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QUETTA VOICE

National Assembly Erupts in Fiery Clash as Mahmood Khan Achakzai and Speaker Ayaz Sadiq Trade Sharp Remarks

Haseeb Khan, Qasem Shah:

ISLAMABAD: Tempers flared in the National Assembly on Tuesday after a heated exchange between Opposition Leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai and Speaker Ayaz Sadiq over constitutional issues, parliamentary conduct, provincial rights, and the role of democratic institutions.

Speaking during the Assembly session, Achakzai launched a wide-ranging critique of the federal government and the speaker's handling of parliamentary affairs. He said the opposition would adopt a tougher stance now that the government had completed two and a half years in office, arguing that Parliament must function in accordance with the Constitution and democratic principles.

The opposition leader questioned the speaker's decisions regarding the disqualification of lawmakers, claiming constitutional norms had not been upheld. He also criticised the government's handling of several politically sensitive issues, including the reported life sentence

He further accused the government of weakening democratic institutions and called for meaningful dialogue with the people of Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on issues relating to governance, constitutional rights, and the ownership of natural resources.

Responding on the Assembly floor, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq firmly rejected the allegations and defended his conduct as custodian of the House.

He said he would not allow any speech that, in his view, targeted Pakistan, its armed forces, or the judiciary, stressing that safeguarding national institutions remained his constitutional responsibility.

The speaker also challenged the opposition's criticism of Parliament, saying that members who questioned the legitimacy of the House continued to use its platform extensively, often speaking beyond their allocated time.

He further claimed that opposition parties had repeatedly declined opportunities to participate in parliamentary committees despite being invited on multiple occasions. Later, the National Assembly Secretariat issued a statement quoting Speaker Sadiq as



President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and others receive Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian upon his arrival in Islamabad on June 23.

Iranian President Pezeshkian, FM Araghchi arrive in Pakistan

NEWS DESK:

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Pakistan on Tuesday.

Pezeshkian is on an official visit to Pakistan at Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's invitation. The Iranian president and foreign minister arrived in Pakistan in separate planes. Pezeshkian flew to the federal capital from Iran, while Araghchi's last engagement was in Oman.

President Pezeshkian, upon his arrival at the Nur Khan airbase, was received by President Asif Ali Zardari, PM Shehbaz, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and Iran's envoy to Islamabad Reza Amiri Moghaddam.

FM Araghchi was also present to welcome his president, according to televised footage.

Pezeshkian was accorded a 21-gun salute, while fighter jets conducted a flypast in his honour, state-run APP reported. The president waved in response to the children's welcoming slogans, it added.

FM Araghchi meets president, PM

of the US-Iran talks in Switzerland over the weekend, is also part of Pezeshkian's delegation.

Iran's state media IRNA reported that the top Iranian diplomat held talks with President Zardari and PM Shehbaz "only hours" before Pezeshkian landed in Pakistan.

Upon his arrival at Rawalpindi's Nur Khan airbase earlier in the day, Araghchi was welcomed by Dar, Naqvi and Bilawal.

"The leadership and people of Pakistan extend a warm welcome to Foreign Minister Araghchi and the Iranian delegation to Islamabad," the Foreign Office said (FO).

Both sides to review 'full spectrum' of bilateral relations. During the visit, Pezeshkian will meet President Asif Ali Zardari and hold talks with PM Shehbaz, according to the FO.

Senate Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani, National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, and Deputy PM Dar will call on the visiting dignitary.

"This will be Dr Pezeshkian's second visit to Pakistan in his capacity as president of Iran," the FO said.

It said the visit would provide an opportunity for the two sides to review the full spectrum of bilateral relations and explore

avenues for enhanced cooperation in trade, energy, border security, people-to-people exchanges and regional connectivity. It also termed the visit an "important opportunity to discuss ongoing diplomatic engagements following the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, as well as regional and international developments of mutual interest".

"The forthcoming visit reflects the shared commitment of Pakistan and Iran to further deepen their historic and cultural ties and underscores their common aspiration for peace, stability, and sustainable progress in the region," the FO added.

