



**President Zardari urges dialogue, development & water security to stabilize Balochistan**



**Naqvi urges businessmen to bring back at least 30% of their wealth to Pakistan**



**First Lady extends heartfelt wishes to Hindu, Sikh families on aisakhi/Baisakh**

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## PM takes president into confidence on US-Iran talks, briefs him on upcoming visits to Saudi Arabia, Turkiye

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif briefed President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday about his upcoming visits to Saudi Arabia and Turkiye "for further engagement to promote peace efforts" and took him into confidence on "all aspects of the dialogue" between Iran and the United States, a statement issued by the President's Secretariat said. Pakistan hosted direct Iran-US talks in Islamabad over the weekend, marking the highest engagement between the two sides since 1979, seeking a resolution to the US-Israeli war on Iran. However, both delegations departed the capital on Sunday after the talks ended without an agreement, but also without a breakdown. It is now being

reported that negotiating teams from the US and Iran could return to Islamabad later this week. On Monday, PM Shehbaz also told a meeting of the federal cabinet that "full efforts" were ongoing to resolve the conflict.

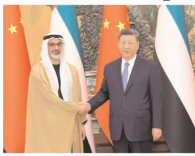
The President Secretariat's statement said PM Shehbaz called Zardari at the Aiwan-i-Sadr today, and the latter "appreciated the untiring efforts" by Pakistan in hosting a dialogue between the US and Iran. The president discussed the prevailing security and diplomatic situation in the region, saying that the situation had a "far-reaching impact not only on the region but also on the global security, economy and politics at large", the statement added.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari in a meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## China's Xi puts forward 4-point proposal on promoting Middle East peace, stability

PEAK POINT



CHINA: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday put forward a four-point proposal to promote peace and stability in the Middle East during a meeting with UAE President Sheikh

Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Beijing.

Xi called for adherence to the principle of peaceful coexistence, stressing the need to build a "common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable" security architecture for the Middle East and the Gulf region. Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday stressed the need for China and Spain to strengthen cooperation in fields including trade, new energy and intelligent economy, and to encourage exchanges in culture, education, scientific research and sports.

The war between the United States and Iran, which started on April 28, marked a sharp escalation in regional tensions, with Washington, alongside Israel, launching an intense military campaign targeting thousands of Iranian sites from land, sea and air. Within days, over 5,000 targets were struck, focusing on military infrastructure, missile capabilities and naval assets, in an apparent bid to neutralise Iran's perceived threat to Israel.

## US, Iranian teams could return to Islamabad for 2nd round of peace talks this week: sources

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Negotiating teams from the US and Iran could return to Islamabad later this week, five sources said on Tuesday, days after the highest-level talks between the two countries in decades ended without a breakthrough. Pakistan hosted direct Iran-US talks in Islamabad over the weekend, marking

the highest engagement between the two sides since 1979. Both delegations departed the capital on Sunday after the talks ended without an agreement, but also without a breakdown.

According to Reuters, a source involved in the talks said a date was not yet decided, but both countries could return as early as the end of this week. They said that a proposal has been shared with both the US and Iran to resend their delegates to resume the talks. "No firm date has been set, with the delegations keeping Friday through Sunday open," a senior Iranian source said. Two Pakistani sources with knowledge of the talks said Islamabad was communicating with the two sides about the timing of the next round and the meeting would likely take place on the weekend.

"We have reached out to Iran and we got a positive response that they will be open to a second round of talks," a senior Pakistani government official was quoted as saying by Reuters.

Similarly, a Pakistani source told AFP that Islamabad was working to bring Iran and the US back together for a second round of talks and to secure an extended ceasefire to allow for diplomacy.

## Around 90 detained in New York City protest over US arms sales to Israel

PEAK POINT



NEW YORK: Dozens of protesters were detained by police in New York City on Monday during demonstrations calling for the blocking of arms sales to Israel and an end to US military support for its ally.

Demonstrators included the anti-war group Jewish Voice for Peace, which said around 90 people were detained.

Among those detained was whistleblower Chelsea Manning, a former US Army soldier and WikiLeaks source.

