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Minister for Foreign Affairs  
**Ishaq Dar**

## Finance Minister met to representatives of S-P Global, Fitch Ratings

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb, met with the representatives of S&P Global and Fitch Ratings on the sidelines of the IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington D.C.

During the meetings, he highlighted positive indicators of the country on the back of the Standby Arrangement (SBA) signed with International Monetary Fund (IMF), said a press release issued here on Sunday.

He provided details on the government's ongoing reforms in priority areas, including taxation, energy, and privatization over short, medium and long-term horizons. He also referred to his recent engagements with Managing Director of the IMF, President of the World Bank, and heads of multilateral institutions including Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB). He reaffirmed that the World Bank's agenda aligns with Pakistan's priorities on climate change, digitalization, and human development. The finance minister also mentioned potential investments in the pipeline from Saudi Arabia.

He also addressed the rating agencies' concerns related to Pakistan's external position, inflation levels, primary fiscal balance, and interest rate regime. Other engagements of Finance Minister included interaction with officers of the Embassy of Pakistan, Washington D.C., media interviews with the Voice of America and The National and Press Conference with Pakistani media.

Finance Minister is leading Pakistan's delegation in the IMF / World Bank's 2024 Spring Meetings being held in Washington DC. Other delegates include Mr. Imdadullah Bosal, Finance Secretary, Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary Economic Affairs Division, Mr. Jameel Ahmed, Governor State Bank of Pakistan and Mr. Adil Akbar Khan, Senior Joint Secretary, Economic Affairs Division.

## Pakistan sends humanitarian assistance tranche for Gaza: FM

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Foreign Affairs Ishaq Dar on Sunday said that Pakistan dispatched 8th tranche of humanitarian assistance for the people of Gaza. The 400 tons assistance consisted of winterized tents, tarpaulins, blankets, medicines and food supplies through sea, the foreign minister posted on his X account.

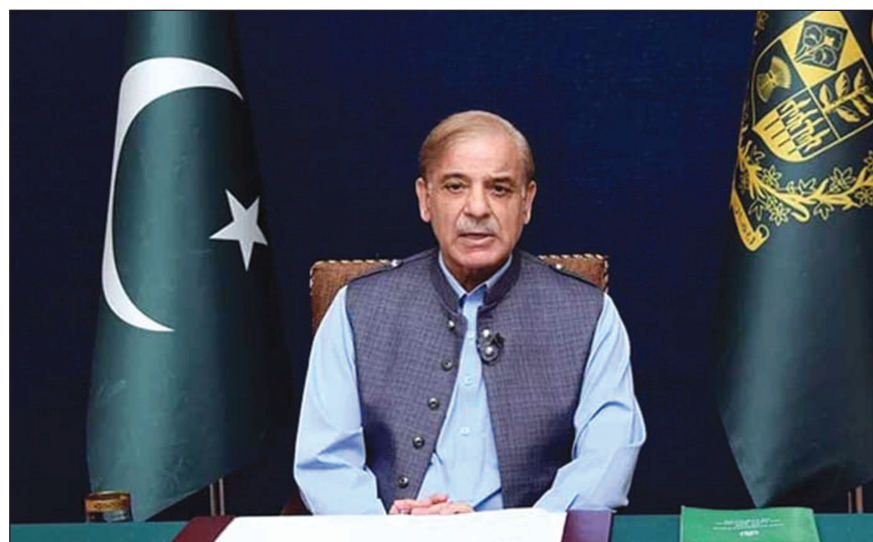
"The shipment will be received by the Pakistani Ambassador at Port Said, Egypt and handed over to the Egyptian Red Crescent for onward delivery to the people of Gaza.

Pakistan remains committed to addressing the urgent humanitarian needs of our brothers and sisters in Gaza," he further posted. APP



LAHORE: April 21 - Leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Mr. Nasir Iqbal Bosal calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. APP

## PM renews pledge to realize Allama Iqbal's vision



VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that Allama Muhammad Iqbal had dreamt of a 'Pakistan' that would be a cradle of peace, political forbearance and brotherhood and stressed upon

renewing of pledge to achieve Iqbal's vision by making strenuous efforts. He said that Allama Iqbal wanted the youth to take the country to acme of progress and development with their constructive approach. In a message on the observance of the 86th death anniversary of Dr Muhammad Iqbal,

the prime minister said that the entire nation had been praying for the high ranks of Allama's departed soul on the day and paid rich tribute to his contributions.

"Dr Muhammad Iqbal, through his thoughts and teachings, had stressed the unity of Muslim Ummah. He especially focused upon youth and played an important role in getting them acquainted with the sacrifices of their forefathers, prestige and the forgotten inheritance," PM Office Media Wing, in a press release on Sunday, quoted the prime minister as saying.

The prime minister further said that Allama Iqbal taught the youth to wage consistent struggle and exhorted them to carve paths in the future through gaining knowledge, carrying out research and learning from the past glorious periods of Muslims.

Iqbal's philosophy of self-hood (Khudi) was a beacon of light for all and by emulating his philosophy, the exquisite qualities of mankind could be achieved, he said, adding that not only the modern universities in the region but across the globe were also conducting research upon his philosophy and teachings.

The prime minister said, moreover, Iqbal's verses and writings in Persian and Urdu languages had been popular in the world.

