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## CM pledges to fight war of State against terrorism with political responsibility and under joint course of action

Mir Sarfraz Bugti chairs high level meeting on law & order; strongly condemns Noshki incident; decides to revisit security plan for curbing such incidents in future

### Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has reiterated his government's resolve to fight the war of State against terrorism with political responsibility and under joint of action. He asserted that the war against terrorism is not mere of the security forces, rather it is the war

of State against peace enemies.

He stressed that this war has to be fought by the politicians, civil armed forces, judiciary and media.

He said that we would fight the war against terrorism with political responsibility and joint course of action.

The Chief Minister was chairing high level meeting on law and order

situation in the province here on Sunday morning.

The Inspector General of Police, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Chief Secretary, Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem besides senior civil and military officials were in attendance.

The Commissioner Rakhshan Division and Deputy Inspector General of Police briefed the meet-

ing about Noshki tragic incident.

While the meeting strongly condemned the Noshki incident, it decided to review and revisit the security plan in backdrop of the gory incident.

The Chief Minister on the occasion directed to ensure payment of financial compensation to the bereaved families of Noshki martyrs within week time.



GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH: President Asif Ali Zardari addressing a gathering on the occasion of the 45th death anniversary of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto



GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti along with MPs Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Haji Ali Madad Jattak and Mir Ubaidullah Gorgage coming to attend death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

## Iran warns Israel against retaliation, global powers urge restraint

US will not take part in retaliatory action against Iran, says White House

### Monitoring Desk

JERUSALEM: Iran warned Israel and the United States on Sunday of a much larger response if there is any retaliation for its mass drone and missile attack on Israeli territory overnight, as Israel said "the campaign is not over yet".

The threat of open warfare erupting between the arch Middle East foes and dragging in the United States has put the region on edge as Washington said America did not seek conflict with Iran but would not hesitate to protect its forces

and Israel.

Iran launched the attack over Israeli strike on its consulate in Syria on April 1 that killed top Revolutionary Guards commanders and followed months of clashes between Israel and Iran's regional allies, triggered by the war in Gaza.

However, the attack from hundreds of missiles and drones, mostly launched from inside Iran, caused only modest damage in Israel as most were shot down with the help of the US, Britain and Jordan.

An Air Force base in southern Israel was hit, but

continued to operate as normal and a 7-year old child was seriously hurt by shrapnel. There were no other reports of serious damage.

"We intercepted, we repelled, together we shall win," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on social media ahead of a planned 1230 GMT meeting of the war cabinet to discuss a response to the attack.

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said despite thwarting the attack,

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KARACHI: Palestine Foundation stages a protest demonstration against Israeli genocide in Gaza at Karachi Press Club

## Saudi Arabia commits \$1b investment in Reko Diq project

ISLAMABAD (INP): Saudi Arabia is set to inject a hefty \$1 billion into the Reko Diq Copper-Gold Project nestled in the scenic Chagai District of Balochistan Province, Pakistan.

The investment is anticipated to take place next month, pending the clearance of any hurdles by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

To ensure a seamless process for Saudi Arabia's investment, the Prime Minister will establish a dedicated committee within the Ministry of Finance. This committee will encompass all relevant stakeholders from Pakistan, ensuring a collaborative approach.

This milestone underscores the fruitful endeavors of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in fostering a conducive environment for foreign investment within the nation.

Such an injection of capital is poised to not only

pave the way for further foreign investments but also aligns with SIFC's mandate to spur economic growth.

Following this significant investment, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are expected to ink agreements aimed at strengthening investment within the mining sector.

Online adds: Saudi Arabia has decided to make investment of overall 7 billion dollars in Pakistan. According to government sources a high level 100-member delegation of Saudi Arabia under Saudi foreign minister prince Faisal bin Farhan will arrive in Pakistan on April 16.

The delegation will include Saudi ministers for investment, water and agriculture, environment, industries, mineral resources and energy.

Secretary general of Saudi-Pak Supreme Coordination Council and Saudi investors will also part of delegation.

## CM Balochistan attends DA of ZAB

### Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti reached Garhi Khuda Bakhsh on Sunday.

The members of provincial assembly, Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Ali Madad Jatak, Ubaidullah Gorgaj, Secretary Information PPP, Sarbuland Khan Jogezi and other leaders were also accompanied by the Chief Minister.

They participated in the 45th death anniversary of the founding leader of PPP, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

They also paid rich tributes to him on his death anniversary besides offering fatiha for the departed soul.

Meanwhile, in a message issued on eve of his death anniversary, Chief Minister said that the parliamentary system of the country is because of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He said that Shaheed Bhutto had given the constitution to the country which guarantees basic human rights of every citizen.

## President Zardari says PPP will continue to support govt to achieve economic stability

GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari says Pakistan People's Party will continue to support the government for economic stability and prosperity in the country.

He was addressing the public gathering on 45th death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto in Larkana on Sunday.

The President said Pakistan is blessed with vast potential of minerals and natural resources and we will emerge from current economic crisis through exploitation of these resources.

Paying tribute to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, he said Bhutto family always sacrificed their lives for the country and people.

President Zardari thanked the people for pos-

ing their confidence on Pakistan People's Party in general elections.

The President assailed the bureaucracy in Islamabad saying Pakistan was not a poor country but it had been made so by mindset of the 'babus' [officers] sitting in the capital. Zardari recounted how former prime minister Benazir Bhutto had appointed him as the chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, despite doubts from some friends about his leadership capabilities.

The president emphasised that Pakistan's status as a poor nation was not predetermined, adding that despite Allah's provision of abundant wealth, the nation suffered from a lack of intellect. Zardari stressed the importance of cultivating a mindset that seeks to understand and address the country's challenges comprehensively.

## Pakistan concerned over ongoing developments in ME, calls for restraint

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sunday said that Pakistan was watching with deep concern the ongoing developments in the Middle East (ME) and called upon all the parties to exercise the utmost restraint and move towards de-escalation.

"Today's developments demonstrate the consequences of the breakdown of diplomacy. These also underline the grave implications in cases where the UN Security Council is unable to fulfill its responsibilities of maintaining international peace and security," the Foreign Office

Spokesperson said in a press statement.

It was now critically urgent to stabilize the situation and restore peace, it was further stressed.

The spokesperson said that for months, Pakistan had underlined the necessity of international efforts to prevent the expansion of hostilities in the region and for immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

On April 2, Pakistan had pointed to the dangers of an attack on the Iranian consular office in Syria as a major escalation in an already volatile region, it was added.

## JIT comprising police, army officers formed to investigate Bahawalnagar incident

LAHORE (INP): A six-member Joint Inquiry Team (JIT) comprising officers of police, military and local administration has been constituted to probe the Bahawalnagar incident wherein a faceoff broke out between some police officials and military personnel, The News reported on Sunday.

The Punjab Home Department has formed the team and appointed Special Secretary Interior Atta-ur-Rehman as its convener. The JIT also includes the Bahawalpur Division commissioner, DIG police special branch Punjab and officers of Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Military Intelligence and Intelligence Bureau.



LAHORE: People carrying their luggage coming back from their home towns after spend their Eid-ul-Fitr holidays at Lahore Railway Station, in the Provincial Capital.

## Bilawal calls for 'Charter of Reconciliation' among all political parties

PPP chief warns of dictatorship if politicians do not focus on national reconciliation



GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH (INP): PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that all politicians and political parties should work on a 'Charter of National Reconciliation' to avoid fighting with each other and shun politics of foul language.

"Rather than playing dharna dharna, we should sit on the table and have a political dialogue to bring improvement in our system,

democracy, and institutions through amendments," he said while addressing a large crowd in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, Sindh on Sunday.

The PPP chief's recommendation comes as the newly formed alliance of opposition parties Tehreek Tahafuz-e-Aain will launch a massive movement.

This alliance kicked off its protest movement against alleged rigging in the February 8 general elections

from Balochistan by staging two separate public gatherings in Pishin and Chaman on Saturday.

Without naming the multi-party confab, Bilawal described it as the "PNA (Pakistan National Alliance) 2" and added that the alliance was beating drums for alleged vote-rigging to cause "economic and political instability."

He reminded the parties of the result of such movements, warning them of the risk of dictatorship in the country.

"When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the PM of this country, some conspirators like 'nine stars' started a campaign and thought that they would oust Bhutto and come into power. But because of their campaign Pakistan had to bear dictatorship for 10 years and this risk exists today," he said while addressing a large

Continued on page 2

## President, PM felicitate Sikh community on Baisakhi festival

ISLAMABAD (Online) President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif have felicitated Sikh community on the celebration of Baisakhi festival.

In their message on this event, they that this occasion gives message of love, happiness, peace and affection. He said that Pakistan felt pride over its diverse cultural heritage.

The President said that Pakistan will ensure all steps to facilitate the Sikh community.

In his felicitation message, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Government of Pakistan and all the provincial governments are ensuring provision of all facilities to the Sikh Yatees who were visiting their religious places in Pakistan.

Shehbaz Sharif termed Baisakhi as the festival of spreading love and happiness. Prime Minister proudly said that Pakistan was a beautiful blend of different faiths and culture and the colours of Baisakhi further add to this beauty.

## We want supremacy of law & constitution: Sharif family afraid of Qaidi No. 804, says Umar Ayub



### Independent Report

QUETTA: The central Secretary General of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) and leader of Opposition in National Assembly, Umar Ayub Khan has stated that we want supremacy of law and constitution in the country, and nothing else for the movement has been started for protection of the constitution.

He believed that the coming era of government is of PTI after the incumbent government of Form 47 would be wind-up. He claimed that the government formed through Form 47 would no more run.

Continued on page 2

The senior leader of PTI was addressing hurriedly called press conference before his departure from Quetta on Sunday morning.

Umar Ayub had come to Quetta to participate in the protest public meetings held in Pishin and Chaman besides attending the crucial meeting of the six-party alliance, which are part of the movement for protection of constitution in the country.

A leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Sharif Khilji also announced to join the PTI after resigning

Continued on page 2

## PDMA issues advisory in view of risks of sky lightning during rains in Balochistan province

### Independent Report

QUETTA: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has issued advisory for protection from the sky lightning during rains in the Balochistan province. According to the directives issued by PDMA on Sunday, it was mentioned that there are risks of lightning during rains in the province.

The PDMA pointed out that casualties are being reported due to lightning in the province.

It was also pointed out that lightning generally takes place at open and high places. Therefore, general

public should adopt preventive measures to save them from lightning, it was advised.

It was further advised to the citizens to avoid from taking shelter and sitting under trees during the lightning. The PDMA also issued directives to the people not to move in the plane fields, coasts and other open places and not use mobile phone games, landline phone, computer and laptop in open.

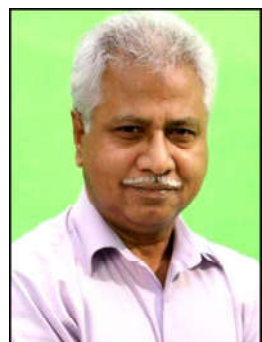
Moreover, the people were also advised not to travel on motorcycle and bicycle, etc. during lightning.

## “Navigating Pakistan’s Population Challenge: Strategies for Sustainable Growth”

By Nazimuddin

Pakistan is grappling with a significant challenge: a continuous rise in its population growth rate, as highlighted in the latest census report. Data from the 2017 census revealed a growth rate of 2.4 percent, which has since increased to 2.55 percent by 2023. This alarming trend emphasizes the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to combat the various factors contributing to overpopulation in the country.

exacerbate the issue, along with factors like poverty, illiteracy, and low female labor force participation. Pakistan must adopt a multifaceted strategy to address overpopulation effectively, drawing inspiration from successful models in other countries. This strategy should prioritize robust family planning programs aimed at reducing birth rates. Empowering women to make informed decisions about their reproductive health, ensuring comprehensive access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, and raising the legal age of marriage are pivotal steps.



Expanding access to modern contraceptives, engaging religious leaders to dispel misconceptions, providing pre-marital counseling, and advocating for birth spacing are integral components of this strategy. The ramifications of overpopulation extend beyond demographic concerns, impacting various sectors such as the economy, environment, education, and healthcare. Economic challenges, including unemployment and poverty rates, are exacerbated by rapid population growth. Environmental degradation, inadequate waste management, and heightened resource demand strain the country's infrastructure and threaten ecosystem sustainability. The education sector faces challenges like high rates of out-of-school children and declining education standards, while the healthcare system struggles with overwhelming demand, compromising the quality of care.

Addressing overpopulation requires concerted efforts from policymakers, civil society, religious leaders, and communities. Prioritizing family planning, enhancing reproductive health awareness, empowering women, and investing in education and healthcare infrastructure are critical steps toward sustainable population control and socio-economic development. As Pakistan stands at a crucial juncture, decisive action is imperative to secure a better future for future generations.

The writer is former director DGPR.

Addressing overpopulation requires concerted efforts from policymakers, civil society, religious leaders, and communities. Prioritizing family planning, enhancing reproductive health awareness, empowering women, and investing in education and healthcare infrastructure are critical steps toward sustainable population control and socio-economic development. As Pakistan stands at a crucial juncture, decisive action is imperative to secure a better future for future generations.

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## Pak Army starts tree plantation drive in North Waziristan

RAWALPINDI (INP): Pakistan Army has started tree plantation drive on the arrival of spring season at Bang Dar area of Tehsil Ghulam Khan in North Waziristan.



Initially, Pakistan Army leveled the land to make it cultivable and then fruit plants were cultivated.

Pakistan Army also distributed saplings to the locals and guidelines were also given to them regarding plant protection for optimal growth.

People expressed gratitude to the Pakistan Army for this historic initiative as there will be lasting and positive results on the climate and the lives of the people of North Waziristan.

## Sharif family afraid of Qaidi...

Continued from page 1 from his party.

Also present on the occasion were leaders of PTI including Akhunzada Hussain, Dawood Shah Kakar, Noor Khan Khilji, Muhammad Asif Tareen, Sardar Zainul Abidin Khilji, Barat Khan Khilji, Khurshid Kakar, Najeebullah Kharoti, Siddiq Tareen and others.

Addressing the press conference, Umar Ayub Khan said that Balochistan is my home town and he has come to his home. He has lot of love and affection with Balochistan. He said that the resources of the province should be used for well being of its masses.

Referring the public meetings in Pishin and Chaman, he said that hurdles were created in the way of PTI workers for participation in the public meetings held in Pishin and Chaman on Saturday.

He charged that the PTI workers were not allowed

to carry the party flags while some were also manhandled. Despite this and hard weather conditions, the public meetings remained very successful, adding he claimed.

He said that participation of people in large number proves that they have lot of expectations with the ideology and vision of party leader, Imran Khan.

The PTI leader said that our parties alliance would hold public meetings all over the country.

He said that PTI Qaid Iman Khan has given political consciousness to the masses, and it is not the “old Pakistan” rather they (masses) have become conscious.

Referring the former Deputy Speaker National Assembly, Qasim Suri, the PTI’s secretary General said that he (Suri) is a brave person and proud worker, and so Salar Khan, however, his (Suri) family is passing through hard time.