The New York City Police Department said there were "multiple" arrests but did not provide a number. Clips from the protests showed a crowd gathering near the offices of US Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and his Democratic colleague, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand.

Protesters chanted slogans like "stop the bombs", "end the killings", and "free Palestine" while expressing opposition to the US-Israeli strikes on Iran, Israel's attacks in Lebanon and Israel's assault on Gaza.

## Govt announces more than 2 hours of daily loadshedding amid fuel constraints

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Amid fuel constraints, the government on Tuesday formally announced more than two hours of daily loadshedding "during peak hours" to prevent a sharp increase in electricity tariffs.

"The government has decided to suspend the electricity supply for about 2.25 hours daily between 5:00pm and 1:00am," the Power Division said in a statement. "This step is aimed at reducing the use of costly fuels and preventing a sharp rise in tariffs," it added.

## Naval chief says Pakistan stands ready to deter any aggression, vows 'befitting response'

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf on Tuesday said that Pakistan's armed forces stood ready to "deter any aggression" vowing to deliver a "befitting response" to any such act.

He made the assertion while addressing the passing out ceremony of cadets of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) in Risalpur.

The naval chief, in his address congratulated the graduating cadets, expressing hope that they will "uphold PAF's vision" with "commitment and dedication".

In his speech, he recalled the four-day conflict with India in May 2025 —Marka-i-Haq — and stressed that Pakistan stood "ever ready, vigilant, and capable to deter any

aggression and give a Marka-i-Haq, Bunyanum befitting response". The Marsoos, was the outcome



Pakistan Army had named the period of conflict with India, from the Pahalgam attack to the conclusion of Operation Bunyanum Marsoos, as Marka-i-Haq in May, 2025. He further stated that the armed forces, including the navy, stood ready to "enhance our capabilities and keep up with the evolving geopolitical developments and harnessed cutting-edge technologies," he told the cadets, stressing

of exemplary professionalism, remarkable foresight, and relentless hard work on the part of the Pakistan Air Force leadership," the naval chief said. He added in the years preceding the conflict, the air force pursued a "comprehensive strategy of organisation". "PAF has embraced technological developments and harnessed cutting-edge technologies," he told the cadets, stressing

that the PAF's previous successes placed "greater responsibility" on the cadets.

The naval chief said that the Pakistan Navy was also "making significant headway".

Detailing the advancement efforts, the navy chief said that Pakistan Navy was modernising its fleet and "indigenously developing long-range weapons".

He added that the navy's combat capabilities had "undergone a remarkable enhancement across all operational domains, including surface, subsurface, and aviation".

Admiral Ashraf recalled that the navy, during the May 2025 conflict, "successfully deterred the Indian navy from any hostilities at sea and it remained at bay throughout the conflict".

## High school shooting in Turkiye wounds 16; attacker dead

PEAK POINT



TURKIYE: An ex-student opened fire at his former high school in Turkiye on Tuesday, where school shootings are rare, wounding 16 people, including students, before killing himself, officials said. Special security forces were deployed to the school in southeastern Turkiye's Sanliurfa province, where students were evacuated, the local governor, Hasan Sildak, told reporters. The former student, 19, used a rifle during the attack, after which those wounded were rushed to a hospital in the Siverek district, Sildak said.

Twelve of the wounded were still in the hospital. Local media reported that most of the wounded were students.

Television footage showed ambulances standing by outside the school as students fled the building in panic.



# SPORTS



## Walsh says Shaheen has 'all qualities' to carry forward Pakistan's pace legacy



PEAK POINT

KARACHI: The legacy of Pakistan's fast bowling continues to command global respect, and few understand the craft better than West Indies legend Courtney Walsh. From the greats of the past to the rising stars of today, Walsh believes Pakistan's production line of fast bowlers remains as potent as ever, with Shaheen Afridi standing out as a complete modern-day pacer. Speaking to the media persons during the ongoing Pakistan Super League, which is part of Rawalpindi's setup as coach, Walsh pointed to conditions and skill development as the founda-

tion of Pakistan's fast-bowling success across generations. "I think the conditions here," he said when asked what makes Pakistani pacers different from the rest of the world. "You have to have good skill sets, and you've got quality bowlers here from over the years. I mean, you go back, way back, went from Sarfraz up till now, Wasim, Waqar, those guys. All those guys have been good fast bowlers for Pakistan, and the youngsters have come on, and they've learned their trade as well," he added. At the heart of the current pace attack, Walsh sees



