FOUNDED BY QUAID-I-AZAM MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAH

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# PTI 'still in two minds' over march plans

• Panjutha hints at possibility of postponement, links it to acceptance of party's demands for Imran's release, snap polls, probe into May 9 events • PTI spox says no such proposal being discussed, insists only founder can postpone march • Govt deploys Rangers in Islamabad, multiple districts of Punjab ahead of PTI protest

By Ikram Junaidi and Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: A PTI leader on Thursday hinted at the possibility of postponing its protest march if the federal government agreed to hold elections within six to eight months, release party chief Imran Khan and other political prisoners, and investigate May 9 and November 26 crackdowns on the opposition party.

Advocate Naeem Haider Panjutha told *Dawn* that the protest could be postponed if these three assurances were given by the government.

There was no clarity on where such a proposal originated from, which added to confusion about the PTI's plans for its Sept 27 protest. Party spokesperson Sheikh Waqas Akram, however, denied any such proposal was being discussed at any party forum, saying only Imran Khan could take a decision even if such a proposal was on the table.

"The first and primary condition is that the public mandate be respected and for that free, fair and transparent elections must be held within six to eight months," Mr Panjutha said, while demanding a clear guarantee that elections would be held before the end of this financial year.

All political prisoners, including Imran Khan, must be released — not through any deal or political settlement, but through the courts and due process of law, he said, adding that all cases

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**150 PTI activists picked under 3-MPO, shifted to different jails: Page 4**

**KP CM directs police to resist unlawful orders: Page 8**

## Déjà vu at D-Chowk?

SITUATIONER

By Ismail Khan in Peshawar

KHYBER Pakhtunkhwa is on edge again, and not just for the deteriorating security and volatility in the south, which has been bad for quite some time now.

It is the provincial government's avowed single-point agenda to secure its party's chairman's freedom from Adiala jail, or at the very least, get him some relief like shifting him to a private hospital in Islamabad.

But days before 'D-Day', i.e. Sept 27, one cannot help but be struck by an overwhelming sense of déjà vu: this is November 2024 all over again, albeit with some changes to the cast.

Ali Amin Gandapur, the chief minister

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THE entrance to the M1 Motorway is blocked with barricades, as part of measures taken by the capital administration to prevent the PTI from staging its protest march on the capital.—Mohammad Asim

# Pezeshkian reaffirms pledge to Islamabad MoU: PM

• Premier tells Iranian president Islamabad and Tehran must work together to reduce regional tensions; apprises him of progress on Makkah accord • Meets Bangladesh PM; reiterates commitment to continued engagement under GSP+ in meeting with European officials

By Anwar Iqbal

NEW YORK: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has reaffirmed that the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) remained "totally acceptable" to Iran, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday, adding that Tehran agreed that there was a need to move it forward.

Speaking to the media in New York after his meeting with President Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the prime minister said the entire Pakistani leadership was united in its resolve to expedite the peace efforts outlined in the Islamabad MoU.

PM Shehbaz said the current situation in the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandab, and the provocative activities taking place there, required brotherly and friendly countries to work together to reduce tensions.

"For this purpose, today I met the Iranian president, had a detailed meeting with him, and told him that restoring peace to the region is the need of the hour, a very important need," he said.

He said Pakistan, as it had done in the past, would continue working for peace with Iran, which he described as a "brotherly" and neighbouring country.

According to PM Shehbaz, President Pezeshkian appreciated Pakistan's efforts and reaffirmed Iran's acceptance of the Islamabad MoU.

"The Iranian president appreciated this and said the Islamabad MoU is still totally acceptable to us and there's a need to move it forward," he said.