## Joint session of parliament rescheduled

ISLAMABAD (Online): The joint session of parliament has been rescheduled.

According to Parliamentary affairs sources, the joint session of parliament will take place on April 18 instead of April 16.

President Asif Ali Zardari will address the joint session of parliament on the commencement of new parliamentary year.

The joint session will be attended by prime ministers of AJK and GB, chief ministers of all the four provinces, governors and all the three services chiefs will attend the joint session of parliament.

Arrangements have been made in guests gallery for foreign ambassadors in order to participate in joint session. Special passes will be issued to media persons and guests. Opposition has finalized its planning to protest on the occasion of address of president.

## Three dead, 8 injured in collision between two buses

KARACHI (INP): At least three people including two baby girls were killed and eight were seriously injured when two passenger buses collided with each other at Superhighway, in Karachi.

As per rescue sources, two passenger buses collided with each other near Joghia Morr at Superhighway as the drivers lost control of vehicles due to rain.

As a result, three people including two baby girls and eight people were seriously injured. The injured and bodies were moved to the Jinnah Hospital. As per initial reports, the identity of the injured could not be revealed.



ISLAMABAD: The New Zealand cricket team arrived to participate in 5 match T-20I series against Pakistan

## New Zealand team arrives in Islamabad ahead of T20I series

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The New Zealand cricket team arrived in Islamabad in the early hours of Sunday morning ahead of their T20I series against Pakistan set to commence on April 18.

The hosts, led by Michael Bracewell, will go up against the Men in Green in a five-match series of which three will be played in Rawalpindi, while the rest of the two games will be played in Lahore with the series culminating on April 27.

A day earlier, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced the match officials for the forthcoming series. The panel led by Andy Pycroft, a member of the Emirates International Cricket Council (ICC) elite panel of match referees, includes Aleem Dar, Asif Yaqoob, Faisal Afridi and Rashid Riaz.

On April 9, the board announced the much-awaited Babar-Azam-led 17-member squad for the T20I series with pacer Mohammad Amir and all-rounder Imad Wasim making a comeback into the national side.

The series will also likely see Usman Khan and

Muhammad Irfan Khan making their debut for the Green Shirts owing to their impressive performances in the recently concluded ninth edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL 9).

Match fixtures  
18 April – 1st T20I, Rawalpindi  
20 April – 2nd T20I, Rawalpindi  
21 April – 3rd T20I, Rawalpindi  
25 April – 4th T20I, Lahore  
27 April – 5th T20I, Lahore

Squads for T20 2024  
Pakistan: Babar Azam, Ahrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Fakhar Zaman, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Amir, Irfan Niazi, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Afridi, Usman Khan, Zaman Khan, Usama Mir.

New Zealand: Michael Bracewell, Tom Blundell, Mark Chapman, Josh Clarkson, Jacob Duffy, Dean Foxcroft, Ben Lister, Cole McCoinchie, Zack Fowkes, Jimmy Neesham, Will O'Rourke, Tim Robinson, Ben Sears, Tim Seifert, Ish Sodhi.

## Baisakhi encompasses cultural equality, universal unity sans borders

LAHORE (APP): Baisakhi, also known as Vaisakhi, is an important Punjabi festival celebrated in the Pakistani and Indian Punjab and other parts of the both countries. It falls on April 13th or 14th every year and marks the beginning of the new solar year and the harvest season.

It is a day to celebrate 1699 - the year when Sikhism was born as a collective faith. As a whole the message of Baisakhi is peace and love.

Noted educationist and Sikh activist in Pakistan Professor Kalyan Singh told APP that to celebrate Vaisakhi, Sikhs visit important religious places of worship called Gurudwaras.

These holy places are also especially decorated for the occasion, Kalyan said, adding many people enjoy parades and special processions through the streets called Nagar Kirtans.

To a query, he said that ‘Nagar’ means town and ‘Kirtan’ means the singing of hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib, which is the Sikh holy book.

It is worth mentioning here that the government of Punjab (Pakistan) has declared that the Baisakhi celebration would be observed officially.

It is worth mentioning here that Punjab (Pakistan) is celebrated on Baisakhi. As the Punjab people also gather around the first crop of the Rabi season. The farmers offer their prayers for an abundant harvest and prosperity.

In addition, the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, founded the Khalsa Panth on this day, giving it prominence in

Sikh tradition. According to various traditions, Baba Guru Nanak was inspired by a unique and powerful spiritual experience that awarded him with a vision of the true nature of God.

To Sikh rituals, Wesakhi’s cultural festivities adopt various spiritual meditations that Baba Guru Nanak experienced while concluding the idea, that the way to find spiritual growth was only through thinking power, and through living in a virtuous way that reflects the feelings of presence of the divine within each human being on earth.

Meanwhile Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday in a statement has felicitated the Sikhs on the occasion of the Baisakhi festival. He said “Pakistan is a beautiful blend of different faiths and cultures” and the colour of Baisakhi further added to this beauty.

The PM said that the government of Pakistan and its provincial governments will provide all-out facilities to Sikh pilgrims, coming from all over the world, to perform Baisakhi rituals.

The main event of the Sikh religious festival, Baisakhi Mela, was held at Gurudwara Panja Sahib in Hasanabdal on Sunday. Thousands of Sikh pilgrims from all over the world, including India participated.

It is worth mentioning here that this year Pakistan has extended visas to 2,843 Indian Sikh pilgrims, granting them the opportunity to engage in the festivities of Baisakhi Mela and Khalsa Janam Din.

Subsequently, on April 15, the pilgrims will travel

to Nankana Sahib from Hasanabdal, where they will pay homage to Sacha Sauda (Ferozabad) during their stay. This will be followed by a visit to Gurudwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur (Narawal) on April 18.

The pilgrimage will continue with a visit to Gurudwara Rodi/Rori Sahib (Eminabad) on April 20, where the pilgrims will spend a day in contemplation.

The culmination of the spiritual journey will see the Sikh pilgrims bidding farewell to Pakistan on April 22, marking the completion of their 10-day pilgrimage.

Sardar Ramesh Singh, the head of the Pakistan Sikh Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee and provincial minister for minority affairs in Punjab, said that Basakhi and Khalsa Janam Day are distinct festivals.

He recounted the historical significance of Baisakhi, stating that on this day in 1699, the tenth Guru Gobind founded the Sikh Panth at Anandpur Sahib. Pakistan is home to several Sikh religious sites and every year thousands of followers of the religion visit the country to perform sacred rites.

In all Sikh holy places including Nankana Sahib, Gurudwara Rodi Sahib (Amen Abad Gujranwala) Kartarpur and Panja Sahib (Hasan Abdal), the procession with religious zeal pours into the streets of these cities.

The local Muslim community also pays respect to the great leader and help Sikh pilgrims decorate the passage covering it with banners.

## Bilawal calls for ‘Charter of...’

Continued from page 1 crowd in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, Sindh on Sunday.

The country would not develop and democracy would be at the receiving end if politicians make such an environment and not focus on national reconciliation and are involved in politics of bad-mouthing.

While advising the politicians to “come to their senses”, he called for dialogue between political parties. The PPP chief added that the party would try to provide relief to the people in the provinces ruled by them.

He also mentioned about the ‘Charter of Democracy’, saying that the party achieved 90% of its target under the agreement. The remaining 10 per cent was related to the judicial reforms, he said and hoped to do it with all parties, legal fraternity, and civil society.

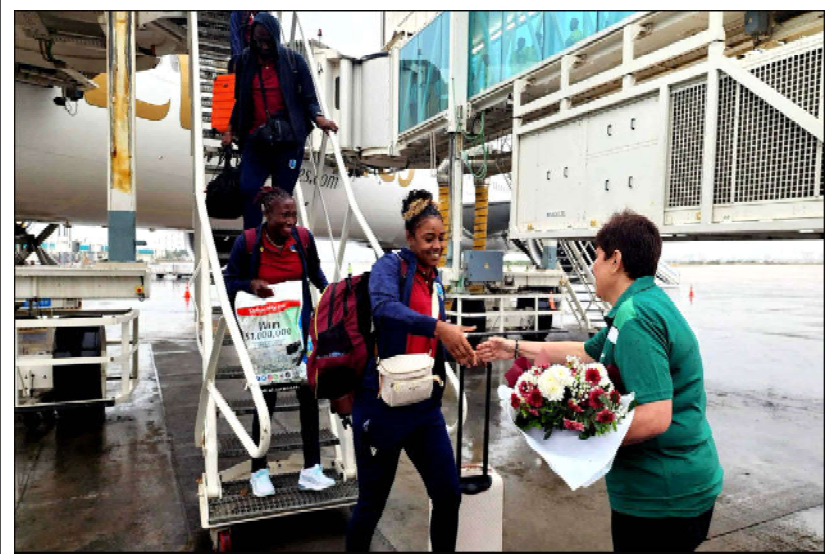
Bilawal called for reviving people’s trust in the national institutions. Every worker of the PPP

wants the implementation of the charter of democracy, he said.

President Asif Ali Zardari also addressed the people. He shunned the impression that Pakistan was a poor country and blamed the “thinking, understanding and softheaded” of ‘Babus in Islamabad’.

He said that such thinking has made Pakistan a poor state, reiterating that the country was not poor. The country has everything, but lacks intellectual capacity, Zardari said and called for sitting together. “What is about power? Power is about people’s service and we fight for it,” he said and stressed the need for dialogue.

“If you cannot come to that point then withdraw. The PPP for the past 40 years have been fighting. Sometimes it withdraws, advances, sidesteps and takes a front step,” the president said and called for thinking before taking any step.



KARACHI: West Indies Women Cricket Team arrived in Karachi to feature in eight white-ball matches against Pakistan, starting from 18 April

## Pakistan players win gold, bronze medals in Australia Junior Squash

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistani squash team has showcased exceptional talent by clinching gold and bronze medals in the Australia Junior Squash Championship 2024 held at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre at Albert Park, Victoria.

The Pakistani players dominated the courts throughout the tournament, culminating in impressive victories on the final day.



In Boys U-13, Huzaifa Shahid (Pakistan) defeated Gng Hung Yu (Australia) by 3-0.

In U-15 Boys, Yahya Khan (Pakistan) triumphed over Henry Kross (Australia) by 3-0.

In Boys U-17, Ibrahim Zeb (Pakistan) secured victory against Brodie Bennett (New Zealand) by 3-0.

In Girls U-13, Mahnoor Ali (Pakistan) outshined Emily Senior (Malaysia) by 3-0.

In Girls U-17, Mehwish (Pakistan) emerged victorious over Erin Willie (Malaysia) by 3-2.

Meanwhile, Harmas Ali Raja secured bronze medal in U11 category, Fawad Khan in U13 and Azaan Ali Khan in U15 category further highlighting Pakistan’s success in the championship.

Continued from page 1

the military campaign was not over and “we must be prepared for every scenario”.

Israel’s Channel 12 TV cited an unnamed Israeli official overnight as saying there would be a “significant response” to the attack.

Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian said Tehran had informed the United States its attack on Israel would be “limited” and for self defence. He said Israel’s neighbours had also been informed of its planned strikes 72-hours in advance.

Global powers Russia, China, France and Germany as well as Arab states Egypt, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates urged restraint.

“We will do everything to stop a further escalation,” German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told reporters during a visit to China. “We can only warn everyone, especially Iran, against continuing this way.”

Turkey also warned Iran it did not want further tension in the region.

The Islamic Republic’s mission to the United Na-

## Iran warns Israel against retaliation....

Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian said Tehran had informed the United States its attack on Israel would be “limited” and for self defence. He said Israel’s neighbours had also been informed of its planned strikes 72-hours in advance.

Iranian army chief of staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri warned on television that “our response will be much larger than tonight’s military action if Israel retaliates against Iran” and told Washington its bases could also be attacked if it helped Israel retaliate.

Meanwhile President Joe Biden warned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the US will not take part in a counter-offensive against Iran if Israel decides to retaliate for a mass drone and missile attack on Israeli territory overnight, a White House official said.

The threat of open warfare erupting between the arch Middle East foes and dragging in the United States has put the region on edge, triggering calls for restraint from global powers and Arab nations to avoid further escalation.

Advertisement • Scroll to continue US media reported ear-

lier on Sunday that Biden had informed Netanyahu he would not participate in retaliatory action in a phone call overnight. The remarks were confirmed to Reuters by a White House official.

The US will continue to help Israel defend itself, but does not want war, John Kirby, the White House’s top national security spokesperson, told ABC’s “This Week” program on Sunday.

Iran launched the attack over a suspected Israeli strike on its consulate in Syria on April 1 that killed top Revolutionary Guards commanders and followed months of clashes between Israel and Iran’s regional allies, triggered by the war in Gaza.

However, the attack from more than 300 missiles and drones, mostly launched from inside Iran, caused only modest damage in Israel as most were shot down with the help of the U.S., Britain and Jordan.

An Air Force base in southern Israel was hit, but continued to operate as normal and a 7-year old

child was seriously hurt by shrapnel. There were no other reports of serious damage.

Two senior Israeli ministers signalled on Sunday that retaliation by Israel is not imminent and it would not act alone.

“We will build a regional coalition and exact the price from Iran in the fashion and timing that is right for us,” centrist minister Benny Gantz said ahead of a war cabinet meeting.

Defence Minister Yoav Gallant also said Israel had an opportunity to form a strategic alliance against “against this grave threat by Iran which is threatening to mount nuclear explosives on these missiles, which could be an extremely grave threat,” he said. Iran denies seeking nuclear weapons.

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also be attacked if it helped Israel retaliate.

Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian said Tehran had informed the United States its attack on Israel would be “limited” and for self defence and that regional neighbours had also been informed of its planned strikes 72-hours in advance.

A Turkish diplomatic source said Iran had informed Turkey in advance of what would happen.

Iran said the attack was aimed at punishing “Israeli crimes” but it now “deemed the matter concluded.”

Russia, China, France and Germany as well as Arab states Egypt, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates urged restraint and the U.N. Security Council was set to meet at 4 p.m. ET (2000 GMT) on Sunday.

“We will do everything to stop a further escalation,” German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on a visit to China. “We can only warn everyone, especially Iran, against continuing this way.”

Turkey also warned Iran it did not want further tension in the region.

