



The present govt is committed to providing complete religious freedom to people of all faiths living in the country

Federal Minister for Defense

Khawaja Muhammad Asif

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## Visit of Saudi Foreign Minister to Pakistan

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: A high-level Saudi delegation, led by Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah, will visit Pakistan from 15 to 16 April 2024. The delegation consists of Saudi Minister of Water and Agriculture, Eng Abdul Rahman Abdul Mohsen Al-Fadley, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, Bandar Ibrahim AlKhorayef, Deputy Minister of Investment, Badr AlBadr, Head of Saudi Special Committee, Mohammad Mazyed Al Towajiri, and senior officials from Ministry of Energy and Saudi Fund for General Investments.

The visit takes place essentially to expedite follow up on the understanding reached between Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and HRH Mohammad bin Salman, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during their recent meeting in Makkah Al Mukaramah to enhance bilateral economic cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The Saudi delegation is expected to hold meetings with the President, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and counterpart Ministers, COAS, Apex Committee of SIFC.

This visit is aimed at lending positive impetus to enhanced bilateral cooperation and mutually rewarding economic partnership.

## Buner IBO martyr laid to rest in native town



RAWALPINDI: 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 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 senior 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 determination 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 Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said. PR



LARKANA: President Asif Ali Zardari addressing to public gathering on the occasion of 45th Death Anniversary of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto. APP

## PM Shehbaz, President Zardari felicitate Sikh community on Baisakhi



VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari Sunday felicitated the Sikh community which is celebrating Baisakhi — the ancient harvest festival which holds key significance in Sikhism and also marks the beginning of the new year. "I extend my heartiest greetings to the Sikh community all over the world and in Pakistan on the occasion of the colourful festival of

Baisakhi," PM Shehbaz said in a statement released by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Highlighting Baisakhi's importance as a symbol of the spring season and embodies love, affection and happiness, the premier said that the festival adds to Pakistan's religious diversity which reflects a "beautiful blend of different faiths and cultures". "I want to send you all a message of love, peace and love. Let's play our part in creating

a peaceful world together," the prime minister said.

Furthermore, the PM reassured that both federal and provincial governments are providing all the relevant and necessary facilities to the Sikh pilgrims who reached Pakistan from all over the world.

Meanwhile, President Zardari also congratulated the Sikh community and reiterated Pakistan's commitment towards the protection of minorities and their rights.

"Pakistan will take all possible steps to facilitate the Sikh community [as it is] determined to protect minorities and their rights," the statement from the President House read.

As many as 2,400 Sikh pilgrims from India crossed into Pakistan via Wagah Border to participate in Khalsa Janam Day and Baisakhi celebrations.

Each year, thousands of Sikhs visit Hassan Abdal, which is also the birthplace of Sikhism's founder Guru Nanak, to celebrate Baisakhi.

The main event of Vaisakhi Mela will be held on Sunday (today) at Gurudwara Panja Sahib and the Sikh pilgrims will return to India after completing their 10-day pilgrimage on April 22, the publication added citing an Evacuee Trust Property Board (EPTB) spokesperson.

## Pakistan expresses 'deep concern' over ongoing developments in Middle East

Islamabad calls on all parties to exercise utmost restraint and move towards de-escalation, says FO

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan expressed 'deep concern' on Sunday over the ongoing developments in the Middle East and said that there is an urgent need to stabilize the situation and restore peace. According to the statement by the FO spokesperson, for several months, Pakistan has emphasized the need for international efforts to ensure peace in the region and a ceasefire in Gaza.

Pakistan had pointed to the attack on the Iranian consular office in Syria on April 2 as a major escalation in the region and today's developments show a breakdown in diplomacy, the FO said.

The statement added that such incidents also underline the grave implications in cases where the UN Security Council is unable to fulfil its responsibilities of maintaining international peace and security.

Earlier, Pakistan welcomed the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Israel following its invasion of Gaza. "We consider the ICJ's ruling timely and a significant milestone in the pursuit of justice for the Palestinian people and international accountability of Israel," the FO said.

Pakistan called for the full and effective implementation of the ICJ's decision so that basic human rights, dignity and identity of Palestinian people as a distinct group were upheld and protected, as stipulated by the United Nations Charter, relevant UN resolutions, and international law.

"Pakistan reaffirms its unwavering support to the Palestinian people in their just and legitimate struggle for the realization of their inalienable right to self-determination."

With a similar spirit, "Pakistan has supported the application filed by South Africa before the ICJ against Israel under the 1948 Genocide Convention, in follow up to which the Court today announced the provisional measures," it added.



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

## Iran told Turkey in advance of its operation against Israel, Turkish source says

ANKARA: Iran informed Turkey in advance of its planned operation against Israel, a Turkish diplomatic source told Reuters on Sunday, adding that Washington had conveyed to Tehran via Ankara that any action it took had to be "within certain limits". Turkey, which has denounced Israel for its campaign on Gaza, said earlier on Sunday that it did not want a further escalation of tensions in the region.

