



**Kyrgyz president explains what sources contributed to economic growth in country**

In the first quarter of 2024, the growth of the economy of Kyrgyzstan made 8.8%. Compared to the indicators of the first quarter of 2023, the growth rate increased by 3 times. Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers Akybek Zhaparov said that these are not just numbers ... (Details on Page 5)



**SIM cards of nearly two million non-filers to be blocked**

Implementing the orders of International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has decided to block the SIM cards of nearly 2 million individuals involved in tax evasion. Sources told that FBR chairman has greenlighted the blocking of SIM cards of tax evaders dispatched instructions to relevant officials. The FBR has identified 1.8 million tax evaders. Sources claimed that the FBR also has the authority... (Details on Page 7)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

**Call on**

ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of Muslim World League H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday.



Photo: PID

**PM, SG Muslim World League discuss matters related to Muslim Ummah**

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House on Saturday and discussed matters of mutual interest. The Prime Minister welcomed Dr. Al-Issa and thanked him for visiting Pakistan on the occasion of Eid ul Fitr. He appreciated the valuable contributions and services of Dr. Al-Issa for promoting the true image of Islam around the world. He also acknowledged the critical role of Muslim World League in developing unity among the Muslim Ummah, advocating for Muslim causes around the world and in spreading the message of peace, tolerance and inter-faith harmony.

Salman bin Abdul Aziz as well as for the Crown Prince and Prime Minister His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz. He underscored that Pakistan attached utmost importance to its strong fraternal ties with Saudi Arabia that were rooted in common faith, shared values and culture.

Extending his best wishes to the Secretary General for the success of his ongoing visit, the Prime Minister assured him of Pakistan's continued support and partnership with the Muslim World League. Secretary General of Muslim World League praised the Prime Minister for his commitment and efforts to further strengthen ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

He congratulated the Prime Minister on the success of his recent visit to Saudi Arabia. Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa is visiting Pakistan from 07-15 April 2024.

**Two soldiers martyred as security forces kill 'wanted terrorist' in Buner**



**City Desk**

RAWALPINDI: Two Pakistan Army soldiers embraced martyrdom during an intelligence-based operation (IBO), in which a "highly wanted terrorist" was killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) Buner district.

However, during the operation, two Pakistan Army soldiers - Lance Havildar Mudassar Mehmood (age 36 years); resident of Rawalpindi and Lance Naik Haseeb Javed (age 27 years); resident of AJK - having fought gallantly, embraced martyrdom.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the security forces conducted the IBO on the reported presence of terrorists which resulted in the elimination of terrorist and ring leader Saleem alias "Rabbani" while two other militants sustained injuries in the gun battle.

"Sanitisation operation is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. Security forces of Pakistan remain determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the ISPR said.

Rabbani, who had an Rs5 million bounty on his head, was involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as extortion and target killings of innocent civilians, the military's media wing said.

The operation comes amid a surge in terrorist activities across the country, especially in KP and Balochistan, since the outlawed militant group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan ended its ceasefire with the government in November 2022.

**Nine bus passengers killed in latest Balochistan execution**

**Spokesman Report**

QUETTA: In a shocking incident, a bus traveling from Quetta was intercepted by armed assailants who forced nine passengers off the bus and mercilessly gunned them down, police said.

The gruesome incident is a reminder of similar executions carried out in the past in Balochistan.

The bodies of the victims were discovered beneath a bridge in the mountainous area of Noshki, with gunshot wounds inflicted on various parts of their bodies, Noshki SSP Allah Bux said.

The deceased individuals have been identified as residents of Mandi Bahauddin and Gujran-

**President condemns killing of passengers in Noshki**

President Asif Ali Zardari Saturday strongly condemned the merciless killing of passengers in Noshki. In a statement, he expressed grief and sorrow over the barbaric killing of passengers by the terrorists. Those who targeted the innocent citizens could not be well wishers of the nation, he said adding the whole nation rejected the heinous

designs of the terrorists. The President said the security forces with the support of the nation were determined to completely eradicate terrorists. He expressed sympathy with the heirs of those who lost their lives. He prayed for the departed souls and for patience to the bereaved families.

wala, said the police officer. The culprits responsible for this heinous act stopped the bus, abducted the passengers, and subsequently executed them by

firing multiple rounds. In a separate incident gunmen fired shots at a vehicle in the Sultan Charhai area, killing two people and injuring five, said the SSP.



The brother of Balochistan MPA Ghulam Dastgir was among the injured.

The wounded victims have been rushed to nearby medical facilities for treatment.

Expressing his condolences, the Chief Minister of Balochistan condemned the killings of inno-

cent passengers in Noshki and extended his sympathies to the bereaved families.

He vowed that those responsible for the incident would not be granted any leniency, as this act of murder against the passengers is an inhumane and unforgivable crime.

**Interior Minister pays homage to Pakistan Army jawans, martyred in operation against terrorists**



**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday paid homage to two soldiers of the Pakistan Army who were martyred in the operation against terrorists in Buner district.

Martyr Havaldar Mudassar and Lance Naik Haseeb bravely thwarted the nefarious intentions of the terrorists, said the minister in his message.

Naqvi expressed heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the families of the martyrs and said that Havildar Mudassar and Lance Naik Haseeb got the high status of martyrdom for the sake of peace of the nation. Martyrs are the pride of the nation, he said adding that martyrs have cultivated peace with their precious blood.

He said that the nation is determined in the war against terrorism and such cowardly acts cannot defeat the unwavering resolve of the nation.

**Railways facilitates 2,400 Indian Sikh pilgrims for Baisakhi celebrations**

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Pakistan Railways transported 2,400 Sikh pilgrims to Hassan Abdaal for their religious rituals via special trains on Saturday.

Earlier, these Sikhs entered Pakistan via the Wagha border crossing from India to participate in the celebrations of Baisakhi, a religious festival. According to the PR spokesperson, the Sikh pilgrims were welcomed at the Wagah Railway Station by senior officials of Pakistan Railways, in addition to officials from the Evacuee Trust Property Board. During their approximately one-week stay, Sikh pilgrims will visit their religious sacred sites to express their faith.