## Bilawal highlights climate crisis amidst rain-related losses in country

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has conveyed heartfelt condolences for the tragic loss of lives resulting from multiple accidents amidst heavy rains across various regions of the nation, notably Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

He also voiced his concern regarding the incidents of lightning strikes exacerbated by the changing climate conditions during the inclement weather. According to the press release issued by the Media

Cell Bilawal House here Sunday, the PPP Chairman lamented the loss of lives caused by lightning strikes as well as other rain-related incidents in South Punjab, including its districts Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Rajanpur and Lodhran. He urged the provincial government to deploy all available resources to fulfill its duty in aiding the rain-affected victims throughout Punjab. Bilawal Bhutto expressed regret over the loss of lives in accidents during the rains in various areas of the prov-

ince, including the lower and upper Chitral areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He urged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and related disaster management agencies to provide immediate assistance to the rain victims, aiding citizens trapped in various problems including landslides. He further conveyed his heartfelt grief and sorrow for the tragic loss of lives and property resulting from lightning strikes and other accidents in various areas of Balochistan, including Chaman, Dera Bugti, and Kohlu. He ex-

pressed confidence that the People's government in Balochistan will stand by the rain victims, ensuring they are not left alone during this challenging time. Bilawal Bhutto highlighted the surge in lightning incidents nationwide as indicative of climate change, emphasizing the imperative role of universities and research institutions in addressing this issue. He underscored the necessity for exceptional spirit and leadership at the government level to shield citizens from climate change impacts.



ISLAMABAD: People stand in a queue wait for their turn for buying tickets as going back their home towns after spend their Eid-ul-Fitr holidays, at Faizabad bus station in the city.



ISLAMABAD: A view of Saudi Arabia and Pakistani national flags fixed on a green belt in front of Prime Minister Secretariat in the Federal Capital, in connection with Saudi delegation, led by Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan will visit in Pakistan.

## Letter of IHC judges Petition seeking constitution of full court to hear suo motu case likely to be heard this week

ISLAMABAD (Online): The petition seeking constitution of full court to hear suo motu case on the letter of Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges is likely to be heard along with central case in Supreme Court (SC) in this week.

The new petition has been filed by 6 lawyers including former president SC Bar, Abid Zubairi.

The petitioners including Abid Zubairi, Shahab Sirki, Shaqat Choochan, Munir Ahmad

Kakar, Chaudhry Ishtiaq Ahmad Khan and Tahir Sarfraz Abbasi have prayed the court to make them respondents in the case.

The petition said, Justice (Rtd) Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui has too leveled the allegation before 6 judges.

The petition said that the decision of constituting inquiry commission is not decision of full court meeting or supreme Judicial Council (SJC) but decision was taken to establish inquiry commission after the

meeting between Chief Justice of Pakistan and administrative head.

The petitioner requested the court through the petition that administration and intelligence agencies be restrained from interfering in judiciary. Need is there that the incident be fully investigated.

It is pertinent to mention here Pakistan Bar Council has already expressed its stance alike this petition in a demand in one of its Executive meeting.

## SIM cards of nearly 2m non-filers to be blocked

ISLAMABAD (INP): Implementing the orders of International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has decided to block the SIM cards of nearly 2 million individuals involved in tax evasion.

Sources stated that FBR chairman has greenlighted the blocking of SIM cards of tax evaders dispatched instructions to relevant officials.

The FBR has identified 1.8 million tax evaders. Sources claimed that the FBR also has the authority to disconnect electricity connections, besides blocking SIM cards of non-filers.

Meanwhile, special powers have been given to 145 district tax officers across the country in this regard. Action will be taken under Section 114-B against

non-filers and tax evaders. Sources added that the FBR had previously sent notices to such individuals, but returns were still not filed. After detailed discussions between authorities, the decision to block SIM cards has been finalised.

Earlier in January, it was reported that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) 'delayed' nationwide crackdown against non-filers due to 'legal issues'. Sources privy to the development said the action is being 'delayed' over non-completion of the Income Tax General Order because FBR may have to face courts on legal grounds.

The IMF's move to issue notices to hundreds of thousands of non-filers is part of a broader strategy to boost tax compliance in Pakistan.

## Posters urge Jammu people to foil Hindutva's nefarious agenda

ISLAMABAD (APP): Posters carrying an appeal to the people of Jammu region in occupied Jammu and Kashmir have emerged at various places in the territory, urging them to wake up and foil BJP-RSS' evil agenda of usurping their rights. According to Kashmir Media Service, the posters pasted by the Jammu Dogra Liberation Front have appeared at different places in the Jammu region and on social media platforms as a form of protest against India's brutal and anti-Jammu policies.

The posters read, "Since August 2019, the BJP/RSS has stripped away our rights.

## ECP empowers ROs, POs with first-class magistrate authority for by-elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has granted Returning Officers (ROs) and Presiding Officers (POs) powers equivalent to those of first-class magistrates to ensure the seamless execution of the forthcoming by-elections on five national and 16 provincial Assembly constituencies scheduled for April 21.

District Returning Officers (DROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) are vested with magisterial powers as per the notification issued by the ECP, in

adherence to Section 193 of the Election Act 2017. The Presiding officers have the authority to employ these powers during the by-elections across five national and 16 provincial assemblies in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan, spanning from April 20 to 22, until the official declaration of final results for the candidates.

Returning Officers (ROs) and District Returning Officers (DROs) are empowered to take action against candidates who violate the code of conduct set

forth by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). These officers have the authority equivalent to that of a Magistrate first class concerning offenses outlined in Sections 169 and 171. They can also initiate legal proceedings under Section 190 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and conduct summary trials as per Chapter XX of the code. It is important to note that by-elections will be conducted on April 21 for 21 constituencies of National and Provincial Assemblies.

## Iran gave appropriate response to Israel's evil acts: Senior Pak expert

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistani military expert Raashid Wali Janjua has said that the Islamic Republic of Iran's operation in occupied Palestine was an appropriate response to Israel's evil acts.

In an interview with IRNA in Islamabad on Sunday, the Pakistani expert said that after the public opinion pressures due to the defeat in the Gaza war, Israel targeted the Iranian consulate in Damascus to divert world public attention, and we saw Iran's response to the Zionists' action.

He added that Israel's attack on the Iranian mission in Syria early this month

was a violation of the territory of an independent country, and the Islamic Republic of Iran also has said to take revenge on the perpetrators of this violation. The military expert further described the operation as a calculated tactic, adding that Israel's behavior in the region made Tehran's military response inevitable and it seems that this response was given in the right place. The IRGC launched an extensive retaliatory missile and drone operation against the Zionist regime on Saturday night in response to its attack on the Iranian mission in Syria early this month.

## 994 electricity thieves held; over Rs 88m recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The administration had managed arrest of 994 accused under special campaign launched against electricity theft in Rawalpindi division while over Rs 88 million were recovered from them, said Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak.

He informed that 1186 FIRs were registered since 7 September 2023 and all available resources were being used to prevent electricity theft. He directed the authorities to ensure 100 percent electricity theft recoveries in all districts of the division.

## DIG Operations Nadeem pays surprise visit to Margalla Police Station

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: The DIG (Operations), Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari paid a surprise visit to Margalla police station, a public relations officer said.

During the visit, DIG Operations awarded two police officers for good performance and checked the records, roznamcha, front desk, record room, lockup, investigation officers' under any circumstances. He directed the police officials to utilize all available resources for the convenience of citizens.

Effective steps should be taken immediately for the prevention of serious crimes, apprehension of accused and recovery of stolen goods.

He further said that no effort will be spared in providing relief to the citizens,

rooms and residential barracks. He said that inappropriate behavior toward citizens will not be tolerated



the protection of life and property of the citizens is among the top priorities of the Islamabad Capital, he maintained.

## Six outlaws netted, narcotics, weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) apprehended six outlaws from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession.

A public relations officer said on Sunday that, responding to the directions of DIG Operations Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified its crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Meanwhile, the Aabpara police team arrested an accused named Adnan Khan and recovered one 30-bore pistol from his possession.

Likewise, the Karachi Company police team arrested two accused named Abdul Samad and Bilal and recovered two 30-bore pistols from their possession.

The Tarnol police team arrested an accused named Fazal Subhan and recovered one 9mm pistol from his possession. Moreover, the Noon police team arrested an accused named Baqir Hussain and recovered one 9mm pistol from his possession. The Lohi Bher police team arrested an accused named Nisar ul Haq Minhas and recovered 610 grams heroin from his possession.

The police have registered separate cases against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

The DIG Operations directed the police officials to further intensify the crackdown against the criminal elements, as the Safety and security of the citizens is our foremost priority and no laxity will be tolerated in this regard.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) has successfully apprehended an accused who was allegedly involved in child molestation case and obtained his physical remand from the relevant court to carry out further investigations.

A public relations officer said on Sunday that, on April 10, 2024, the Kirpa police team received information from a plaintiff who stated that my 10 years old son was sexually assaulted by an accused named Imdad Hussain. Upon receiving the information, the Kirpa police team registered case no. 161 under section 376-PPC.

DIG Operations Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari took immediate notice of a molestation case registered at Kirpa police station. He directed the officials to apprehend the culprit on a priority basis.

A specialized police team was formed under the supervision of SSP Investigation. The SSOIU and Kirpa police teams utilized all scientific and technical resources and successfully apprehended the accused involved in this case.

The police also took a physical remand of the accused and further investigation is underway.

## Campaign for registration of house servants and tenants data in full swing

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Police "Knock the Door" campaign for the registration of employees and tenants is in full swing, a public relations officer said.

He said that, during this campaign various teams of Islamabad Capital Police are going to the streets and door-to-door to ensure the registration of tenants and domestic workers as well as to inquire about the problems faced by the citizens.

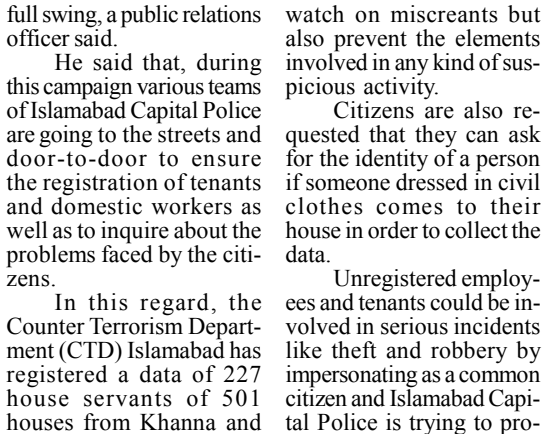
In this regard, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Islamabad has registered a data of 227 house servants of 501 houses from Khanna and Bani Gala Police Station jurisdiction.

The purpose of this campaign is to avoid any

untoward incident by maintaining law and order in the federal capital adding that the registration of tenants and domestic workers could not only keep a close watch on miscreants but also prevent the elements involved in any kind of suspicious activity.

Citizens are also requested that they can ask for the identity of a person if someone dressed in civil clothes comes to their house in order to collect the data.

Unregistered employees and tenants could be involved in serious incidents like theft and robbery by impersonating as a common citizen and Islamabad Capital Police is trying to provide a safe environment to the citizens of the federal capital by using all its resources.



ISLAMABAD: A group of police officers standing in a line during a campaign for registration of house servants and tenants data.

## Stool transplant could improve motor symptoms in Parkinson's disease

ISLAMABAD (Online): Significant improvements were also found for an objective measure of constipation (colon transit time), although there was no significant difference in patient-reported scores for constipation.

Mild gastrointestinal symptoms were a common negative side effect at the time of the transplant and were more frequently observed in people who received the donor transplant. Donor transplant recipients were also more likely to have worsened fatigue after 12 months.

Fatigue: A negative side effect of fecal transplantation?

For the study, a total of 22 participants with early-stage Parkinson's disease received the transplants from healthy donors, and 24 received their own fecal matter as a placebo, as part of the GUT-PERFECT trial carried out at Ghent University Hospital, Belgium between December 1, 2020 and December 12, 2022.

The fecal transplant for both the treated cohort and the placebo cohort was delivered via a tube inserted in the jejunum, a part of the small intestine, via the nose.

Researchers followed up with the participants at 3, 6 and 12 months post-transplant.

## Police arrests accused involved in child abuse case

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) has successfully apprehended an accused who was allegedly involved in child molestation case and obtained his physical remand from the relevant court to carry out further investigations.

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The police also took a physical remand of the accused and further investigation is underway.

## Pakistan 'deeply saddened, shocked' by mass stabbing at Sydney shopping center

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's foreign office said on Sunday it was "deeply saddened" and "shocked" by the mass stabbing at a Sydney shopping center a day earlier which claimed six lives, including that of a Pakistani security guard.

An attacker fatally stabbed six people on Saturday afternoon at the busy Westfield Bondi Junction shopping center in Sydney.

Five of the six victims killed were women, while eight people, including a nine-month-old baby, were

taken to hospital with stab wounds, New South Wales Police Commissioner Karen Webb told a press conference.

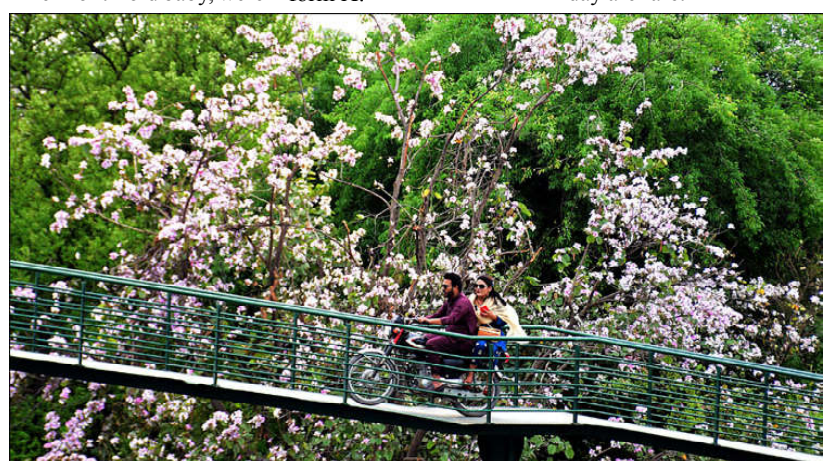
The only male victim who was killed in the attack was identified as 30-year-old Faraz Tahir from Pakistan, who worked at the mall as a security guard.

"We are deeply saddened and shocked over the terrible and tragic events at Westfield Bondi Junction in Sydney, Australia on Saturday," the foreign office said on social media platform X.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who have lost their lives," the FO remarked.

Webb said during a press conference on Saturday that police did not believe the attack was "terrorism-related" while Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said there was no indication yet of the man's motive.

Australia has some of the world's toughest gun and knife laws, and attacks such as the one on Saturday are rare.



ISLAMABAD: A couple on their way on motorcycle in front of full blooming seasonal flowers in the Federal Capital.

# Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Monday April 15, 2024

## Escalating tension between Iran-Israel

While Iran's use of hundreds of drones and missiles to directly target Israel overnight on Sunday in retaliation for an Israeli strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus set some major political and military precedents, but it has escalated tension between Iran and Israel and so in the region and world aggravating the conflict.

It was the single largest drone attack ever carried out by any country, and it was the first time Iran directly attacked Israel after almost a half-century of being archenemies.

Here's a look at what political, military and economic considerations Tehran might have factored in while deciding on the attack that has amplified fears of a larger regional war and that could also affect the direction of Israel's war on Gaza.

Pakistan has already issued a clear statement by highlighting the escalatory steps of 1st April by Israel and Pakistan has squarely put the blame of escalation to where it rightfully belongs. There's call for international community and UN especially UNSC to follow through internationally accepted norms and obligations is the right way to proceed for dialing back. Under the prevailing circumstances, rather amidst escalating tension, Pakistan calls for restraint and step back is the most pragmatic way forward.