IHC, FCC cancel judicial work; govt tells Red Zone employees to work from home.

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) also cancelled judicial work for Tuesday, due to the closure of the Red Zone for the Iranian president's visit. A notification issued by the IHC said that Tuesday's cause list had been cancelled, adding that officials were directed to work from home.

However, it added that district courts would function as per routine.

Similarly, the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) also announced the suspension of judicial work at its principal seat in

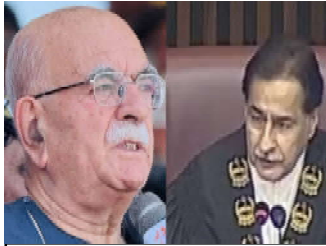
Islamabad due to the closure of the Red Zone in Islamabad.

"Consequently, the cause list of the Court stands cancelled. However, all officers and staff shall work from home and shall not leave the station. Besides, all four benches registries of the court shall remain open for judicial and administrative work," the notification said.

Separately, the federal government issued a notification implementing a one-day "work from home" directive for various ministries.

According to a notification issued by Cabinet Division Secretary Kamran Ali Afzal, employees of ministries, divisions, and government offices located inside Islamabad's Red Zone will work remotely. Furthermore, autonomous bodies and attached departments operating within the Red Zone will observe a full holiday.

However, essential federal institutions and banks were exempted from this order. These included the Prime Minister's Office, the Senate, the National Assembly, the Cabinet Division, the Ministry of Finance and Revenue, the Federal Board of Reserve, and the ministries of foreign affairs, interior, commerce, industries, law, parliamentary affairs, and planning division, alongside all federal banking institutions.



File Photo: Opposition Leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai and Speaker Ayaz Sadiq

awarded to Baloch Yakeethi Committee leader Dr. Maqarab Baloch and the official response to recent unrest in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Turning to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who was present in the House, Achakzai referred to the premier's earlier remarks on Pakistan's unity.

While agreeing that the country's future was paramount, he argued that Pakistan's strength lay equally in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Sindh, and Punjab, urging the federal government to ensure that every province enjoyed equal constitutional rights and representation.

saying that freedom of expression must always be exercised within the limits of the Constitution, parliamentary rules, and democratic traditions.

He added that protecting the dignity of Parliament was among his foremost responsibilities and urged all elected representatives to place national interest, sovereignty, and stability above political differences. The tense exchange ended with opposition lawmakers, led by Achakzai, staging a walkout from the National Assembly before the speaker concluded his remarks. Members of Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), however, remained in the House as proceedings continued.

Pakistan-Iran Relations: Field Marshal Asim Munir Meets President Masoud Pezeshkian for Regional Peace Talks

From Our Correspondent:

ISLAMABAD: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HI, COAS & CDF, called on the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, during which views on regional developments and peace initiatives were exchanged, the military's media wing said.

The Iranian President appreciated Pakistan's constructive and responsible role in promoting dialogue, de-escalation, and regional stability, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

He acknowledged



Pakistan's consistent efforts to encourage peaceful resolution of disputes and foster understanding among regional stakeholders at a time of heightened geopolitical challenges.

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to peace and stability in the region.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening Pakistan-Iran relations and maintaining close consultations on issues of mutual interest.

with the shared objective of advancing peace, prosperity and stability across the region.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan Recognised for Driving Governance Reforms in Balochistan

By Sheikh Abdul Razaq:

QUETTA: The role of an efficient bureaucracy remains central to effective governance, particularly in provinces facing complex administrative and developmental challenges. In Balochistan, the recent recognition of Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, by the provincial cabinet and Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti during the provincial budget session has highlighted the significance of strong institutional leadership in advancing governance reforms.

Governance experts argue that while elected governments provide policy direction, successful implementation depends largely on a capable and professional civil service.

In Balochistan, where issues such as vast geography, infrastructure gaps, developmental disparities, and security concerns continue to pose challenges, an effective administrative framework is essential for sustainable progress.

Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, widely regarded as an experienced and competent civil servant, has played a pivotal role in enhancing interdepartmental coordination, strengthening



administrative efficiency, and supporting the provincial government's reform agenda.

His tenure has coincided with renewed efforts by the Balochistan government to promote institutional reforms, fiscal discipline, transparency, and performance-based governance.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti has consistently emphasized the importance of governance reforms, institutional strengthening, and improved public service delivery.

Analysts believe that translating these policy objectives into tangible outcomes requires a bureaucracy capable of aligning administrative priorities with the government's

development vision. The formulation of the provincial budget served as a key example of this collaborative governance model.

Modern budget-making extends beyond financial accounting and reflects a government's development priorities, fiscal management strategy, and long-term planning objectives.

Effective budget preparation requires strong interdepartmental coordination, data-driven decision-making, and prudent allocation of resources.

The acknowledgment extended to Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan by both the provincial cabinet and the Chief Minister on the floor of the Balochistan As-

sembly reflects a broader recognition of the critical role played by the civil service in ensuring policy implementation and institutional continuity.

Observers note that such recognition promotes a culture of merit, professionalism, and accountability within the public sector, encouraging civil servants to maintain high standards of pub-

lic service. Balochistan's unique governance landscape demands administrative foresight, continuity, and strategic leadership.

Effective oversight of development projects, monitoring mechanisms, departmental coordination, and accountability systems remains vital for achieving sustainable development goals

across the province. Experts maintain that institutional reforms are ultimately measured by their implementation. Strong institutions are built through consistent leadership,

professionalism, and efficient governance practices. Public officials who uphold these principles contribute significantly to strengthening government institutions and enhancing administrative performance.

The recognition accorded to Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan underscores the growing importance of a professional and responsive civil service in supporting Balochistan's development agenda.

It also sends a positive message throughout the bureaucracy that dedication, competence, and commitment to public service continue to be valued.

As Balochistan advances towards improved governance and sustainable development, the partnership between political leadership and an effective administrative structure will remain essential.

The province's long-term progress will depend not only on visionary policies but also on the institutional capacity required to implement them successfully.

Forced Marriage in Islam: A Clear Violation of Women's Rights and Human Dignity

By Musavir Durrani:

Forced marriage remains one of the most damaging cultural practices in parts of the Muslim world today. Despite being justified in the name of honor, tradition, or family unity, Islam itself strictly forbids forcing any woman, or man, into a marriage they do not want. Islamic teachings make consent the

core of marriage, while coercion makes a marriage batil (invalid).

The Qur'an Clearly Forbids Forced Marriages. Allah states in Surah An-Nisa:

"O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will."

(Qur'an 4:19) This verse was revealed to abolish the jahliyyah practice of controlling or forcing women into marriages.

Islam replaced oppression with dignity, choice, and responsibility.

Prophetic Example: Forced Marriages Declared Invalid

A woman once came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)



complaining that her father had married her without her permission. The Prophet (PBUH) gave her the full right to reject or accept the marriage, proving that consent is mandatory.

Hadith References: Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 5138.

Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1419. These narrations all confirm that the Prophet (PBUH) allowed the woman to annul her forced marriage.

One narration even states that she chose to remain married but wanted to teach women that fa-

thers have no right to force their daughters. Parents Can Advise, But They Cannot Force.

Islam highly respects parents, but marriage choice is not their right. They can guide, suggest, and advise, but they have ab-

solutely no power to force their child into marrying someone. Even if parents think they "know what is best," they cannot override the choice of their daughter or son. The final decision always

belongs to the person getting married.

Statements such as: "If you don't marry this one, who will marry you?" "You have no choice." "Do it for family honor." "You must obey your parents."

These are pure emotional manipulation, and Islam does

not allow it. Emotional or Psychological Pressure is Also Haram. Forced marriage is not only when someone is physically

pressured. Even emotional, mental, or family pressure

counts as force. Any Nikkah done under fear, pressure, or

threats is invalid (Batil) in Islam. This ruling is based on multiple hadith in which the Prophet (PBUH) annulled marriages done without consent.

