PEAK POINT

QUETTA: A sit-in of the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) demanding the release of arrested Baloch Yakehti Committee (BYC) leaders continued on Sunday, after the provincial government's talks with the party yesterday failed to reach a solution. BNP-M President Sardar Akhtar Mengal had announced a "long march" from Wadh to Quetta to protest the arrests of BYC chief organizer Dr Mahrang Baloch and other leaders as well as police crackdowns on a sit-in.

However, the Quetta administration had denied the party permission for the rally. On Saturday evening, a provincial government delegation comprising Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Bakht Muhammad Kaker and Sardar Noor Ahmed Bangwail met Mengal and other BNP-M leaders at the party's sit-in site in Mastung. Mengal, Nawab Muhammad Khan Shahwan, Sajid Tareen and other leaders participated in the talks on behalf of the sit-in participants. Speaking to the media after the talk, Mengal



said, "This sit-in will continue until our women are released." In a post on X today, Mengal reiterated his demand that Mahrang and Sammi Deen Baloch

be freed. He also claimed that a BYC leader and his relatives were taken away from their house in the wee hours of Sunday. Mengal alleged: "BYC's Shahji Baloch, his

brother Dr Sanaulah and nephews Dr Aftab and Shams were abducted after three separate raids on their residence. The first raid was conducted at 11pm, the second one was for the arrest, and the third was to seize mobile phones and electronic devices." He also said that BYC activists were detained as his march was met with police action near Mastung, Mengal and other party workers also survived a suicide bombing. Addressing the sit-in yesterday, Mengal said: "The government delegation spoke to us about cooperation and finding a way.

continue?" the BNP-M president asked. Marchers and motorists from different political parties had started their journey to Quetta from Mengal's native town of Wadh at around 9am on Friday. On Saturday, after the BNP-M claimed that over 200 of its activists were detained as his march was met with police action near Mastung, Mengal and other party workers also survived a suicide bombing. Addressing the sit-in yesterday, Mengal said: "The government delegation spoke to us about cooperation and finding a way.

Pakistan won't tolerate terrorism, Tariq Fatemi tells US

BY NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Foreign Affairs, Tariq Fatemi, has conveyed to the United States that Pakistan would not tolerate terrorism under any circumstances. Speaking to a private TV channel in New York, Fatemi described meetings with the Trump administration as friendly, emphasising that Pakistan's cooperation has remained meaningful despite regional challenges. He noted that changes in administration do not alter fundamental state relations. He highlighted that Pakistan has recently apprehended and handed over a key terrorist wanted by the U.S., a move appreciated by the American president. He also acknowledged the sacrifices made by the Pakistani people and law enforcement agencies in the fight against terrorism. Fatemi further stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was committed to fostering strong economic ties with neighboring countries, adding that Pakistan expected significant foreign investment in the next three to six months.

Myanmar quake death toll hits 1,700 as aid scramble intensifies

PEAK POINT

MYANMAR: The toll from Myanmar's earthquake continued to rise on Sunday, as foreign rescue teams and aid rushed into the impoverished country, where hospitals were overwhelmed and some communities scrambled to mount rescue efforts with limited resources. The 7.7-magnitude quake, one of Myanmar's strongest in a century, jolted the war-torn Southeast Asian nation on Friday, leaving around 1,700 people dead, 3,400 injured and over 300 missing as of Sunday, the military government said. The junta chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, warned that the number of fatalities could go up and his administration faced a challenging situation, state media

reported, three days after he made a rare call for international assistance. India, China and Thailand are among Myanmar's neighbours that have sent relief teams and aid rushed into the impoverished country, along with aid and personnel from Malaysia, Singapore and Russia. "The destruction has been extensive, and humanitarian needs are growing by the hour," the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said in a statement. "With temperatures rising and the monsoon season approaching in just weeks, there is an urgent need to stabilise affected communities beyond secondary crises emerge." The United States pledged \$2 million in aid through Myanmar-based humanitarian assistance



organisations" and said in a statement that an emergency response team from USAID, which is undergoing massive cuts under the Trump administration, is deploying to Myanmar. The devastation has piled more misery on Myanmar, already in chaos from a civil war that grew out of a nationwide uprising after a 2021 military coup ousted the elected government of