Obviously, Pakistan continues to have a very clear and lucid stance towards Palestinian and Gaza issue and would like that the ongoing humanitarian crisis is not pushed back due to focus on these new developments.

Under all circumstances, Pakistan fully supports and stand by the Palestinians who are suffering from the brutal attacks and naked aggression by Israeli forces in Ghaza.

What Pakistan wants is that Israeli must stop ongoing naked aggression against innocent Palestinians, rather the world community should also force it to do so putting an end to the war crimes.

While Iran has taken revenge of the April 1 Israeli strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus that had killed seven IGRC members, including two generals in charge of leading operations in Syria and Lebanon, along with six other people, it (Israel) and its allies and supporters must take cognizance of the situation and play role for bringing peace instead of taking any action against Iran. At the same time, critical importance of a strong defence and security apparatus in any country especially Pakistan which has multiple external threats, a strong and immoral enemy like India as well as externally sponsored terrorism in the country. It is also clear that nexus between Israel and India is meant to destabilise the region.

Amidst the external and internal security threats, strong Armed Forces are need of every country and so of Pakistan especially in view of the nefarious designs of India evident from its past moves.

This cannot be overemphasised than in the ongoing conflict in the region.

What's most important is that social media and vested political interests need to stop their heinous propaganda and think of Pakistan rather than playing in the hands of the enemy.

They must think and take care of the vested national interests of the country instead of their petty ones.

All the responses given by the countries have asked for cessation of hostilities rather than following jingoistic rhetoric or war mongering less the social media propaganda trolls sitting in and outside of Pakistan just to hurt Pakistan national interests.

### Muhammad Amir Rana

Pakistan finds itself in the midst of a delicate balancing act with regard to its relationships with Iran and Saudi Arabia.

This became evident recently when, at the same time that it secured a \$2 billion deposit from Saudi Arabia — which will boost total Saudi deposits in the State Bank to \$5bn — Pakistan banned the Iranian-backed Zainebiyoun Brigade. Despite this move, President Asif Ali Zardari reassured his Iranian counterpart of Pakistan's commitment to cooperation in areas of mutual interest, including security. These developments highlight Pakistan's growing dependence on Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states due to evolving regional security concerns and persistent economic challenges. This increased reliance, however, may come with a few strings attached.

Tensions are soaring in the Middle East as the Israel-Hamas conflict threatens to escalate in the larger region. The US has restricted staff travel in Israel, fearing

Iranian retaliation for a suspected Israeli strike on Iran's consulate in Damascus. In this context, clipping the wings of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its principal subsidiary, the Quds Force, has become essential for the US, Israel, and its allies in the Gulf. The Quds Force employs all semi-conventional warfare tactics, including sophisticated techniques of guerrilla warfare and militancy. It operates through its regional proxies, the Iraqi Hashd al-Shaabi, the Afghan Fatemiyoun Brigade, the Pakistani Zainebiyoun, and Yemen's Houthis. The Zainebiyoun Brigade is believed to have been involved in supplying weapons to the IRGC in the Middle East. Last month, reports emerged of alleged Zainebiyoun members of Pakistani origin being apprehended in international waters for carrying weapons to be given to the IRGC in the Middle East. In another incident, the death of a Pakistan-origin commander in Syria affiliated with the group paved the way for Pakistan to ban it.

Pakistani law-enforcement agencies are believed to have sufficient proof of

the Zainebiyoun Brigade's involvement in sectarian violence in the country and recruitment for the Iraq and Syria conflict, but the government had not acted earlier because of circumstances linked to the alleged presence of Baloch insurgents on Iranian soil. The loyalty of its members, who prioritise ideological affiliations over national ties, also remains a major challenge for security institutions.

The involvement of a section of Shia youth in transnational political activism and militancy goes back to before the 1979 revolution, with figures such as Arif al-Husayni playing key roles. The Brigade has acknowledged ties with the Quds Force since around the 2001 US invasion of Afghanistan, and its formation was announced in 2014 during the conflict in Syria. It has recently pledged its readiness to follow orders from the IRGC. The insurgent Sunni Baloch group, Jaish al-Adl, has been a long-standing source of tension between Iran and Pakistan, though labelled as a terrorist organisation by both countries. Jaish al-Adl has intensified its operations against the Iranian security

forces, which is building pressure on Pakistan to act against it. Iran says Jaish al-Adl is a Saudi proxy operating from Pakistani soil.

Iranian drone and missile attacks in Balochistan in January this year and Pakistan's tit-for-tat response aggravated tensions between the two countries. Though immediate diplomatic efforts eased immediate tensions, mistrust continues to lurk beneath the surface. Jaish al-Adl has continued attacking the Iranian security forces, while recruitment for the Zainebiyoun has also continued. Meanwhile, Iranian government has not taken any concrete action against the Baloch insurgents on its soil. The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline remains a major reason for Pakistan's tolerance of some key security issues with Iran. The pipeline was an old idea, but implementation began much later, when Asif Ali Zardari was nearing the completion of his first term as president. Iran has built its part, but Pakistan is hesitant to proceed at its end, due to pressure from Saudi Arabia and the risk of debilitating US sanctions.

The US has continu-

ously signalled to Pakistan not to pursue the project. If Pakistan fails to fulfil its commitment to building the pipeline, it could face a hefty fine, potentially having to pay \$20 billion. The last interim government had tasked a company with building Pakistan's portion of the gas pipeline. However, the changing situation in the Middle East and Pakistan's internal economic situation may delay construction.

Apparently, the combination of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari is a feasible way to maintain a balance between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Sharif's family is considered close to the Saudi camp, while the Saudis have doubts about the PPP leadership's credentials on sectarian matters and their approach to Iran. Prime Minister Sharif has secured a commitment from the Saudi crown prince to accelerate the implementation of the massive \$5bn plan. President Zardari has invited his Iranian counterpart, Ebrahim Raisi, on an official visit to the country to ease tensions.

Iran will remain a tough diplomatic, political, and

security challenge for Pakistan. It remains to be seen how President Zardari copes with the challenge, especially if the conflict in the Middle East escalates and leaves few choices for Pakistan's closest allies in the Gulf. Meanwhile, an IMF bailout for Pakistan is also seen to be linked to how the latter country conducts its relations with Iran.

A concerning scenario could emerge if the Middle East crisis worsens and forces Iran to utilise the full potential of its alleged proxies in the region, including in Pakistan. This could have security ramifications, as pro-Iranian organisations could launch large-scale anti-Israel, anti-US, and anti-Saudi protest movements in support of Iran. Other religious parties would likely be forced to choose sides, potentially disrupting the sectarian equilibrium the country achieved after a long struggle. One can recall the first Gulf War in 1990-91, when the power elites and the masses were divided into opposing camps.

Pakistan's real test ahead is to remain neutral and maintain its relationships with both Iran and Saudi Arabia.

## The big test ahead

## Will Iran react to Israel?

for him. At this stage, Netanyahu and Israel's strategy is clear. They want to continue their long-drawn-out ethnic cleansing with unqualified Western material support, following Hamas's shocking daylong attack on Oct 7 last year, which killed about 1,200 Israelis, including some 400 security personnel.

Hamas also took about 240 Israelis back to Gaza as hostages in order to swap them for several thousand Palestinian prisoners, many being held without charge on 'administrative orders' in Israeli jails. A little over half of those hostages have been released, but over 130 remain captive in Gaza.

For over six months, Israel may have been carrying out a relentless pogrom in Gaza, with the death toll of children alone running at nearly 13,000 among the nearly 34,000 Palestinians killed so far, but it is beginning to realise its military campaign now has an end date slapped on it by its Western allies.

The West's waning support doesn't owe itself to any sudden awakening of the conscience, but is

dictated by domestic politics, such as President Joe Biden's desperate need for Muslim votes in states such as Michigan, and the support of countless progressive Americans who are outraged by the Gaza genocide and say they are unsure if they'll vote for him in this November's presidential election.

In contrast to its support over six months, recently the US has briefed journalists about "tough and candid discussions" during a phone call between President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu, particularly over Israel's planned invasion of camps in Rafah, currently home to some 1.7 million displaced Gazans.

Over several months, Israel has tried to provoke Hezbollah, seen as an Iranian proxy in Lebanon, in the north, but failed to draw it into a full-fledged confrontation. It has attacked not just south Lebanon and Beirut and hit Hezbollah targets, including commanders, but has also bombed targets in Syria, which forms part of the 'axis of resistance' along with Iran, Hezbollah and Yemen.

However, all these

blatant acts of provocation failed to draw Hezbollah and Syria into the Middle East conflict because the 'axis' powers possibly saw through Israel's tactics and chose restraint, so the focus remained solely on Israel's brutality in Gaza, which was slowly but surely beginning to change Western attitudes.

The US has remained a staunch ally, offering unconditional support to Israel's 'right to self-defence' (a term that normally applies in the context of external aggression) against forces in areas under its own occupation, and has supplied unprecedented levels of arms, ammunition, fighter jets and bombs.

But adding to domestic political compulsions has been the recent killing of around half a dozen Western aid workers in a targeted strike on three vehicles belonging to the global relief organisation World Central Kitchen, which resulted in international anger and opprobrium; even Western governments sounded concerned and expressed unease at Israel's continuing military campaign.

I have tried hard to

ascertain the time of the WCK strike that killed seven Western aid workers on April 1 so as to ascertain whether the Israeli strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus on the same day was a diversionary tactic. In any case, the two attacks served two different purposes.

The one major consequence of the WCK killings was that the relief organisation suspended its operations in Gaza. That fitted perfectly with Israel's policy of depopulating the Strip through mass killings and widespread destruction of its infrastructure, including homes, schools, hospitals, libraries and universities, and by preventing food aid from reaching the Palestinians.

The thousands of Palestinians who were being served hot meals by WCK must be going hungry again.

The outrageous Israeli air attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus was an act of extreme provocation designed to force Iran and its influential Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps into retaliating. Any retaliation by Iran, which the West sees

as the bane of its existence, would pull not only Israel but likely the US and other Western military powers into at least an aerial campaign against it.

This would serve Israel's cause no end, as on the one hand, it can continue its Gaza genocide and the land grab in the West Bank through more and more settlements, displacing thousands of additional Palestinians, and on the other, the West's attention will be diverted to, and remain focused on, its favourite hate figures, ie, the Iranian clergy, and not on Israel's mass murder.

As these lines are being written, the US has stated it will unequivocally support Israel in case of Iranian aggression, while calling on Tehran to desist. It has to be seen whether Tehran decision-makers can take a step back and think through the regional consequences before deciding on their course of action.

Or will the slight of the consulate attack and the killing of a senior IRGC commander force their hand? Any violent reaction would only be a bailout for an under-pressure Israel.

## World of 2035

### Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

What will the world look like about a decade from now? Given that geopolitics, geo-economics, and technologies are evolving rapidly, the future is uncertain. However, there are trends that give us a clue regarding the direction of global geopolitics. Today, we are transitioning from a world order to disorder: major power rivalries are intensifying, global military expenditure is rising steeply, unilateralism is ascending while multilateralism is in decline, and xenophobia is embedding itself in almost every country.

Four theatres of global contestation are contributing to the global disarray: Indo-Pacific (US-China competition), Europe (Russia-Ukraine war), Middle East (Palestine conflict, Israel-Iran tensions), and the Indian Ocean, where major powers including the US, UK, France, Australia, China and India want to enhance their presence. American maritime strategist Alfred Mahan had rightly predicted in the 19th century that the future of the 21st century would depend on whoever dominated the Indian Ocean.

Shifting alliances are being formed, essentially along three broad categories: the US, Europe and Australia have an informal broad alignment against Russia, China, and Iran. For some countries, such as India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan, and other middle powers, the preferred option is to exercise strategic autonomy. Across these two broad categories, multi-alignments are emerging to pursue common interests, such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), which has expanded to include

other countries, including Iran and Saudi Arabia; QUAD, a platform created by the US, Australia, India and Japan to contain China; and I2U2, which has brought together India, Israel, the US, and UAE for economic cooperation, but has been halted, for now, by the Gaza war. For its part, China is engaged with over 100 countries in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and six economic corridors, including CPEC.

These shifting alliances will be affected by six cross-cutting trends: (i) emerging technologies, such as AI platforms, multi-role drones, big data, and semiconductors, which are currently at the centre of the US-China tech war; (ii) climate change, which can spell havoc for countries with low fiscal space through extreme weather and food insecurity; (iii) de-dollarisation, an option many countries have begun to explore; (iv) rare earth elements, which are required for advancing technologies — such as smartphones, digital cameras, semiconductors, etc — and that are evoking stiff competition between China and the US, Europe, and Japan; (v) non-traditional security threats, including energy politics, cyberwarfare, disinformation campaigns and lawfare; and (vi) resurgent terrorism as concerted international response wanes.

Global contestations, shifting alliances, and the six trends that will shape the world in the coming decade will all play out in the high-risk areas of potential global conflict, including the South China Sea, Ukraine, Middle East, Afghanistan, and Kashmir. The probable nature of conflict will be hybrid, with countries using every tool of national

power at their disposal to achieve their goals, including kinetic options (military strikes, use of proxies), economic instruments (sanctions, lucrative aid packages, coercion through the international monetary system) and information tools (propaganda, media, entertainment industry).

Consequently, power potential will also change. The US is a waning power, but the instruments of its national power are largely intact and can sustain it through the next decade as a leading superpower. It is also taking steps to recover ground lost to China in high-tech industry and the manufacturing sector. China is a rising power, and is interested in continuing its peaceful rise to become fully industrialised, for which it will resist involvement in major kinetic conflicts. Russia is seeking to revive its lost glory, but its energies are likely to be consumed by the conflict in Europe. India is also a rising economic power, though its geopolitical profile will be constrained by ideological politics, the North-South divide, restive minorities, and agitated farmers.

The UN would remain sidelined in matters of peace and security, but stay relevant for sustainable development and climate change. The OIC is not likely to dent the future in any major way. Asean will continue as a success story of regional integration. Europe is a resilient continent but the focus of global attention will remain on Asia in the coming decade.

The world of 2035 appears to be even more fragmented and polarised than it is today. Only countries exhibiting economic resilience and societal harmony will stand a chance against the mighty winds of change.

### Muna Khan

An old, rickety house in upstate New York has served as a landmark since I began visiting family here in 2017. It is hard to miss because it has a massive Trump sign, painted in the colours of the American flag, with the years '2016', '2020' and now '2024' next to his name. I am unaffected by its presence, but the folks I know who live here see it as a sign of all that is wrong with politics.

They are distressed by an April 3 poll by the Wall Street Journal placing Trump in the lead in six of the seven most competitive states. These states tend to determine the election outcome. The poll reported on "voter dissatisfaction" with the economy and "deep doubts" about President Joe Biden's capabilities.