The Turkish source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan had spoken to both his U.S. and Iranian counterparts in the past week to discuss the planned Iranian operation, adding Ankara had been made aware of possible developments.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue Earlier this week, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke to Fidan to make clear that escalation in the Middle East was not in anyone's interest.

"Iran informed us in advance of what would happen. Possible developments also came up during the meeting with Blinken, and they (the U.S.) conveyed to Iran through us that this reaction must be within certain limits," the source said.

"In response, Iran said the reaction would be a response to Israel's attack on its embassy in Damascus and that it would not go beyond this," Reuters

## PPP to support govt for economic stability, prosperity: President Zardari

LARKANA: President Asif Ali Zardari has said that Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) 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 Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto in Larkana here on Sunday. President Asif Ali Zardari said national interest was the top priority of Pakistan Peoples Party and it will remain in touch with all political parties for the betterment of the country. He said Pakistan was blessed with vast potential of minerals and natural resources and it would emerge from current economic crisis through exploitation of these resources.

Paying tribute to Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, he said Bhutto family always sacrificed their lives for the country and people. He said that party's leadership and workers accepted martyrdom for the sake of country. "I faced jails with support of party workers," he said adding the country was facing challenges due to wrong decisions of some people. "We will strengthen the country's economy," APP

## Govt to providing complete religious freedom to people of all faiths living in country: Kh Asif

ATTOCK: 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 Besakhi 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 famous 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 yatraes—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. The leader of the Indian Sikh contingent, Sardar Kulwant Singh, expressed their satisfaction over the arrangements made for Sikh pilgrims in his address.

## With challenges ahead, the jury's still out on CJP Isa's legacy

While some hail CJP's tenure for its historic strides, others remain sceptical about his effectiveness

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa finds himself in the hot seat as he enters the remainder of his term, grappling with a slew of challenges amid a mixed bag of reviews regarding his performance over the past six months.

While some hail his tenure for its historic strides, others remain sceptical about CJP Isa's effectiveness, who is set to hang up his robes on October 26. From the get-go, CJP Isa set the tone by convening a full-court meeting on his first day, where the majority of judges gave the nod to live-streaming court proceedings.

Flexing his authority judiciously, he streamlined bench formations and gave precedence to public interest cases with the backing of the Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Act 2023, effectively

clipping the wings of discretionary powers of the CJP.

Furthermore, the lifetime disqualification of political titans such as Nawaz Sharif and Jahangir Tareen under Article 62 (1) (f) of the constitution has been abolished. The SC chimed in on the presidential reference, revisiting the murky waters of ex-prime minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's murder case while ousting SC judge Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi over alleged misconduct. Meanwhile, the gavel came down hard on ex-army chief Pervez Musharraf's conviction.

Through it all, CJP Isa notably held the reins of suo motu jurisdiction with integrity. Observers note the SC, under CJP Isa's helm, has been focused to right the

wrongs of the past.

However, the superior judiciary showed judicial restraint in navigating the turbulent waters of clashes between powerful circles and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

Regarding the future challenges of CJP Isa, Advocate Abdul Moiz Jafferri said, in one sentence: That the CJP's greatest challenge for the next six months is the same as his greatest challenge for the past three months: to recover from the decision given on January 13.

It's noteworthy that on January 13, a three-judge bench headed by CJP Isa declared the intra-party elections of PTI illegal, resulting in the party being stripped of its election symbol. Later, PTI was unable to secure reserved seats post-election. Jafferri further elaborated that the CJP's

biggest challenge for the rest of his remaining tenure is to shed the perception that his court has assisted the incumbent coalition government both by knocking out the most popular party in the country on a technicality and by allowing the government a wide berth to operate.

"Another challenge will be to take the IHC judges' allegations towards a conclusion which strengthens the institution and doesn't just look like a self-serving exercise which ends with letting the executive do what it wishes," he added. Jafferri opined that if the Supreme Court could write to the high courts to ask what to do next, it could also have asked them if they had any experiences of establishment interference of their own to convey. "This court looks like it's either stuck in

the past, with a focus on the Bhutto sentence correction or the fixation with the 2018 election and government-related issues, or it seems to be focused on moving on to the future.

Jafferri suggested that what might be lacking is justice in the present moment, precisely when it is most needed and "when it is actually the job of this Supreme Court". Barrister Asad Rahim Khan noted that the recent spate of SC decisions, as well as near-complete inertia in response to the IHC judges' letter, was eroding the judiciary's standing each day.

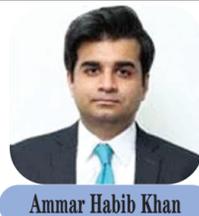
This chief justice would be better served acknowledging that citizens' fundamental rights have all but collapsed, rather than pass statements about getting out of the kitchen. He further said that another challenge

was that the trash fire of a law was the Practice & Procedure Act has so far only succeeded in suspending the landmark military courts judgment.