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Critical infrastructure — including bridges, highways, airports and railways — across the country of 55 million is damaged, slowing humanitarian efforts while the conflict that has battered the economy, displaced over 3.5 million people and debilitated the health system rages on. In some areas near the

epicentre, residents told Reuters that government assistance was scarce, leaving people to fend for themselves. "It is necessary to restore the transportation routes as soon as possible," Min Aung Hlaing told officials on Saturday, according to state media. "It is necessary to fix the railways and also reopen the airports so that rescue operations would be more effective." The U.S. Geological Service's predictive modelling estimated Myanmar's death toll could eventually top 10,000 and losses could exceed the country's annual economic output. Hospitals in parts of central and northwestern Myanmar, including the second-biggest city, Mandalay, and the capital Naypyitaw, were struggling to cope with an

influx of injured people, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said late on Saturday. The quake also shook parts of neighbouring Thailand, bringing down an under-construction skyscraper and killing 18 people across the capital, according to Thai authorities. At least 76 people remained trapped under the debris of the collapsed Bangkok building, where rescue operations continued for a third day, using drones and sniffer dogs to hunt for survivors. Myanmar's opposition National Unity Government, which includes remnants of the previous administration, said anti-junta militias under its command would pause all offensive military actions for two weeks from Sunday. "With bridges

The devastation in some areas of upper Myanmar, such as the town of Sagaing near the quake's epicentre, was extensive, said resident Han Zin. "What we are seeing here is widespread destruction — many buildings have collapsed into the ground," he said by phone, adding that much of the town had been without electricity since the disaster hit and drinking water was running out. "We have received no aid, and there are no rescue workers in sight." Sections of a major bridge connecting Sagaing to nearby Mandalay collapsed, satellite imagery showed, with spans of the colonial-era structure submerged in the irrawaddy River. "With bridges

destroyed, even aid from Mandalay is struggling to get through," Sagaing Federal Unit Hlutaw, a political association linked to the NUG, said on Facebook. Myanmar people and medicine are unavailable, and the rising number of casualties is overwhelming the small local hospital, which lacks the capacity to treat all the patients. "Can you hear me calling out? In Mandalay, scores of people progress fears trapped under collapsed buildings and most could not be reached or pulled out without heavy machinery, two humanitarian workers and two residents said. "My teams in Mandalay are using work gloves, ropes and basic kits to dig and retrieve people," said one of the humanitarian workers.



Yousuf praises New Zealand for playing exceptional cricket

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN
NAPIER: While expressing his tentativeness regarding a solid bowling combination, Pakistan batting coach Mohammad Yousuf on Saturday lauded New Zealand for playing exceptional cricket which gave them victory over the Green-shirts in the first One-day International in Napier.

After being sent in to bat, New Zealand from a precarious 50-3 went on to post a massive 344-9 at McLean Park before dismissing the tourists for 271 in 44.1 overs. Middle-order batter Mark Chapman struck his career-best score of 132 and was backed well by Daryl Mitchell (76) and debutant Mohammad Abbas (52). "It was a good track for bowling in the

morning, yet they [New Zealand batters] played very good cricket. Chapman deserves more credit — he stood at the wicket, covered later, and played very well. And [Daryl] Mitchell and finally, the debutant played very good knocks. I think credit goes to them; they have played very well," Yousuf told reporters during the post-match media conference.

Answering a question, the batting coach sought to defend his bowlers but at the same time acknowledged that extra runs conceded by the part-time bowlers — off-spinner Salman Agha (0-67 in five overs) and medium-pace Irfan Khan (5-51 in five overs) proved costly.

"See, both my [part-time] bowlers went for some 120 runs. I think,



obviously, it could have been costly, but I think it is not appropriate to talk about the team that has been formed [recently]. It

could have been better; they could have bowled well," he said.

"Chapman, replying to a question in his media

conference, has said that he decided to attack when we [Pakistan] brought in a part-timer."

Yousuf signalled that

Pakistan may look to include fifth regular bowler in order to manage things better in the remaining matches of the

ODI series.

"Look, as team management, even before this, we saw in the [preceding] T20 series that in powerplay, we gave overs to spinners and made them score 30, 30 runs [each]. However, these things are proving to be costly," he said.

"Now, we will see what to do in the next matches — which fifth bowler or an all-rounder will play and what benefit do we get from that."

"Obviously, if a regular bowler plays, he may not concede as many runs which the part-timers conceded. So I think this [team] management will definitely think about what bowling attack we should play in the next match," he maintained.

He admitted that conceding 43 extras in the Napier ODI was a costly

bargain for the tourists which he said would be looked into by the coaches who would make sure the bowlers put things right in the coming games.

The match, Yousuf noted, at one stage was within their reach before it got out of their hands.

The New Zealand pace bowlers, Yousuf emphasized, fared well on a fairly good batting track. "The wicket was playing well in the second innings, the ball was coming onto the bat. Credit also goes to the New Zealand bowlers who continuously kept us in a testing mode."

Their tall bowlers kept delivering bouncers and kept bowling in good areas which gave them success in the end," the coach concluded.

Russell Domingo replaces Gough as Lahore Qalandars head coach

RIZWAN HAIDER
ISLAMABAD: The former South Africa and Bangladesh coach Russell Domingo has been appointed head coach of Lahore Qalandars in Pakistan Super League (PSL) X replacing Darren Gough who made himself unavailable due to 'unavoidable personal commitments'.