Afridi as a symbol of discipline and consistency, qualities he believes define great fast bowlers. "Shaheen is someone who I've always admired, the way he conducts himself, the way he plays, he's never given that attitude and just his own skill set and the pride that he plays when he plays for Pakistan and even in franchise cricket. And that's what you want to see in fast bowlers, and he has all those qualities." He also acknowledged the depth in Pakistan's pace resources, naming Naseem Shah and Mohammad Wasim Jr among those carrying the tradition forward. "As you

mentioned, Naseem and those guys, yes, they're up there with it, and the quality is always going to be there. But I've always singled him (Shaheen) out for the way he executes, the way he goes about his job, keeping it simple and just trying to do the basics consistently." While Walsh's words reflect admiration for Pakistan's pace culture, his current role in franchise cricket has given him a different perspective on the modern game. Working within the fast-paced environment of the PSL, he highlighted the challenges of coaching in a format where preparation time is minimal.

## PSL bans Blessing Muzarabani for two years



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has imposed a two-year ban on Blessing Muzarabani from participating in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) after finding him in breach of contractual obligations. Regional business reports

According to the PCB, Muzarabani violated the terms of his agreement with the league by opting to participate in the Indian Premier League despite having already committed to the PSL. The board stated that once a player signs a contract with a franchise league, they are expected to honor those commitments fully. In an official statement, the PCB emphasized that professional cricket operates on trust, discipline, and adherence to agreements. It highlighted that franchise-based tournaments rely heavily on the credibility of contracts, and any violation undermines the structure and integrity of the competition.

The board further noted that maintaining a professional environment within the PSL is essential for its continued growth and reputation on the global stage. As such, strict action was deemed necessary to deter similar incidents in the future. The PCB reiterated that all players and their agents must act responsibly and ensure transparency in their professional dealings.

## Naqvi to consult PM Shehbaz on allowing fans at PSL 11



PEAK POINT

KARACHI: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Monday said he would speak to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif again to allow spectators during the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11. "I will speak again to the prime minister regarding the crowd," Naqvi told the media in Karachi, saying the PCB would make every effort to bring

spectators back to the stadium. However, the PCB chief stressed the need to consider ongoing global crisis stemming from the Middle East conflict. His comments came days after PCB announced that PSL matches would be held without spectators as part of the government's austerity measures amid the ongoing regional crisis. At the time, Naqvi announced limiting the tournament to two venues, Karachi and Lahore. He added that the decision aimed to reduce public movement. The decision followed the government's wide-ranging austerity and savings plans to deal with the prevailing global fuel crisis triggered by the ongoing US-Israel-Iran conflict. Later, several franchise owners called for the return of spectators, emphasizing that fan presence was integral to the league's atmosphere and identity. They appealed to

both the prime minister and the chief ministers to permit crowds in stadiums during the ongoing edition. Meanwhile, the PCB chief lauded law enforcement agencies for ensuring the smooth conduct of the PSL despite prevailing challenges.

While he announced his intention to ensure spectators' return to the stands, Naqvi ruled out any changes to the schedule. The PCB chairman further said that franchises would receive gate money, with the board covering related expenses. Naqvi also revealed that plans were under consideration to review and potentially rebuild the National Bank Cricket Arena to improve facilities.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Faisal Ayub Kokar chairing a meeting National Hockey Stadium.