"At no point since 2009 has confidence in the judiciary been this low; so far, it's not quite been this chief justice's priority to restore even a fraction of it," he added.

"The challenge is to build consensus within 17 Judges of the SC. To overcome poisonous divisions. To renew faith in shared goals of achieving Jinnah's Pakistan which we all dream of", Advocate Zahid F Ebrahim opined. Advocate Umer Gilani believed that Justice Qazi Faez Isa assumed office of CJP at a moment in our judicial history when all state institutions, including the courts and the armed forces, were deeply fractured, with pro-Imran and anti-Imran camps fighting an existential battle. Agencies

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Ammar Habib Khan

# The future is electric

excess electricity generation capacity. Public transportation options exclusively relying on electric, or electric-hybrid vehicles can significantly reduce private consumption of fuel while enhancing mobility for the people. The availability of affordable public transportation not only reduces reliance on imported fuel, but also enhances the ability of people to seek better employment opportunities, and higher wages since the cost of transportation is reduced. The availability of public transportation has a net positive impact on household income, as a mix of both increased wages (through better mobility) and reduced spending on fuel. Rolling out such projects exclusively through electric buses can also partially solve the overcapacity problem in the case of electricity – albeit a lot more structural changes will be required for that to be successful. Such transportation projects must be executed in a modular manner. Mega public transportation projects rolled out in the country over the last decade entailed ripping up existing infrastructure, and replacing it with new infrastructure, eventually leading to significant capital costs, and cost overruns, as well as extended delays. A modular approach through public-private partnerships can accelerate the roll-out of such projects, wherein the government can set parameters for service delivery, and auction routes to private parties which can then bid for routes. There may be cases where certain routes may not be viable – in those cases, the government can provide the necessary subsidies to make the project feasible. It is important to note here that the subsidies rolled out must be compared with the

potential fuel savings, as well as improvement in household income – rather than be viewed in isolation. Through such a structure, the government can roll out public transportation projects running on electric vehicles in a fairly short period, providing valuable relief to the people at the same time. The government of Punjab has recently launched a scheme for subsidizing motorcycles, of which only a small percentage are electric motorcycles. It makes little economic sense to subsidize petrol-fueled motorcycles when a completely new market can be carved out for electric motorcycles. In China, and many Southeast Asian countries, the proportion of electric motorcycles continues to increase, catalyzed by the presence of battery swapping stations. Through such battery charging, and swapping stations, two-wheelers, and three-wheelers alike can quickly swap out their batteries, instead of getting a refill of fuel. The savings from switching to electricity from petrol are significant, and directly impact overall household budgets – and eventually fuel imports at a macro-level. A compelling case exists to create an electric mobility emergency, which targets both public transportation and private mobility solutions. Any such policy actions earlier were largely restricted to reducing duties on electric vehicles exclusively for the ultra-rich in the country. For a change, the government may actually formulate policies for the vast majority of the country that continues to struggle with reducing purchasing power, amidst the increasing cost of transportation. A two-tiered approach can be taken for mobilizing capital, and support for it, a policy framework for public-

private transportation projects, with clear service delivery parameters, and a route auction mechanism. Rolling this out to the provinces can further accelerate the process. The government has been charging a Petroleum Development Levy on the sale of petrol, and diesel for the longest time. Reallocating it for incentivizing public transportation would align with the spirit of the levy, rather than it being a vanilla source of revenue for federal budgetary support. The government needs to make budgetary allocations for the people, rather than friends and family. The next policy framework is to incentivize and encourage the manufacturing of electric buses, two-wheelers, and three-wheelers in the country. Such a policy framework should also cover parameters for charging and swapping stations, making it a plug-and-play solution. Incentives can be provided for the manufacturing of such vehicles through tax breaks, or duty differentials, such that it is cheaper to develop an ecosystem of electric vehicles in the country. The future is electric. Our present is excess power generation capacity, and increased reliance on imported fuel. Both these problems can be solved through an accelerated roll-out of electric mobility solutions through a mix of public-private partnerships, and ecosystem development of electric vehicles. Such interventions will not require much capital outlay from the government, but they will require the will and the imagination to do something different. Public transportation has one of the highest social impacts; one simply can't go wrong with this, unless it is by design.