A highly experienced coach, Domingo brings a wealth of cricketing expertise, having previously served as head coach of South Africa's national team and Bangladesh's men's team. Known for his tactical acumen and ability to nurture young talent, his appointment aligns perfectly with Lahore Qalandars' vision of building a strong and competitive squad.

Expressing his enthusiasm, Russell Domingo said: "I am really excited to be part of Lahore Qalandars for the 2025 PSL season. I can't wait to get to work, meet the players and get to know the man-



agement and start of preparations for what promises to be an amazingly exciting campaign. We know we will have all the support from our faithful supporters and I look forward to making you all proud in the coming weeks."

Welcoming Russell Domingo to the Qalandars family, Lahore

Qalandars' COO, Sameen Rana, expressed his excitement: "We are delighted to have Russell Domingo join us as head coach for PSL 10. His vast experience at the international level, combined with his ability to strategize effectively, makes him an invaluable asset for the Qalandars. We

believe his expertise will contribute immensely to our team's success in PSL 10."

The most popular franchise in PSL, Lahore Qalandars, are set to begin their HBL Pakistan Super League 10 campaign with a high-stakes clash against Islamabad United at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on April 11.

After securing back-to-back titles in 2022 and 2023, Lahore is determined to reclaim its dominance and chase a historic third PSL trophy. With a well-balanced squad, the leadership of Shaheen Shah Afridi, and a passionate fanbase behind them, the Qalandars will be eager to start their season on a winning note. As they embark on another title quest, all eyes will be on how they set the tone for yet another thrilling PSL season.

PSL X is due to start on April 11 and Lahore Qalandars will play the opener against Islamabad United.

Usman Khan ruled out of second ODI against New Zealand following injury blow

MUHAMMAD USMAN
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's opening batter, Usman Khan, has been ruled out of the second ODI against New Zealand after suffering a hamstring injury, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) confirmed on Sunday.

The 29-year-old sustained the injury while fielding during Pakistan's first ODI against New Zealand at McLean Park in Napier on Friday. An MRI scan revealed a low-grade tear, leaving him unavailable for the second ODI, scheduled for April 2 at Seddon Park in



Hamilton.

Pakistan is currently in New Zealand for a three-match ODI series, which the hosts lead 0-0. The second ODI will be played on Wednesday, followed by the final

match on Saturday, April 5, at Bay Oval.

Pakistan's chase of 345 in the first ODI ended in defeat, as they were bowled out for 271, losing by 73 runs.

Pakistan Volleyball Federation aims for top 30 global ranking by 2026

KOMAL BUTT
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF) on Friday announced its ambition to break into the world's top 30 rankings by 2026 to compete in the qualifying rounds for the 2028 Olympic Games, urging the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) and private sector to bolster support for the mission.

PVF Chairman Chaudhry Mohammad Yaqoob outlined the roadmap during a press conference detailing the 54th National Senior Volleyball Championship, scheduled from April 4-10 in Wah Cantt.

He emphasized that achieving the ranking target requires the current potential of our players and their impressive performances make it possible," Yaqoob said, highlighting recent strides in



the sport.

Pakistan junior team won the U-18 CAVA Championship and bronze medal in the Asian U-18 Volleyball Championship in 2024.

Yaqoob noted that 10 Pakistani players are currently competing in international leagues, earning between \$4,000 to \$8,000. To strengthen prepara-

tions, the PVF has hired an Iranian head coach, two assistant coaches and a dedicated coach for the women's team.

Yaqoob also revealed plans to host Russia's junior team for a five-match series ahead of the Junior World Championship in Uzbekistan this July.

In a regional diplomatic nod, he added that India's volleyball team was the first to confirm participation in the Asian Central Volleyball Championship, which Pakistan will host in May-June.

The upcoming National Senior Volleyball Championship will feature 14 teams, including Punjab, Andhra, AP, principal squad Gilgit, Baltistan and Azad Kashmir.

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Rana said, Qalandars are set to begin their Pakistan Super League 10 campaign with a high-stakes clash against Islamabad United at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on April 11. After securing back-to-back titles in 2022 and 2023, Lahore are determined to reclaim their dominance and chase a historic third PSL trophy.

Domingo replaces Gough as Lahore Qalandars head coach

SAMRA ATHAR
ISLAMABAD: South Africa's Russell Domingo was appointed as head coach of Lahore Qalandars for the 10th edition of the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) on Saturday, replacing Darren Gough who made himself unavailable due to 'unavoidable personal commitments'.

A highly experienced coach, the 50-year-old Domingo brings a wealth of cricketing expertise at the highest level, having served as head coach of South Africa (2012-17) and Bangladesh (2019-22).

Known for his tactical acumen and ability to nurture young talent, Domingo's appointment aligns perfectly with Lahore Qalandars' vision of building a strong and competitive squad.

The Port Elizabeth-born Domingo was excited to take up the job.