## Iranian President Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi to undertake an official visit to Pakistan from tomorrow: FO Spokesperson

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch says Pakistan & Iran enjoy strong bilateral ties anchored in history, culture & religion



ISLAMABAD: President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi will undertake an official visit to Pakistan from tomorrow (Monday). This will be the first visit by any Head of State to

Pakistan after the general elections in February 2024. According to the statement issued by Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch on Sunday, the Iranian President will be accompanied by his spouse and a high-level delegation comprising the Foreign Minister and other members of the cabinet, senior officials as well as a large business delegation.

She said that during the visit, President Raisi will meet the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Chairman Senate and Speaker, National Assembly. He will also visit Lahore and Karachi and meet with the provincial leadership during his three-day long visit.

FO spokesperson said that the two sides will have a wide-ranging agenda to further strengthen Pakistan-Iran ties and enhance cooperation in diverse fields including trade, connectivity, energy, agriculture, and people-to-people contacts. They will also discuss regional and global developments and bilateral cooperation to combat the common threat of terrorism. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that Pakistan and Iran enjoy strong bilateral ties anchored in history, culture and religion. This visit provides an important opportunity to further strengthen Pakistan-Iran relations, she said. SABAH



SHOUGUANG: Ambassador of Pakistan to China H.E. Mr. Khalil Hashmi paid a one-day visit to Shouguang county, renowned for being China's "vegetable capital" at the invitation of the Shouguang government.

## Majority of developing countries do not have the public resources to finance infrastructure: Munir Akram

Calls for development of infrastructure connectivity to fortify global resilience



NEW YORK: At the United Nations, Pakistan has called for development of infrastructure connectivity to fortify global resilience and promote sustainable development, especially in developing countries.

UN General Assembly's Sustainability Week in New York. Munir Akram said the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and our climate goals require a major transition to sustainable infrastructure in energy, transport, housing, communications and industrial and agricultural production and consumption. The Pakistani envoy said majority of developing countries do not have the public resources to finance infrastructure nor are they able to secure sufficient private investment. He called for mobilizing significantly larger concessional finance enhance credit quality and incentivize private infrastructure investment in the developing countries. SABAH

## Interior Minister condemns attack on customs officials in DI Khan

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi strongly condemned the incident of firing on customs officials in the limits of Dera Ismail Khan Police Station on Sunday. The minister expressed grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of three customs officials in the attack and expressed his heartfelt sympathy to the families of the martyrs. He prayed for the martyrs and for the speedy recovery of the injured.

The martyred officers were identified as Inspector Hasnain Tarni, Constable Ziad Khan and the civilian was identified as Amir.

He paid tribute to officials who sacrificed their lives in preventing illegal smuggling and said that the great sacrifices of the martyrs would not go in vain. He said that no exception will be taken with those involved in smuggling.

## Pak Ambassador Khalil Hashmi underscores the longstanding partnership between China & Pakistan

SHOUGUANG: As a part of his orientation tour to Shandong, Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi paid a one-day visit to Shouguang county, renowned for being China's "vegetable capital" at the invitation of the Shouguang government.

Ambassador also delivered remarks at the opening ceremony of the 25th China (Shouguang) International Vegetable Science and Technology Expo. He took a tour of the expo and visited the Pakistan pavilion.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Expo, Ambassador Hashmi praised the Expo's role in promoting global agricultural innovation and cooperation.

He commended Shouguang's leadership in the field of vegetable production, highlighting its international reputation as a center for excellence in facility vegetables. Ambassador Hashmi also underscored the longstanding partnership between China and Pakistan, particularly in agriculture, recog-

nizing it as a cornerstone of their bilateral relations.

He highlighted Pakistan's agrarian landscape, showcasing its substantial contributions to GDP and employment, and emphasized the country's commitment to enhancing agricultural productivity through collaboration with Chinese partners.

He outlined favorable policies and conducive frameworks for collaboration, emphasizing the potential for mutually beneficial partnerships and continued growth in agricultural trade and technology.

Khalil Hashmi also highlighted the upcoming Food and Agri Expo in August 2024, where China would be honored, as a platform for deeper collaboration and exchanges in the agricultural sector.

Ambassador Hashmi also extended a warm invitation to stakeholders, experts, businessmen, and investors to explore opportunities in Pakistan's agriculture sector. SABAH

## PML-N worker Muhammad Yousaf killed in Narowal while three people injured in violence during by-elections

Attaullah Tarar condemns killing of PML-N worker in Narowal

NAROWAL/LAHORE: A Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) worker died while three people were injured in violence during by-elections on Sunday. In a tragic turn of events, Muhammad Yousaf, a 60-year-old worker of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Narowal constituency PP-54, met a fatal end in a clash between supporters of PML-N and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

The incident occurred at Kot Najo village where tension between the opposing political factions boiled over into violence. According to sources familiar with the

situation, a dispute erupted between PML-N and PTI voters, escalating into physical confrontation. In the midst of the altercation, members of the opposition party reportedly struck Yousaf on the head with a stick. Despite efforts to rush him to hospital, Yousaf succumbed to his injuries before getting medical assistance.

A clash erupted between workers of the PML-N and the Sunni Itehad Council (SIC) at the Government Primary School, Nizampur in Sheikhupura district's Ferozawala tehsil constituency PP-139. As firing began, women voters started

running in panic to save their lives. The Ferozawala police remained a silent spectator as the activists continued to throw punches at each other. Polling

## Maryam Nawaz says the killers PML-N worker of Narowal have been arrested

remained suspended as a result of violence. An ECP official later said in a statement that voting resumed as extra police personnel have been deployed to maintain peace.