*The writer is an independent macroeconomist.*

## Inevitable shift

DR MURTAZA KHUHQRO

The capitalist system, built upon a foundation of inequality and exploitation, is on the verge of collapse by the year 2030. Human history and civilization are poised to undergo a significant transformation, driven by the rapid development of technologies such as generative artificial intelligence, AI software engineering, and the imminent arrival of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) and AI agents. It is of utmost importance for all nations, their governments, policymakers, and various institutions, as well as the majority of people who have long been deprived of fundamental rights and equality, to comprehend the emergence of these new forces that are favorable to human civilization. These forces have surfaced and gained momentum since November 30, 2022. No country, government, policymaking group, institution, or even the people themselves can afford to disregard these forces. Failing to grasp their significance and revolutionary impact would spell doom. These unstoppable forces, inherently objective, will transcend borders with the aid of globalization and advancements in human intellect. They will inevitably influence and impact every individual worldwide before the year 2030. The claim that capitalism inherently encourages competition, promotes efficiency, limits corruption and mismanagement, and creates a free market can indeed be critically examined, especially when considering its impact on inequality and the dynamics of competition. This perspective suggests that capitalism, as practised and advocated by its proponents, primarily serves the interests of specific economic groups, corporations, and countries, potentially at the expense of broader social equity. It is crucial to recognize that with the rise of capitalism in the 19th century, the productive forces generated by science and technology became the exclusive domain of those who possessed capital, whether through personal wealth, control of banks, or access to state resources. The coercive powers wielded by the state or government to control the general population were made accessible to these privileged groups. Certainly, throughout history, exceptional individuals have emerged who were able to break free from the confines of the system and attain great heights. It is important to acknowledge that such exceptional people have always been capable of transcending the limitations imposed upon them. However, the persistent question remains: why were regular people merely exploited by these groups, used solely to generate more wealth without the development of their intellectual capacities? Furthermore, why were the vast majority of people not provided with a system that would address their basic human needs? If our system fails to meet the basic human needs of the common people and instead exploits them, what is the rationale and moral foundation behind a development and growth paradigm that perpetuates an unequal society? This paradigm leaves individuals with no choice but to depend on influential classes, groups, and state institutions that do not regard them as fellow human beings. The question arises: who holds greater importance – the human being or GDP growth? The concept of GDP growth with a trickle-down effect is deeply inhumane, as it subjects common people to pain, exploitation, and inequality. No philosophical or economic theory that inflicts suffering upon ordinary individuals through exploitative or unequal practices can be supported or justified. The pervasive myth that capitalism inherently fosters competition is deeply flawed. Genuine competition presupposes a level playing field, yet capitalism is fundamentally characterized by pervasive inequality. It thrives on the exploitation of labour and natural resources, with the singular goal of profit maximization by any means necessary. In this system, societal development and research and innovation are not priorities but rather incidental byproducts or mere requisites for continued exploitation. It is a compelling argument that the absence of capitalism could have, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, fostered the rise of countless minds capable of revolutionary change. Moreover, without the capitalist paradigm, the devastating global conflicts of the First and Second World Wars, which inflicted unparalleled human suffering and environmental devastation, might have been averted. Reflecting on the origins of technology, it's clear that innovation is the product of human intellect and creativity, not an economic system. From the inception of civilization, technology has been a tool for extending human capabilities and reshaping the environment. The Industrial Revolution, driven not by scientists or their understanding of physical, chemical, or biological laws but by individuals motivated by profit and technological aptitude, brought about significant advancements like the steam engine and the railways. Rail transport, in particular, showcased technology's potential for unbiased service, offering access to all who could afford even the most modest fare. However, the emergence of a class-based system, rooted in the ownership of private property, starkly distorted the inherently equitable nature of technology, especially during the Industrial Revolution. This period saw technology being commandeered by those with capital, effectively denying its benefits to the wider populace and its original innovators. This appropriation disrupted the natural progression of human civilization, creating a chasm between technology's potential and its actual application. Had technology and science not been ensnared by capitalist motives, we might have seen exponential growth in intellectual development even in the pivotal periods of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This misalignment led to technology and science being wielded as tools of destruction and division, constrained by a system deeply rooted in inequality and exploitation.

*The writer is an advocate of the high court and a former civil servant.*

More than one-third of Pakistan's imports is essential transportation fuel. Almost \$5 billion of fuel is used by two-wheelers, and three-wheelers for transportation. There are more than 30 million two-wheelers in the country, making up more than 40 per cent of the total adult male labour force – estimated to be 70 million. External price shocks continue to affect household budgets, while economic growth remains constrained by the availability of foreign currency that can be used to finance consumption-oriented growth. On the flipside, Pakistan has a surplus energy generation capacity and continues to struggle with ramping up electricity consumption due to high tariffs. A negative feedback loop through which higher prices (determined through a cost-plus mechanism) result in lower consumption further increases tariffs, as the fixed costs of capacity payments are spread over a shrinking base of electricity units consumed. In the first instance, we are importing energy, and burning precious foreign currency reserves for this. In contrast, in the second instance, we have surplus electricity generation capacity, but cannot think beyond cost-plus tariff determination to increase energy consumption through electricity. To reduce the reliance on imported fuel for transportation, there exists a strong case for accelerated roll-out of electric mobility options, which can utilize

Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect The Asian Telegraph's point-of-view

## Today in History

### Pakistan

However, it had the satisfaction that the performance of the Indian National Congress in the Muslim constituencies was bad. After the elections, the attitude of the Congress leadership was arrogant and domineering. The classic example was its refusal to form a coalition government with the Muslim League in the United Provinces. Instead, it asked the League leaders to dissolve their parliamentary party in the Provincial Assembly and join the Congress. Another important Congress move after the 1937 elections was its Muslim mass contact movement to persuade the Muslims to join the Congress and not the Muslim League. One of its leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru, even declared that there were only two forces in India, the British and the Congress. All this did not go unchallenged.

Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah countered that there was a third force in South-Asia constituting the Muslims. The All-India Muslim League, under his gifted leadership, gradually and skillfully started organising the Muslims on one platform.

#### TOWARDS A SEPARATE MUSLIM HOMELAND

The 1930s witnessed awareness among the Muslims of their separate identity and their anxiety to preserve it within separate territorial boundaries. An important element that brought this simmering Muslim nationalism in the open was the character of the Congress rule in the Muslim minority provinces during 1937-39. The Congress policies in these provinces hurt Muslim susceptibilities. There were calculated aims to obliterate the Muslims as a separate cultural unit. The Muslims now stopped thinking in terms of seeking safeguards and began to consider seriously the demand for a separate Muslim state. During 1937-39, several Muslim leaders and thinkers, inspired by Allama Iqbal's ideas, presented elaborate schemes for partitioning the subcontinent according to two-nation theory.

#### PAKISTAN RESOLUTION

The All-India Muslim League soon took these schemes into consideration and finally, on March 23, 1940, the All-India Muslim League, in a resolution, at its historic Lahore Session, demanded a separate homeland for the Muslims in the Muslim majority regions of the subcontinent. The resolution was commonly referred to as the Pakistan Resolution. The Pakistan

demand had a great appeal for the Muslims of every persuasion. It revived memories of their past greatness and promised future glory. They, therefore, responded to this demand immediately.

#### CRIPPS MISSION

The British Government recognized the genuineness of the Pakistan demand indirectly in the proposals for the transfer of power after the Second World War which Sir Stafford Cripps brought to India in 1942. Both the Congress and the All-India Muslim League rejected these proposals for different reasons. The principles of secession of Muslim India as a separate Dominion was however, conceded in these proposals.

To be continued....

## Rebecca Ferguson reflects reactions on working with 'Absolute Idiot' actor

Rebecca Ferguson's revelation about 'Screaming' co-star sparks anxiety

Rebecca Ferguson in a recent interview on SiriusXM's The Jess Cagle shed light on the aftermath of her disclosure about a troubling experience with an unnamed co-star. The actress shared that her revelation caused anxiety among her past castmates as media speculated about the identity of the actor in question. Ferguson recounted receiving calls from multiple former co-stars after her initial remarks in February, expressing surprise at the unexpected reaction to her story. Her original anecdote described an encounter with an 'absolute idiot' actor who screamed at her on set, leading her to walk off in tears.



The Dune actress recounted, "And I was like, Oh my God. No, I didn't think." However, Rebecca emphasized that it's not her responsibility to shield celebrities from scrutiny, stating, "I mean, it's not my responsibility, to be honest. I don't really care." She asserted her right to share her story, adding, "You know, You're great, but my story is my story, and if you're a good person, then don't worry about it." Reflecting on the attention her story received, she admitted, "Number one, yes, I kind of enjoyed the grab." However, she acknowledged the insignificance of such attention, remarking, "But what I realized even at the age that I am now — 21 — is it doesn't matter.

## Apple's iOS 18 will have these features

Apple is set to release iOS 18 from June 10 till June 14 and iPhone users are excited for the new features. Following are some anticipated options and changes in Apple's iOS 18. **Smarter Siri and Generative AI** iOS 18 is expected to have new generative AI features for Siri, Spotlight, Shortcuts, Apple Music, Messages, Health, Numbers, Pages, Keynote, and more, according to sources such as Bloomberg's Mark Gurman and The Information's Wayne Ma. **More customisable Home Screen** iOS 18 will finally allow users to place app icons anywhere on the Home Screen grid, as reported by the MacRumors. This will enable users to create blank spaces, columns, and rows between app icons. This basic feature has long been available on Android smartphones, and now Apple is bringing it to the iPhone. **New Apple Maps features** Additionally, with the custom routes feature,



Apple Maps users would be able to choose specific roads to travel on while navigating, for reasons such as familiarity or scenic views. This feature is expected to be available in the US only at launch. Users are already allowed by Google Maps to create custom routes on the web, and then view them on an iPhone. **RCS Support in Messages app** Moreover, in November, Apple announced that it would support the cross-platform messaging standard RCS in the Messages app on the iPhone starting "later" in 2024. As a result, it will likely be an iOS 18 feature based on that timeframe.

## Can sugar replacement with artificial sweeteners help you lose weight?

When seeking a low or no-calorie sweet fix, people who are worried about their weight frequently turn to artificially sweetened items. However, is this tactic actually helpful for managing weight? According to a recent study, it might be promising. "The Sweet Project", a study, discovered that individuals who had quickly dropped weight and then swapped sugary meals and beverages for ones that contained sweeteners and sweetness enhancers (S&SE) kept the weight off for a full year. "The use of low-calorie sweeteners in weight management has been questioned, in part because of the link between their use and apparent weight gain in observational studies," co-author Jason Halford, PhD, president of the European Association for the Study of Obesity, said in the statement.