## Kinnaird promotes clean sport with anti-doping awareness session

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: The Kinnaird College for Women took a proactive step towards promoting clean sport by organising an anti-doping awareness session titled "Say No to Drugs" in collaboration with its Sports Department. The session, hosted by the college's Anti-Doping and Drug Committee, aimed to educate student-athletes about the risks of substance abuse and the importance of maintaining integrity in sports. The event was attended by Prof. Dr. Masha Asad Khan, Chairperson of Anti-Drug and Tobacco Committee, and Dr. Ammara Rubab, Head of the Sports Department, along with faculty members and a large number of students, particularly those actively involved in sports. Guest speaker Ms. Ayesha Waqas delivered an insightful session focusing

on the impact of drug use on athletic performance, health, and fair competition. She highlighted how doping and substance abuse not only damage physical fitness but also undermine the spirit of sportsmanship and the growing challenges of doping in sports and reinforced the need for awareness at the grassroots level, especially within educational institutions. Kinnaird College reaffirmed its commitment to nurturing



ethical competition. Emphasising the importance of discipline and informed decision-making, she urged student-athletes to uphold the values of clean sport and avoid shortcuts that could jeopardise both their careers and well-being. The interactive session also addressed responsible and informed athletes by promoting anti-doping education and encouraging a culture of fair play. Through such initiatives, the institution continues to support the development of sports alongside character-building and healthy living.



LAHORE: Sardar and Uni Software teams face each other in round matches of Prof Mukhtar Ahmad Butt Memorial Cricket Tournament.



# Islamabad Food Authority takes stringent action against adulteration and hazardous food practices: Thousands of inspections and fines imposed

**NADEEM TANOLI**  
ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) has come under scrutiny after revealing its extensive efforts to tackle the rising issue of adulterated and chemically contaminated food products in Islamabad's hotels and restaurants. During a National Assembly question and answer session, the Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control, Senator Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, outlined the authority's ongoing efforts and the alarming

statistics from their inspections between March 2023 and March 2026. According to the Minister's response, IFA has conducted a total of 2,878 dairy inspections during the reporting period, resulting in the discovery and disposal of over 400,000 kilograms of adulterated milk and dairy products. In total, IFA has issued 2,594 improvement notices, sealed 41 premises, and imposed fines totaling Rs. 1.5 million. Furthermore, the authority has lodged 23 FIRs against violators under the ICT Food

Safety Act, highlighting the gravity of the issue. The most alarming concern raised by the IFA was the discovery of several clandestine milk adulteration units operating in residential areas. These units, which mix harmful chemicals and contaminants into milk, were shut down, and the machinery, vehicles, and adulterants were destroyed. This action has been part of IFA's broader strategy to improve food safety standards across the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). In addition to tackling

adulterated milk, IFA has also focused its efforts on controlling the use of substandard food items and hazardous cooking oils in local restaurants. The authority conducted 45,483 inspections of food establishments, resulting in 22,024 improvement notices and 1,216 premises being sealed. A total of 2,731 fines amounting to Rs. 42.94 million were imposed for violations ranging from improper food handling to the use of rancid oils. In a dedicated oper-

ation targeting the use of hazardous cooking oil, IFA's inspectors identified and discarded over 8,500 litres of rancid oil from various food establishments. These efforts are part of the government's broader strategy to ensure that public health is not compromised by substandard food products. The IFA also emphasized the importance of public awareness, revealing that 61 seminars and outreach activities were conducted to educate both consumers and food businesses

about food safety regulations. Furthermore, the authority continues to issue licenses to food businesses, with 7,063 licenses granted to date. Businesses failing to comply with licensing requirements face severe penalties, including sealing and criminal prosecution. Despite these efforts, the authority's actions have highlighted significant gaps in enforcement, with several food establishments still operating without proper oversight.

## Experts call for coordinated policy action, farmer incentives, real-time monitoring to tackle Smog crisis

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Policy experts, environmentalists, development practitioners and researchers on Tuesday proposed a series of actionable policy recommendations to address crop residue burning and black carbon emissions in Punjab, stressing the need for stronger coordination among institutions, farmer-focused incentives, improved data systems and regional cooperation to reduce air pollution. Speaking at the consultation titled "From Smog to Solutions: Addressing Crop Residue Burning and Black Carbon Emission in Punjab," Malik Amin Aslam, environmentist and former Minister of State for Climate Change, said Pakistan already possesses sufficient research identifying pollution sources and solutions but lacks implementation on the ground. He urged stronger enforcement of clean-air policies and learning from successful regional examples such as Beijing and Delhi, where coordinated interventions helped reduce smog levels significantly. Zainab Naem, Lead Ecological Sustainability and Circular Economy at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI),