"I am really excited to be part of the Lahore



Qalandars for the 2025 PSL season. I can't wait to get to work, meet the players and get to know the management and start of preparations for what promises to be an amazingly exciting campaign," he said. "We know we will have all the support from our faithful supporters and I look forward to making you all proud in the coming weeks."

Lahore Qalandars COO Sameen Rana welcomed Domingo to the family of the franchise. "We are delighted to have Russell Domingo join us as head coach for PSL 10. His vast experience at the inter-

national level, combined with his ability to strategize effectively, makes him an invaluable asset for the Qalandars. We believe his expertise will contribute immensely to our teams success in PSL 10."

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Pakistan implode as Chapman sees New Zealand to win

PEAK POINT
NAPIER: Mark Chapman struck a sublime century and Nathan Smith claimed four wickets Saturday as New Zealand eased to a 73-run win over Pakistan in the first one-day international in Napier. Chapman's career-best 132 formed the foundation of an imposing 344-9 at McLean Park before Pakistan's promising chase capitulated as they fell for 271 in the 45th over.

The tourists looked on track at 249-3, at that point needing 96 runs to win, with more than 11 overs remaining.

However, seamer Smith (4-60) helped to spark a late collapse, with the last seven wickets



falling for 22 runs.

Pakistan captain Mohammad Rizwan lamented a lack of contribution from his lower order,

with the bottom six batsmen scoring just three runs between them. "We started the innings with good intent," Rizwan said.

"Obviously, at the end, the pressure increases because you're getting nearer to the chase. We lost wickets and it changed the momentum." Earlier, he recalled Babar Azam top-scored for Pakistan with 78 off 83 balls, but it was his dismissal that started the rot. Salman Agha struck a defiant 58 off 48, but he was let down by a series of loose shots from lower order teammates as New Zealand moved one-up in the three-match series. Chapman's 111-ball innings featured 13 runs and four sixes, lifting New Zealand out of early trouble after they were asked to bat and stuttered to 50-3.

Noor Zaman bags Liverpool Open Squash C'ship title

HUMA REHAN
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's squash player, Noor Zaman, has won the Liverpool Cricket Club Open Squash Championship 2025 presented by ABC Squash Liverpool, England (\$15,000 USD prize).

Zaman has made the whole nation proud once again by bagging the mega event, said a press release. Noor defeated top-seeded Rory Stewart (SCO) in the final with a convincing 3-0 win: 11-9,



12-10, 11-8 (43m).

The Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) is thrilled to see him perform at such a high level and make Pakistan

proud. The federation has extended its best wishes to Zaman for the upcoming WSE World U23 Championship from April 6 to 10 at Karachi.

Pakistan Commits to Zero Waste Future: Minister Shezra Mansab

ARSHAD MALIK

ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Kharal reinforced the nation's commitment to sustainable waste management and a circular economy.

On the eve of International Day of Zero Waste, she emphasized on this year's theme, "Towards Zero Waste in Fashion and Textiles," Dr. Kharal highlighted Pakistan's proactive measures to combat environmental degradation while fostering economic resilience through green policies.

In a strong appeal for collective action, Dr. Kharal

underscored the urgent need to address waste generation, particularly from the textile industry, a major contributor to pollution.

"Transitioning to a circular economy isn't just an environmental imperative, it's an economic opportunity," she stated, pointing to Pakistan's forthcoming National Policy on Circular Economy as a roadmap for sustainable industrial practices.

The minister cited flagship initiatives like "Living Indus," a U.N.-recognized ecosystem restoration project and the "National Action Roadmap on Plastic Pollution" as evidence of Pakistan's tangible progress. These efforts align

with global sustainability goals while addressing local challenges, such as plastic waste and unsustainable consumption patterns.

Dr. Kharal also called for public-private collaboration, urging citizens to adopt waste-conscious lifestyles. "From reducing food waste to supporting recycling, every action counts," she said, praising community-led efforts and corporate partnerships that amplify impact.

"Together, we can build the tide on waste turning a cleaner, greener Pakistan for future generations," Dr. Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Kharal.



ISLAMABAD: Ckgu Aml Abdul Hamid (Sitara-i-Pakistan), President Malaysian Consultative Council of Islamic Organization (MAPIM) called on Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, Chairman Senate of Pakistan, in Kuala Lumpur.

PM felicitates Azerbaijan's president on Eid, discusses relations

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephonic conversation with President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on auspicious occasion of Eidul-Fitr, and reaffirmed the strong fraternal ties between the two nations.

During the call, PM Shehbaz extended heartfelt Eid greetings to President Aliyev, his family, and the people of Azerbaijan. He expressed his best wishes for their continued peace, prosperity, and well-being.

Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening bilateral relations. Building upon the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to Baku, they agreed on enhancing economic cooperation. It was confirmed that Azerbaijan's Minister of Economy would visit Islamabad in the first week of April to hold discussions with Deputy



Prime Minister/Foreign Minister and also meet Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The visit aims to finalise key investment agreements, paving the way for President Ilham Aliyev's anticipated visit to Pakistan later in April. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasised that President Aliyev's upcoming visit would mark a significant milestone in Pakistan-Azerbaijan relations.