Meanwhile, in a polling station set up in Lahore College in NA-119 constituency, PTI and PML-N workers clashed with each other. Police personnel deputed

there pacified the mob. Similar incidents were reported from two polling stations of the PP-149 constituency where the PTI and IPP workers confronted each other. It is reported that Mughalpura police took an IPP

worker into custody and shifted him to a police station.

Meanwhile Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar Advocate has condemned the killing of PML-N worker Muhammad Yousaf in Narowal.

In a statement issued on Sunday, Attaullah Tarar said the deceased was associated with the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz. He said the PTI is resorting to bloodshed and vandalism in rig elections.

The Minister said the blood of the deceased PML-N worker will not go in vain and his assassins will be brought

to the justice.

Commiserating with the bereaved family of Muhammad Yousaf, Attaullah Tarar also prayed higher status in heaven for the departed soul.

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif says the killers PML-N worker Muhammad Yousaf of Narowal have been arrested. In a statement, she said that hooliganism of PTI would not be tolerated at any cost. She expressed condolences and heartfelt sympathy with the family of Muhammad Yousaf. She said that turning politics into hatred and personal enmity is a major challenge for society. SABAH

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## Is privatization the answer?

KHALID BHATTI

The newly elected coalition government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is under immense IMF pressure to privatize several public-sector entities. PIA and power distribution companies (DISCOs) top the privatization list. The privatization of various public-sector companies is an integral part of the IMF's conditions for a bailout package. Pakistan is looking for a fresh financial assistance plan of more than \$6 billion. The government has once again renewed its commitment to privatize the remaining state-owned enterprises and assets. The PML-N government wants to privatize the oil, gas and power sectors and other utilities and services. Minister for Privatization Abdul Aleem Khan recently announced the decision to privatize PIA immediately. It appears that the government is bringing up the same old reasons to make a case for privatization: financial losses, inefficiency, crippling services and overstaffing. It argues that the state has nothing to do with running enterprises. Privatization stands as a central pillar of neoliberalism and the free market. In today's era, dominated by the free market and neoliberalism, the concept of a welfare state has largely faded away. Since the 1980s, there has been a widespread agreement among the ruling elite that the free market and neoliberal economic policies should be the guiding principles of our economy. Privatization plays a significant role in this agenda, aiming to reduce the state's welfare role and its role in the redistribution of wealth in an attempt to minimize state interference in economic life. The philosophy behind privatization has its roots in the state's role within the economy. International financial institutions and neoliberal economists argue that the state should focus on establishing regulations, while the ownership and operation of industries, services, and utilities should be left to the private sector. According to them, the state should only play the role of a regulator. In simpler terms, privatization means that the state no longer bears the responsibility for providing essential services to people. Instead, this responsibility is shifted to the private sector. Unlike the public sector, which aims to provide services either for free or at affordable rates, the private sector's main drive is to maximize profits and wealth. The history of privatization in Pakistan shows that, while wealthy investors have reaped benefits, workers and ordinary Pakistanis have faced significant challenges. Workers have to deal with layoffs, low wages, and no legal protection against various forms of exploitation. To understand the detrimental impacts of privatization, one can look at privatized banks and corporations and see who truly benefits from this policy. Privatization has, in many cases, been used to exploit the state's assets and resources. This process often reveals a story of corruption, political favouritism, manipulation, and the formation of cartels. State monopolies have turned into private monopolies, and a segment of the ruling elite has frequently leveraged this policy for personal enrichment. Privatization has played an important role in the elite capture of the economy. Most state-owned industries and enterprises were privatized during the 1990-2008 period. We were told that the privatization of public-sector enterprises will help reduce the budget deficit and our reliance on debts. But after privatizing almost all state-owned industries, more than 90 per cent of the banking sector and 100 per cent of the telecom sector, we are still living in an economic crisis. According to one estimate, nearly 82 per cent of the Pakistani economy is in the hands of the private sector. Since the 1980s, we have gradually dismantled the public sector-led growth model established by the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto government. We cut public investment while the bureaucratic control of the public sector played its role in making the public sector largely inefficient. Lack of investment, innovation, rampant corruption and bureaucratic control created crisis in the public sector. No government since the 1990s has tried to reform the public sector to make it efficient, corruption-free, service-oriented and consumer-friendly. Our private sector-led growth model might be working well for the capitalist class and Big Business, but it is not working well for the majority of Pakistanis and the national economy. Our economy has faced one crisis after the other in the last 30 years. We are still blaming the nationalization drive of the PPP government in the 1970s for the economic crises caused by the neoliberal model and free market economic policies. It is crucial to assess the outcomes of privatization in Pakistan over the past three decades. Initial promises suggested that privatization would reduce fiscal deficits and public debt, enhance the efficiency of privatized industries and services, lower prices, increase production rates, attract foreign and local investment, and boost employment and social spending. Many believed it would alleviate poverty and improve living standards. However, the reality has not aligned with these promises. According to a World Bank report, 40 per cent of the population in Pakistan lives below the poverty line. Pakistan's debt has soared to unprecedented levels. Poverty and unemployment have risen, while the means of production and wealth remain concentrated in a few hands. Prices have skyrocketed, making basic commodities unaffordable for many in society. Privatization has also led to the loss of public-sector jobs and weakened workers' rights – trade unions have been hit hard by privatization and neoliberal economic policies. Privatization was supposed to finance budget deficits, reduce losses, and enhance the efficiency of poorly managed entities to stimulate economic growth and create jobs. However, the promised jobs, robust growth, and economic opportunities have not materialized. Instead of privatizing loss-making enterprises, our governments sold the profit-making industries and corporations. The state kept the loss making entities (Pakistan Railways, PIA, Wapda and Pakistan Steel Mills) without making any serious effort to restructure or reform them. Privatization in Pakistan has fallen short of achieving its intended goals and commitments. This policy needs a serious review.