Railway staff received necessary instructions regarding arrangements for the arrival of Sikh guests. Separate counters for men and women were set up for ticketing and reservations for Sikh pilgrims by the PR. On the occasion, the Sikh guests expressed satisfaction with the arrangements made by Pakistan Railways.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Pakistan Railways, Aamir Ali Baloch, has issued instructions to Divisional Superintendents to ensure the provision of travel facilities for Sikh guests. He directed them to strictly adhere to the timings of arrival and departure, ensuring no compromise on facilities and comfortable travel arrangements.

Moreover, the railway administration deployed coolies for free baggage handling for Sikh pilgrims at the Wagah Railway Station on Saturday. Pakistan Railways is expected to generate approximately Rs 23 million in revenue from the special trains operated for Sikh pilgrims.

**Aurangzeb to leave for US with delegation today**



**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: A delegation led by Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb will leave for the United States today.

During his visit, Mohammad Aurangzeb will also meet IMF MD Kristalina Georgieva, US Deputy Secretary Donald Lu and Deputy Treasury Secretary.

Regarding the visit, sources say that Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb's visit will take place from April 13 to 21. Pakistan will also request the IMF to send a loan mission. It should be noted that Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb had said that there will be negotiations with the IMF for a new and bigger program in April.

He said that talks will be held on April 14 and 15, with the International Monetary Fund to continue microeconomic stability.

Mohammad Aurangzeb also said that the IMF should have a program of at least 3 years.

**Punjab Police refutes news of officials resigning**



**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Punjab Police has refuted rumours about resignations being tendered by officers of the service after the Bahawalnagar incident.

Police made a post on the social media site X, saying that the claims were aimed at misleading the public.

"The rumors spread by some miscreants on social media about the resignation of police officers are absolutely false, fabricated and baseless," police said.

"No resignation was received in any police office including the IG office. Action is being taken against those who try to mislead the public and the police force with such malicious propaganda," it added.

Reports had emerged on social media about a purported clash between Police and army in a police station in Bahawalnagar earlier this week.

However, both sides had later refuted the 'propaganda' about the incident and said that the matter had been 'amicably resolved'.

According to a statement by the police, the two institutions conducted an "immediate" joint investigation after the unconfirmed rumours went viral on social media. Officers of the two institutions reviewed all the facts and resolved the matter "amicably".

**PM strongly condemns killing of passengers on NH-40**

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday strongly condemned the horrible incident of killing of passengers of a bus after their kidnapping on the National Highway-40 in District Noshki, Balochistan.

thies with the bereaved families, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

He also offered Fataha for the departed souls. Seeking a report, the prime minister said that they shared the grief of the bereaved families and resolved that the culprits and their facilitators involved in the incident would be given exemplary punishment.

The spectre of terrorism would be rooted out, he reiterated.



# Punjab Police to monitor law & order in the province: CM Maryam Nawaz

PPA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif presided over a special meeting in Murree to comprehensively review law & order situation in the province.

IG police gave a detailed briefing on overall law & order situation across the province. It was principally decided in the meeting to launch a Special Unit, besides conducting IT training of the staff to eliminate organized and cyber crimes in the province. Various proposals and recommendations were put forth to undertake concrete steps to safeguard life and property of masses.

An approval was also accorded to enforce a Special Audit System in order to ascertain corruption and unprofessional attitude in police. The police officers and officials found involved in conniving with the corrupt mafias and criminals will undergo a Special Court Martial. In case of asking for bribe, a complaint can be registered via CM's Special Dashboard.

A proposal to establish Border Security Force to check smuggling was also



reviewed in the meeting. It was in principle decided to set up a Functional Specialized Police Force to effectively counter every crime. An approval was granted to vigorously carry out a campaign for the complete eradication of narcotics. It was decided to make a legislation for awarding death penalty to those found involved in committing molestation of women and children.

Madam Chief Minister directed to undertake strict measures to root out culture of illegal weapon in Punjab and

it was decided to make amendments in the relevant laws in this regard. Madam Chief Minister also directed to undertake additional foolproof measures for the permanent elimination of kite-flying and usage of metal wire. She underscored, "Crime can be reduced by ensuring stern punishment to the culprits." Madam Chief Minister added, "It is a fundamental responsibility of the Punjab government to protect every citizen of Punjab. We would provide latest arms and ammu-

munition, state of the art equipment, night vision technology and drones." Madam Chief Minister directed to launch an effective crackdown for the permanent eradication of terrorism, smuggling and criminal gangs. She said, "There is a dire need to streamline the prosecution and investigation system as well."

Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Chief Secretary, Secretary Home, IG Police, Additional IGP, Commissioner, CCPO, RPO and other officers were also attended the meeting.

## I strongly condemn the killing of labourers in Nushki Balochistan

Asim Tanveer



MULTAN: Acting Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Liaquat Baloch has strongly condemned the killing of 11 Labor including 9 laborers from Punjab in a terrorist incident in Nushki Balochistan and has demanded an immediate investigation from the government and bringing the culprits to justice.

In a statement, he expressed his condolences to the bereaved and prayed for the forgiveness of the deceased. Expressing great concern over the increase in terrorist incidents in different areas of the country, especially in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he has asked the rulers to ensure the safety of people's lives and property. He says that the government is clearly failing in providing security to the people and establishing public order in the country. Without peace there can be no development and the country will not move forward. He demanded that the government should provide financial assistance to the families of the deceased.

Further, Liaquat Baloch has also expressed regret over the loss of lives and property caused by rains and hailstorms in Balochistan, Punjab and Khabar Pakhtunkhwa and has urged the federal and provincial governments to provide relief to the people under emergency measures and to help the victims. He has also demanded help from the government to the farmers and farmers for the loss of orchards in Balochistan and wheat crop in Punjab.

## CM Maryam Nawaz Condemns Bus Passengers Murder Incident in Noshki

PNP

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz strongly condemned murder incident of bus passengers after abducting them in Noshki. CM expressed her profound sorrow and grief over the occurrence of the sorrowful incident. Maryam Nawaz expressed her condolence with the bereaved families. She solemnly vowed, "The Pakistanis are a united nation and their unity will remain intact forever adding that such nefarious elements involved in spreading hatred will be wiped out once and for all."