Both sides are expected to sign investment agreements worth US\$2 billion, signifying a new era of strategic partnership and economic collaboration between the two countries.

The strengthening of ties between Pakistan and Azerbaijan is expected to bring mutual economic benefits and further consolidate diplomatic relations between the two brotherly nations.

Senate chairman meets Malaysian Islamic Advisory Council president in Kuala Lumpur

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Senate Chairman Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani met with the President of Malaysia's Advisory Council for Islamic Organization, Segku Azmi Abdul Hamid (Sitara-e-Pakistan), in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday.

Segku Azmi Abdul Hamid is a prominent activist in Malaysia, advocating for human rights, particularly minority rights, and has consistently raised his voice in support of the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

During the meeting, Segku Azmi Abdul Hamid briefed the Chairman Senate on the objectives and performance of his organization. He also provided a detailed update on the initiatives taken to

assist the oppressed Muslims in various countries, including the people of occupied Kashmir. Furthermore, he appreciated the efforts of the Pakistani people in supporting the Kashmiri cause.

The Senate chairman praised Segku Azmi Abdul Hamid's efforts and highlighted the significance of Pakistan-Malaysia relations. He emphasized that both countries can collaborate to combat challenges such as Islamophobia. He also underscored the importance of dialogue for the peaceful resolution of global conflicts, stating that through such means, the dream of a peaceful world can be realized.

Governor Kundi extends Eid-ul-Fitr greetings

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Sunday extended heartfelt Eid-ul-Fitr greetings to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and to the entire nation and the Muslim Ummah.

In his message on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, the Governor emphasized that this joyous festival is a practical expression of unity and brotherhood, bringing the Muslim Ummah together on the found-



ation of love and solidarity. In his Eid message, Governor Kundi highlighted that in the current situation of the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there is a critical need for unity and brotherhood to defeat the malicious designs of anti-state elements. He stressed that such unity would

help transform the province and country into a haven of peace. He further encouraged everyone to continue sharing smiles and love with each other during Eid and throughout the year, spreading joy not only on this significant occasion but also in the small and big moments of life. Governor Kundi also paid tribute to the security forces and police martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the peace and security of the nation.

Eid festivities light up Saudi Arabia, UAE and beyond as millions gather for prayers

BY: NEWS DESK

RIYADH: Eid-ul-Fitr is being celebrated with religious fervor today (Sunday) in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Major Eid congregations are taking place at Masjid al-Haram and Masjid an-Nabawi (P.B.U.H), where millions of Muslims have gathered for prayers. Imam Sheikh Abdul Rahman Al-Sudais led the Eid sermon and prayers at Masjid al-Haram, while the Imam Sheikh Abdullah conducted the prayers at Masjid an-Nabawi (P.B.U.H).

King Salman, extended Eid greetings to the Muslim Ummah, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to serve millions of Umrah pilgrims during Ramadan. He also praised the efforts of those involved in their service.

Eid prayers were also performed in Dubai, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Turkey, and Russia. In Dubai's Al-Qusais area, 15,000 people, including women and children, attended the prayers. Major congregations were also held in Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and other cities.

Thousands of Muslims worshippers said Eid

prayers at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound on Sunday morning as the holy month of Ramadan drew to a close. According to the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf, nearly 120,000 worshippers attended the prayer.

The Al-Aqsa mosque lies at the heart of Jerusalem's Old City and is the third holiest shrine to Muslims. The compound is on a hill known to Jews as Har ha-Bayit, or Temple Mount, and to Muslims internationally as al-Haram al-Sharif, or The Noble Sanctuary. In Qatar's capital Doha, people rushed before sunrise to

the Education City Stadium on Sunday to attend the Eid prayers congregation.

The Education City Stadium hosted eight matches in total during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, welcoming tens of thousands of fans from around the world.

The festival of Eid is very beautiful, we always pray that such a beautiful experience and such a livelihood and brotherhood should prevail all across the world," worshippers Ibrahim Khalil Khan, who has been living in Qatar for almost two decades, said after the prayers.

Govt in disarray in current situation: Khaqan Abbasi



ISLAMABAD: Awam Pakistan Party (APP) convener Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has said launching an anti-government movement after Eid is a long way to go because first there is a need to develop a consensus in opposition parties, adding main problem exists between the PTI and the JUI-F.

Talking to a private news TV channel, the former PM said in current situation the government was itself in disarray.

"The PTI accepts the JUI-F's reservations, but it does nothing to allay its concern.

The task PTI founder gave to All Amin Gandapur he did not do the job. The incumbent rulers did not win elections.

The government feels threat within itself," Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said.