The writer is a freelance journalist.



Maheen Shafeeq

## India's election plays

With the 18th Lok Sabha elections in India in full swing, the country's political parties have relied on rigorous campaigning to expand their voter bank. Prior to the last Lok Sabha elections in 2019, the BJP depended on sensational campaigning by opting for a false flag operation in Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJK). In 2019, anti-Pakistan rhetoric peaked in India, and the BJP cashed it to influence the Indian public and secure their votes overdramatically.

India used the backdrop of February 14, 2019, when a convoy of the Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel was attacked in Pulwama, IOJK, and the BJP leadership ordered so-called 'surgical strikes' inside Pakistan. In a revealing interview given to Karan Thapar on April 14, 2023, the former governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Satyapal Malik, exposed that the attack on the CRPF was due to a series of lapses and ignorance of the Indian government that resulted in a lack of security on the route travelled by the paramilitary forces.

Without conducting any investigation, the BJP government immediately pinned the blame for the attack on the CRPF on Pakistan and announced a series of steps against Pakistan in the diplomatic, political and trade arena. On February 26, 2019, India conducted a so-called 'surgical strike' inside Pakistan's territory on an alleged Jaish-e-Muham-

mad (JeM) training camp in Balakot located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The then Indian foreign secretary, Vijay Gokhale, claimed that the strike killed 'a very large number' of militants, including commanders to further the sensationalism for the Indian voters. However, the strike was termed as 'a very precise miss' by analysts who deeply studied it through open-source satellite imagery. Pakistan armed forces' spokesman of the time Major General Asif Ghafoor rejected the claims of casualties by India and said that the "payload of hastily escaping Indians aircraft fell in open

21, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, was taken into custody by Pakistan and treated with dignity and under international law before being returned to India as a peace gesture. However, failing to appreciate Pakistan's maturity, former Indian diplomat Ajay Bisaria penned down a distorted version of this history in his recent book arguing disingenuously that Pakistan returned the pilot due to India's aggressive posture and threats to escalate tensions further. These claims have been quashed by Pakistani analysts, underlining that if Pakistan was apprehensive about Indian aggression and escalation, it

own Mi-17 V5 helicopter which killed seven people and also misfired a missile that was intended for its own aircraft. These series of events concluded that the disoriented Indian forces were hardly in a position to demonstrate firmness, undertake any decisive action, or pursue an 'aggressive posture' – as being claimed post-facto.

Knowledge accounts further corroborate that India's reported message to undertake missile strikes against Pakistan was forcefully retorted by Islamabad, pledging much more than any intended number of Indian missiles in a counter-strike by Pakistan. During this time, Pakistan had already aimed 12 missiles at Indian targets to counter any Indian aggression.

This had a further sobering effect on India. International interlocutors, reporting back to Islamabad, said they were reassured by New Delhi that India did not intend any further escalation. This clearly showed that India was not in any position in February 2019 to indulge in 'coercive diplomacy,' as being falsely claimed now by some commentators.

The timeline of the incidents of February 2019 and the information revealed recently have shown that the BJP manipulated the Indian voters in 2019. Given these incidents, the BJP's willingness to go to any lengths to remain in power should not be underestimated; nevertheless, Pakistan's resolve to deliver an immediate and effective response to any aggression from the larger neighbour must also be registered clearly. Protracted regional instability will neither benefit India nor Pakistan in the long run.

The writer is a research analyst in emerging technologies and international security. She tweets/posts @MaheenShafeeq

### The timeline of the incidents of February 2019 and the information revealed recently have shown that the BJP manipulated the Indian voters in 2019

space" in a tweet on X with images of damage to a tree and a cow. The violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity prompted Pakistan to deliver an immediate and appropriate response to India's action.

In the early hours of February 27, 2024, under Operation Swift Retort, the Pakistan Air Force carried out six airstrikes at non-military targets in IOJK. During the operation, the Pakistan Air Force depended on F-16 and JF-17 Thunder to down two Indian aircraft that violated Pakistan's territory. India refuted Pakistan's claims of shooting down the jets while Pakistan denied India's claim of the loss of an F-16 jet during the aerial encounter, which was also refuted by the US Department of Defence (DoD) officials who verified Pakistan's inventory. The pilot of the downed Indian MiG-

would have not carried out Operation Swift Retort.

Contrary to India's false narrative peddled in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and in the following years, the day (February 27, 2019) clearly belonged to Pakistan. First, the Indian strikes in Balakot had miserably failed and there was no independent verification of the 'losses' that India claimed to have inflicted. Second, Operation Swift Retort demonstrated that Pakistan held adequate defence capabilities as well as the will to carry out defensive operations even against military targets deep inside Indian-occupied territory in broad daylight without the fear of consequences.

Third, as the day wore on, the captured Indian pilot was confirmed to be in Pakistan's custody. Lastly, and most importantly, the Indian forces, in the fog of war, shot down their

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

### History of Pakistan



After the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan President Ronald Reagan immediately moved to help Zia supply and finance an anti-Soviet insurgency. Zia's military administration effectively handled national security matters and managed multi-billion-dollars of aid from the United States. Millions of Afghan refugees poured into the country, fleeing the Soviet occupation and atrocities. Some estimate that the Soviet troops killed up to 2 million Afghans [142] and raped many Afghan women. [143] It was the largest refugee population in the world at the time, [144] which had a heavy impact on Pakistan. Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province became a base for the anti-Soviet Afghan fighters, with the province's influential Deobandi ulama playing a significant role in encouraging and organising the jihad against the

Soviet forces. [145] In retaliation the Afghan secret police carried out a large number of terrorist operations against Pakistan, which also suffered from an influx of illegal weapons and drugs from Afghanistan. Responding to the terrorism, Zia used "counter-terrorism" tactics and allowed the religiously far-right parties to send thousands of young students from clerical schools to participate in the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union.