## Muttahida Ittehad Abbasia meets with PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari

Qayoom Sarohi

HYDERABAD: Rafique Ahmad Abbasi, Central Chairman of Muttahida Ittehad Abbasia International and provincial leader of people's party sindh, meet with PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the political situation was discussed. Leader of people's Party sindh Rafique Ahmad Abbasi said that there was a detailed discussion in the meeting with the PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, important party figures including Faryal Talpur were present in the meeting. He said that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is the hero of the youth, he has emphasized on the projects to strengthen the party and the welfare of the youth. Referring to the meeting, Rafique Ahmad Abbasi said that a working plan has been decided in the meeting with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the problems of the senior party leaders will also be solved as per the order of the party chairman. want to work for, people's party chairman wants to work Welfare for people, especially they want to look forward to the youth.



## PTI leaders and activists are in unjust political imprisonment: Malik Tamoor



Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf ticket holder NA 148 Barrister Malik Tamoor Altaf Mahe, while congratulating the people of the constituency and the public on the occasion of the Eid Milan party in NA 148, said that this Eid is not like the previous Eids for us because our leader on this Eid. Founder Party Tehreek-e-Insaf and Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Many political leaders and activists are in unjust political imprisonment. This Eid is also difficult because the mandate given by you from your constituency NA 148 was unfairly taken away from the founding party and me. This Eid is also difficult because including NA 148. Taking away the mandate given to Tehreek-e-Insaf from many constituencies across Pakistan However, we are workers and workers of this leader who says that we will open till the last ball, who says that hopelessness is a sin. They are also fighting a political battle for the welfare and development of the nation. We have got an opportunity on May 19. To give the seat of NA-148 to the founding party Tehreek-e-Insaf to win this seat in the by-election.

## Police to provide foolproof security for Baisakhi Mela: DPO

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: District Police Attock issued security plan for Baisakhi Mela 2024 Gurdwara Sri Panja Hasan Abdal. Around 1023 Police personals will perform security duty in three layers, besides 26 elite sections will also perform duty.

According to the details, the Baisakhi Mela 2024 will be held from April 13 to 15 at Sri Panja Hasan Abdal, in which local/foreign Sikh pilgrims will participate, in order to provide foolproof security, the Attock Police has deployed troops at various locations. Appointment of troops has been supervised personally by DPO Attock Dr. Sardar Ghyas Gul Khan. Apart from this, 06 DSPs will also perform their duties to check the security process. To provide security to the Sikh pilgrims. Around 1023 police officers and troops have been deployed for security duty including 06 DSP, 13 SHO, 143 Upper Superintendents, 95 Head Constables, 728 Constables, 36 Ladies Constables, 26 sections of elite commandos will be on alert all the time. On this occasion, DPO Attock Dr. Sardar Ghyas Gul Khan said that the safety of religious places and their followers is our top priority.

## Careless

ISLAMABAD: A motorcyclist heading towards his destination along with a kid sitting in a risky manner on a bundle of grass at a highway in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

# Grand Jirga of Wazir tribes held in Wana to resume trade activities at Angoor Ada border

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: In South Waziristan Lower, Wana a grand Jirga of nine tribes led by Tribal elders and Ulamas of Ahmad Zai Wazir was held to revitalize business activities and remove obstacles on the Angoor Adda border.

It was decided that another grand Jirga would be held in Wana Bazaar on Monday with full participation from the all Wazir tribes.

It's noteworthy that business activities have been halted and suspended for the past five months at the Angoor Ada border, continuous to protests by local tribes for their rights and legitimate demands.

The President of the Chamber of Commerce, South Waziristan Lower



District Saif Ur Rehman Wazir, mentioned significant losses to the national treasury and around five billion rupees in losses to traders. He highlighted that unemployment has affect-

ed thousands of people and local transport linked to Angoor Ada business has ceased.

Furthermore, due to the halt in business activities, numerous estab-

lishments such as hotels, warehouses, petrol pumps, and service stations at the Angoor Ada gate have shut down, exacerbating unemployment and financial distress among tribal youth.

Saif Wazir said, many prominent businessmen from Wana have shifted their capital to Ghulam Khan, Torkham and Kharlachi borders to keep their businesses running, aggravating unemployment in the area. It's evident that the cessation of business activities at the Angoor Ada border has led to increased incidents of smuggling, robbery, and theft in South Waziristan Lower District.

All participating tribal elders and Ulamas in the grand Jirga informed the media that the rise in theft and smuggling in South Waziristan Lower is largely due to youth unemployment.

# Former Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto 45th Death Anniversary

Faheem Soomro

LATKANA: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that in connection with the 45th martyrdom anniversary of Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the grand public Jalsa on 14 April at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto (GKB) will once again demonstrate the enduring appeal of Bhuttoism among the Pakistani people, especially the marginalized. Let's use this day to reaffirm our commitment to Bhutto's ideology and principles with renewed determination.

In a press release issued from the Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP reiterated that tomorrow's public



gathering is more than just a commemoration. It's a collective reaffirmation of the principles championed by Quaid-e-Awam, celebrating his vision for a progressive and inclusive Pakistan.

It's a platform where the voices of the marginalized resonate, ensuring the protection of every citizen's rights.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari highlighted that as the public gathers to honor Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's legacy, the nation is also witnessing a significant milestone in the pursuit of justice. He emphasized that the recent decision by the Supreme Court regarding Shaheed Bhutto's case underscores the quest for truth and fairness. Chairman Bilawal further noted that the court's acknowledgment of the grave injustice inflicted upon him, affirming the denial of his fundamental right to a fair trial, serves as both a legal verdict and a moral vindication of Quaid-e-Awam's unwavering struggle and dedi-

cation to democracy and justice.

Chairman PPP extended heartfelt gratitude to all Jiyalas making their way to GKB from across the nation for the historic gathering. "Your presence will be a powerful testament to the enduring legacy of Bhuttoism and the unwavering spirit of the Pakistani people," he remarked. He urged that as we pay homage to Shaheed Bhutto, let's also recommit ourselves to the ideals he sacrificed his life for. "Let's strive to build a Pakistan where justice prevails, democracy flourishes, and every citizen is empowered to realize their full potential. Together, let's march forward with renewed determination, inspired by the courage and conviction of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto."