highlighted the need to promote circular economy solutions by linking farmers with small and medium enterprises that can utilize crop residues instead of burning them. She emphasized that agricultural burning contributes significantly to particulate pollution and called for market-based mechanisms to enable farmers to sell residues as a resource rather than treating them as waste. Mohsin Rose, Agriculture Economist at the World Bank Pakistan, stressed the importance of integrated cross-sectoral coordination and digital data-sharing mechanisms between public institutions and private stakeholders to better manage air quality challenges. He noted that effective mitigation requires short-, medium- and long-term strategies backed by research-driven planning. Dr. Ambreen Latif, Deputy Secretary Climate Change at

the Environment Protection and Climate Change Department (EPCCD) Punjab, highlighted institutional efforts including the approval of provincial climate plans and the launch of data dashboards to enhance transparency and coordination among departments. She also underscored the importance of biomass-based energy initiatives to reduce crop burning and promote environmentally friendly alternatives. Abid Omar, Founder of the Pakistan Air Quality Initiative, recommended expanding real-time air-quality monitoring networks by integrating satellite, remote sensing and ground-based data systems to support early warning mechanisms and localized policy responses. He said improved forecasting would allow authorities to adopt targeted interventions such as selective school closures and district-specific mitigation strategies rather than blanket measures. Dr. Umar Maqsood, Agriculture Specialist (Crops) at FAO Pakistan, emphasized collaboration with farmers through sustainable agriculture initiatives and field-level demonstration projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote climate-smart practices.

## Dr Mumraiz Khan-a seasoned development professional

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: Dr. Mumraiz Khan, a PhD in Anthropology, is a seasoned development professional with over three decades of experience in social research, public and reproductive health, and environmental science. He currently serves as Deputy Director of Field Research at the Population Council Pakistan, where he contributes to advancing evidence-based research and policy.



# Opinion & Editorial


  
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## Polio security

Yesterday, the government initiated a nationwide polio vaccination campaign, aiming to reach over 45 million children under the age of five. Such drives are meant to signal resolve, yet this one has begun under the shadow of violence, with the martyrdom of a police officer in Hangu, K-P, exposing once again the fragility of security arrangements surrounding one of the country's most critical public health efforts. The scale of the campaign is formidable, extending across all provinces and regions, with 400,000 front-line workers tasked to reach even the most remote and high-risk areas across all provinces. Encouragingly, progress is evident. The poliovirus footprint has shrunk significantly, with far fewer affected districts and a sharp decline in environmental samples. Yet, the one confirmed case in 2026, detected in Sujawal town of Sindh, is a reminder that the fight is far from over. Meanwhile, the attack in Hangu cannot be brushed aside. Security personnel are integral to the success of these campaigns, particularly in volatile regions. When they are targeted, and worse, left exposed, it points to systemic lapses that undermine both morale and effectiveness. Years of conducting such drives should have resulted in refined security protocols.

## Back to an abyss?

**Dr Niaz Murtaza**  
THEY came, they talked, they went away without a deal. The impasse on even the two most burning issues — a longer ceasefire and opening the Strait of Hormuz — is truly bad news for all. The impasse may still break. But even uncertainty is bad for the global economy, moving back from one abyss only to inch towards another. US obduracy, as always, was the key cause. A lesser one was the large agenda, with both foes coming with big teams to discuss all issues in one go. An initial focus on these two burning issues, among others, and a plan for future talks may have been more apt. Given especially the many past failures, lower-ranking officials on both sides and the mediators perhaps misread how much they must shrink gaps via prior backchannel talks before inviting big guns like J.D. Vance.