Problems with India arose when India attacked and took the Siachen glacier, prompting Pakistan to strike back. This led the Indian Army to carry out a military exercise which mustered up to 400,000 troops near southern Pakistan. Facing an indirect war with the Soviet Union in the west, General Zia used cricket diplomacy to lessen the tensions with

India. He also reportedly threatened India by saying to Rajiv Gandhi "If your forces cross our border an inch... We are going to annihilate your (cities)...". [146]

Under pressure from President Reagan, General Zia finally lifted martial law in 1985, holding non-partisan elections and handpicking Muhammad Khan Junejo to be the new prime minister. Junejo in turn extended Zia's term as Chief of Army Staff until 1990. Junejo gradually fell out with Zia as his administrative independence grew; for instance, Junejo signed the Geneva Accord, which Zia disapproved of. A controversy loomed after a large-scale blast at a munitions dump, with Prime minister Junejo vowing to bring to justice those responsible for the significant damage caused and implicating several senior generals. In return Gen-

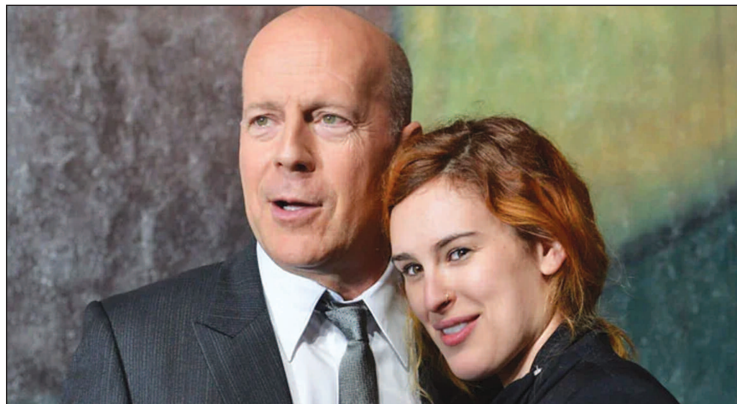
eral Zia dismissed the Junejo government on several charges in May 1988 and called for elections in November 1988. Before the elections could take place General Zia died in a mysterious plane crash on 17 August 1988. According to Shajee Zaidi a million people attended Zia ul Haq's funeral because he had given them what they wanted: more religion. [147] A PEW opinion poll found that 84% of Pakistanis favoured making sharia the law of the land. [148] Conversely, towards the end of Zia's regime, there was a popular wave of cultural change in the country. [149] Despite Zia's tough rhetoric against the Western culture and music, underground rock music jolted the country and revived the cultural counter-attack on the Indian film industry. [149]

To be continued....

## Bruce Willis adorably holds granddaughter during birthday festivities

Rumer Willis recently offered an insight into her daughter's first birthday

Rumer Willis recently paid tribute to her and Derek Richard Thomas' daughter Louetta 'Lou' Islye Thomas Willis on her first birthday. The post featured an adorable photo of the toddler being held by her maternal grandfather Bruce Willis, giving a quick glimpse at the actor. Bruce Willis adorably holds granddaughter during birthday festivities. On Saturday, April 20, the 90210 alum took to her Instagram to share photos of her mom, alongside her sisters Scout Willis and Tallulah Willis. In a carousel of pictures, Rumer gave shout-outs to Bruce's wife Emma Heming Willis and her mom's floral designer Eric Buterbaugh among others.

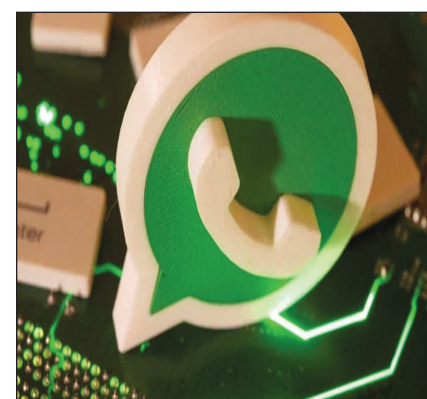


She posted the heartwarming pictures alongside a caption that read: "Thank

you to @demimoore for being the best Ya Ya I could ask for. Lou loves you so much." "@scoutlaruewillis @buuski Mabel and Evelyn for being the greatest aunts and Emma for being bonus Gma and my Papa and @ericbuterbaugh for being the best Papous," she added. Paying tribute to her partner, Rumer wrote: "Thank you @derekrichardthomas for the greatest gift of my life," she added. "She is so lucky to have you as her papa. I can't believe our baby girl is 1." Addressing her daughter, the actress gushed: "Oh my tiny tender daughter, I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU ARE 1. This last year with you has been the best year of my life."

## Showbiz

## WhatsApp working on game-changing feature for business users



WhatsApp is all set to launch a new feature to empower users to help boost their business by improving their messaging organisation, the Meta-owned app said in a report. WhatsApp Business is in the process of testing a new feature that would allow users to promptly add specific messages to notes, set

to be introduced in an upcoming app update, WABetaInfo reported.