Modern Forced Marriages, A New Way of Burying Women Alive. Before Islam, Arabs used to bury baby

girls alive. Today, many scholars say: "We no longer bury women in the ground, we bury their dreams on the day of their Nikkah."

When a girl is forced into a marriage, pressured emotionally, or told she has no other choice, we destroy her life while she is still alive. This is the new form of burying women alive, and Islam came to end this injustice completely.

Forced marriage has no place in Islam. It is against the Qur'an, against the Sunnah, and against the dignity that Islam

gives to every woman and man. Parents must love, support, and guide, but never control or force marriage decisions.

Allah gave women this right, and no one can take it away."

Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail Highlights Gwadar Port's Strategic Role in Pakistan's Economic Future During Meeting with Chinese Diplomat

NEWS DESK: Governor Balochistan, Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, has expressed strong optimism about the future of Pakistan and Balochistan, emphasizing that the full development and operationalization of Gwadar Port will trigger a "silent economic revolution" with far-reaching benefits for the region and beyond.

The remarks were made during a meeting with China's Acting Consul General, Mr. Feng Deheng, in Karachi. Political Director Mr. Zang Song and Mr. Wang Zhaoxiang were also present during the discussions.

Gwadar Port to Transform Pakistan into a Regional Trade Hub Governor Mandokhail stated that Gwadar Port has the potential to be



come a strategic gateway connecting Pakistan with global economic and commercial networks.

He noted that Pakistan is uniquely positioned to serve as a bridge between Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, facili-

tating trade, cultural exchange, and industrial cooperation across the region.

Our vision extends beyond infrastructure development. It is a strategic step toward economic integration, regional connectivity, and sustainable growth," the

governor said. Pakistan-China Friendship Remains Strong After 75 Years

The governor highlighted the enduring friendship between Pakistan and China, noting that the two countries recently celebrated the 75th anniversary of dip-

lomatic relations. He described the bilateral partnership as a testament to mutual trust, cooperation, and resilience, stating that both nations have stood shoulder-to-shoulder through decades of progress and shared challenges.

Focus on Education, Artificial Intelligence, and Technology Governor Mandokhail emphasized the importance of collaboration with China in emerging technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), innovation, and advanced technical education.

He said China's expertise could help equip Balochistan's youth with world-class skills and knowledge through partnerships with public sector universities.

Balochistan Education Support Programme (BES-II) Successfully Concludes, Benefiting Over 760,000 Children Across the Province

QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan, in collaboration with the European Union (EU) and UNICEF, marked the successful completion of the five-year Balochistan Education Support Programme (BES-II) with a prestigious closing ceremony held in Quetta.

The event was attended by provincial officials, development partners, education experts, and representatives from international organizations.

Provincial Minister for Education, Rabeha Hameed Khan Durani, attended the ceremony as the chief guest, while Secretary Schools Education Lal Jan Jaffar and senior representatives from the European Union, UNICEF, and the Balochistan Education Department were also present.

BES-II Reaches



More Than 760,000 Children Addressing the gathering, Lal Jan Jaffar highlighted that the programme, funded by the European Union to the tune of \$74 million, was implemented from 2021 to 2026 and successfully provided quality education, improved learning environments, and enhanced educational opportunities to more than 760,000 children across Balochistan.

He noted that approximately 355,000 girls directly benefited from the initiative, significantly contributing to girls' education and gender equality in the province.

Education Key to Sustainable Development in Balochistan Speaking on the occasion, Education Minister Rabeha Hameed Khan Durani emphasized that education remains the

cornerstone of sustainable development, social stability, and economic prosperity in Balochistan.

He praised the continued support of the European Union and UNICEF, stating that the programme not only expanded access to education but also introduced long-term reforms aimed at strengthening the province's education system.

Major Educational Reforms Introduced Under BES-II, several transformative reforms were implemented to improve educational planning.

The Government of Balochistan remains committed to ensuring quality education for every child, especially girls, in line with Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti's vision for educational development," she said.