I have since been listening to fears about Trump's return and how folks will migrate to Canada. Funny enough, I first heard that in 2004, when George W. Bush was re-elected, the data shows around 10,000 Americans became permanent residents in Canada following Bush's re-election, and dipped after Barack Obama was elected in 2008. The data for Trump showed a 350 per cent increase in search for "how to move to Canada" when he won, and around 9,000 made good on their promise and migrated in 2017.

On the subject of data, there is plenty to show the US economy has done well under Biden. Unemployment and inflation are low and economic growth "is growing faster than expected", reported Politico in January. Yet Biden's age gets a lot of media time, like Hillary Clinton's emails got in

## Polls apart

2016. I am not here to suggest Biden being 81 is a non-issue, but it does seem to distract from the economic strides made by his administration, the very thing respondents expressed dissatisfaction about. Where are they getting their information then, or should the media be reporting on the economy (boring) and not Biden's latest gaffe (fun and gets clicks which gets advertisers).

Biden has had missteps and falls, but beyond confusing people or places, he has not threatened to derail democracy like the other guy; the one who is not exactly a spring chicken at 77. The one who faces a slew of criminal charges, attempted an insurrection, and has vowed to deport just about everybody. Why are more people willing to believe he is a better candidate to manage the economy than the guy who is actually doing it?

I have often wondered why people's memories are short, but I am now sure the media helps create this amnesia. It does so partly because the business model favours clicks over context, assumes audiences want this and not that, and believes it must remain objective.

Since I began reading academic material on journalism, I have learned how problematic objectivity can be. It often pits the oppressed with the oppressor for the sake of balance over informed — that is, factual — storytelling. Imagine families of disappeared sharing the same media space with the powerful men often responsible for doing the disappearing. How is that fair?

On the first day of class, I always tell students it is impossible not to have personal likes, dislikes, biases. Journal-

ists are human. Journalism is rooted in values. I will never support a policy that is racist, sexist, anti-women, anti-children, anti-poor, anti-science. I oppose whatever is masquerading as democracy these days. I dislike climate change deniers too. Does my transparency mean I cannot practise journalism? On the contrary, I tell students that knowing our biases allows us to practise journalism better, because we work harder to ensure we have been fair.

The elections in the US are six months away but the focus is already on polls. It looks like the media has not learned from its mistakes. We saw this in Pakistan too, when many in the media wrote the PTI off, didn't take voter sentiment into account, and had to eat humble pie on election day. When you cover elections like you would a horse race — who's leading, who's behind — you are not helping audiences make informed decisions. Especially if you are reporting a candidate's falsehoods without challenging them because you're worried you will be seen as partisan or you're scared you'll lose their subscriptions. That's lazy journalism. And it's denying the truth about what is at stake.

I don't have any stakes in the US elections. It will not matter whether Biden or Trump throws drones or sanctions at us. But I think we can learn a lot from how their media covers this election, even if it is a 'what not to do'. I hope that includes calling out leaders that threaten Pakistan's stability, which includes the economy, which can be gauged by numbers. People lie. Math doesn't.

## CM announces reduction of roti price to Rs.16

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that the government has reduced the price of roti to Rs16 from today.

In her post of social media platform X, formerly known as twitter, the CM said that all districts of Punjab and the departments concerned have been instructed to ensure strict implementation of the decision. The chief minister prayed, "May Allah Almighty bring more ease in the lives of people."

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif expressed

her heartfelt congratulations to the Sikh community on the blissful occasion of Besakhi, saying that Besakhi is the hallmark of Punjab's unique culture.

In her message, the CM offered greetings to the Sikh brothers and sisters who have come here to celebrate this festival. "I am a proud Punjabi after my identity as a Pakistani first. Punjab lives in my heart. Every person of Punjab equally shares the joy and happiness of Besakhi. May God protect the happiness of Besakhi forever," she added.

"Besakhi starts with the harvest of the golden

crop of wheat with a sickle on the drum beat, spreading joy and happiness around. We are starting to officially celebrate this Punjabi festival 'Besakhi,'" she announced and added that special ceremonies of Besakhi had been organized in Hasan Abdal, Nankana Sahib, Kartarpur and Lahore for the Sikh community coming from all over the world to celebrate this festival. Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that the Punjab government was focusing on providing best environment and facilities to Sikh pilgrims for their religious and cultural tourism.



SEHWAN: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah talking to media persons in Sehwan.

## CM KP expresses grief; announces financial assistance for rain-affected families

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur on Sunday expressed grief and lamented the loss of precious human lives due to rains in the province and announced financial assistance for the affected families.

In a statement issued here, the Chief Minister, expressed sorrow that several districts including Chitral, Dir, Swat, and Abbottabad have suffered significant human and material losses due to heavy rainfall.

Expressing his grief, Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur, lamented the loss of precious human lives resulting from various incidents triggered by the rainfall.

The Chief Minister extended heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the affected families, while also expressing hope for the speedy recovery of the injured.

He directed the Relief Department to provide a detailed report on the human and material losses incurred in the province due to the incidents.

The Chief Minister announced financial assistance for the affected families and instructed relevant authorities to take necessary actions in this regard. "We stand in solidarity with the grieving families," said Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur.

He assured that the provincial government will not leave the affected individuals alone and will provide them with all possible assistance.

"It is imperative to take immediate steps to restore closed roads and other infrastructure damaged by landslides caused by the rainfall," added Ali Amin Gandapur.

He urged the district administration officials to oversee relief and rescue operations themselves.

Efforts will be made on an urgent basis to provide immediate relief to the affected families and ensure the provision of the best medical aid to the injured, as per the directives of the Chief Minister to the concerned district administration.

## Zahir Toru calls peace, education essential for development in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru has said that peace and education were essential for development.

Addressing a gathering organized by the Gujjar Foundation here Sunday, he stated that without peace and education, progress remains merely a dream in any region, province or country.

Further reiterated that peace and education were among the top priorities of the provincial government in the province, despite limited resources, real actions are being taken towards this end.

Speaking about the hardworking and resilient Gujjar community, he praised their contributions to peace and Pakistan's development.

Referring to historical lessons, he highlighted that nations that have progressed ensured peace first, followed by educating their youth. He

He affirmed his party's commitment to providing equal opportunities for employment, education, and progress to all communities.



HYDERABAD: Large number of people enjoying themselves on the bank of River Indus near Ghulam Muhammad Barrage Jashoro of River Indus, during rainy and cloudy weather.

## Murtaza raises concerns over alleged misuse of relief funds in KPK

ABBOTTABAD (APP): PML-N General Secretary and former federal minister Murtaza Javaid Abbasi Sunday has raised concerns regarding the alleged misuse of relief funds by the provincial government.

The PML-N official criticized the distribution of 1000 packages to MPAs by the Chief Minister KP, alleging that undeserving individuals were being forcibly verified, which he condemned as unacceptable. He stressed the importance of elected officials serving the entire province and assembly impartially, regardless of political affiliations.

Talking to media here, Abbasi highlighted that both the Ramadan and Eid packages are being distributed without proper accountability, raising questions about their transparent allocation.

Abbasi also highlighted the need for thorough scrutiny of the allocated funds, amounting to Rs 1.15 billion, emphasizing the importance of preventing any embezzlement or misappropriation. He cautioned against repeating the alleged looting witnessed during the previous Ramadan package distribution, warning against similar actions with the upcoming Eid package.

He emphasized the need for fair and transparent distribution of resources, warning that they intend to challenge the preferential treatment in the courts. Murtaza Abbasi announced the initiation of consultations at the provincial level and vowed to protest vigorously against what he termed as discriminatory practices.

## Sindh gov't declares high alert in view of heavy rains

KARACHI (APP): The Government of Sindh has issued a high alert for all municipalities, administrative bodies, and hospitals across the province. The Chief Secretary of Sindh, Syed Asif Haider Shah has instructed all relevant authorities to remain high alert during the expected rainfall. Addressing all commissioners and deputy commissioners, Mr Shah emphasized ensuring the effective drainage of

rainwater from major thoroughfares and low-lying areas. He directed the Water Board, Karachi Electric, Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA), and Cantonments to stay prepared to handle any emergency situations. The Chief Secretary urged the installation of de-watering pumps on key city roads and emphasized the completion of all necessary arrangements in districts to tackle any emergent situation.

## Zahid commends efforts to reopen Bahrain Kalam road

MANSEHRA (APP): Advisor to the KP Chief Minister for Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb Khan Sunday has commended the diligent efforts of relevant authorities in reopening the Bahrain Kalam Road, which had been affected by landslides. He expressed these views while talking to the media here. Zahid Chanzeb said that tourists are encouraged to explore tourist destinations, particularly Swat, with assurance of safety. He

expressed appreciation for the collaborative efforts of the Relief and Tourism Department, district administration, as well as rescue and security agencies. Advisor said that their dedication has been instrumental in diverting stranded tourists and local residents through alternative routes after the Bahrain Kalam Road was reopened for traffic. There are hopes that similar measures will be taken to widen roads leading to Asreet.



DIAMER: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan meeting special persons during his visit.

## Flood in Chamarkan village damages communication system

PESHAWAR (APP): Due to continued torrential rains from last Friday, while snowfall on the peaks of the mountain and Kalash village badly affected the communication system in the entire valley.

Talking to APP, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Chitral Muhammad Imran Khan said that all appropriate measures have been taken to ensure the safety of the general public. He said that due to the heavy rain since last Friday, the flood hit different streams and the routes of several valleys were closed due to land sliding and falling heavy boulders from mountains.

The only land route connecting Chitral to other parts of the country is also closed for all kinds of traffic at Lowari tunnel, while Upper Chitral, Lutkoh and Kalash Valley's roads were also closed for

the safety of the general public. He said the district administration and officials of the relevant department including TMAs, NHAs are working day and night for the opening of roads and ensuring communication systems. He said that Chamarkan village was badly affected by chowchou goal nullah as a link road, pedestrian bridge, irrigation stream and water supply pipelines were also destroyed due to floods. He said that road connection would be restored soon to different areas and a guideline has already been issued to the general public to avoid unnecessary travelling. DC Muhammad Imran Khan said the officials of the PDMA, TMA and NHAs are working hard with heavy machinery in opening the main and link roads.

## Unknown gunmen kill a youth in Maneri, Swabi

SWABI (APP): Some unknown persons killed a young man in Bhai Kot Maneri, Police control in Swabi confirmed the shoot-out here on Sunday.

According to the police, Wajid Ali filed an FIR at the Swabi Police Station. He reported that his 26-year-old brother, Umar Ghani, was cutting grass around 10:00 am, when unknown gunmen opened fire on him without any reason. As a result, his brother was killed on the spot.

Wali informed the police that Siraj had been missing for a long time. He searched for him with his nephew Samad, and eventually found Siraj's lifeless body in a field. The Swabi Police have registered an FIR.

## 39,000 Punjab schools to be upgraded with Rs 50bn

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has decided to upgrade more than 39,000 schools with Rs 50 billion.

Among these schools, 7,000 would be upgraded from elementary to high level, while 32,000 schools would be upgraded from primary to elementary level. According to an official document, the elementary schools would be upgraded in next two years, and primary schools in next three years. Updated IT and science

labs would also be set up in these schools. Earlier, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif had announced that delay in delivery of textbooks was not acceptable. The Punjab School Inspectorate submitted a proposal to form Standardised Matriculation Examination Board and run all matters of school education through a central body, which was discussed in a meeting, chaired by CM Maryam Nawaz.

## Bahawalpur's local leaders join PML-N

BAHAWALPUR (APP): The local leaders of Bahawalpur Division have joined the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) in a ceremony to repute trust in the leadership of PML-N.

According to a press release issued here, renowned local politicians including Sardar Jahanzaib Khan Abbasi and Sardar Kamran Khan Abbasi accompanied by their group activists have joined PML-N. A ceremony was held where they announced joining PML-N.

Member National Assembly and senior leader of PML-N, Sardar Azhar Khan Leghari welcomed the local senior politicians.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that PML-N had been enjoying the status of the largest political party in the country. He said that PML-N had been introducing dynamic policies to put the country on track for progress and prosperity.

## Senior medical officer suspended for negligence during Vasakhi

LAHORE (APP): In a swift response to alleged negligence, Evacuee Trust Property Board Secretary Fared Iqbal has taken decisive action by suspending Senior Medical Officer Dr. Tanveer Mushtaq.

According to a press release issued here on Sunday, the suspension comes in the wake of investigations into purported lapses in duty during the Vasakhi mela.

During an inspection of the Vasakhi fair arrangements at Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Hassan Abdal, Secretary Fared Iqbal and his team discovered multiple shortcomings. These included the absence of Dr. Mushtaq from the medical camp and he was allegedly found asleep in his room.



FAISALABAD: People arriving back to the city after spending Eid holidays with their family members in hometowns.

## Three arrested in Rs 1.50m robbery case

ATTOCK (APP): Three suspects involved in a day broad light robbery of a government employee in Fatehjang town of Attock were arrested besides recovery of looted booty and weapons utilized in the incident.

## Gov't to focus on solution of public problems on priority

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Public Health Engineering Malik Pakhtunyar Khan Sunday said that the current government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is paying special attention to solving the public problems of the province. The provincial government has closed the door of corruption, looting and nepotism by establishing the supremacy of merit in the province, while building a strong barrier against corruption and looting in the future.

On the occasion of participating in the Eid celebrations, the political and social figure Haji Malik Muhammad Allah Dawar was also with him. Pakhtunyar Khan said that unlike the previous governments, the PTI government has focused on the welfare of the people and is taking positive steps to provide relief to the people. It has introduced excellent testing service institutions and modern reform system for providing employment, which is expected to improve significantly in education.

## Foolproof security at churches, parks

LAHORE (APP): Lahore police deployed full-scale security arrangements on Sunday at the city's churches, parks, and recreational places. Teams of Lahore police executed high alert operations to ensure security duties across the city. This was stated by Lahore Capital City Police Officer Bilal Siddique Kamyana in a statement issued here today. He said that Lahore police ensured foolproof security of religious gatherings at Christian places of worship, parks, and recreational places on Sunday. Search and sweep operations continued around churches, parks,

and sensitive locations. Supervisory officers monitored security arrangements at churches and recreational places. Bilal Siddique Kamyana said that additional personnel and snipers were deployed at sensitive churches, while Dolphin Squads, Police Response Unit, and Elite Forces patrolled effectively around churches and parks. Traffic police ensured smooth traffic flow around churches and recreational areas. Bilal Siddique Kamyana also highlighted the stringent checking of individuals and vehicles at entry and exit checkpoints in the city.



HYDERABAD: Fire fighters extinguishing burning bus which caught fire due to electric short circuit, at M-9 Motorway in Hyderabad.

## 'Green Emergency' vital to combat environmental degradation

LAHORE (APP): In a world grappling with environmental challenges and global warming, reforestation stands out as a powerful solution that offers numerous benefits to combat climate related hazards.