This feature will be handily accessible from the message options, enabling users to attach chosen messages to notes with minimal hassle. Rather than manually creating notes from the chat info screen, users will now have the option to directly add selected messages to their notes. It's important to note, that it appears to be tailored primarily for business users and may not be immediately available to standard users.

"The shortcut to add specific messages to notes adds a layer of convenience to the user experience, as it will allow businesses to easily capture and reference pertinent details shared within conversations without opening the chat info screen," the report said. It added that by simply selecting the desired message and opting to attach it to a note, businesses would be able to save important details without having to manually input information.

## Health

### This virus is likely to cause next pandemic

Many scientists confirm that common virus will cause next global pandemic

Prominent experts believe Influenza is the pathogen most likely to start a new pandemic soon.

An international poll, scheduled for publication this coming weekend, will disclose that 57% of prominent disease experts now believe that the next global outbreak of deadly infectious sickness will be caused by a strain of the flu virus, according to The Guardian.

As per Cologne University's Jon Salmanton-Garcia, the study's author, long-term research indicates that Influenza is continually changing and evolving, supporting the theory that it poses the biggest pandemic threat to the world. "Each winter Influenza appears," he said. "You

could describe these outbreaks as little pandemics. They are more or less controlled because the different strains that cause them are not virulent enough – but that will not necessarily be the case forever."

The survey's specifics, which were contributed to by 187 prominent scientists in total, will be made public during the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID) convention in Barcelona the following weekend. According to 21% of the experts involved in the study, a virus known as Disease X that is currently unknown to science is possibly the second most likely source of a pandemic, after Influenza. According to them, the next pandemic will be

brought on by an unidentified microorganism that will emerge out of nowhere, just like the Sars-CoV-2 virus, which caused COVID-19, did when it first infected people in 2019.

In fact, 15% of the experts surveyed in the study said that Sars-CoV-2 is still a concern and might potentially spark a pandemic in the near future. Just 1% to 2% of respondents considered Lassa, Nipah, Ebola, and Zika viruses to be severe global concerns, among other deadly microorganisms.

"Influenza remained – by a very large degree, the number one threat in terms of its pandemic potential in the eyes of a large majority of world scientists," added Salmanton-Garcia.





## Country's constitutional, political & democratic parliamentary system has become non-functional: Liaqat Baloch

Says at present, the country is facing political, economic, constitutional, ideological, moral & national unity crisis

LAHORE: Naib Emir Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Liaqat Baloch has said that the country's constitutional, political and democratic parliamentary system has become non-functional and crippled due to unconstitutional interference of civil-military establishment. Palestinian leader Dr. Khaled Qaddoumi held meeting with Naib Emir Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Liaqat Baloch. While talking to delegations which came from Karachi, Quetta and Malakand and addressing workers eid millan in Lahore, Liaqat Baloch said that at present, the country is facing political, economic, constitutional, ideological, moral and national unity crisis.

He said that national politics instead of positive development is suffering from commotion and revenge, adding this situation is very dangerous for national security. Due to non-constitutional role of army and civil leadership, there is no confidence between the masses and the state, he said and added the distances of this disappointment are increasing. He said the national leadership will have to play national democratic role for the safeguard of country's Islamic ideological role, supremacy of constitution, rule of law, democracy and impartial electoral process.

While condemning terror incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and another target killing by Indian secret network in Lahore, he said that the enemy is targeting freedom of the country and foreign guests and there is no mechanism for the safeguard of life and properties. He said that adhocism has become source of promotion of terrorism and making the people vulnerable.

Liaqat Baloch said that army dictator General Pervez Musharraf under the US pressure threw the country in anti-Muslim Ummah war. He said that Benazir Bhutto, Asif Ali Zardari, Nawaz Sharif, PTI founder Imran Khan and now Shehbaz Sharif are following the anti-terrorism policy of General Pervez Musharraf. He said that the country could not come out of terrorism until and unless it changes policy on terrorism. In 2014, the terror incident of Army Public School Peshawar brought the nation on the same page, he said. On this occasion, National Action Plan was made but it was not implemented according to its spirit as it was used against country's Islamic ideological foundation, mosques, seminaries and imam bargah. SABAH



Washington DC, US: Finance Minister Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb's interaction with Pakistani media at Pakistan Embassy.

## CJP seeks explanation over unnecessary use of public resources on govt officers' residences



LAHORE: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa has sought an explanation from the Punjab chief secretary on the unnecessary use of public resources and the establishment of illegal guard rooms in government officers' residences in Lahore. The registrar of the Supreme Court wrote a letter to the chief secretary, expressing concern over unnecessary expenditure around government officers' residences. The registrar said that the top judge heard cases from April 15 to 19 at the Supreme Court Registry, Lahore, during which he stayed at the Chief Justice Rest House in

Government Officers Residence (GOR). The letter said that during the stay, CJP Isa observed that changes were being made in government officers' residences and illegal guard rooms had been established in the open green area despite a complete checking system at the entrance. He said the guard must be in the premises of that residence where he was required. The letter questioned whether it was justifiable to waste public resources on the walls of government residences. "Why the past example of fencing is abandoned, your answer will be awaited," the CJP asked in

the letter.

He directed to provide rules and regulations regarding government residences, their construction and construction of their walls. This is not the first time that he has spoken for adoption of austerity measures for government officers.

CJP Isa on December 1, 2023, ordered the auction of two luxury vehicles allocated for his use by the federal and Punjab governments, saying it was an "inappropriate splurge of scarce public resources".