Major Educational Reforms Introduced Under BES-II, several transformative reforms were implemented to improve educational planning.

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New Era of Education: Free Public College Inaugurated in Gulistan, Balochistan

Mir Salam Jozgezi: GULISTAN — In a major breakthrough for higher education in northern Balochistan, the newly constructed Ahmed Khan Public College was officially inaugurated in Gulistan, a prominent town in the Qila Abdullah district.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by a large gathering of local residents, elders, and eager students.

The event also featured a vibrant science and arts exhibition where local youth proudly showcased their academic projects.

Distinguished guests leading the ceremony included Senator Shakoor Khan Achakzai, chief guest Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan, prominent tribal leader Ahmed Khan Achakzai, and the Deputy Commissioner of Qila Abdullah.

A lifeline for Underprivileged Students Speaking at the launch, community leaders and visiting lawmakers highly praised the lifelong dedication of tribal leader Ahmed Khan Achakzai.



Decades ago, families were forced to drop out of school simply because they couldn't afford it," noted one of the keynote speakers.

"This college is designed to bridge that gap, giving underprivileged students a launchpad to secure fully-funded scholarships at Pakistan's top universities."

Sparking Hope and Economic Growth Local speakers and educators hailed the project as a "revolutionary milestone" that will reshape the region's

socio-economic landscape. Beyond expanding literacy, the college is expected to equip the local youth with modern, marketable skills, effectively opening doors to new employment opportunities in the province.

The ceremony carried a strong message of inclusivity. Speakers made a direct, impassioned plea to local parents, urging them to break traditional barriers and actively encourage both boys and girls to pursue higher education.

The event concluded on a high note of encouragement, with the chief guests distributing laptops and merit prizes to local students who have achieved top academic positions in recent examinations.

Young Take Center Stage The true energy of the day came from the youth. Local school children performed national songs and delivered moving speeches, openly describing the new college as a "game-changer" for their futures.

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Quetta Mobile and Internet Services Suspended on 7th Muharram Over Security Concerns

Staff Reporter: QUETTA: Authorities in the provincial capital have temporarily suspended mobile phone and internet services today (Tuesday) as part of stringent security measures for the 7th of Muharram processions.

"Sources within the Balochistan Home Department confirmed that the decision was taken to mitigate security risks and ensure the safety of citizens and mourners attending the traditional religious gatherings across the city."

The suspension has affected cellular networks and mobile data services in most parts of Quetta, leaving residents temporarily disconnected.

According to home department officials, the measure is strictly precautionary. "The suspension is linked directly to security alerts received regarding the 7th Muharram processions," a source stated, adding that the services will be restored in a phased manner once the main processions conclude and security clearance is given.

High Alert in the Provincial Capital The digital blackout comes alongside a mas-

sive security deployment. Extra law enforcement personnel, including police and Frontier Corps (FC) personnel, have been stationed at all entry and exit points of the city, as well as along the routes of the mourning processions.

"While the suspension aims to prevent any untoward incidents, it has caused temporary communication challenges for local residents and businesses. However, official sources reiterated that public safety remains the government's top priority during the holy month."

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Additional 500 Cusecs Secured for Pat Feeder Canal to Strengthen Water Supply for Balochistan Farmers

NASIRABAD: Superintending Engineer Irrigation Circle Nasirabad Division, Mudassar Zafar Khosa, has stated that practical measures are being taken to ensure that farmers in Balochistan receive their rightful share of water.

As part of these efforts, an additional 500 cusecs of water has been secured from Guddu Barrage, increasing the flow in the Pat Feeder Canal to 5,000 cusecs.

According to the irrigation official, the additional water allocation was obtained following directives from Provincial Minister for Irrigation Mir Muhammad Sadiq Umrani and Provincial Secretary Irrigation Sohail Rehman Baloch, who instructed authorities to coordinate with senior officials at Guddu Barrage to safeguard Balochistan's water share.