Will President Donald Trump resume war, as he keeps threatening? Despite rising global multipolarity, there is yet no global check on the US when it comes to its endless, senseless wars. But its internal multipolarity — the mismatch between its war aims and political and economic constraints at home are reflected in falling market indices and Trump's ratings — may stop even an impulsive Trump stung by his failure to defeat Iran despite weeks of inhuman bombing. But it's naive to think that vicious "USraeli" hawks will

give up their evil designs forever. They may wait to let the global economy recover and find a way to blunt the two axes Iran used in the war to trump Trump — closing Hormuz and hitting US regional allies hard — before attacking it. But open war may not happen for a while despite failed talks.

That leaves the issue of reopening the strait. Trump, in a typical early morning impulsive rant, says he will impose a naval blockade on Iran until it opens it. But that is like us sealing Islamabad totally when agitators threaten to do so partially. It may yet dawn on him that this illegal step will hit his home constraints hard. China, the EU and regional states may now scramble to get Iran to open the strait via carrot and stick. So, as I said earlier, realpolitik rather than talks may shape future events.

If these two issues get resolved thus, the pressure on Iran and the US to have talks on deeper issues may even fall. Some naively hope they may just have a rethink and resume talks. But serious results may only accrue if their incentive structures change. Talks on key issues failed mainly due to mistrust as their sequential resolution over time involves many stages where one foe takes a step alone before the other reciprocates. Rich states like Europe, China, Russia, Japan and the Gulf countries can help resolve mistrust by using carrots and sticks to give guarantees at each stage

requiring a leap of faith by one enemy alone. Game-theory security experts can help map mutually acceptable guarantees for each such step which has an action-reaction time gap.

"USraeli" hawks are not likely to give up their evil designs. International relations gurus say that only states with clout can strategically shape mediation while states with only trust, good ties and access can just relay messages. This is why rich states must enter the fray as mediators as the role of Pakistan, Egypt and Turkiye in relaying messages faithfully is insufficient in this huge crisis. We must also review our role and constraints, given our own problems that may arise if talks fail again and we get more deeply sucked into Gulf politics or if our rulers lose their domestic mediation role. Oman, Qatar, Turkiye and Switzerland have all facilitated talks between the two earlier. So, it's wrong to think we are the best or the only state able to play the limited role of relaying messages given the recently struck personal ties between our senior state officials and Trump. But personal ties can't substitute for state clout. A globally critical role for us may also harm our human rights, democracy and civilian sway situation and cement our habit of chasing geostrategic rents instead of adopting sound economic progress as under some past regimes.

Courtesy Dawn

## Brain drain through a teacher's eyes

Dr Intikhab Ulfat

Nearly two decades ago, upon completing my PhD in Sweden and defending my dissertation, I was asked a question that seemed simple at the time: "Why do you want to go back to Pakistan?" The assumption behind the question was clear. Many professionals from developing countries prefer to stay abroad, where systems are efficient, research funding is abundant, and merit is not perpetually negotiating with influence.

I replied without hesitation, and with genuine enthusiasm: "There may be many like me here, but Pakistan needs me." I believed it. I believed that returning home was not merely a personal decision but a moral one. A country struggling with educational gaps, institutional fragility and intellectual dependency required its trained minds to come back and build.

I returned with hope, armed with degrees, research exposure, and a conviction that classrooms could be transformed, that students could be mentored into confident thinkers, that institutions could slowly evolve through persistence and integrity.

For years, I invested myself in teaching, supervising research and encouraging students to believe that merit and hard work would eventually find space in our national landscape. I often told them that change is incremental; that nations are not built by escape but by commitment. But something unsettling has changed over the years. Today, when my students walk into my office seeking recommendation letters for graduate studies (often with a quiet but unmistakable resolve not to return) or for jobs abroad, I feel a subtle pause within myself, a moment of reflection that words seldom capture. Outwardly, I smile and say, "Of course, you should apply." And I write strong letters — because they deserve an opportunity. Because talent should not be caged by geography.

Courtesy Tribune

## Aurangzeb says 'all options on table' to replace UAE's \$3.5bn loan, weighs strategic fuel reserve



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is considering Eurobonds, loans from other countries and commercial debt to replace a \$3.5 billion facility from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and manage its foreign reserves, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said.