By planting trees in areas that have been deforested or are devoid of forests, reforestation can unlock a range of positive effects: from combating climate change to fostering biodiversity, as it holds a key to a healthier planet and thriving communities. Climate change is one

of the most pressing global issues, and reforestation plays a crucial role in mitigating it. Trees are champions in absorbing carbon dioxide (CO2) from the atmosphere through the process of photosynthesis — that's why forests are called carbon sinks.

By planting trees and restoring forests, it is possible to effectively sequester carbon to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Forests had a remarkable ability to regulate local and regional climates. The shade provides

by tree canopies helps reduce temperatures, creating a cooling effect in urban areas. Through evaporation, trees release water vapor into the air, further cooling the surrounding environment.

Reforested areas act as natural air-conditioners, mitigating the urban heat island effect, which is a phenomenon where urban areas experience higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas.

Trees can reduce heat-related stress and premature deaths during high temperatures and heat-

waves. The World Health Organization recorded that from 1998 to 2017, more than 166,000 people died due to heat-waves, with this risk increasing due to climate change.

By planting trees strategically in urban settings, microclimates could be created that provide respite from the heat and improve overall climate resilience.

In an era of increasing air pollution, trees emerge as nature's air purifiers. They absorb harmful pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide,

ozone, and particulate matter, thereby improving air quality. Through photosynthesis, trees also release oxygen, which is vital for our wellbeing.

Reforestation efforts had the potential to combat respiratory health problems, such as asthma and other respiratory illnesses. According to the WHO, nine out of ten people worldwide breathe polluted air. This produces millions of preventable illnesses and deaths.

By increasing tree cover in urban areas and near industrial zones,



LAHORE: Activists of Anjuman-e-Tameer-e-Mazarat-e-Jannat-ul-Baqi-o-Jannat-ul-Moala hold a protest in favor of their demands at Karbala Gamay Shah road, in the Provincial Capital.

## Pakistan economic growth forecast to rise 2.8% in FY2025, ADB reports

ISLAMABAD (INP): In Pakistan, growth is forecast to rise at 1.9% in FY2024 (ending on 30 June 2024) and 2.8% in FY2025, up from the 0.2% contraction last fiscal year. Gwadar Pro stated on Sunday quoting Asian Development Bank (ADB) economic forecasts report for Asia April 2024.

According to the report, the shift back to positive growth will come from a recovery in both agriculture and industry. However, domestic demand will remain constrained by the surge in living costs and tight macroeconomic policies. Growth is projected to remain subdued in FY2024 and pick up in FY2025, provided economic reforms take effect. Real GDP is projected to grow by 1.9% in FY2024 driven by a rebound in private sector investment linked to progress on reform measures and transition to a new and more stable government. An expansion in private consumption and a rise in workers' remittances from a move toward a market-determined exchange rate should buttress growth.

However, low confidence, to support recovery in industrial output in the latter half of the year. Construction will remain weak due to elevated construction costs, higher tax rates on property transfers implemented in the FY2024 budget, and rationalization of public investment to consolidate the fiscal position.

Growth in services is projected to strengthen in FY2024 as recovery in agriculture and industry benefit services.

If reforms are implemented, growth is forecast to restart gradually this fiscal year and improve slightly next year. Inflation is projected to moderate somewhat this year, and more next year, under stabilization policies.

Improving women's financial inclusion is critical to strengthen growth.



FAISALABAD: Women are buying clothes on a stall at Sunday weekly bazaar in the city.

## Central bank needs to review credit policies in SMEs favor: Anjum Nisar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Businessmen Panel (BMP) of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Mian Anjum Nisar has said that the central bank needs to review its credit policies by fixing a special quota to finance the small and medium enterprises, as only the large industries have been availing government's all major concessional export loaning facilities, with very limited financing is left for the SMEs which are the backbone of the economy, contributing around 40 percent to the national gross domestic product (GDP).

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said that the government with a view to help grow the businesses will have to take solid measures to strengthen the industry, especially the SMEs, saving the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the small industries. He said the government will have to make a visible reduction in markup rate to help grow the businesses, particularly the SME

## FBR completes preparations for action against tax evaders

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has completed preparations for action against tax evaders.

According to FBR sources, within a few days, final notices will be issued to tax evaders, traders, and industrialists, who will also be sent notices. Their assets, and extravagant expenditures, do not match their tax data; some traders' tax is only a few thousand while their annual income runs into billions.

Sources say that many have purchased multiple plots and are also running businesses outside, sometimes allowed to pay their taxes, they turn their black money white.

Lists of most traders and industrialists have been made, including Akbari, Shah Alam Market, Azam Cloth Market, Anarkali, Liberty Market Road, and Gulberg. Ferozpur Road, Model Town, and all other plazas are included.

## SNGPL imposes Rs 132,000 fine on eight consumers

MULTAN (APP): Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL) has imposed a fine Rs 132,000 on eight different consumers for illegal use of gas.

Official sources told on Sunday that two consumers were using domestic gas meters on a commercial basis. Their connections were cut by the department team. Similarly, another four consumers were offering illegal connections to some other homes. Action was taken against another two consumers for violations.

The team imposed a fine of Rs 132,000 on the consumers.

The SNGPL administration also vowed to continue action against the illegal consumers.



LAHORE: People are buying steel crockery in Sunday weekly bazaar at Shadman area, in the Provincial Capital.

## Locals demand restoration of train

SARGODHA (APP): Social circles and traders have demanded railways authorities to restore the Sandal Express train in the larger interest of people of the area.

Talking to APP here on Sunday, traders including Chaudhry Muzammil of Sargodha, Muhammad Yaseen of Jhang, Muhammad Noman of Khanewal and Muhammad Atta of Multan said that the Sandal Express used to run from Sargodha to Multan via Shaheenabad, Sillanwali, Shah Nikdur, Shah Jewna, Jhang, Shortkot and Khanewal but railway authorities suspended it operation three years ago

due to unknown reasons. They said they would send and bring their goods by the train at a cheaper fare, and now they had to bear an extra burden of fare by road. They demanded railways authorities to restore the train as early as possible for the interest of traders, commuters and other people.

Tanveer Ahmed, a resident of Shah Nikdur, who used to travel daily from Shah Nikdur to Sargodha by the train, said the train was the best and cheaper source of travel for daily commuters, and now, after the suspension of the train operation he had to commute daily by bus or van.



CHINIOT: Farmers harvesting wheat crop starting from 1st of Besakh Month.

## PAJCCI commend Railways over increasing its revenue, suggests launching of cargo trains

PESHAWAR (APP): Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) has commended Pakistan Railways over increasing its annual revenue to highest peak of Rs. 66 billion in nine months of current year and has suggested for launching of cargo trains to further piling up of earnings.

In a press statement issued here on Sunday, Coordinator PAJCCI KP, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi said it is appreciating development that Pakistan Railways has increased its annual revenue to record height.

The phenomenal jump in earnings reflect revival of people's confidence on Railways in the wake of better management decisions taken by Chairman Mazhar Ali Shah and GM, Amir

Baloch for provision of improved travelling facilities, opined Zia who is also Member Advisory Committee of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) on Pakistan Railways.

He said Railways is safest and cheapest travelling facility in the country but due to some management loopholes, travelers had diverted to buses and other mode of travelling.

If such decisions were kept on taking, more people will prefer travelling in trains and revenue will increase with passage of time, he opined.

Coordinator PAJCCI also suggested Pakistan Railways to focus on launching of cargo trains from Karachi to Peshawar for facilitation of business community especially

those dealing in Pak-Afghan trade.

He said Railways should also cater to transportation of loose cargo being sent by exporters and importers within the country.

By focusing on plying of cargo trains, Railways can triple its annual earnings from existing one besides providing relief to people especially business community who have to pay exorbitant rates to truck owners for transportation of goods.

Zia said in the wake of increase in prices of petroleum products, fare for transportation of goods from port city (Karachi) to Peshawar through heavy vehicles has increased manifold, inflicting huge burden on business community of the country.

## Economic growth linked to durable regional peace

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former president Iftikhar Ali Malik has advocated the cause of achieving durable peace in the region, a prerequisite to economic growth, prosperity and development for all countries of South Asia.

Talking to a delegation of traders led by Muslim Khan Bunerri from KP here Sunday, he said South Asia has long been plagued by instability and conflicts that have hindered the region's progress and potential. One of the major concerns contributing to this instability has been the presence of terrorist sanctuaries on Afghan soil, which have posed a severe threat not only to

neighboring countries including Pakistan, he added. He said counterterrorism cooperation and collaboration closely with regional and international stakeholders, especially Pakistan, to eliminate terrorist sanctuaries can help eradicate the breeding grounds for extremist elements and bring about much-needed stability.

About economic integration, he said, "We must embrace economic integration initiatives within the South Asian region and enhanced economic cooperation can create an environment conducive to peace, prosperity, and development for all."

He believed that by taking these steps,

## Prices of most capital goods fall in China

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): Most of the capital goods monitored by China's statistics authorities registered price decreases from late-March to early-April, official data shows.

Of the 50 major goods classified in nine categories, including seamless steel tubes, gasoline and fertilizer, 26 saw price declines, 20 reported heightened prices, and 4 remained unchanged, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

Hog prices increased 0.7 percent to 15.3 yuan (about 2.16 U.S. dollars) per kg during this period, the NBS said.

The figures, released every 10 days, are based on the survey of nearly 2,000 wholesalers and distributors in 31 provincial-level regions across the country.



MULTAN: A worker preparing khas for the air cooler at his workplace.

## Large scale structural changes vital in power sector: Chairman PIAF

LAHORE (INP): Chairman Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Faheemur Rehman Saigol has stressed the need for large scale structural changes in power sector, controlling line losses of DISCOs by using modern technology, and customer-oriented business approach, as the public chequer has incurred a loss of over Rs400 billion in the fiscal year 2022-23 by the power distribution companies.

Quoting the media report, he observed that the performance of distribution companies (DISCOs) throughout 2022-23 remained very poor, and the expected power sector reforms were not achieved. Given the ongoing poor performance, it is apparent that, under the existing circumstances,

the current DISCO setup is unlikely to be able to deliver the desired results.

Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that no significant improvement has been witnessed on part of some DISCOs in this regard. During FY2022-23, the overall actual losses of DISCOs were 16.38% against the actual loss of 16.69% in FY 2021-22. The actual T&D losses are much higher than the allowed T&D losses for FY 2022-23, which is 12.21%.

He said that unfortunately, the majority of DISCOs have not adhered to the NEPA given targets, except FESCO, GEPCO, and K-Electric which have managed to keep their losses below the levels or equal to targets set by NEPA. However, other DISCOs have exceeded these limits.

## Price controller revises bread loaf rates

RAWALPINDI (APP): The controller of prices and supplies/ Deputy Commissioner has revised the rates of open market loafs (Naan-Roti) in the city. Following the Punjab Price Control of Essential Commodities Ordinance 2023 (V of 2024), the price controller issued a notification regarding the rates.

According to the notification issued on Sunday, the unit price for 100g Roti Tandoori (per loaf) will be Rs. 16.0 and that of 120g Naan (per loaf) will be Rs. 20.0.

The notification intimates that new prices for mentioned essential commodities for the open market will come into force with immediate effect in revenue limits of the district. No person or shopkeeper shall charge or cause to be charged the prices of the aforementioned items offered for sale.

## Punjab CM felicitates PM over improving economic indicators

LAHORE (APP): Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz, while paying tributes to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on improving Pakistan's economic indicators, said on Sunday that under the vibrant leadership of PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan's economy had once again started treading on the path of progress.

The fruits of economic progress during the tenure of PML-N government are prominently coming to surface, Maryam said adding that "the common man would be provided relief with reduction in electricity rates and price-hike. Big international financial institutions including IMF, ADB had acknowledge Pakistan's economic policies."

She said, "Owing to PM Shehbaz Sharif's economic policies, the

investors' confidence is enhancing. For the first time in the history, 100 index Stock Exchange has crossed its 70 thousand psychological barrier."

The chief minister said, "Good news are awaiting Pakistanis and their is a strong likelihood of reduction in inflation rate up to 12.2 per cent next year. For the first time, Rs 500 reduction occurred in the price of 20-kg flour bag and there is further possibility of Rs 300 reduction in the flour price according to market indicators."

"The Economic & Social Survey of Asia & Pacific Region termed Pakistan's economic indicators excellent. In the UN Report, Pakistan's economic progress has been predicted in the next fiscal year. The growth rate would increase from 2 per cent to 2.3 per cent during the current and next financial year in Pakistan."



MULTAN: Labourers off-loading watermelons from a delivery truck at the fruit market.

## Increase in taxes hurt cars' sale, purchase business: APCDA

MULTAN (APP): All Pakistan Car Dealers Association (APCDA) demanded of government to reduce duties, taxes, registration and transfer fees on sale, purchase of cars as the high fees were hurting their business badly.

Vice Chairman All Pakistan Car Dealers Association Chaudhary Tariq Kareem, General Secretary district Multan Abdul Qadir Khan stated that the persons who were linked to sale purchase of cars were worried due to

rising inflation. The high fees including duties, taxes, register and transfer fees on cars also increased manifold. A good number of dealers have left the profession.

They demanded of government to pay focus on condition of car dealers and reduce prices of the cars. Different measures on part of the government could help improve business of car's sale purchase. They also called for reforms in excise and taxation department.



LAHORE: People are buying vegetables in Sunday weekly bazaar at Shadman area, in the Provincial Capital.

## 'Asia has consequential position in the world'

LAHORE (APP): Kyrgyzstan's Honorary Consul Meher Kashif Younis has said that Asia holds a consequential position in the world due to its large population, strategic locations, rich mineral resources and diversity. Presiding over a workshop on "Importance of BRICS for Pakistan" organized by Gold Ring Economic Forum here Sunday, he added that Pakistan, as an important partner in the region has sought membership in order to align with this trend. With its abundant natural resources, strategic location and fifth-largest world population, Pakistan's absence from BRICS could have repercussions in the future

if not addressed. He said Pakistani leadership should consider BRICS while assessing ground realities. He said BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) can pave the way for sustainable development and growth in the region. New doors for trade and investment will be opened under the supervision of developed countries like China and Russia.

He said the individual who coined BRICS has predicted that these nations' economies will dominate the world by 2050. He said a golden opportunity has been presented to these advancing countries under the leadership of this group.

## Agricultural emergency unit established to help farmers in view of rains

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh government has set up an Agricultural Emergency Rapid Response Unit to help the farmers in view of the rains in the province and the leaves of all the employees and officers of the agriculture department have been cancelled.

On the directives of the Sindh Agriculture Minister Sardar Muhammad Baksh Mahar, the leaves of all the officers and employees of the Sindh Agriculture Department have been

cancelled and the staff has been instructed to remain alert. A spokesman for the Sindh Agriculture Department said that the DG Agriculture Head of Agriculture Emergency Rapid Response and DGs of Research, Engineering Wing and On Farm Management Wing will be part of the team.

He further said that the field assistants of the Department of Agriculture will go door to door to provide information about safety measures to the farmers.