The prime minister said Pakistan would continue working with friendly and brotherly countries to help reduce tensions and

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PM Shehbaz Sharif shakes hands with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the 81st UNGA session.—PM Office

# 'Washington, Tehran exploring phased way out of war'

• Reports suggest Tehran could reopen Hormuz, may drop toll demand for blockade relief; but 'neither side wants to move first' • Gulf states press Trump for post-midterms war strategy; 80 countries call for full restoration of Gulf shipping • UAE bars Iranian airline flights

WASHINGTON: US and Iranian negotiators in New York are exploring a phased path out of war that would involve Tehran reopening the Strait of Hormuz and Washington lifting its economic blockade of Iran, sources close to the talks said.

The strait, through which a fifth of the world's oil passes, has become the central bargaining chip in efforts to end the war. Iran wants relief from a blockade that is strangling its economy; Washington wants free passage restored for ships on the vital oil route that Tehran has kept closed.

Talks are complicated by a familiar diplomatic problem: neither side wants to move first.

Two Iranian sources, two regional officials and two Western diplomats said the most workable option now on the table was a staged arrangement — Iran allowing ships through Hormuz in return for an end to the blockade and, potentially, access to frozen assets.

"One way forward would be to solve the crisis in stages. The first would be to end the blockade and reopen Hormuz," a senior Iranian official said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Such a deal would require Donald Trump to accept another interim arrangement, after a previous understanding collapsed in July. The US president has suggested a fuller agreement might only be reached after November's midterm elections. A senior European official said Iranian negotiators arrived in New York "with a very long list of demands".

The White House, for its part, has shown little urgency. "Iran is desperate for a deal, President Trump holds all the cards and will make whatever decision is best for the United States," a White House official said, adding that "crushing sanctions" and "one of the most successful blockades in history" had left Tehran "completely broke".

Trump, the official suggested,

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# PML-N's Dr Najeeb Naqi sworn in as AJK president

Years after his 'accidental' foray into politics, the Poonch native emerged as consensus candidate after speaker, PM slots went to Mirpur, Muzaffarabad men

By Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: Dr Najeeb Naqi of the ruling PML-N was sworn in as Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) president on Thursday, hours after being elected by a clear majority.

AJK Chief Justice Raja Saeed Akram administered the oath of office at a ceremony held at the President's House.

Dr Naqi is the 11th president since the introduction of the parliamentary form of government in 1975. Before that, AJK had a presidential system. Excluding those who held the office in an interim capacity, he is the 23rd president of the region overall.

Earlier in the day, Dr Naqi secured 32 votes against 13 for PPP candidate Chaudhry Latif Akbar in the election held at the Legislative Assembly Secretariat.

As elections in seven constituencies of Poonch have yet to be held, the assembly's current strength is 46.

PPP lawmaker Chaudhry Qasim Majeed did not turn up for voting, reportedly because he was out of the country.

As presiding officer Ayaz Bashir announced the result inside the Assembly Hall, a large gathering outside erupted in celebration while watching the proceedings live on a large screen.

Dr Naqi, who was in the Speaker's Chamber, came out to thank the gathering and was showered with flower petals amid enthusiastic slogans.

In his brief address, he said Poonch was passing through a difficult period and expressed hope that the region would overcome its problems and return to the path of development.

"I will do my best to ensure that the new [AJK] government lives up to the

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AJK Chief Justice Raja Saeed Akram administers oath to PML-N's Dr Najeeb Naqi as the region's president.
—Photo by the writer

## Pakistan hits more terror targets in Afghanistan

Dawn Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan conducted precision aerial and drone strikes at 10 locations across Afghanistan in retaliation for drones launched from the neighbouring country a day earlier, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said in the early hours of Thursday.

Earlier, on Sept 21, in response to recent terrorist attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan had conducted "calibrated" air strikes in the border region with Afghanistan against terrorist hideouts and safe havens of terrorist organisations, eliminating over 28 terrorists.

**Section 144 imposed across Balochistan for 30 days: Page 3**

"In exercise of its sovereign right to self-defence, Pakistan conducted precision aerial and drone strikes against 10 locations in Afghanistan used for launching and storing these drones," Mr Tarar wrote on X on Thursday.