The Opposition should call its All Parties Conference (APC). There is a need to bring basic reforms to get rid of problems.

Senior politicians will have to think for country, setting aside differences and desire to rule, the Awam Pakistan Party leader said.

Govt committed to promoting interfaith unity, national cohesion: Kohistani

HUMA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Kheal Das Kohistani on Saturday emphasized the importance of interfaith harmony for lasting peace and progress, reiterating the government's commitment to inclusive development. Speaking at a seminar organized by the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), Kohistani stated, "interfaith harmony is the need of the hour, and we will move forward with everyone on board."

Highlighting the government's determination to ensure equal rights for all citizens regardless of their faith, Kohistani stressed the significance of



addressing the issues faced by minorities in line with Prime Minister's directives. He said practical steps are underway to resolve minority concerns and foster unity across the nation. The seminar, attended by prominent scholars and religious leaders, including Professor Dr. Muhammad Zia-ullah, Archbishop Rowan Williams, and Christopher Sharaf, focused on promoting interfaith harmony and national solidarity.

The participants recommended actionable recommendations to strengthen communal bonds and eliminate hatred, extremism, and division. Kohistani lauded the efforts of the Islamic Research Institute, IIUI for their continued dedication to interfaith dialogue, praising their contributions towards a peaceful and cohesive society. He remarked, "Pakistan is a beautiful blend of diverse religions and cultures and has always been a proponent of peace and love." The minister was congratulated on his inclusion in the federal cabinet, and participants at the event acknowledged the government's ongoing implementation of a special policy to promote interfaith harmony.

Decision to expel refugees has 'shaken' Afghan community in Pakistan: UNHCR

JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: The head of the UN's refugee agency in Pakistan on Sunday expressed concern as the departure deadline for Afghan citizenship holders (ACC) holders draws closer, warning that the decision has "shaken" the Afghan community. As part of the government's plan to repatriate all illegal foreigners, March 31 was officially set as the deadline for ACC holders to leave Pakistan voluntarily, with a renewed warning by the interior ministry that mass deportations would commence afterwards. In an Eidul Fitr message, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative for Pakistan Philippa Candler expressed her concerns as Pakistani officials have ruled out any



expulsion from the country. "Pakistan hosts 1.52 million registered Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers, an estimated 800,000 Afghan citizenship holders, along with others living in the country without official recognition," she said in the message, titled "A Call for Compassion: Afghan Refugees in Pakistan and the Path to Hope".

The UNHCR representative said she visited an Afghan family last week who had sought refuge here in 2022 after fleeing

Afghanistan in a hurry, leaving behind everything they knew in search of peace and safety. "It was heartbreaking to see how fearful they were to be forced to go back.

Their hopes and dreams have been shattered," Candler added that Afghans who entered Pakistan were part of the workforce, started businesses and contributed to the country. "Over time, Afghan refugees have become woven into the fabric of Pakistan's society," she wrote.



ISLAMABAD: Women are buying bangles on stall at a local shopping mall ahead of the Muslim festivities of Eid al-Fitr in the Federal Capital.

Gulab Jan Welfare Trust distributed Cash Eid and Eid gifts

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Cash Eid and Eid gifts were distributed among women living in Banat Fatima Old Home by Gulab Jan Welfare Trust. According to details, the Gulab Jan Welfare Trust administration visited Banat Fatima Old Home. On this occasion, Cash Eid and Eid gifts were distributed by the Gulab Jan Welfare Trust administration

among the women living in Banat Fatima Old Home. Founder Gulab Jan Welfare Trust Qaiser Khan Tanoli said that the purpose of distributing Eid gifts to women living in Banat Fatima Old Home is also to include these women in the Eid's happiness and to provide them with a home-like environment. Qaiser Khan Tanoli said that this is a crushed section of women society. They have



the same right to the happiness of Eid as it is for other people. Founder Gulab John Welfare Trust

added that education and training and awareness are essential for social development and families.

Therefore, it is necessary to attract education with

the help of the poor and the needy. He said that with the help of donors, he will also try to make more gifts, gifts and rations for the women, the elderly and the children. On this occasion, the Banat Fatima Old Home Administration congratulated the Gulab Jan Welfare Trust administration on the occasion of Eid on the occasion of Eid on Eid.