### Artificial sweeteners are preferred by people for weight loss but it might contain risks

"However, increasingly it is becoming apparent that is not the case in long-term studies," he added. The study's shortcomings were pointed out by the researchers, who also mentioned the limited sample size and the use of a general sweetener test rather than a type-specific one. The fact that women with higher educational levels made up the majority of participants raises additional concerns regarding the findings' generalisability.

Moreover, there are risks involved with using artificial sweeteners but most of the researchers approved of it. "There are many more health risks associated with being overweight or obese than there are with consuming artificial sweeteners," Kylie Bensley, a registered dietitian and owner of Suluni Nutrition, told Health. "If temporarily substituting sugar-sweetened food and beverages helps a person lose weight, that is preferable."



## Health



## Protestors demanded an immediate end to genocide in Gaza

KARACHI: On the appeal of the Palestine Foundation Pakistan (PLF), a large number of Karachi residents gathered outside the Karachi Press Club despite the heavy rain and protested in favor of the oppressed Palestinians.

They also carried pictures of Hamas leader Ismail Haniya's sons while holding banners and placards saying "Stop killing children in Gaza" and "America is responsible for the genocide in Palestine". Protesters also held placards congratulating Iran's retaliatory action against Israel last night.

Representatives of civil society and human rights organizations including leaders of political and religious parties and minority leaders from across the city participated in the protest organized for solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Dr. Sabir Abu Maryam Secretary General of Palestine Foundation Pakistan, leader of Jamat Islami Muhammad Hussain Mehnati, Leader of Majlis Wehdhat Musmaeen Sindh Allama Baqir Zaidi, Jamiat Ulema Pakistan's leaders Allama Qazi Noorani, Allama Aqeel Anjum, PTI leader Israr Abbasi, Qazi Zahid Hussain of PMLN, Kashmiri leader Bashir Sadouzi, chairman of Human Rights Council of Pakistan Jamshed Husain, Sikh leader Anil Singh, Sagib Nowshahi of Pakistan Awami Tahreek, Allama Mubashir Hasan, Qari Abdul Waheed, Younis, Khalida Iqbal spoke while on this occasion, Samreen Zahra, Mehreen Khan, Dr. Fazi Hussain, Dr. Madad Ali Sabri, Maulana Salahuddin Mujahid, Imran Madani, Qazi Hasnain Ahmed and others were also present.

Addressing the protestors, the speakers said that the major countries of the Muslim world are busy with America's laissez-faire, but Iran is the only Islamic country that has carried out historic countermeasures against Israel in fifty years. They said that we pay tribute to the government and leadership of Iran for their courageous action and congratulate them on their successful countermeasures against the murderous usurper Zionist state of Israel.

The speakers said that we assure Hamas leader Ismail Haniya that the people of Pakistan are always with Palestine. The speakers condemned the US and Israel for the martyrdom of the three sons of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyah who were martyred in the Israeli aggression in recent days and offered condolences to the Hamas leader.

The speakers said that America is responsible for the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and our protest will continue until the end of the aggression on Gaza.

The speakers also demanded the government of Pakistan leave America's laissez-faire and fight on the international level with the clear and unequivocal stand of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on the issue of Palestine. They strongly condemned the slow attitude of the government.

On this occasion, the protestors also chanted the slogans of "Death to America, Israel, thank you Iran, long live Hamas and Hezbollah". SABA



LAHORE: After the Eid al-Fitr holidays, people are returning to the city by train. APP

## Iran's Proportionate Military Action Targets Zionist Bases; Emphasizes Right to Self-Defense

IRAN: In a strategic move aimed at safeguarding its sovereignty and responding decisively to unwarranted aggression, the Islamic Republic of Iran executed a carefully calibrated military operation targeting Zionist military bases in occupied Palestine. The action, carried out within the framework of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, emphasized Iran's inherent and legitimate right to self-defense.

It was a proportionate military action against Zionist regime aimed at targeting the military bases in the occupied Palestine. No civilians and non-military centers including cities, hospitals, synagogues, infrastructures etc. were targeted.

This action was carried out within the framework of the inherent and legitimate right of self-defense according to Article 51 of the United Nations Organization Charter.

It was in response to the Zionist regime's military attack targeting the consular section of the Islamic republic of Iran embassy in Damascus, which led to the martyrdom of 7 Iranian military advisers who were present in Syria at the official invitation of the Syrian government. This action of the Zionist regime violated the 1961 Vienna Convention, the 1973 New York Convention and other international laws and regulations.

While emphasizing adherence to the principles and goals of the United Nations Charter, Islamic republic of Iran emphasizes its determination to resolutely defend its sovereignty, ter-

ritorial integrity, and national interests against any illegal use of force and aggression.