Islamabad  
15° - 23° Clear

**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr .....4:13 am  
Zohr .....12:08 pm  
Asr .....4:46 pm  
Maghrib .....6:37 pm  
Isha .....8:05 pm

**EMERGENCY**

Rescue (Police) ..... 15  
Bomb Disposal ..... 15  
Fire Services Rawalpindi/  
Islamabad .....1122 & 16  
Emergency Ambulance ..... 1122 &  
& Rescue Services ..... 4451122  
Motorway Police ..... 9266044  
Motorway Police ..... 9270601-20

**Women Police Stations**

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Rawalpindi ..... 9270601-20

**ENQUIRY**

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WASA Rawalpindi .....5555489  
CAA ..... 9281092

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MH .....561116  
MH .....561116  
Cantt Hospital .....9270907-11  
DHQ .....5556311-4  
RGH .....9290301-7  
Holy Family .....9290322-7  
PIMS .....9261170-79  
Polyclinic .....9218300-09  
Shifa International .....4603666

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CDA ..... 9208301-04  
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RDA ..... 5555864  
TMA ..... 5770886  
Cantonment Board ..... 9270151-3  
Islamabad Metropolitan  
Corporation ..... 9209224  
Potohar Town ..... 9209224  
Rawal Town ..... 5773343

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Water Tanker Service  
E-7, F-10 & F-11 ..... 9204654  
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8, ..... 9203883  
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 ..... 9266316  
Wapda Islamabad ..... 9217579-80  
Sui Gas Complaint ..... 119, 9272249  
Wasa Water Tank  
Rawalpindi ..... 0331-5022125

**Kashmiri girl Tasneem Kawoos tops Judicial Exam**



**Abdul Majeed Tahir**

SRINAGAR: The central Kashmir's Srinagar girl Tasneem Kawoos emerged as the top scorer in the 2023 Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Judicial) Examination, garnering an impressive 628 marks out of a pool of 208 candidates.

According to details Ms Tasneem Kawoos emerged as the top scorer in the 2023 Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Judicial) Examination, garnering an impressive 628 marks out of a pool of 208 candidates. Reflecting on her achievement, Kawoos, a graduate of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) currently pursuing her LL M there, highlighted the evolving nature of the examination, noting a shift towards analytical prowess over rote memorization.

**'Air ambulance service to roll out from June'**

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz on Saturday announced that the air ambulance service will be operational in June as training session for the service has commenced.

Taking to X (formerly Twitter), the Punjab chief minister said the training session for Pakistan's first air ambulance service has been commenced.

"The air ambulance project in Punjab has been completed in record time," Maryam Nawaz noted.

First female Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz had made an announcement of launch of the ambulance service within weeks in her maiden address at the Punjab Assembly.

Earlier in March, the Punjab cabinet approved the project, marking a significant



step forward in emergency medical services.

Under this initiative, there is a plan to initially get two aircraft on lease. These ambulances will be equipped to transport doctors, paramedics, and essential

medical equipment, along with life-saving medicines.

The air machines are designed to operate from short runways. They will also have the capability to land and take off from national highways and motorways.

**Awesome**

ISLAMABAD: A view of a Highway heading towards Faisal Masjid after rain in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

**Devcom announces 'RCS Himalayan Odyssey Award for Creative Arts' 2024**

**PPA**

ISLAMABAD: Devcom-Pakistan (Development Communications Network) on Saturday announced the details of the seventh category of Pakistan Mountains Pride Awards (PAMPA) for 2024, titled 'Raja Changez Sultan Himalayan Odyssey Award for Creative Arts'.

In an online artists meetup, the founder of the PAMPA and Executive Director Devcom-Pakistan Munir Ahmed said three artists will be given the RCS Himalayan Odyssey Award for Creative Arts for their best work on the mountain themes. The categories for nominations of the creative arts include paintings, sculptures, and digital art. The best artworks will be chosen from their exhibitions on the themes. The artists can share the details of the exhibition of their artwork to the organizers at the Devcom-Pakistan. A three-member jury comprising the well-known artists will scrutinize all the data of the exhibits and select one artist from each category; paintings, sculptures and digital art for the Award.

Briefing about the objectives of the RCS Himalayan Odyssey Award for Creative Arts, Munir Ahmed said primarily, we are adding this category to engage artists from various fields to focus on the challenges confronting the grandeur of mountains, its people and resources that are very vital for the people living downstream. Most of the 250 million people are unaware of what is happening in the highlands. Devcom-Pakistan aspires to



engage the artist-community in raising the significance of mountains for life on earth. Besides, the pieces of art will also decorate the buildings and houses with enhanced aesthetics.

Munir Ahmed said: Pakistan is blessed with 11 ranges of mountains that have their own characteristics and treasures of natural resources, which are being depleted. It is the time to raise collective-voice on the exploitation of the mountain resources, and encourage the shared conservation and protection of the mountain resources. Pakistan Mountains Pride Awards (PAMPA), launched in 2019, is a very important organ of Pakistan Mountain Festival, a flagship annual event of Devcom-Pakistan. It is a gesture of recognition and appreciation to the services of the marvelous individuals and organizations that have laid the foundation of the initiatives to improve the lives and livelihood of the natives, or rendered their

life selflessly for mountain conservation, community development.

He said the Raja Changez Sultan Himalayan Odyssey Award for Creative Arts will add a new colour to the bouquet of existing six awards including Agostino Da Polenza Mountain Conservation Award, Shoab Sultan Khan Mountain Community Development Award, Nazir Sabir Mountaineering Award, Ashraf Aman Sustainable Mountain Tourism Award, Ustad Jan Ali Mountain Music Award, and the PPAF Best Mountain Small and Medium Enterprises Award.

The artists present on the occasion appreciated the Devcom-Pakistan efforts to engage artists in a very important voluntary campaign for the conservation and protection of mountains. Senior Nigar Nazar said launching the Award will be a significant initiative that would encourage artists to focus on mountains. She suggested including art mentoring and art education in this regard.

Asrar Farooqi said the artists shall take responsibility for spreading the word about the Raja Changez Sultan Himalayan Odyssey Award for Creative Arts in their native towns to engage them in the initiative.

Saima Raza suggested organizing the exhibition of the selected pieces of art in different cities to achieve the objective. Some of the artists also took responsibility to coordinate the exhibition in their towns with the coordination of the local departments and authorities.