Government Suspends Pak-EPA Officer for 120 Days Amid Disciplinary Action

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan has suspended Ms. Farzana Altaf Shah, a BS-20 officer of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) under the Ministry of Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, for a period of 120 days. The decision, made under Rule 5(1) of the Civil Servants (Efficiency and Discipline) Rules 2020, was approved by the Prime Minister and implemented with immediate effect. An official notification issued from Islamabad detailed the action, which is aimed at addressing concerns over administrative efficiency and discipline within the ministry. In an effort to reinforce accountability across government agencies, officials indicated that the suspension follows an internal review that uncovered serious lapses in conduct and performance. This move is part of a broader strategy to uphold high standards in the civil service and to ensure that departments critical to national development, such as those dealing with environmental issues



and climate change, maintain operational integrity. Government sources have stressed that while further details of the investigation have not been disclosed, the decision serves as a stern reminder of the commitment to efficiency and discipline. Additional commentary from industry experts and political analysts suggests that such decisive actions can help strengthen institutional frameworks within Pakistan's public sector. Recent discussions in policy circles have highlighted that rigorous enforcement of civil service regulations is essential not only for internal reforms but also

for maintaining public trust in government institutions. This disciplinary measure is seen by some as a corrective step that could pave the way for further administrative overhauls, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of environmental governance. Moreover, observers note that the suspension coincides with ongoing debates about how best to tackle environmental challenges in Pakistan. As the country grapples with the impacts of climate change, the role of agencies like Pak-EPA has come under increased scrutiny. Stakeholders across the spectrum—from government officials to environmental activists—are closely watching how these internal reforms will affect the broader national agenda on environmental protection. The incident underscores the growing demand for transparency and accountability in public administration at a time when environmental issues are rapidly gaining prominence on both the national and international stage.

Overloading and overcharging of passengers will not be tolerated

REPORT / WAJHA TAMEEL MIRZA

ISLAMABAD: National Highways and Motorway Police Multan arranged Press Release on the Date: March 29, 2025. Overloading and overcharging of passengers will not be tolerated. Said, Sector Commander M-4, Hamid Ullah Khan Niazi. Motorway Police have launched a crackdown against passenger vehicles involved in overloading and overcharging. Heavy fines is being imposed against passenger vehicles found guilty of these offenses. In addition, passengers who have been overcharged are also being refunded the excess amount. Sector Commander M-4, Hamid Ullah Khan Niazi, stated that strict legal action is being taken against passenger vehicles involved in overloading and overcharging, particularly during Eid-ul-Fitr. A special enforcement campaign has been launched, where all passenger vehicles are being checked at Motorway M-4 Sub-Sector entry points. Furthermore, SSP Beat-22, Mohammad Hassan Bhatti, added that passengers traveling on the motorway can call the helpline 130 for free in case of any emergency.



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What's on our mind?

Whats is Pakistan thinking and talking about? There is, of course, no way of drawing a reliable picture or a map of what is on the minds of ordinary Pakistanis at this time. Though it would be hard to monitor, even by our high-tech intelligence agencies, there will be a unique manifestation of this questing during the next few days in almost all our drawing and dining rooms. That is how Eidul Fitr is ritually celebrated every year. Families and relatives and friends get together on this occasion, many of them travelling to their hometowns to be with their dear ones and to repair relationships. A number of traditions are associated with Eid, such as new clothes and the giving and receiving of cash gifts as Eidi. A lot of excitement is also generated by late-night shopping during the last day of Ramadan. And there is the romance of 'chand raat'. But I want to focus largely on the social impact of Eid. It fosters family and community connections. Having a meal together is supposed to be a measure of wellbeing and mental health. Only last week ('Thriving on adversity', March 23), I had celebrated Pakistan's ranking in the World Happiness Report 2025. Why this report should somewhat lessen our sorrows is that it is perhaps the only global survey in which we have done better than India and Bangladesh. It said that we are 'happier' than our socially and economically more advanced South Asian neighbours. As experts explain, happiness is not just about wealth and growth. It is about connections. Americans have become more miserable because such a large number of them dine alone. Ah, but this finding that we are happier than other major countries in the region may not be reflected in the countless Eid conversations held at various levels during the long vacations. It is possible that family gossip and personal anecdotes would be the staple of most encounters during these sessions. At the same time, any mention

of the national state of affairs is sure to serve a smorgasbord of lament and gloom. It is my experience that all participants readily partake in this activity even when they belong to opposite sides of the political divide. I have noted that this almost obligatory chorus of bereavement is generally not supplemented with any serious references to reason or facts. So, one can imagine many Eid conversations lapsing into this state of dejection, if only in a non-serious manner. Otherwise, the Eid holidays do provide an opportunity for relatives and friends to share their thoughts on trivial matters while renewing their contacts and catching up with developments within the extended family. There is some speculation that the political scenario will shift after Eid. Imran Khan's party is expecting a movement against the present arrangements with the formation of a grand alliance. A lot would depend on how Maulana Fazlur Rehman plays his cards. Anyhow, the point I am making is that if a protest movement is in the works, so to say, then its intentions should be there in the discussions that take place in Eid gatherings that is the level of political maturity and awareness is high enough to promote an effective movement against an oppressive administration? Loyalists of the PTI would do well to study the turmoil that has gripped Turkey after the arrest of the leader of opposition. Certainly, there is so much more for the concerned citizens of Pakistan to talk about when they interact in small groups. Small talk often helps to break the ice in meetings of relatives and acquaintances after an interval. Because of how politics has divided families and strained relations between good friends, I have noticed that conversations on highly divisive issues are now generally avoided. In any case, I would like to restrict my imaginary eavesdropping to people belonging to the educated middle class. I believe that their opinions and their stance on some specific issues are important. It should contribute to the collective mood and to society's capacity