Speaking during a visit to review water conditions at RD-109 of the Pat Feeder Canal in Sindh,

Mudassar Zafar Khosa emphasized that the Balochistan Irrigation Department remains committed to protecting the rights of farmers and addressing water-related challenges faced by the agricultural community. He reiterated that there would be no compromise on the province's legitimate water share.

During the visit, Sub-Divisional Officer Haji Muntaz Ali Soomro briefed officials on the water delivery process up to RD-109.

Irrigation Officer Nabi Baksh Bugti and Ali Ahmed Khosa were also present on the occasion.

The Superintending Engineer directed all officers and field staff to pay special attention to

the water distribution system, noting that Nasirabad Division is facing a significant demand for water for both drinking and agricultural purposes.

He explained that while Balochistan receives its allocated share of water from RD-109, irrigation of areas located approximately five kilometers further within Sindh—both on the inner and outer sides of the canal—often contributes to water shortages.

Keeping these challenges in view, the department is implementing measures to improve water management and ensure adequate irrigation for Balochistan's command areas.

Mudassar Zafar Khosa said that the ultimate objective is to maximize irrigation coverage, enhance agricultural productivity,

Rakhni Police Arrest Absconding Theft Suspect in Sukkur During Crackdown on Criminal Elements

BARKHAN/RAKHNI: Workshop Tangwani, Kandhkot, Sindh.

The suspect was wanted in FIR No. 08/2024 registered under Sections 380 (Theft) and 457 (Lurking House-Trespass or House-Breaking by Night) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

He had been evading arrest since the registration of the case and was declared a proclaimed suspect wanted in a theft case.

According to police officials, SI/SHO Rakhni Muhammad Younis Khetran, along with ASI and Investigation Officer Ata Muhammad and a police team, conducted

a successful operation in Sukkur and apprehended the fugitive suspect Khalid Hussain, son of Waji Muhammad, a resident of Mohalla

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a successful operation in Sukkur and apprehended the fugitive suspect Khalid Hussain, son of Waji Muhammad, a resident of Mohalla

Harnai Administration to Hold Open Public Hearing on June 27 for Citizens' Complaints and Grievances

HARNAI: On the directives of the Deputy Commissioner Harnai, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Muhammad Saleem Tareen has issued an important public notice announcing the organization of a one-day Open Public Hearing (Khuli Katcheri) to address public grievances, complaints, and community concerns across the district.

According to the official notification, the

public hearing will be held on June 27, 2026 (Saturday) at 10:00 AM at Government High School Speen Tangi, Harnai.

The district administration stated that all district-level officers from various government departments will be present in person during the event.

The initiative aims to provide citizens with direct access to relevant authorities, enabling them to

present their issues, complaints, and suggestions without intermediaries.

The notice strongly encourages residents from across Harnai District to actively participate in the open hearing and bring forward any concerns related to government departments. Citizens will have the opportunity to directly communicate with district officials and seek immediate attention to their problems.

The initiative aims to provide citizens with direct access to relevant authorities, enabling them to

officials said that the purpose of the Khuli Katcheri is to strengthen public engagement, improve service delivery, and ensure prompt resolution of citizens' issues through on-the-spot instructions and administrative action.

The district administration emphasized its commitment to transparent governance, public accountability, and responsive service delivery, urging the public to make

full use of this platform for addressing their concerns and contributing constructive suggestions for better governance. Harnai News, Khuli Katcheri Harnai, Deputy Commissioner Harnai, Muhammad Saleem Tareen, Public Hearing Pakistan, Government High School Speen Tangi, Public Complaints, District Administration Harnai, Citizen Grievances, Balochistan News.



If 2018 election was legitimate, so is current govt: PM Shehbaz

NEWS DESK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday rejected opposition claims that his government lacked legitimacy, telling the National Assembly that if the 2018 general election was considered legitimate, then the current government should be regarded as legitimate as well.

"Conduct an inquiry into the 2018 election. If there was no manipulation, if ballot boxes were not stuffed, and if people were not brought to Islamabad by force and no threats were issued, then take a look at the 2018 election. If that was a legitimate government, then this is also a legitimate government. And if you were keen on investigations, then let us start from 2018. If the matter is opened, it will go very far," said PM Shehbaz while addressing the House during debate on the Finance Bill 2026-27.