In a letter sent by the SC registrar to the federal government cabinet secretary and Punjab chief secretary, the bureaucrats were told that the apex court had purchased a new Mercedes Benz, 2996 CC Sedan for Rs61 million for the CJP in September 2020.

"A brand-new bullet-proof Toyota Land Cruiser, Registration No LEG-S00, was also provided by the Government of Punjab for the use of the chief justice of Pakistan, which is parked in the Supreme Court Rest House in GOR, Lahore," the letter had said.

The letter had stated that every judge of the apex court had been provided two vehicles as per rules.

"Justice Isa has not used the said Mercedes sedan nor the Toyota Land Cruiser," it had added. It further stated that it was an "inappropriate splurge of scarce public resources to buy imported luxury vehicles for the use of constitutional and public office holders". ByWeb Desk

## CEC urges candidates to ensure Form 45 collection from presiding officers

ISLAMABAD: Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja has urged candidates participating in the bye-elections to ensure their polling agents collect Form 45 from the presiding officers before departing from the polling stations.



He instructed the supervising officers to ensure that Form 45 is handed over to all polling agents at polling stations. The CEC communicated with the chief secretaries of all four provinces to obtain reports on the day-long election process, inquiring about electioneering activities. He emphasized that any laxity in ensuring the smooth conduct of the entire exercise would not be tolerated.

The CEC also reached out to regional deputy commissioners and commissioners overseeing sensitive polling station areas, instructing them to guarantee transparent elections.

Meanwhile, the CEC has sought a report from the Inspector General of Police Balochistan regarding the intrusion of armed individuals into the polling station of PB-50 Killa Abdullah and instructed for strict action against the perpetrators. At the behest of several candidates and the The Pash-tunkhwa Milli Awami Party, the Election Commission has promptly sought a report from the Provincial Election Commissioner Balochistan and Deputy Commissioner Killa Abdullah regarding the reported abduction of polling staff in constituency PB-50 Killa Abdullah.

The DC of Kila Abdullah verbally stated that no abduction of polling staff occurred. The Election Commission requested a written report from him regarding this matter, to facilitate a proper decision on the aforementioned applications.

The Chief Election Commissioner reached out to District Police Officer Narwal via phone to request a report on the death of a person near polling station PP-54, Narowal, and directed strict action against those accountable. APP

## Arms smuggling bid foiled, two held at Torkham border

TORKHAM: The customs department foiled an attempt to smuggle foreign-made weapons, ammunition and arrested two accused here on Sunday.

On a tip-off, the customs department searched two cargo vehicles at Torkham border.

During search of the vehicles, foreign-made three M3 Rifles, two American pistols, 4000 bullets and 8000 bullets of 9MM were seized and two smugglers were arrested.

The customs department seized the recovered weapons, ammunition and detainees were being interrogated. INP

## Punjab's Labourers, Farmers, Students and Women are on top priorities: CM



LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif said, "We gave maximum relief to the people of Punjab in a short span of time.

The labourers of Punjab, farmers, students and women are foremost in my priorities. Ramazan Nigheban Package, 20 thousand bikes, subsidized flour and subsidized roti speak volumes of our few days performance. Rupees 130 billion Kissan Package depicts agri-

culture-friendly vision of Nawaz Sharif. Myself and my team always strive to provide ease and comfort to the common man. We are soon going to introduce laptop and iPad schemes in Punjab. My mission is to carry forward the vision of the people as well as of Quaid Nawaz Sharif.

PML-N under the dynamic leadership of Mian Nawaz Sharif is endeavouring to the utmost so as to resolve problems of the masses. PML-N voter turnout was impressive in the by-elections which is welcoming as they reposed their complete trust in the leadership of PML-N and their candidates," she concluded. APP

## Bilawal felicitates elected office-bearers of various Sindh Bar Associations



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has extended warm congratulations to the recently elected office-bearers of various bar associations in Sindh, expressing his heartfelt wishes for their success in their new roles. In a press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, he extended his heartfelt congratulations to newly elected President of the High Court Bar Association Mirpurkhas, Ali Hassan Chandio, and General Sec-

retary Aziz Ahmed Leghari Advocate. He also extended his felicitations to the newly elected officials of other bar associations, such as Naveed Ahmad Shah, President of the District Bar Association Sukkur, and General Secretary Sunder Khan Advocate; Habibullah Ghoori, the newly elected President of District Bar Association Larkana, and General Secretary Kamran Gorar; as well as Ali Raza Chana, President of District Bar Association Shaheed Benazirabad, and General Secretary Naeem Mangi. Bilawal Bhutto lauded the efforts of the office bearers and workers of the People's Lawyers Forum (PLF) Sindh chapter, praising their exceptional performance and dedication. APP

## Iranian president's visit to Pakistan signals progress towards economic stability: PUC chairman



ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Ulama Council (PUC) Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Sunday hailed the visit of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Pakistan as a positive step towards fostering economic stability for two countries.

He, in a statement, said it was another milestone in country's efforts towards economic development following the recent high-profile delegations from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan.

Ashrafi expressed hope about the potential of President Raisi's visit to pave the way for a new era of cooperation in a range of bilateral issues, including trade, security, and regional stability as the two countries share deep-rooted ties, emphasizing the shared goals of peace and economic development. He said President Raisi's visit was expected to focus on an opportunity for Pakistan and Iran to explore avenues for expanding collaboration in areas such as energy, infrastructure, and people-to-people exchanges.