# China 'deeply concerned' about escalation after Iran strikes Israel

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: China is "deeply concerned" about escalating tensions in the Middle East after Iran launched drones and missiles in a retaliatory strike against Israel, a foreign ministry spokesperson said on Sunday.

Iran's strikes marked its first direct attack on Israeli territory, raising the threat of a wider conflict in the region where China has sought to play a role as a mediator and from where it sources a growing proportion of its energy imports.

"China calls on relevant parties to remain calm and exercise restraint to avoid further escalation of tensions," the spokesperson said in

a statement in the form of a response to a question from unidentified reporters about the Iranian attacks. The statement was posted on the ministry's website.

"China calls on the international community, especially influential countries, to play a constructive role in maintaining regional peace and stability," the spokesperson, who was also not identified, said in the statement.

The war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, now in its seventh month, has ratcheted up regional tensions, spreading to fronts with Lebanon and Syria and drawing long-range fire from Yemen and Iraq at Israeli targets.

The Chinese foreign ministry's spokesperson said that this round of tensions was a "spillover from the Gaza conflict," adding that quelling it as soon as possible was "a top priority."

China mediated between Iran and Saudi Arabia last year, and Reuters reported China had asked Iran to help rein in attacks on ships in the Red Sea by the Iran-backed Houthis, or risk harming business relations with Beijing.

Earlier on Sunday, the Chinese embassy in Iran advised Chinese nationals and companies in the country to strengthen security precautions, according to state television CCTV.



Demonstrators wave Iran's flag and Palestinian flags as they gather in front of the British Embassy in Tehran, after Iran launched a drone and missile attack on Israel.

# North Korea's Kim, top Chinese official hail 'new chapter' in ties

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and China's top legislator hailed a "new chapter" of Beijing-Pyongyang relations, in one of the most high-level meetings between the allies in years. Beijing's third highest-ranking official, Zhao Leji — a member of the powerful Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo — made a goodwill visit to the nuclear-armed North this week as the two countries mark 75 years of diplomatic ties.

China is North Korea's most important economic benefactor and diplomatic

ally, obstructing US-led efforts at the UN Security Council alongside Russia to impose stricter sanctions on Kim Jong Un's government in response to its increased weapons tests. Zhao met Kim on Saturday, after attending an opening ceremony on Friday for the "year of China-Democratic People's Republic of Korea Friendship" in Pyongyang on Friday, according to Beijing's state news agency Xinhua.

Zhao told Kim that China is "willing to strengthen development linkage and deepen bilateral cooperation with the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea," according to Xinhua, using the North's official name.

Zhao told Kim that China is willing to "promote bilateral practical and mutually beneficial cooperation to achieve new results, to continue to give strong mutual support and to safeguard the common interests of both sides".

Kim in turn told Zhao the North was keen to "deepen the traditional friendship and write a new chapter in Democratic People's Republic of Korea-China relations," according to Xinhua.



Nigeriens gather in a street in Niamey to protest against US military presence.

# India's Modi promises to create jobs, boost infrastructure if BJP wins third term

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) promised on Sunday to create jobs, boost infrastructure and expand welfare programmes if it wins a third term, seeking to address key voter concerns ahead of next week's elections.

The general election, which begins on April 19, will be held in seven stages until June 1. Votes are due to be counted on June 4 and results expected the same day.

Modi, 73, is widely tipped to win a record-equaling third term on the back of his 10-year record, which includes strong economic growth, infrastructure projects, welfare handouts and aggressive Hindu nationalism.

Surveys, however,

suggest unemployment, inflation and rural distress remain issues of concern in the world's most populous country despite its strong economy, and addressing these will be Modi's biggest challenge.

"Our focus is on dignity of life... on quality of life, our focus is also on creating jobs through investment," Modi said after releasing the manifesto, titled "Modi's Guarantee", at the party headquarters in the capital.

Modi said the manifesto is focused on creating jobs in sectors such as infrastructure, aviation, railways, electric vehicles, green energy, semiconductors and pharmaceuticals, among others, in a bid to address discontent at unemployment levels that are rising despite strong economic growth.

# British jets shot down Iranian drones, PM Sunak says

**Monitoring Desk**  
LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said on Sunday that British military jets shot down drones launched by Iran in its attack on Israel and called for "calm heads to prevail" to avoid an escalation of the conflict.

"I can confirm that our planes did shoot down a number of Iranian attack drones," Sunak told broadcasters.

"If this attack had been successful, the fallout for regional stability would be hard to overstate."

We stand by the security of Israel and the wider region, which is of course important for our security here at home, too. What we now need is for calm heads to prevail."

# US diplomat turned Cuban spy jailed for 15 years

**Monitoring Desk**  
MIAMI: A former US ambassador who pleaded guilty to spying for Cuba for over four decades was sentenced in federal court to 15 years in prison. Victor Manuel Rocha, 73, was arrested in December for what US officials called "one of the highest-reaching and longest-lasting infiltrations of the United States government by a foreign agent." Rocha pleaded not guilty in February to charges of conspiring to act as an agent of a foreign government but later accepted a plea deal with federal prosecutors. Judge Beth Bloom, after a three-and-a-half-hour hearing in Miami on Friday, told Rocha she would give him "the maximum penalty permitted by law." In addition to the 15-year sentence, Rocha was given a \$500,000 fine.

Rocha, a naturalised US citizen originally from Colombia, allegedly began aiding Havana as a covert agent of Cuba's General Directorate of Intelligence (DGI) in 1981.

# Airlines redirect flights amid soaring Middle East tensions

**Monitoring Desk**  
FRANKFURT: German airline Lufthansa said its planes would no longer use Iranian airspace as it extended a suspension on flights to and from Tehran amid soaring Middle East tensions.

"Due to the current situation, Lufthansa is suspending its flights to and from Tehran up to and including Thursday, 18 April," a company spokesperson said on Friday.

"The airline is also no longer using Iranian airspace." Its subsidiary Austrian Airlines followed suit.

The flights to the Iranian capital have been suspended since April 6. Lufthansa did not outline the immediate reasons for the suspension. In a statement, Austrian Airlines cited "the current situation in the Middle East". "For Austrian Airlines, the safety of its passengers and crews has top priority. The situation in the Middle East is being evaluated on an ongoing basis. To this end, Austrian is in close contact with the authorities."

The move comes after Iran blamed arch-foe Israel for a strike in Syria this month that killed two Iranian generals.

# Hezbollah source says Israel struck position in east Lebanon

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIRUT: A Hezbollah source said Israel struck Sunday one of the Iran-backed group's buildings in Lebanon's east, close to the Syrian border, as tensions soared after Iran directly attacked Israel.

"The Israeli strike targeted an area... near Baalbek and targeted a two-storey building belonging to Hezbollah," a source within the Lebanese group told AFP, adding there were no casualties.

# Thousands rally in Niger to push for withdrawal of US troops

**Monitoring Desk**  
NIAMEY: Thousands took to the streets of Niger's capital on Saturday to demand the departure of US troops, after the ruling junta further shifted its strategy by ending a military accord with the United States and welcoming Russian military instructors.

Niger also signed a memorandum of understanding with Chinese state-owned oil giant China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) worth \$400 million linked to the sale of crude oil from its Agadem oilfield, Niger state television RTN reported late on Friday. "China is a great friend to Niger; we can never say it enough," Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine said at the signing ceremony, which was broadcast by RTN.

"This signature demonstrates the friendship... and fruitful cooperation between the two states," Chinese ambassador Jiang Feng said.

An export pipeline project backed by CNPC subsidiary PetroChina was officially launched last November, linking the Agadem oilfield to the port of Cotonou in neighbouring Benin. Previously, the West African country had a small oil refinery with capacity of around 20,000 bpd that mostly supplies Niger's domestic fuel market.

Marching arm in arm through central Niamey, the crowd waved Nigerian flags in a demonstration that recalled anti-French protests that spurred the withdrawal of France's forces from Niger last year after the army seized power in a coup.

One hand-written sign in English read "USA rush out of Niger," in a show of support for the junta and its decision in mid-March to revoke an accord that had allowed around 1,000 US military personnel to operate on its territory out of two bases.

# Germany to send new Patriot air defence system to Kyiv

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: Germany will supply a US-made Patriot air defence system and air defence missiles to Ukraine at a "critical time" as Kyiv struggles to defend its energy system from Russian bombardment, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Saturday. More than two years into its full-scale invasion, Russia has staged three massive airstrikes on power stations and substations in recent weeks, prompting Kyiv to issue desperate appeals for supplies of high-end air defences.

"I am grateful to the chancellor for the decision to supply another, additional Patriot system to Ukraine, as well as missiles for the existing air defence systems," Zelenskyy said after speaking by telephone with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. He described their conversation as "important, productive" and said: "I call on all other lead-

ers of partner states to follow this example."

Germany will hand over the Patriot system immediately and it will be in addition to air defence systems that were already delivered and planned, the defence ministry said in a post on X. An April 10 German government summary of arms and military equipment transfers to Ukraine included two Patriot systems on a list of air defence supplies already delivered, making this the third from Germany.

Zelenskyy said last week that Ukraine needed 25 US-made Patriot air defence systems to cover the country from Russian attacks.

In his statement on the Telegram app on Saturday, the Ukrainian leader said he and Scholz also discussed preparations for a reconstruction conference in Berlin and a peace summit in Switzerland in June.

# US diplomat turned Cuban spy jailed for 15 years

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MIAMI: A former US ambassador who pleaded guilty to spying for Cuba for over four decades was sentenced in federal court to 15 years in prison. Victor Manuel Rocha, 73, was arrested in December for what US officials called "one of the highest-reaching and longest-lasting infiltrations of the United States government by a foreign agent." Rocha pleaded not guilty in February to charges of conspiring to act as an agent of a foreign government but later accepted a plea deal with federal prosecutors. Judge Beth Bloom, after a three-and-a-half-hour hearing in Miami on Friday, told Rocha she would give him "the maximum penalty permitted by law." In addition to the 15-year sentence, Rocha was given a \$500,000 fine.

Rocha, a naturalised US citizen originally from Colombia, allegedly began aiding Havana as a covert agent of Cuba's General Directorate of Intelligence (DGI) in 1981.



People offer flowers for the victims of Saturday's stabbings at Bondi Junction in Sydney, Australia.

# Vigil held for victims of Sydney mall attack

**Monitoring Desk**  
SYDNEY: A small evening vigil was held on Sunday for the six people killed in a knife attack at a busy Sydney shopping centre, which police said was carried out by a local man with a history of mental illness.

Mourners gathered in silent reflection outside the Westfield mall in Bondi Junction, which had been packed with weekend shoppers when 40-year-old itinerant Joel Cauchi went on a stabbing rampage.

Police said five women and a Pakistani security guard were killed in the attack, which lasted for about half an hour, until a solo police-

# Zuma steals the spotlight ahead of South Africa elections

**Monitoring Desk**  
JOHANNESBURG: With less than two months to South Africa's crunch election, scandal-tainted former president Jacob Zuma has stolen the spotlight in an unlikely comeback, further wounding the ruling ANC, analysts say. Arguably the most polarising politician in the country's history of democracy, Zuma's politicking can be enthralling or perplexing. The ex-leader who has made headlines almost daily in the southern African nation for a series of political engagements.

# Cyprus suspends Syrian asylum applications as it struggles with arrivals spike

**Monitoring Desk**  
NICOSIA: Cyprus has suspended the processing of asylum applications from Syrians following a sharp increase in irregular arrivals this month, authorities said on Sunday.

More than 1,000 people have arrived in Cyprus on boats from Lebanon since the start of April amid deepening tensions in the Middle East. It has triggered calls from Nicosia to its European Union partners to do more to assist Lebanon, as well as reconsider the status of war-torn Syria.

# Biden returns to Washington as Iran launches attack on Israel

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden reinforced solidarity with Israel after meeting with his national security team to discuss Iran's drone and missile attack on the US ally, which prompted concerns about a wider conflagration in the Middle East.

Biden cut short a weekend trip to his home state of Delaware and returned to Washington to meet with cabinet members and other top US officials.

"I just met with my national security team for an update on Iran's attacks against Israel," Biden said in a post on X after the meeting. "Our commitment to Israel's security against threats from Iran and its proxies is ironclad."

Iran on Saturday

launched dozens of drones at Israel that will take hours to reach their targets, Israel's military said, an attack that may trigger an escalation between the regional arch-enemies.

Iran had vowed to retaliate for Israel's attack on Iran's embassy compound last week in Damascus that killed a senior commander in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' overseas Quds Force and six other officers.

The White House said Biden was being briefed regularly on developments in the region, where the American military shot down Iranian drone aircraft headed toward Israel, according to three US officials.

# Thousands gather in Iran in show of support for attack on Israel

**Monitoring Desk**  
TEHRAN: Thousands of Iranians took to the streets early Sunday in a show of support for the unprecedented drone and missile attack under way against arch foe Israel.

"Death to Israel!" and "Death to America!" chanted demonstrators in Tehran's Palestine Square shortly after the Revolutionary Guards announced the launch of Operation Honest Promise.

A mural saying "the next slap is fiercer" was unveiled in the square where a huge banner had hung for days calling, in Hebrew, for Israelis to "take shelter".

On Sunday, demonstrators waved Iranian and Palestinian national flags alongside banners reading "God's victory is near". Iran's attack came in retaliation for an April 1 strike that levelled the five-storey consular annex of the Iranian embassy in Damascus and killed seven Revolutionary Guards, two of them generals. Tehran has

since vowed to avenge the strike which was widely blamed on Israel.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei pledged that the "evil (Israeli) regime will be punished". Iranian media described the attack on Israel as "complex" as it also involved Iranian allies in Yemen, Lebanon and Iraq. "This attack did not come from Iran only, and this regime (Israel) is being punished from four directions," the Tasnim news agency said.

A large crowd of demonstrators gathered outside the British embassy in Tehran.

Supporters of the retaliatory attack also demonstrated in Iran's third largest city Isfahan where Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi, one of the generals killed in the Damascus strike, is buried.

Demonstrators also gathered near the grave in the southern city of Kerman of prominent Guards commander Qasem Soleimani, who was killed in a 2020 US drone strike in Baghdad.

# Thousands rally in Niger to push for withdrawal of US troops

**Monitoring Desk**  
NIAMEY: Thousands took to the streets of Niger's capital on Saturday to demand the departure of US troops, after the ruling junta further shifted its strategy by ending a military accord with the United States and welcoming Russian military instructors.

Niger also signed a memorandum of understanding with Chinese state-owned oil giant China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) worth \$400 million linked to the sale of crude oil from its Agadem oilfield, Niger state television RTN reported late on Friday. "China is a great friend to Niger; we can never say it enough," Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine said at the signing ceremony, which was broadcast by RTN.

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Marching arm in arm through central Niamey, the crowd waved Nigerian flags in a demonstration that recalled anti-French protests that spurred the withdrawal of France's forces from Niger last year after the army seized power in a coup.

One hand-written sign in English read "USA rush out of Niger," in a show of support for the junta and its decision in mid-March to revoke an accord that had allowed around 1,000 US military personnel to operate on its territory out of two bases.