**PHC orders Transparency Int'l to republish report on Pakistan corruption perception**

**Bureau Report**

PESHAWAR: The Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) has delivered the final verdict regarding the case involving the Transparency International report, which had labeled the judiciary as the 3rd most corrupt institution.

In a comprehensive 31-page judgment, the Chief Justice has ruled that Transparency International must republish its 2023 annual report on Pakistan, including all relevant facts and unpublished data.

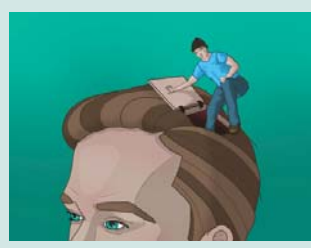
According to the written verdict, Transparency International was required to submit the revised report to the Registrar of the PHC by April 24th. PHC has directed Transparency International to disclose the percentage of public opinion and make public all the rejected forms during the survey to eliminate any ambiguities.

The court emphasized that Transparency International must provide clarification on the National Corruption Perception Survey Report of 2023. It further clarified that the decision to republish the revised report should not be construed as a restriction on freedom of speech.

**Kaspersky warns of security concerns due to growing deepfakes in AI age**

**PNP**

ISLAMABAD: Kaspersky research has found the availability of deepfake creation tools and services on darknet marketplaces. These services offer generative AI video creation for a variety of purposes, including fraud, blackmail, and stealing confidential data. According to the estimates by Kaspersky experts, prices per one minute of a deepfake video can be purchased for as little as \$300.



The widespread adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning technologies in recent years is providing threat actors with sophisticated new tools to perpetrate their attacks. One of these are deepfakes which include generated human-like speech or photo and video replicas of people. Kaspersky warns that companies and consumers must be aware that deepfakes will likely become more of a concern in the future.

"Despite the technology for creating high-quality deepfakes not being widely available yet, one of the most likely use cases that will come from this is to generate voices in real-time to impersonate someone. It's important to remember that deepfakes are a threat not only to businesses, but also to individual users—they spread misinformation, are used for scams, or to impersonate someone without consent – and are a growing cyberthreat to be protected from," says Hafeez Rehman, Technical group manager at Kaspersky.

Kaspersky recommends people and businesses to be aware of the key characteristics of deepfake videos. A solution such as Kaspersky Threat Intelligence can assist keeping information security specialists up to date on the most recent developments in the deepfake game. Companies should also strengthen the human firewall by ensuring their employees understand what they see.

**Polio victim contributing in fight against climate change**

**News Desk**

PESHAWAR: A young polio victim performing as role model for countrymen in ongoing fight against increasing threats of climatic changes has decided to embark on a countrywide travel by visiting 400 cities with the objective of planting saplings and spreading awareness about importance of increasing green cover. "The objective of countrywide visit is to convey message about pressing need of planting trees to reduce the impacts of climate changes in shape of devastating floods, erratic rains, global warming, heat wave," said Khizar Wali Chisti, a young teacher of 32 years age who is a polio victim and walks with the support of crutches with a mission of planting 10 million trees in the country with his hands.

"I have set the target of planting 10 million trees in the country and so far succeeded in planting more than 150,000 saplings," said Khizar whose left leg is paralyzed due to polio. Talking to APP from his hometown, Pak-Patan, Khizar Wali Chisti informs that he is arranging funds to purchase a heavy vehicle for carrying of sapling in different parts of the country. The countrywide journey is tentatively scheduled to start in June 2024 during which Khizar Wali will visit different cities and meet with public to inform them about growing threats posed by climatic changes. Pakistan is ranked among top ten in the list of most vulnerable countries due to climate induced disasters and the disastrous flood of 2022 is an eye opener for all the countrymen, Khizar opined. Khizar also spent recently passed holy month of Ramzan and religious festival of Eid in plantation of trees in different cities of Punjab. During Razman, I visited Lahore and besides planting different trees also planted a Miyawaki forest in the city, he told APP.

Around a couple of months earlier, Khizar Wali organized Fourth Annual National Tree Festival in Pak-Patan wherein experts from across the country were invited who apprised visitors about importance of planting indigenous trees and tips about kitchen gardening. Being a teacher, Khizar Wali Chisti also tries to create awareness among people about importance of increase in green cover. If heat wave continues to increase with the same pace and temperature kept on around or more than 50 degree celsius in major parts of the country, how people will bear it and there will be crisis of very serious level for mitigation of which we have to work jointly by creating awareness and taking practical measures, he added.

**Three thousand Sikh Pilgrims/ Yatrees reach Pakistan to participate in the Vasakhi Mela**

**PPA**

LAHORE: Three thousand Sikh pilgrims/ Yatrees from India entered Pakistan via Wagah border to participate in the Sikh religious festival Vasakhi where Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs/Pradhan PSGPC Ramesh Singh Arora, Provincial Transport Minister Bilal Akbar Khan, Addl secretary Shrines Rana Shahid Saleem, Senior officials of the ETPB, Sardar Sawant Singh, Sardar Tara Singh, Sardar Dr. Mampal Singh, Sawant Kaur and other committee members were also among those welcomed the Yatrees. Indian High commission issued 10 Days Visa while Sikh pilgrims will visit Gurudwara Janam Asthan Nankana Sahib, Gurudwara Sacha Sauda, Gurudwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur and go to Gurudwara Panja Sahib Hasan Abdal through various trains where the main event of Visakha Mela 2024 will be held on Sunday. Indian Sikh pilgrims will also visit Gurudwara Rohri Sahib Aminabad and Gurudwara Shri Dera Sahib Lahore. On this occasion, Additional Secretary Shrines Rana Shahid Saleem said that all the arrangements including accommodation, security, transport and medical for the guests have been completed. The main event of Vasakhi Mela will be held on April 14 at Gurdwara Panja Sahib Hasan Abdal. The Sikh pilgrims will leave for India after completing their 10-day pilgrimage on April 22. Apart from beautifying the Gurdwara, other special arrangements have been made by the Trust Board. Provincial Minority Affairs Minister Ramesh Singh Arora said that the Sikh pilgrims will be provided free accommodation, food, transport and medical facilities in Pakistan. He further said that Gurdwara Panja Sahib has been decorated with new colours, decorations and electric kettles, while all arrangements are complete in Guru Dwara Janam Asthan Nankana Sahib and other gurdwaras.