Islamic republic of Iran's recourse to the legitimate defensive measures in exercising the right to self-defense shows a responsible approach to the regional and international peace and security at a time when the Zionist regime is committing genocide and massacre against the innocent people of Gaza.

Islamic republic of Iran has already and repeatedly stated that in its principled framework, it does not seek to expand the scope of the war and escalations in the region and it has shown this issue in its responsible restraint. Though, restraint is not permanent because the continuation of that has led to the miscalculation by the Zionist regime.

8. The root of the continued current crisis in the region is the Zionist regime's aggression and genocide in Gaza.

Crucially, the Iranian military operation adhered strictly to international humanitarian law, with no civilian or non-military targets, including cities, hospitals, synagogues, or infrastructures, being compromised. This underscores Iran's commitment to upholding the principles of the United Nations Charter while resolutely defending its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national interests against any illegal use of force and aggression.

The catalyst for Iran's measured response was the egregious violation of international conventions by the Zionist regime, which targeted the

consular section of the Iranian embassy in Damascus. This act of aggression resulted in the tragic martyrdom of seven Iranian military advisers who were present in Syria at the official invitation of the Syrian government. The Zionist regime's actions not only contravened the 1961 Vienna Convention and the 1973 New York Convention but also flagrantly disregarded other international laws and regulations.

Iran's proactive stance in exercising its right to self-defense serves as a beacon of responsible regional and international peacekeeping, particularly amidst the ongoing atrocities and massacres perpetrated by the Zionist regime against the innocent people of Gaza. The Islamic Republic has consistently emphasized its commitment to preventing the escalation of hostilities in the region, opting instead for a restrained and measured approach to conflict resolution.

However, Iran's restraint should not be mistaken for complacency. While the current response was minimal and targeted, it sends a clear message of deterrence to the Zionist regime. Should further aggression occur, Iran stands ready to escalate its response decisively and decisively, ensuring the protection of its interests and the restoration of peace in the region. Ultimately, the key to resolving the ongoing crisis lies in the immediate cessation of hostilities and the implementation of a comprehensive ceasefire in Gaza.

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

ISLAMABAD: 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 province, 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 expressed 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. Bilawal Bhutto stressed that confronting the threats posed by climate change demands substantive action rather than superficial discourse or avoidance.

## CM Balochistan reviews law & order

QUETTA: A high level meeting on law and order was held at CM Secretariat under the chairmanship of Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti.

IG Police Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, ACS Jome Zahid Saleem and other senior civil and military officers participated in the meeting. The law and order situation in the aftermath of Noshki terrorism was reviewed in the meeting. Commissioner and DIG Rukhsan Division gave a briefing in the meeting regarding the Noshki tragedy wherein the meeting strongly condemned the incident. Moreover, it was decided to revise the security plan to prevent such incidents in future "War against terrorism is not only for security forces, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti said adding that this war is against the enemies of peace and is the war of the state. APP

## CM Maryam Pays Tribute to the Leadership of PM Shehbaz on Pakistan's Economic Indicators Getting Improved

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif while paying tribute to the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Pakistan's economic indicators getting improved stated that under the vibrant leadership of Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan's economy has once again started trading on the path of progress. The fruits of economic progress during the tenure of PML-N government are prominently coming to surface. The Chief Minister highlighted, "The common man would be provided relief with the reduction in electricity rates and price-hike. Big international financial institutions including IMF, ADBP highly acknowledge Pakistan's economic policies." She stated, "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." Madam Chief Minister said, "Good news are awaiting Pakistanis and their is a strong likelihood of reduction in the inflation rate up to 12.2 percent next year. For the first time, rupees 500 reduction occurred in the price of 20 kg flour bag and their is a further possibility of rupees 300 reduction in the flour price according to market indicators. The Economic & Social Survey Of Asia & Pacific Region have termed Pakistan's economic indicators as excellent. In the UN Report, Pakistan's economic progress moving forward briskly in the next fiscal year has been predicted. The growth rate would increase from 2% to 2.3% during the current and next financial year in Pakistan."



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

## ADB's report validates correct economic policies: Ahad Cheema

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Ahad Cheema here on Friday termed the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) report for April 2024 as a validation of the government's correct economic policies.

"The ADO from the Asian Development Bank is a strong endorsement of the government's correct economic policies," said the minister according to press statement issued by Economic Affairs Division.

The minister said, the ADO portrayed positive prospects for Pakistan's economy adding under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the government had started working towards a stable and sustainable economy. Inflation is decreasing in the country and this has also been confirmed by global financial

institutions, Cheema said. He said, the government has been working to improve financial discipline, promote investment, and facilitate a better business environment in the country. He said, the previous coalition government during past 16 months had taken necessary measures to stabilize the economy while it also saved the country from default and the economic measures taken by it have stabilized the value of rupee. According to EAD statement, the minister said, the country's agricultural sector was strong and has potential for further growth. The minister said, the government was committed to implementing the recommendations of the ADB and continue to work towards building an economy where opportunities are available for all Pakistanis. DNA

## Economic growth linked to durable regional peace

LAHORE: 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 Bumeri 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 Afghanistan but 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." APP

## Russia calls for restraint after Iranian attacked Israel with hundreds of missiles and drones

MOSCOW: Russia said on Sunday it was extremely concerned by Iranian strikes on Israel and called on all parties to exercise restraint but said tensions would remain high until the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians was resolved.