Aurangzeb also told Reuters the shock from the ongoing war in the Middle East meant that Pakistan must consider a strategic petroleum reserve and a faster switch to renewable energy. "All options are on the table," Aurangzeb said when asked if the government was in talks with Saudi Arabia for a loan that could replace

the UAE facility. Pakistan will reportedly return a \$3.5bn loan to the UAE this month, putting pressure on its reserves and risking breaches of its International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme targets. The country has been thrust into the international spotlight as it plays the role of a mediator between the United States and Iran to end the war in the Middle East.

Aurangzeb, speaking on the sidelines of the IMF/World Bank annual spring meetings, said the country could manage all debt repayments, and that its reserves remained at roughly 2.8 months of import cover.

Maintaining at least that level, he said, would be "an important aspect of our overall macro stability as we go forward." "We are looking at Eurobond, we are looking at Islamic sukuk, we are looking at dollar-settled rupee-linked bonds," Aurangzeb said, adding that they expected to issue Eurobonds this year and are also exploring commercial loans. Aurangzeb said while the country had

not yet requested any additions or changes to its \$7bn IMF lending programme due to the economic shocks of the war in the Middle East, it was a potential option.

"Depending upon how things pan out over the next few weeks, that's something which can be discussed," he said. The Fund's board is likely to sign off on the latest lending tranche by the end of this month or early next month, Aurangzeb said, which would unlock just under \$1.3bn via the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF).

Pakistan also expects to launch its first-ever Panda bond — debt denominated in Chinese yuan — next month, he said. The \$250m issue, the first of a planned \$1bn programme, will be backed by the Asian Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Aurangzeb said the country's expected GDP growth of close to 4pc, remittances of around \$41.5 billion and targeted assistance.

## Naqvi urges businessmen to bring back at least 30% of their wealth to Pakistan

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has urged businessmen to bring back at least 30% of their wealth to Pakistan ahead of the federal budget 2026-27.

"The business community are requested to bring back at least 30% of their money from abroad," Naqvi said while addressing an event at Federation House in Karachi on Tuesday.

The minister claimed that around \$100 billion had moved out of Pakistan, stressing that even partial repatriation could provide significant economic relief.

"If businessmen decide today, \$10 billion can come back before the budget," the security czar



added.

Naqvi also assured the business community of improved conditions, saying Pakistan offers strong returns on investment. "The profit Pakistan offers cannot be found anywhere else in the world," he said and assured them of providing a conducive business environment."

He further said that proposals regarding visas for traders would soon be presented to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## President Zardari urges dialogue, development & water security to stabilize Balochistan

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday stressed the need for dialogue, improved governance, enhanced connectivity and water management to address challenges in Balochistan, and underlined that Pakistan could not progress without the province's stability and development.

Speaking during an interaction with participants of the National Workshop Balochistan-19 here at the Presidency, the president said creating an atmosphere of "workability" in the province was essential so that people would not feel compelled to migrate elsewhere in search of opportunities. He noted that Balochistan was rich in mineral resources but required sustained long-term development initiatives rather than short-term measures, adding that connectivity had improved after the 18th Constitutional Amendment through the construction of several bridges over the Indus River linking Balochistan with other parts of the country.

The president, amid highlighting water as a critical issue, said canal lining projects were being undertaken to minimize seepage losses, stressing that water conservation was vital for agriculture as well as mining activities in the province. He termed water security one of his top priorities and said efforts were under way to explore regional options, including water cooperation initiatives with Tajikistan, to support irrigation needs in Balochistan.

Referring to Gwadar Port, President Zardari said his vision was to ensure that dividends from the port's development were shared with local tribes and communities, particularly those living along road corridors leading to Gwadar. He added that the port had the potential to become a major economic hub if stakeholders worked together to create a conducive investment environment.

The president underscored the importance of unity and internal reflection to address the province's challenges, emphasizing that dialogue and democratic engagement remained the only viable path forward.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari addresses the participants of the National Workshop Balochistan-19 during an interactive session at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## First Lady extends heartfelt wishes to Hindu, Sikh families on Vaisakhi/Baisakhi

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: First Lady Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari extended her heartfelt wishes to the Hindu and Sikh families across Pakistan and around the world on the occasion of Vaisakhi/Baisakhi.