The prime minister responded to remarks by opposition leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai, who had earlier described the government as "illegal" and accused it of undermining democratic institutions. Achakzai had delivered a wide-ranging speech criticising the government's handling of political and constitutional affairs.

Responding to the criticism, PM Shehbaz said the day was not meant for raising divisive political issues and described several of



Achakzai's assertions as correct to the facts. He rejected suggestions that development was being pursued at the expense of smaller provinces.

"I have always maintained that if Punjab progresses alone, that is not Pakistan's progress. If Sindh progresses alone, that is not Pakistan's progress. If Baloch progresses alone, it cannot be called Pakistan's development."

The prime minister also highlighted Pakistan's recent diplomatic efforts, saying an Iran-US understanding had been reached in Geneva through talks hosted by Pakistan. He said a ceasefire was now in place between the two countries and that technical negotiations would continue over the next 60 days under the memorandum of understanding, with

the aim of reaching a permanent agreement. "Pakistan worked with sincerity and dedication to help bridge the gaps between Iran and the United States," he said.

The prime minister said negotiations had continued throughout the day and night before a joint statement was agreed by all parties. "Today, by the grace of God, not only has a ceasefire been achieved between Iran and the US, but technical negotiations will continue over the next 60 days," he told lawmakers.

"There will be discussions on nuclear facilities, ballistic missiles, and frozen assets, and we hope that within 60 days the memorandum of understanding will lead to a long-lasting agreement that contributes to peace in the world." Congratulating parliamentarians and the

National Assembly (NA) passes budget for FY2026-27 following opposition walkout

NEWS DESK: The National Assembly on Tuesday passed the budget for the upcoming fiscal year during a session that saw the opposition staging a walkout.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb moved the bill for the House to approve the budget proposals for the next fiscal year after the opposition's walkout.

The walkout was preceded by a speech by NA Opposition Leader Mehmoood Khan Achakzai, who had criticised the government over several issues.

His speech was not livestreamed on the NA's social media platforms or on television channels, even after Speaker Ayaz Sadiq on Sunday lifted longstanding curbs on the airing and dissemination of opposition members' speeches.

Later, Achakzai posted on X: "We have taken an oath to protect the Constitution of Pakistan. You have supported undemocratic forces in trampling the Constitution; through your vote, you have clipped the wings of the judiciary."

According to Achakzai, this excerpt was from his address in the NA, which was "censored". Achakzai assailed the government, prompting a strong response from Speaker Sadiq.

The opposition leader began his speech by criticising Sadiq. "We will have to change our tone now that your government has completed 2.5 years," he said, criticising Sadiq for his conduct as the speaker.

You did not care about the Constitution and law as you dismissed 14 of your colleagues from the Assembly," he said.

He further stated that despite the opposition questioning the legitimacy of Parliament, "you speak for more than your allotted time; does the parliament not appear fake to you then?"

Rebuking the opposition leader, Speaker Sadiq further alleged that the opposition had always refused to participate in parliamentary committees despite being asked repeatedly.

"You are in a confused state of mind," he said, reiterating that the House stood united "when it comes to Pakistan".

He added that the Strait of Hormuz should be restored to pre-conflict status, which "means no fees and no toll at all".

"For certain items, they have 30 days to conclude, but the bulk and overall conclusion of the final deal timeline is 60 days, and this can be mutually extendable," he said.

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NA sees heated budget debate

NEWS DESK: A heated exchange between the government and opposition marked proceedings in the National Assembly on Monday during debate on the Interior Ministry's budget and cut motions.

Opposition leader Barrister Gohar Khan, speaking during the debate, raised concerns over the government's victimisation and alleged violations of human rights over the past four years.

He said such practices undermined democratic norms and institutional trust. Criticising the government, he warned against using the events of May 9 for political victimisation, arguing that legal proceedings should not be influenced by political considerations.

Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tahir responded by stating that two opposition members had been given representation in the JCP. He also criticised the opposition for boycotting key meetings and said important criminal law reforms remained pending at the committee stage.

Separately, JUI-F MNA Noor Alam Khan highlighted the worsening security situation, saying terrorism had severely affected K-P and Balochistan.

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Dar says US-Iran talks in Switzerland could have happened earlier if not for Israel's attacks on Lebanon

NEWS DESK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishak Dar said Sunday's US-Iran talks in Switzerland were nearly "derailed" due to Israel's continued attacks on Lebanon, it emerged on Tuesday.

In an exclusive interview with Al Arabiya, which was recorded before the talks began, DPM Dar said: "The parleys starting in Switzerland could have started a few days earlier, but Israel's attacks on Lebanon derailed and stopped everything."

At the outset of the interview, DPM Dar recalled Pakistan's diplomatic efforts since the start of the conflict on February 28, recalling the Pakistan-mediated ceasefire followed by the talks in Islamabad in April.

"Those parleys were the first time direct talks between the US and Iran after 47 years. Pakistan was asked to be the witness," DPM Dar said.

He said that Pakistan's continued efforts after the Islamabad talks culminated in the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on June 18.

"You see, during this period, Pakistan has been... very active. Not only were we mediating between the US and Iran, but we were also keeping our allies and friends in the region connected with us," DPM Dar told Al Arabiya.

He continued: "In that process, we saw that a regional forum has been created which is Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye and we were dealing side by side with Gulf countries and also international partners."

Shifting his attention to the talks in Burgtenstock, he called the summit "phase two" of the negotiation process.

"There are three technical groups. One is to deal with the nuclear issue, the second is about sanctions and fro-

peace process and added that the Switzerland talks were nearly "derailed" due to Israel's attacks on Lebanon.

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Supreme Court (SC) reopens teacher back-benefits case

NEWS DESK: The Supreme Court has set aside a Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Service Tribunal judgment and directed authorities to reconsider the case of a reinstated school teacher for grant of back benefits under Fundamental Rule (FR) 54. The court held that an employee honourably acquitted of criminal charges is entitled to full pay and service benefits for the period of absence, subject to lawful determination by the competent authority.

The ruling was authored by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, with Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afroz also on the bench, in a civil appeal arising out of a 2019 decision of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Service Tribunal, Swat Camp Court.

The appellant, Mian Abdul Saeed, a Secondary School Teacher (BPS-17) posted at Government High School Gokand, District Buner, was suspended on December 31, 2012 after being implicated in an FIR under Sections 302, 324, 147, 148 and 149

of the Pakistan Penal Code. He was subsequently convicted by an additional district judge in Buner on December 19, 2013, leading to his removal from service on July 6, 2015. However, on appeal, the Peshawar High Court (PHC) acquitted him on December 11, 2017.

Following his acquittal, he sought reinstatement and back benefits. The departmental authority reinstated him through an order dated April 19, 2018, but denied back benefits and treated the intervening period as leave without pay.

His appeal before the Service Tribunal was only partially accepted, maintaining the denial of back benefits and treating the absence period as leave of the kind due, prompting him to approach the Supreme Court.

At the leave stage, the apex court examined whether a civil servant honourably acquitted of criminal charges is entitled to full back benefits under FR 54.

During proceedings, counsel for the appellant argued that once a civil servant is acquitted, he is entitled to full salary and benefits as if he had never been removed from service.

It was contended that the appellant's removal was based solely on his conviction and no departmental inquiry had been conducted. Therefore, denial of back benefits was unlawful and contrary to Fundamental Rules.

The K-P additional advocate general argued that since the appellant did not actually perform duty during the intervening period, he was not entitled to back benefits, and the period was rightly treated as leave without pay.

He further submitted that under Section 17 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Civil Servants Act, 1973, the competent authority had discretion in granting arrears. After examining the record, the Supreme Court noted that the appellant was initially suspended after being charged with an offence under FR 54.

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