**Islamabad Police organises Eid feast for martyrs families, police officials**

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Police organised an Eid festival for paying tribute to the valiant martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty where the Families of all martyrs of Islamabad Capital Police were invited to the Police Lines Headquarters.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Headquarters Hasan Raza Khan, along with senior police officers, officials and families of martyrs offered Eid-ul-Fitr prayers at the Police Lines Headquarters Masjid, a public relations officer on Saturday said.

A smart contingent of police presented the guard of honour to the families of the martyrs. The families of the martyrs



visited the martyrs' memorial and recited Fatihah.

All senior police officers, including

DIG Headquarters Hasan Raza Khan celebrated Eid with the families of martyrs and police officers and officials.

On this occasion, DIG Hassan said that 62 officers of the Islamabad Capital Police sacrificed their lives in the line of duty. Islamabad Capital Police never forgot the sacrifices of it's martyrs.

He further said that, living nations never forget the sacrifices of their martyrs. The brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the peace of the country are the proud asset of the Islamabad Capital Police.

DIG Hassan and other senior police officers also distributed the gifts among the martyrs' families. On the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, events were also organized for officers and officials at different police stations, where senior police officers participated and celebrated Eid with their subordinates.



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# Bahawalnagar incident, a PR Success, or...

**W**ith extensive experience supporting ministers and leaders in various capacities—from press attaché in Kuala Lumpur to Press Minister in Paris, and culminating as Press Secretary and media advisor to the President—I had developed a habit to instinctively evaluate public relations campaigns. The Bahawalnagar incident serves as a prime example. Despite an otherwise successful media campaign, a significant flaw was the unwarranted escalation of the incident in traditional media, which initially emerged on social media and should have been contained within that platform.

Let's explore why the Bahawalnagar incident should have been contained within social media. The posts, including footage, views, analysis, and commentary shared by social media activists regarding the incident, were initially perceived with skepticism by viewers due to their informal nature and the general lack of credibility and authenticity associated with social media content. However, when official media managers injected this incident into traditional media, they inadvertently lent credibility and authenticity to these potentially concocted social media posts by associating them with the more trusted and established traditional media channels. This shift in platform allowed misleading or unverified information to gain unwarranted credibility, which could have been avoided by keeping the incident within the sphere of social media.

Furthermore, state institutions possess an overwhelming advantage in having access to actual and factual information compared to the informal and laymen social media posts. This advan-

tage empowers official media managers to effectively counter misinformation or propaganda with accurate data, evidence, and explanations. For instance, in the mentioned incident where social media users were spreading misinformation through fabricated videos or pictures lacking context or evidence, the optimal response would have been to consistently provide factual information with equal frequency and reach. This approach could have swiftly addressed and debunked falsehoods within the same digital space where they originated, without inadvertently legitimizing the misinformation in traditional media channels and amplifying it by exposing the incident to a broader audience that may not have encountered it initially on social media.

The second significant mistake made by the official media managers was their lack of preparedness when using traditional media to counter the false propaganda. Their statement was vague, lacking in facts, figures, and context, and it failed to provide legal backing or support. The official narrative failed to address crucial details about the incident, leaving important questions unanswered. For example, there was no clarification on why a police contingent ambushed the house of a serving army man, what information they had to justify the raid, whether they possessed a search warrant, or if they had obtained the necessary approvals from competent authorities. Additionally, details such as the presence of a female police officer during the raid, any arrests made, or the registration of an FIR against the serving

army man or alleged illegal raiding party were conspicuously absent from the official response.

Furthermore, the official response failed to address critical gaps in the narrative, such as the circumstances surrounding the alleged army contingent raiding the police station. Key questions left unanswered included: Who authorized the raid? Who led and executed the raid? What were the mission and objectives of the raid? What legal rules or procedures empowered the army to conduct a raid on a civilian police station? What actions were taken during the raid and what objectives were achieved? These omissions in the official account contributed to a lack of transparency and raised further doubts and questions among the public.

The official communication also failed to specify the legal basis under which the army and police officers reached a compromise. Critical details were left unanswered, such as who the negotiating officers were, what specific points of agreement were reached, and whether the agreement was documented in writing or solely verbal.

Instead of addressing these vital questions, the official response shifted the burden to an inquiry team composed of officers from both agencies, seemingly aware that the involvement of police and army officials as parties in the incident necessitated an independent third-party investigation. Ideally, the matter should have been adjudicated by a trial court with relevant jurisdiction to ensure impartiality and transparency in resolving the issues

raised as per law of the hand.

The official media managers may have overlooked the critical consequence of failing to provide essential information through traditional media channels. Without this information, the public may dismiss the narrative, leading them to seek answers from social media. Unfortunately, social media influencers seeking to boost their ratings and profit may exploit this gap by filling it with persuasive rhetoric and concocted, distorted, or skewed facts and figures to craft compelling but misleading narratives.

As patriotic Pakistanis, it is essential that we all uphold and support our country's key institutions responsible for external and internal security—the army and police—by fostering public trust and respect towards them. To achieve this, it is imperative that the official media managers of both the army and police collaborate effectively, presenting factual information supported by laws and rules to convey their narrative or counter-narrative. It is crucial that they refrain from sharing incomplete or half-baked narratives on social or traditional media until they are fully prepared with comprehensive and accurate details. Additionally, they should employ public relations tools professionally and effectively to manage and de-escalate any issues, incidents, or developments without resorting to the use of force. By prioritizing transparency, professionalism, and strategic communication, these institutions can enhance public confidence and strengthen their relationship with the people of Pakistan.

*Writer is Former Press Secretary to the President, Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former MD, SRBC*



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

## Israel intelligence failures in Gaza

**T**here is no doubt that the once-powerful, seemingly omnipotent Israeli intelligence services failed the country on Oct. 7. But the failures are not limited simply to the fact that they were unable to predict and prevent the attacks by Hamas; the biggest failure has been what has happened since then.

The first failure following the attacks was their inability to correctly survey and assess the likely results of a war on Gaza, in particular the ability to ensure the conflict would be a short one and would secure a decisive win.

