

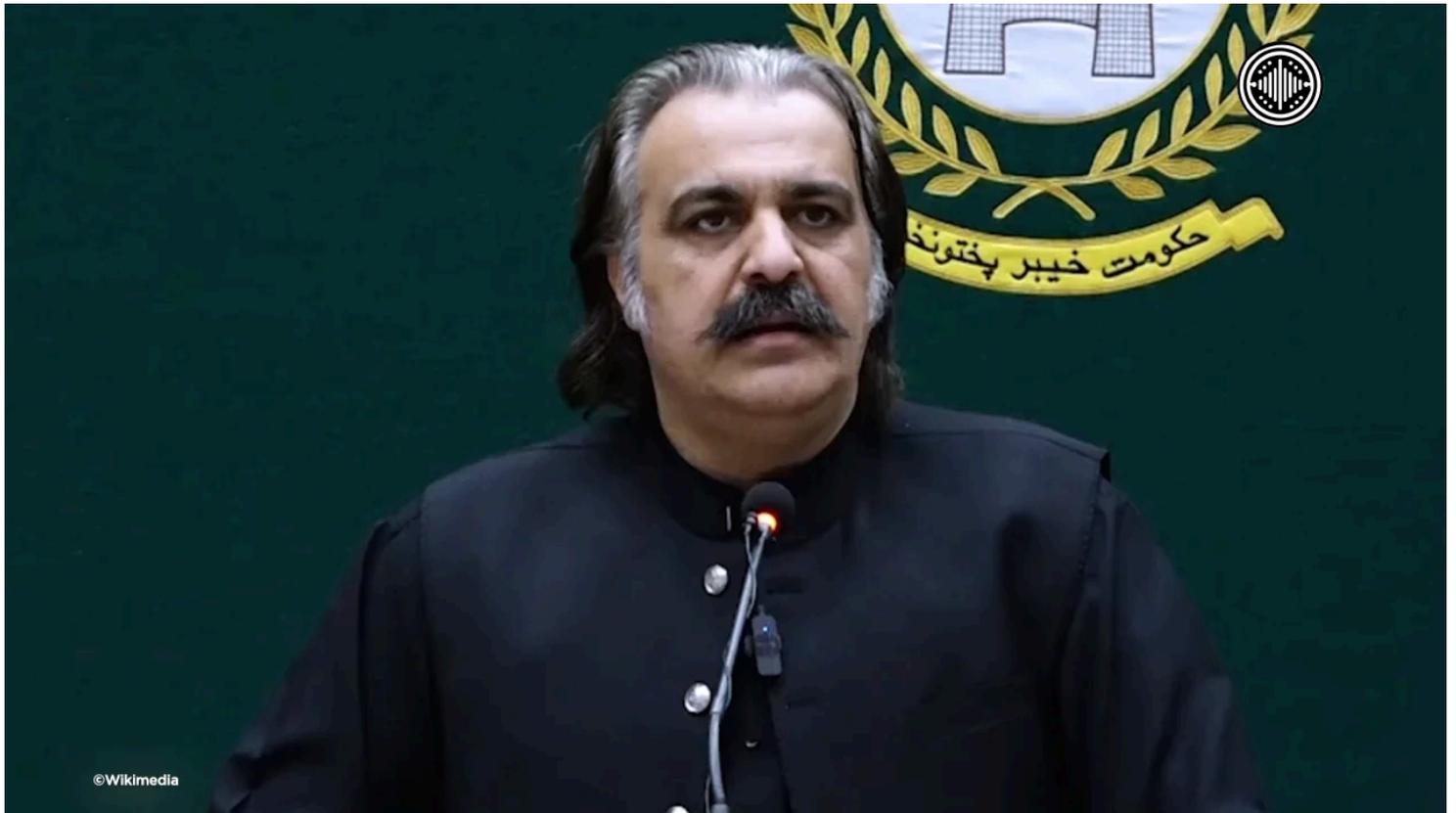
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Islamabad Court Rejects Plea in Gandapur Case

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ISLAMABAD – A local court in Islamabad has dismissed a request to allow the Advocate General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to record a statement on behalf of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in a case linked to the alleged possession of illegal weapons and alcohol.

Judicial Magistrate Mubashir Hassan Chishti issued the ruling on Thursday, upholding the non-bailable arrest warrants previously issued for the chief minister. The court directed that Gandapur must personally appear or record his statement via video link at the next hearing, scheduled for July 29.

The plea was submitted under Section 342 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which permits an accused person to explain circumstances arising from the evidence presented against them. The Advocate General argued that Gandapur's responsibilities as chief minister made it difficult for him to attend in person. However, the court stated that the legal requirement under this section necessitates either personal appearance or a direct video statement from the accused.

The case stems from an incident in October 2016 when Islamabad police reportedly recovered several Kalashnikov rifles, a pistol, ammunition, a bulletproof vest, tear gas shells, and bottles of liquor from Gandapur's vehicle parked near the Bani Gala area. At the time, he was serving as a PTI lawmaker.

Gandapur has denied the allegations and previously claimed the case is politically motivated. His legal team had requested multiple exemptions from appearance, citing various engagements, but the court had already rejected those requests. Non-bailable arrest warrants were issued on July 21 and reissued on July 22 when he failed to appear or submit a valid statement.

Although the court permitted Gandapur to record his testimony via video link, his legal team cited technical difficulties during the last scheduled hearing. The court has now reiterated that no further delays will be accepted, and that the statement must be submitted directly by the accused.

Legal analysts suggest the decision affirms the principle that no public office grants immunity from due legal process. The court emphasized that procedural law must be followed regardless of an individual's rank or public duties.

As of now, Gandapur has not issued a public statement. PTI has also not commented on the court's ruling.