for political action. On this count, the situation does seem very depressing. One might even say that the Pakistani middle class has abdicated its social and intellectual responsibilities. Among the things that I worry about is the lack of any serious discourse on the many problems that Pakistan is afflicted with. Way back, when we launched this newspaper in 1991, I was fond of this Arthur Miller quotation: "A good newspaper is a nation talking to itself." We now live in another media universe. But a nation would still need to talk to itself, though not entirely on the pages of a newspaper. Yes, those in power would want to set limits to this conversation and deflect it towards conclusions that they have already proclaimed. But this is also something that the concerned citizens should be aware of as they should be willing to be a part of the media's struggle for freedom. However, I do not find people talking about the government's brazen attempts to intimidate the media by arresting journalists. There, of course, are a number of civil society activists who do whatever they can but they are unable to mobilise an effective campaign for the cause of justice and rule of law. Not taking part in any social action for any cause is one thing. I think that they—the ones who constitute the middle class—are also clueless about the major crises that threaten the survival of this country. How much, for example, do they know or care about the surge of terrorist activities in recent weeks? Have they tried to comprehend the situation in Balochistan? And, with reference to some thoughts that I have raised in this column, are they talking about these issues in their casual encounters? Finally, it seems outlandish on my part to imagine how Eid conversations may swerve in certain directions in these difficult times when monstrous realities are staring us in the face. But we pretend to protect ourselves by looking in the other direction. Meanwhile, here is Eid as a distraction. Courtesy The News

The Current State of Education in Pakistan and Ways to Improve It

By Alian Raza
The education system in Pakistan is very weak. Every third person in the country is illiterate, and nearly 2.6 million children never even reach the doors of a school. The main reason for this is the poor condition of government schools. Most school buildings are dilapidated, classrooms are overcrowded, and essential resources such as books, notebooks, and other materials are insufficient. The number of teachers is also low, and those who are present are not trained in modern teaching methods. On the other hand, private schools offer somewhat better conditions, but their fees are so high that children from poor families cannot even dream of studying there. As a result, the country is running two separate education systems—one for the rich and another for the poor. There are also major flaws in the teaching methods. In most schools, children are only encouraged to memorize. They are neither given the opportunity to think critically nor encouraged to ask questions. In today's world, where computers and the English language hold great importance, most schools lack these facilities. The condition of universities is no better. The government spends very little on higher education. Private universities do provide quality education, but their fees are so high that the children of ordinary citizens cannot afford to enroll. Urgent measures are needed to improve this situation. First and foremost, more funds must be allocated to education. Schools need to be repaired, new classrooms must be built, and all necessary learning materials should be provided. The number of teachers must be increased, and they should be trained in the latest teaching techniques. The curriculum also needs to be revised. A new curriculum should be designed that forces children to understand and think rather than just memorize. Additionally, vocational training courses should be expanded so that young people can secure employment after completing their education. Free education must be arranged for children from poor families. Online education should be promoted in remote areas so that children there are not deprived of learning opportunities. If we truly want our country to progress, we must prioritize education above all else. Every child, regardless of their background, deserves quality education. Only education can strengthen our nation and enable us to stand alongside the rest of the world. Until we fix our education system, our dreams of progress will remain unfulfilled.

No water, no food

With agriculture making up almost a quarter of Pakistan's GDP and well over a third of its employment, Kharif (sowing) season is an incredibly important time of year for the country. What happens for farmers now, for good or ill, may well have an outsized impact on what the rest of the country pays for its food. Sadly, reports suggest that this Kharif season is shaping up towards a hill side. The country's water shortages woes have reached a critical level, with both the Tarbela and Mangla Dams at dead level and Sindh reporting an overall 50 per cent water shortage. The situation is so dire that, on Wednesday (March 26), the Advisory Committee of the Indus River System Authority held a meeting and decided to make only drinking supplies available for April. According to an official statement "the summer 2025 weather outlook presented by Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), approved the water availability only for the month of April 25 with 43c system shortfall". The PMD also points out that below-normal rain and above-normal temperatures are forecast for April, May and June and that winter snowfall in the catchments of Indus and Jhelum was recorded as 26.8 inches against the normal of 49.7 inches, reducing water inflows by almost a third. All of this raises the potential for an acute shortage of water for irrigation, which could have serious consequences for crop production. So how did the country reach such a precipitous stage of water scarcity? For one, it is not as though this problem came entirely this season. For years, experts have been warning of Pakistan's declining per capita water availability, which fell by 400 per cent between 1947 and 2021. The latter was the year in which some experts began warning that the country would have only very limited usable water by 2025.