Having seen the results of the attacks on Oct. 7, all that the Israeli intelligence services needed to do was listen to and analyze what the leaders of Hamas were saying at the time. Those leaders made it clear that they knew Israel would react harshly, and stated publicly that they were ready for all possible retaliatory action.

It has not been publicly revealed whether the Israeli intelligence services were aware, or believed, that the Hamas leadership would be able to survive nearly six months of devastating war in Gaza. But if they did, and made any effort to warn the political leadership, it is clear that the Netanyahu administration paid little or no attention to it.

Most likely, though, Israeli arrogance and exaggerated self-confidence blinded them to the benefits of adopting a cool, level-headed approach instead of diving into the heavily populated Gaza Strip and taking on what we now know to be a ready Palestinian resistance to the Israeli invaders.

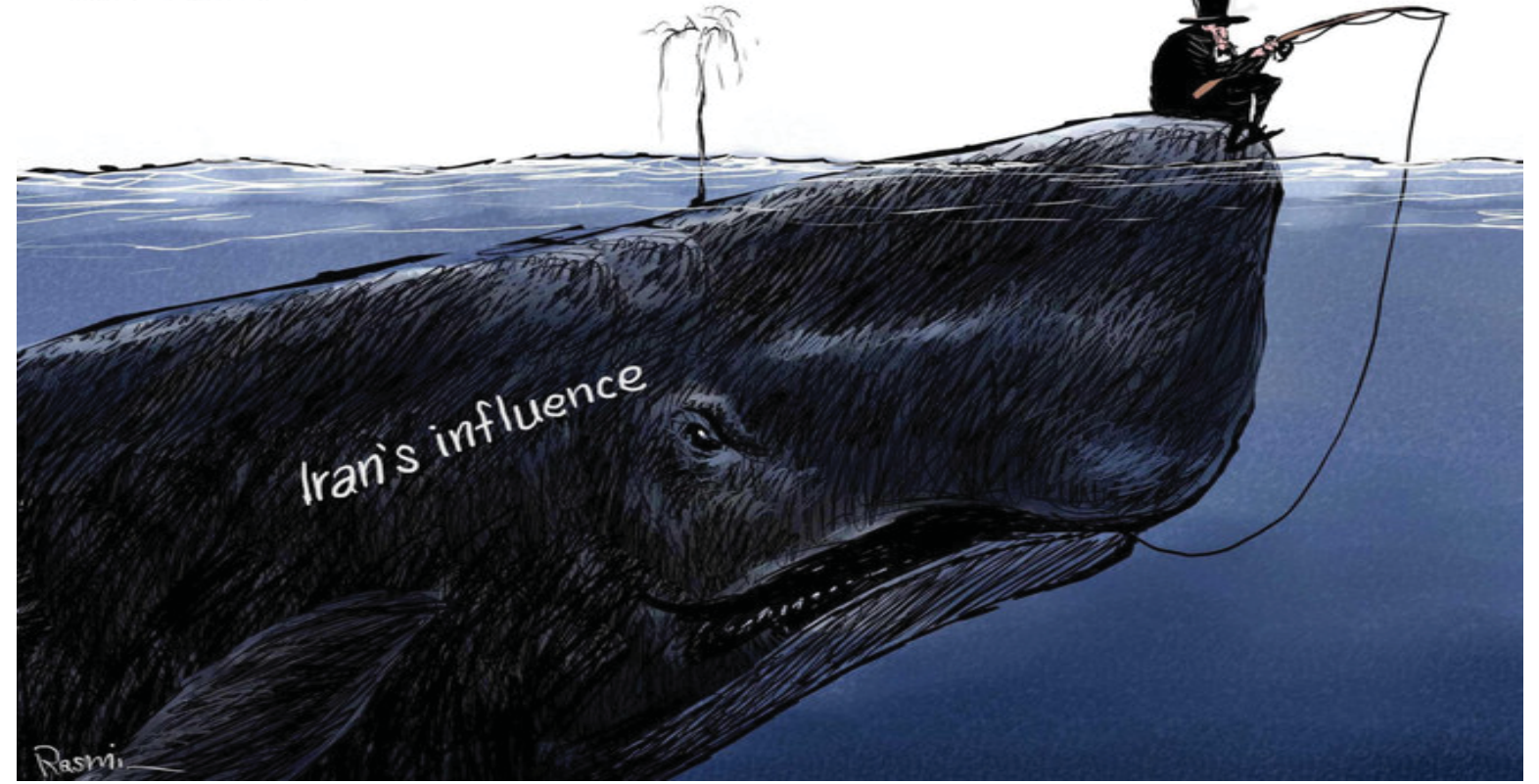
The failures of Israeli intelligence were also evident in the mistaken belief that if Gaza and its people were hit very hard militarily, Hamas would simply lay down its arms, release the hostages and surrender.

It is true that Palestinians did indeed leave their land and homes once before, in 1948, falsely believing that they could later return home. It is also true that Israel was able to defeat a coalition of Arab countries in six days in 1967. But the Israeli intelligence services clearly failed to see a major change among the Palestinian people in more modern times; they learned their lessons about the futility of ever leaving their homes, preferring to die there than become refugees for, in some cases, a second or third time.

Simple historical research into the modus operandi and ideological beliefs and practices of fundamentalists in general, and Islamists in particular, would have revealed many examples of how extremists might react when under attack.

All Israeli Jews needed to do, for example, was look to the historical example of the Jewish zealots who became trapped in the desert enclave of Masada in the 1st century. Unable to repel their attackers and under siege, these fundamentalists choose mass suicide rather than surrender. Similar examples of religious fundamentalists refusing to capitulate abound throughout history.

## The Red Sea ...



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Ashraf Al-Awsat)

## After 6 months of tragedy in Gaza, is there any hope of an end in sight?

Yossi Mekelberg

**E**id Al-Fitr was a very sad occasion in Gaza this year, during which people mainly celebrated the fact that they had managed to survive the bloodiest war this tiny enclave has ever experienced — and it is no stranger to conflict and the deaths and devastation that come with it.

It is six months since the latest war began. Six months ago, I did not think we would reach this tragic landmark. Although the intensity of the fighting has lessened recently, still there is no end to it in sight, and the fear of regional escalation continues to loom.