"Vaisakhi/Baisakhi carries a cherished significance. It is a celebration of the earth's abundance, of faith and of the bonds that hold families and communities together. It is a moment to give thanks for the harvest that sustains life, and to honour the labour and devotion that make it possible," she said in a message on the occasion of Vaisakhi/Baisakhi being celebrated on April 14.

At this time of year, the first lady said she found herself thinking especially of the women in their rural communities, the mothers, daughters, and sisters who carried so much on their shoulders. "Through the long and demanding harvest season, they move between the fields and the home, nurturing both without rest. Their strength.

## Imran's sisters manage to reach Adiala jail but still denied meeting with ex-premier

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: In a surprising turn of events, the sisters of incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan on Tuesday managed to make their way to Adiala jail but were still denied a meeting with their brother.

The sisters were not allowed to enter the jail by the authorities, following which they returned to the checkpoint where they are typically stopped by police.

Speaking to the media, Aleema Khan said, "Usually, police do not allow us to proceed onward and the jail administration informs the court that we did not arrive because of which the meeting could not be arranged."

"This time we reached outside the gate of Adiala jail and informed them that we are here," she added. She said they made sure that their faces were recorded in the CCTV footage so that the jail administration would not deny their presence.

Asked how the sisters managed to reach the main gate, Aleema replied that they would not reveal how, as in that case, it would become difficult to do the same again.

"We could have stayed there but police officials asked us to leave because their jobs would be in danger otherwise," she asserted. Responding to a question, Aleema said 51 workers were arrested during a protest outside the jail last week and efforts.



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## Minister Rana Sanaullah meets WAPDA Chairman Muhammad Saeed

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Rana Sanaullah held a meeting with WAPDA Chairman Lieutenant General (R) Muhammad Saeed at the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination. The meeting focused on key matters related to the better management of water resources, ongoing WAPDA development projects, and the promotion of inter-provincial harmony. During the meeting, a detailed review was conducted of the country's water storage capacity enhancement and the progress of ongoing development projects. Both leaders emphasized that the timely



and transparent completion of energy and water-related projects is essential for national development. Federal Minister Rana Sanaullah stated that achieving consensus and ensuring harmony among all provinces for development projects of national importance is a pressing need of the time. He directed the concerned authorities to further accelerate the pace of ongoing projects.

## NA Speaker visits the residence of MNA Mir Aijaz Hussain Jakhri; offers condolences on demise of his father, former MNA Mir Ahmed Nawaz Khan

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq visited the residence of the Chief Whip of the Pakistan Peoples Party in the National Assembly, MNA Mir Aijaz Hussain Jakhri, in Jacobabad to offer condolences on the sad demise of his father, former Member National Assembly Mir Ahmed Nawaz Khan, popularly known as Mir Babul Khan Jakhri. During the visit, the Speaker expressed profound sorrow and grief over the passing of the late Mir Babul Khan Jakhri and

paid rich tribute to his long-standing political and social services. He said that the deceased was a dignified and respected personality whose contributions to public service would be remembered for a long time to come. The Speaker remarked that parents are among the greatest blessings of Almighty Allah and their loss is an irreparable tragedy and a deeply emotional moment in one's life. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq conveyed his sincere condolences to MNA Mir Aijaz Hussain Jakhri and his family. He offered Fateha for the departed soul and



prayed to Allah Almighty to grant the deceased the highest ranks in Jannat-ul-Firdous

and strength to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss with patience and fortitude. Speaking to the media after his visit, Speaker National Assembly Sardar

Ayaz Sadiq said that Pakistan has gained respect at the global level and is being widely appreciated across the world. He said that Pakistan's diplomatic efforts led to a two-week ceasefire between the United States and Iran, adding that bringing the two sides to the negotiating table despite 47 years of hostility was a major diplomatic success for Pakistan. He further said that consultations are ongoing with President Asif Ali Zardari and former prime minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, and described the Iran-US ceasefire as a success for the entire nation.