By deepening their partnership, Ashrafi said the two countries could unlock new opportunities for growth and prosperity, benefiting their peoples and contributing to regional stability. APP

## Pakistan Navy continues rescue, relief operation in flood hit areas of Gwadar

GWADAR: Pakistan Navy in the aftermath of recent unprecedented rain spells in Gwadar, Ormara and adjoining villages of Balochistan, was actively undertaking rescue and relief operation named 'Operation Madad' from past three days. Immediate relief was provided to affected families on Sunday upon receiving information through local sources that large number of people were stranded into houses due accumulated water in vicinity and were in immediate need of ration supplies.

Pakistan Navy Rescue teams immediately coordinated the efforts and air dropped ration bags to affected people of Muradi, Dando, Kulanch and adjoining isolated areas of Gwadar District. Pakistan Navy Sea King helicopters undertook multiple sorties to ensure ration supply to hundreds of stranded families. Pakistan Navy has always assisted Coastal communities in every crisis situation and was committed to continue rescue operation until normalization of ongoing situation. Prompt relief operation on the call of locals was practical manifestation of Pakistan Navy's strong ties with Coastal communities and demonstrates PN's resolve to assist fellow countrymen in every hour of need. INP

## AJK pays rich tributes to Iqbal on 86th death anniversary

MIRPUR: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) observed the 86th death anniversary of Dr Allama Muhammad Iqbal on April 21 with various cultural, political and social organizations hosting impressive ceremonies to highlight his services and pay homage to the poet of the East. According to Kashmir Media Service, Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal was born in 1877 in Sialkot, and died on April 21, 1938. He envisioned a separate homeland for Muslims in South Asia, which materialized as Pakistan in 1947.

In Mirpur, a special ceremony was held at the Media Corner Sajid Plaza Tower, jointly hosted by the Jammu Kashmiri Union of Journalists and the Jammu Kashmir Free Media Association. Speakers at the ceremony emphasized the need to act upon Iqbal's sayings which focused on high intellect, pen, and Islamic values for humanity's betterment.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal was born in 1877 in Sialkot, and died on April 21, 1938. He envisioned a separate homeland for Muslims in South Asia, which materialized as Pakistan in 1947

Renowned speakers paid rich tributes to Iqbal, acknowledging his services in floating the idea of a separate homeland for Muslims. They highlighted Iqbal's philosophy, which emphasized islam, people, independence, and conscience. They stressed the need for unity among Muslims worldwide to counter political, economic, and social imperialism. INP

## Nonstop borrowing escalates production cost, debt vulnerability: Anjum Nisar

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Businessmen Panel (BMP) of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Mian Anjum Nisar has said that the nonstop debt growth carries significant fiscal costs and exposes the country to huge debt vulnerabilities.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he emphasized that persistent fiscal deficits and debt repayments have resulted in consistently high annual gross financing needs, averaging 28 percent of the GDP over the past decade. This level is notably higher than the emerging market threshold of 15 percent.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that in the past two decades, Pakistan has witnessed two consecutive years of the highest budget deficits in 2023 and 2024. He pointed out that for the current fiscal year, a budget deficit of 7.7 percent of the GDP is anticipated, a staggering Rs1.3 trillion above the government's target. He expressed concerns over these persistent large budget shortfalls, which have led to the rapid accumulation of public debt. This, in turn, has crowded out private investment

and contributed to macroeconomic volatility.

Referring to the SBP data, he unveiled an alarming 39 percent increase in the external debt of the federal government, reaching Rs24.2 trillion within a year. A substantial Rs6.7 trillion increase in external debt was primarily attributed to currency depreciation. As of Feb 2024, external debt stood at Rs17.6 trillion, excluding the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s liabilities.

Out of the total external public debt of \$85.12 billion, the government owed \$62 billion to multilateral and bilateral development partners including IMF which meant more than two-thirds (i.e.75 percent) of the total external public debt was on concessional terms with a longer maturity, 16pc (i.e. \$13.5 billion) from international capital markets and foreign commercial banks.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that this unsettling trend has raised concerns about fiscal sustainability and the adverse impacts of steep currency devaluation come at a time when the World Bank has cautioned Pakistan about the growing risks of its

macroeconomic framework. For the past one and half year, the country is facing a serious financial crunch and continually relying on borrowing to meet its financial needs.

He said that high cost of doing business has proved to be dangerous for businesses, as ever-increasing cost of production is the real threat to the economy amidst frequent upward revisions in policy rate and continuous fluctuations in rupee against dollar.

The FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel chairman said that the government liquidity and external vulnerability risks are elevated and there remain considerable risks around to secure required financing to fully meet its needs for the next few years. He said that constant hike in power tariff has pushed the electricity prices higher and added to the already soaring cost of trade and industry.

He asked the government to shut down all expensive oil-based power plants to ensure availability of cheaper energy for consumers. He condemned the government for shifting power distribution compa-

nies' inefficiencies' burden to the consumers by jacking up the tariff under the guise of Fuel Charges Adjustment. He observed that the aggressive economic measures, high borrowing rates, inflation, oppressive taxation and unstable currency have been negatively affecting running businesses.

With a view to deal with fiscal challenges he asked the economic managers to work on the three-way strategy by implementing short-term goals that will help to keep generating resources for smooth fiscal operations, medium-term goals where they should focus on financial inclusion, documenting the economy by designing a system where all businesses can be registered and properly document their income including collection of sales tax, initiating the process of privatization as well as improving governance by introducing reforms in each sector. As a long-term goal, the country must focus on improving its human capital, and revamping IT sectors by extending facilitations and providing all the requisite supports. INP