He added that the strikes were "deliberate, precise, calibrated and proportionate, and strictly limited to identified military objectives directly

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## FUEL PRICES

| PETROL | |
|---|---|
| Today | Rs389.28 |
| Yesterday | Rs390.12 |

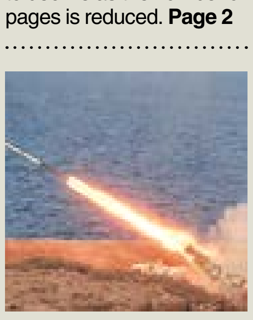
| DIESEL | |
|---|---|
| Today | Rs412.12 |
| Yesterday | Rs414.75 |

Source: Petroleum Division

ON OTHER PAGES

### Punjab govt okays fresh curriculum

The Punjab government has approved a new curriculum from Early Childhood Care and Education to Grade 5 for implementation from the 2027 academic year. The authorities claimed that the revised syllabus would reduce the textbook burden by 25 per cent and shift students away from rote learning. The cost of textbooks is also expected to decline as the number of pages is reduced. **Page 2**



### S. Arabia intercepts six missiles

Saudi Arabia intercepted six ballistic missiles fired by Yemen's Houthis on Thursday after issuing warnings for several regions, including the holy city of Makkah. The Saudi-led coalition supporting Yemen's internationally recognised government said the missiles were intercepted before reaching targets in Taif and Yanbu, a key Red Sea area important for Saudi oil exports. **Page 12**

# Govt working on 174 IMF-sought tweaks, NA panel told

• Proposed changes to be placed before parliament for approval • IMF mission to begin its review on 28th; Kristalina praises Pakistan's performance in meeting with PM Shehbaz • Sovereign Wealth Fund, remittances, sugar policy among areas under discussion

By Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: The government on Thursday said the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was seeking about 174 amendments to various laws to improve governance in the financial sector, state-owned enterprises, foreign remittances, climate change and local currency integration as part of its two ongoing programmes worth $8.4 billion.

"There are a total of 174 amendments the IMF wants to be passed," Finance Secretary Imdadullah Bosal told the National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue, presided over by Syed Naveed Qamar.

He said the government was working on the amendments, which would be placed before parliament for approval.

**Govt limits public disclosure of bureaucrats' assets: Page 3**

**The IMF loop: Editorial on Page 6**

The statement came ahead of formal negotiations with a visiting IMF staff mission for the fourth review of the $7bn Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and the third review of the Resilience Support Facility (RSF), beginning on Monday.

A day earlier, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva — who met PM Shehbaz Sharif on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly — appreciated the country's performance under its programme and praised the government's efforts for economic stabilisation, which she noted were yielding tangible results.

Mr Bosal said changes to the Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) law were also part of the discussions. He said the IMF had been clearly told that the proposed amendments would be presented to parliament, but their approval remained parliament's prerogative.

The SWF, covering five major or blue-chip companies, including OGDCL and Pakistan State Oil, has been a critical debating point of discussion as the IMF wants their governance and financial reporting standards to be brought at par with those applicable to other state-owned enterprises.

The SWF group was created as a prospective investment vehicle for government-owned entities from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE, but little progress has been made.

Mr Bosal said the government was also holding discussions with the IMF on remittances, which were critical to Pakistan's external stability. He said efforts were needed to address costly payment-system impediments, while the IMF had strongly opposed subsidies for facilitating remittances. Such subsidies, which had previously crossed Rs120bn, have already been withdrawn.

He said changes to the sugar policy were also among the benchmarks for the IMF review and that the federal government had circulated a draft policy for liberalisation. Three provinces had agreed to the policy, while one had raised reservations that needed to be addressed.

Committee Chairman Naveed Qamar questioned the government's strategy for power distribution companies (Discos), particularly the fate of loss-making entities. "You will give away the profitable Discos, but what will happen to the remaining ones?" he asked.

The panel stressed that economic reforms should be underpinned by a coherent, transparent and sustainable strategy, particularly where their implementation could

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