"We express our extreme concern over another dangerous escalation in the region," Russia's foreign ministry said in a statement on the Iranian attacks. "We call on all parties involved to exercise restraint."

Russia noted that Tehran had said the attack was made within the right to self defence after Israel's strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus that Moscow condemned. Russia, which has close ties to Iran, said that the West had blocked attempts in the United Nations Security Council to respond to the

Israeli strike on the consulate. "We have repeatedly warned that the numerous unresolved crises in the Middle East, primarily in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone, which are often fueled by irresponsible provocative actions, will lead to an increase in tension," the ministry said.

The Kremlin has yet to comment publicly. But Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said that a war between Israel and Iran would worsen Joe Biden's prospects of being re-elected U.S. president.

"America does not want a big war in the Middle East," Medvedev said on Telegram.

"The killings in Gaza worsen Biden's prospects in the elections, and war between Israel and Iran would introduce additional uncertainty." SABA

## Ahsan Iqbal to receive APO Meritorious & Distinguished Award-2024 next month

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal will formally receive the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) Meritorious and Distinguished Award-2024 during its Governing Body's 66th session to be held in Kuala Lumpur next month for his inspiring, exemplary achievements and contributions leading to centrality of productivity.

"The APO has revealed the winners of the APO, Regional Meritorious and Distinguished Awards, 2024 and Planning Minister Professor Ahsan Iqbal is one of the recipients in Asia Pacific who is the winner among the others," a news release by the Planning Ministry said on Sunday.

These prestigious awards honor individuals who have made significant contributions to productivity improvement across the Asia Pacific. This was the fourth time that Professor Ahsan Iqbal has assumed the charge of the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives. First time he became the planning minister in 1997 and continued this responsibility till 1999 then served from (2013-2017), and again from (2022-2023). Besides,

he served as a Deputy Chairman Planning Commission of Pakistan.

Previously, Ahsan Iqbal was also appointed as the United Nations Development Programme's "Champion Minister" for the Asia Pacific region, for his tireless efforts in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, Ahsan Iqbal was hailed as the "Hero of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) by the Chinese Government, a testament to his pivotal role in fostering bilateral relations and economic prosperity. He was also given the title of "Mr. CPEC" by China.

Under his dynamic leadership, several initiatives were taken which includes vision 2010, vision 2025, Outlook 2035, 5Es framework, 4RF framework for floods, China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), five New Economic Corridor and their alignment with 5Es framework, National Centers for Excellence, Main Line-1 (ML-1) railway project, Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) KCR and others.

Furthermore, other remarkable achievements, includes, initiating the PQI (Productivity, Quality, and Innovation) initiative, driving excellence in

Pakistan's industries, increasing the development budget for higher education by an impressive 68 percent, demonstrating his unwavering commitment to the future of our youth. The APO awards have celebrated the achievements of productivity champions who have significantly contributed to productivity improvement across the Asia Pacific.

In commemoration of the APO's 60th anniversary in 2021, several enhancements have been made to the award schemes to reflect the evolving landscape of productivity and innovation. The presentation of the awards would be conducted at the conferral ceremony during the 66th Session of the APO Governing Body in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, May 28-30, 2024 as well as the designated occasions by the APO Directors of respective countries of awardees based on the APO Regional Meritorious and Distinguished, and National Awards. The APO is dedicated to leveraging the knowledge and experience of these awardees to inspire and steer future productivity initiatives, thereby fostering learning, innovation, and collaboration among APO members. The

APO is a regional intergovernmental organization dedicated to improving productivity in the Asia-Pacific region through mutual cooperation. It is a nonpolitical, nonprofit, and nondiscriminatory organization.

Established in 1961 with eight founding members, the APO currently comprises 21 member economies including Bangladesh; Cambodia; the ROC; Fiji; Hong Kong; India; Indonesia; Iran; Japan; Republic of Korea (ROK); Lao PDR; Malaysia; Mongolia; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Turkey and Vietnam. The other awardees are Dr Pao-Cheng Chang, President of the China Productivity Center, Anilkumar Manibhai Naik, Chairman Emeritus of Larsen & Toubro Limited; Dr Bounthoung Douangavanh, Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Industry and Commerce in Lao PDR; Datuk Wira (Dr) Haji Ameer Ali Mydin, Managing Director of Mydin Mohamed Holdings Berhad; Yamaaranz Erkhembayar, Chairman and CEO of the Mongolian Productivity Organization; and Dr Ha Minh Hiep, Acting Director General of the Directorate for Standards, Metrology, and Quality in Vietnam. APP