# Ukraine's army chief says eastern front under intense Russian assault

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: Ukraine's army chief said on Saturday the situation on the eastern front had worsened in recent days as Russia has intensified its armoured assaults and battles rage for control of a village west of the devastated city of Bakhmut.

The statement by Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyy more than two years since Russia's invasion reflected the grim mood in Kyiv as vital US military aid that Kyiv expected to receive months ago remains stuck in Congress. Syrskyy said he travelled to the area to stabilise the front as Russian assault groups using tanks and armoured personnel carriers took advantage of dry, warm weather that has made it easier to manoeuvre.

"The situation on the eastern front in recent days has grown considerably more tense. This is linked primarily to the significant activation of offensive action by the enemy after

the presidential elections in Russia," he wrote on the Telegram app.

Since President Vladimir Putin won a new term in a stage-managed mid-March election, Russia has stepped up its attacks on Ukraine and unleashed three massive aerial strikes on its energy system, pounding power plants and substations. The slowdown in military assistance from the West has left Ukraine more exposed to aerial attacks and heavily outgunned on the battlefield. Kyiv has made increasingly desperate appeals for supplies of air defence missiles in recent weeks. Moscow's forces, Syrskyy said, were taking significant losses during their attacks in the east, but were also making tactical gains. Social media channels reported the fall of Ukraine's eastern village of Bohdanivka to the west of the occupied city of Bakhmut, prompting Kyiv's defence ministry to deny them.



Chinese and North Korean artists perform during the opening ceremony of "North Korea-China Friendship Year" at the Pyongyang Grand Theatre.

## Syedal Khan Nasar vows to raise forceful voice for real issues of public in Senate

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Deputy Chairman Senate, Syedal Khan Nasar has vowed to raise forceful voice for the real issues being faced by the masses of Balochistan in Senate.

The Deputy Chairman Senate was speaking to local media persons here at his residence on Saturday night.

It was his first media interaction after becoming Deputy Chairman Senate.

Syedal Khan Nasar said that the people of province are facing issues of health, education, unemployment and others, and by the grace of Allah, he

would take up the real issues of people in Senate and other forums.

He also pledged to play his part for making legislation in the Upper House.

To a query, Syedal Khan Nasar said that whatever development works were carried out in the country including Balochistan were done during the era of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

He said that a lot of development works were done in Balochistan. The work on mega projects of roads, Kachhi canal, Reko dik and others were also

done in the era of PML-N, he added.

The Deputy Chairman Senate said that the PML-N's Quaid, Nawaz Sharif gave government to the nationalist party despite getting heavy mandate in elections in 2013, which had never thought of it (government) in the dream even.

He believed that there would be lot of work during next one and two years of PML-N-led government in the country.

He said that PML-N has steered the country out of financial crunch, and would do so in future too.



HASSANABDAL: Federal Defence Minister, Khawaja Asif Mehmood addressing the Sikh pilgrims at Gurdwara Panja Sahib on the occasion of Baisakhi Mela.

## UN chief 'condemns' Iran's attack on Israel

NEW YORK (INP): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has condemned Iran's attack on Israel following Syria Embassy attack.

UN chief in a statement said: "I strongly condemn the serious escalation represented by the large-scale attack launched on Israel. Sirens wailed in Israel heard distant heavy thuds and bangs from what local media called aerial interceptions of explosive drones. Authorities said a 7-year-old girl was critically injured."

Iran this evening, I call for an immediate cessation of these hostilities.

"I am deeply alarmed about the very real danger of a devastating region-wide escalation. I urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint to avoid any action that could lead to major military confrontations on multiple fronts in the Middle East." "I have repeatedly stressed that neither the region nor the world can afford another

war."

Iran launched explosive drones and fired missiles at Israel late on Saturday in its first direct attack on Israeli territory, a retaliatory strike that raised the threat of a wider regional conflict, as the U.S pledged "ironclad" backing for Israel. Sirens wailed in Israel heard distant heavy thuds and bangs from what local media called aerial interceptions of explosive drones. Authorities said a 7-year-old girl was critically injured.

U.S. President Joe Biden, who spoke by phone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said he would convene a meeting of leaders of the Group of Seven major economies on Sunday to coordinate a diplomatic response to what he called Iran's brazen attack.

## Buner IBO martyr laid to rest in native town

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Buner intelligence-based operation (IBO) martyr was laid to rest in his native town with full military honor on Sunday.

On April 13th during an intelligence-based operation against terrorists in

nior officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army, relatives of the martyr and local people participated in the funeral prayer, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

"These sacrifices of our martyrs strengthen our



Buner district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Lance Havaldar Mudassar Mehmood, age 35 years, resident of Rawalpindi district had embraced martyrdom while gallantly fighting against the terrorists.

A large number of se-

dition in the war against terrorism and our love for motherland. Armed forces of Pakistan will continue to fight alongside the nation until the last terrorist is eliminated from the country," the ISPR said.

## Over 230 candidates vie for 23 vacant seats of NA, PAs: ECP

ISLAMABAD (APP): A total of 239 candidates were vying for 23 vacant seats in both national and provincial assemblies during the upcoming by-elections slated for April 21, an official of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said.

A total of 239 candidates will contest in the by elections, with 50 of them competing for vacant National Assembly seats. Notably, the first lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari has already been elected unopposed for NA 207, he said.

He said that a total of 23 candidates were vying for the vacant seats in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, while 154 candidates were seeking their fortunes in Punjab. In Sindh, Zubair Ahmed Junejo secured his seat unopposed on PS-80.

Twelve contenders are in the running for the empty seats in the Balochistan Assembly. The Commis-

sion has schedule to commence printing the ballot papers for the by-elections upon the finalization of candidate lists by the relevant returning officers on March 30, he added.

He stated that necessary election materials had been provided to provincial election commissioners. Additionally, district Returning Officers and Returning Officers are fulfilling their duties according to the established election schedule. He said close coordination has been maintained by the commission with the Ministries of Interior and Defense as well as provincial law enforcement agencies. On March 13, the Commission announced the schedule for by-elections across 23 National and Provincial Assembly seats. These elections encompass six National Assembly seats, twelve Punjab Assembly seats, two seats in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

## Repatriation efforts continue as illegal Afghans return home

ISLAMABAD (INP): The repatriation of Afghan nationals from Pakistan continues at a steady pace, with significant progress made as of April 13, 2024. A total of 535,940 illegal Afghans have now returned to their homeland, marking a significant step in the on-going efforts.

Over the past ten days, from April 3 to April 13, a total of 8,581 Afghan citizens have made the journey back home. Among them, 3,127 men, 1,972 women, and 3,482 children have returned.

In a coordinated effort, 310 families have been safely repatriated to Afghanistan, utilizing 287 vehicles for their journey.



GARHI KHUDBAKHSH: President Asif Ali Zardari, Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Safaraz Ahmed Bugti, President PPP Balochistan Mir Changez Khan Jamali and others offering Dua on eve of death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

## Govt committed to providing complete religious freedom to people of all faiths: Khawaja

ATTOCK (APP): Federal Minister for Defense, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, has said the present government is committed to providing complete religious freedom to people of all faiths living in the country. He was talking to newsmen after participating in the Bhog ceremony in connection with the Baisakhi festival at Gurdwara Panja Sahib Hassanabdal on Sunday.

In his address, he expressed that the Sikh Marriage Act had been passed in 2018, and now it would be implemented soon after

the approval of the provincial cabinet. He said that around six gurdwaras across the country would be open and handed over to the local Sikh community for the observance of rituals. Earlier, speaking at the Bhog ceremony, Khawaja Asif said that the Pakistani people and government were proud to host the Sikh pilgrims on their holy land.

"The present government believes in the freedom of the minority and would extend all its resources for the better preservation of their sacred places" he added.

The Sikh religion fa-

mous Baisakhi celebrations, to mark the advent of the order of the \*Khalsa by 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh Ji, were observed at Gurdwara Panja Sahib here today. Around ten thousand Sikh yatrees—among them over 2400 Indians and others from other parts of the world, including Pakistan, India, Canada, and the United Kingdom participated in the festivities. Baisakhi processions called Nagar Keertan were taken out on the premises of Gurdwara Panja Sahib with traditional performances and religious rites.

## Death toll from lightning in country reaches 26 as one more person dies

QUETTA (INP): The death toll from lightning reached 26 in the country on Sunday when one more person lost his life after he was struck by lightning in Garhi Yasin area of Shikarpur.

The body was shifted to a local hospital where the person was identified as Zulfikar Ali Jakro. On Saturday, at least 25 people were killed in Punjab and Balochistan when they were struck by lightning.

In Punjab alone, 17 people fell prey to the deadly strikes as confirmed by a spokesperson for the Provincial Disaster Management Authority

(PDMA). Lightning struck people in several areas of the province namely Muzaffargarh, Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur, Lodhran, Bahawalpur, and Bahawalnagar.

Heart-wrenching accounts emerged from the Faqeer Wali area near Haroonabad, where a father and his two sons lost their lives, while the mother and another son sustained injuries. Rescue 1122 confirmed nine fatalities in Faqeer Wali. In another incident, a family of four, a man his wife, and their two children perished in Rahim Yar Khan.

## World Bank approves \$1b loan for Dasu Hydropower Project

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan received a much-needed boost for its energy sector as the World Bank approved a \$1 billion loan for the 2,160-megawatt Dasu Hydropower Project. This critical infrastructure project aims to provide Pakistan with affordable and reliable electricity.

The loan approval comes after some delays, with initial reports suggesting a May approval. However, government sources now confirm the World Bank's board greenlit the

financing in June. This represents the third major investment by the World Bank in the Dasu project, highlighting its significance for Pakistan's energy future.

Pakistan's current energy woes stem largely from the high cost of electricity generated using imported fuel. This burden is felt across the country, with domestic consumers, factories, and even institutions like mosques and hospitals resorting to installing solar panels to escape the expensive grid.

## Earthquake shakes Mingora and adjoining areas

SWAT (INP): An earthquake shook Mingora city and surrounding areas in Swat district on Sunday.

After the earthquake, panic spread among the people, prompting them to come out of their houses and shops. According to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre, Islamabad, the earthquake registered with a magnitude of 4.0 on the Richter scale.

The Centre defined that the earthquake's region as Hindu Kush Region, Afghanistan and its epicentre was 217km deep.



QUETTA: Senior leader PML-N Shabbir Rajput greets Saeed Khan Nassar on becoming Deputy Chairman Senate

## Celebrations of Khalsa Janumdin & Vasakhi Mela conclude

LAHORE (APP): The celebrations of the 325th Khalsa Janumdin and Vasakhi Mela concluded at Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Hasanabdal.

According to a press release issued here on Sunday, Sikh pilgrims from all over the world including India, ambassadors from Australia, Nepal and other 10 countries attended the event. They thanked the government of Pakistan and the Evacuee Property Trust Board administration for decorating the Gurdwara Panja Sahib in a beautiful manner and providing accommodation to the pilgrims. Addressing the main ceremony, Federal Minister for Defense Khawaja Muhammad Asif welcomed the guests. While congratulating them, he said

that minorities in Pakistan have complete religious freedom and their places of worship and property are safe. "Measures are being taken for the welfare of non-Muslims," he added.

Senator Sardar Guldeez Singh, Secretary Board Farid Iqbal, Additional Secretary Shrinves Rana Shahid Saleem, Administrator Karachi Muhammad Asif Khan, Deputy Administrator Hasan Abdal Yasir Asghar Monga, Asher Younis MPA, Baba Girpal Singh, Sardar Sawant Singh Dr. Mampal Singh and other political and religious minority leaders participated in the ceremony. Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, Pradhan of Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs,



CHINIOF: Federal Minister Maritimes, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh participating in 16th Annual River Chenab Marathon Race (7 KM long from Toll Palza to Khatmay Nabooat Chwok).

## Adil Raja loses crucial stage of defamation case to Brig ® Rashid Naseer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Controversial Youtuber Major ® Adil Raja has suffered a crushing blow as a UK High Court Judge rejected all his applications including his application to stay a defamation trial progressing against him by former senior military officer Brigadier ® Rashid Naseer.

The judge ruled that Mr Raja had published words which were seriously defamatory of Brigadier ® Rashid Naseer in nine publications on social media sites YouTube, Facebook and Twitter/X.

Deputy High Court Judge Mr Richard Spearman KC ruled that Adil Farooq Raja should pay £5,000 to the now retired Brigadier for the rejected application to stay the defamation trial and the judge also ordered Adil Raja

to pay a further interim payment on account of costs in the sum of £5,000 for the failed security for costs application. Adil Raja, the defendant, has until 17 April 2024 to pay this money.

With help from his lawyer and PTI UK leader Mahtab Anwar Aziz who also represents PTI activist Shayan Ali, Adil Raja appeared before the court remotely by video link and argued that the case of Brig ® Rashid Naseer should be stayed on a number of grounds but the court rejected all his arguments which included allegations that Pakistan was an authoritarian state in which the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) controlled the Judiciary and the Government and allegations of election rigging in Pakistan.

In the case on meaning, the High Court Judge ruled that 9 out of the 10 publications published by Adil Raja were defamatory of Brig ® Rashid Naseer at common law and were matters of fact, rather than expressions of opinion. Brig ® Rashid Naseer's name had surfaced when former PM Imran Khan named him as Mr 'X' in making wild and baseless allegations – the allegations Khan and his party stepped back from and failed to prove at any forum.

In deciding the meaning of the publications, Deputy High Court Judge Mr Richard Spearman KC ruled that Brig ® Rashid Naseer was defamed at UK common law when Adil Farooq Raja made the following allegations, without any evidence, in the publications in June 2022.



QUETTA: Vehicles on their way during a rain experience in the city.

## Canada sacks Indian staffers working at its diplomatic missions in India

**Monitoring Desk**  
LONDON: Ties between Canada and India have deteriorated further as the former has dismissed dozens of Indian staffers from service who were working at its diplomatic missions in India over the Indian regime's plan to assassinate pro-Khalistani Sikhs on Canadian soil.

Relations between Canada and India started deteriorating last year when tens of thousands of Canadian Sikhs voted for Khalistan Referendum in several Canadian cities on the call of Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), led by Gurpatwant Singh Pannun who is a dual Canadian and US national.

The relations hit rock bottom when Indian assassinated SFJ and Khalistan Referendum's Canada coordinator Hardeep Singh Nijjar at the Canada's biggest Gurdwara in June 2023

and also tried to kill Pannun in New York.

A spokesperson for the Canadian High Commission stated that the reduction in the number of Indian employees was required in light of the country's shrinking Canadian workforce. "I can confirm that the Government of Canada has implemented some staff reductions across our network of missions in India," the official said.

The spokesperson, however, said that the high commission expressed its sincere gratitude for the service of its local staff in India.

After the murder of top Khalistani Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged that India was behind Nijjar's assassination.



PISHIN: Deputy Commissioner Juma Dad Khan Mandokhail visiting Khushdil Khan Dam after recent rains