At best, the indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas that are taking place in Cairo might yield a temporary ceasefire and the release of 40 hostages in exchange for Palestinian detainees held in Israeli prisons. But following the assassination this week of three of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh's children and several of his grandchildren, the possibility of such a deal is an even more remote possibility.

For some in the government, the primordial response of revenge coalesced with the political-ideological motivation of imposing a "new order" in Gaza, including building Jewish settlements there.

The devastating consequences to Gaza and its people are clear for all to see. Tens of thousands of people of all ages, most of them innocent civilians with no ties to militancy, have been killed. Many more are either already suffering from starvation or on the verge of it. Meanwhile, Israel is nowhere close to achieving its stated war objectives of "destroying Hamas" and bringing the hostages home, let alone bringing them home alive.

Netanyahu continues to maintain that victo-

ry is within reach but given his credibility deficit there is hardly anyone, at home or abroad, who believes a word he utters.

From the very beginning there was a complete misunderstanding of the consequences of a war between a state, especially one that defines itself as a liberal democracy, and a movement that is defined by armed resistance and an extremist ideology, with little consideration of, or sense of obligation to, international conventions, the rules of war or international humanitarian law.

Moreover, Israeli authorities fell into the trap set by Hamas. They overreacted, handing other forces in the region an opportunity to join the war against them and to radicalize the population in Gaza, particularly the young. They lost the initial sympathy and worldwide support they had enjoyed. They walked into this trap with their eyes wide open.

Israel has lost support even among its closest friends and allies. It stands accused in the International Court of Justice of genocide. Some countries have already imposed on it arms-supply bans. Relations with the US, its main ally and backer, are at an all-time low. And Israeli society is deeply polarized.

Not only is there no victory in sight but Israelis in the northern and southern parts of the country have had to evacuate their homes for security reasons during the past six months. Hamas does not seem ready to lay down its arms, and the hostages continue to languish in captivity.

And yet still there is hardly any reflection on the damage caused by Israel in conflating the culprits of Oct. 7 with the entire population of Gaza, either by treating them as collateral damage in the war against Hamas or, even worse, by judging them deserving of collective punishment.

A limited military operation, in terms of time

and scope, with the required patience to target those behind the Oct. 7 attacks, one that avoided hurting the rest of the population in Gaza, would have enabled a more successful response, built trust with the local population for the day after the war, prevented the deterioration of regional security, and kept allies on side instead of alienating them.

Among the less rational members of Israel's war Cabinet, there is a rejection of the notion that international support is crucial and that it depends upon adhering to standards of behavior in line with international humanitarian law. As a result, that support has evaporated, which has played right into the hands of Hamas but also provoked Iran and its proxies.

As a result, Hamas is emboldened as it attempts to drive a harder bargain during the indirect negotiations with Israel, while Tehran, sensing Israel's weakening position among its traditional allies, might yet retaliate with excessive force to the killing of Iranian military commander Mohammed Reza Zahedi in Damascus this month.

After six months of war, with no end in sight, it is apparent that the damaging consequences of the conflict, the psychological as much as the material, will take many years to repair. Relations between the Israelis and the Palestinians have reached rock bottom and will not, cannot, return to their prewar, so-called status-quo.

There is only one way out of these dire straits and it is for alternative leaders to emerge who recognize that without peace and reconciliation, death and misery will continue to reign supreme.

*• Yossi Mekelberg is a professor of international relations and an associate fellow of the Middle East and North Africa Program at international affairs think tank Chatham House.*

## Strengthening Bonds in a Changing World - I

**R**ussian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's recent visit to Beijing has not only solidified the diplomatic ties between Russia and China but also hinted at a potential reconfiguration of global alliances. As discussions between Lavrov and his Chinese counterparts spanned across a wide spectrum of global issues, from geopolitical tensions to economic cooperation, it became evident that Moscow and Beijing are increasingly aligning their positions on pressing matters. This growing cohesion between the two nations, particularly in the face of mounting pressures from Western powers, suggests a shifting landscape in international relations. With Russia and China deepening their bond, the world may witness a recalibration of power dynamics, challenging the traditional dominance of Western influence and opening avenues for new partnerships and alliances in the future.

nies allegedly supporting Russia in its invasion of Ukraine. However, China maintains that its stance on the Ukraine issue is objective and fair, denying any involvement in providing arms or military assistance to Russia.

Since the signing of a "no limits" agreement in 2022, Russia and China have forged a robust bilateral relationship, focusing on economic and strategic cooperation. China, in particular, views Russia as its fastest-growing trade partner. Despite facing numerous sanctions since its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has found solace in its economic ties with China, which have served as a crucial lifeline amid isolation from the Western world.

During Lavrov's visit, discussions extended beyond bilateral ties to encompass regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. Both nations emphasized the importance of coordination in maintaining security, stability, and development in the region. This sentiment was echoed by Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, who described the current period as the best in history for China-Russia relations under the strategic guidance of Presidents Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin. There have been central figures in nurturing the bond between China and Russia. However, in the West, suspicions persist regarding the deepening partnership between the two nations, especially concerning trade and defense collaborations. This growing alliance has stirred concerns among Western powers, who increasingly perceive it with anxiety. Nonetheless, both China and Russia are unwavering in their commitment to enhancing regional cooperation. They place significant emphasis on organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as vital platforms for fostering closer ties and promoting stability in the region.

The strategic coordination between Pakistan, China, and Russia accentuates the necessity of trilateral cooperation in shaping the evolution of global affairs.

The alignment between Russia and China on international issues, including disputes with democracies and NATO members, has become increasingly evident. While diplomatic discussions unfolded in Beijing, concerns over the situation in Ukraine were raised. The United States has expressed worries about Chinese compa-



Analysis

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani

To be continued



# Kyrgyz president explains what sources contributed to economic growth in country

Kabar News Agency

In the first quarter of 2024, the growth of the economy of Kyrgyzstan made 8.8%. Compared to the indicators of the first quarter of 2023, the growth rate increased by 3 times. Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers Akylybek Zhaparov said that these are not just numbers, but the result of hard work of the president's team over the last three years. In this regard, Kabar Agency asked President Sadyr Zhaparov about the reasons for the growth of economic indicators.

Sadyr Nurgozhoevich, Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, stated that according to the results of the first quarter, our economy grew by 8.8%. Excluding the Kumtor gold mine, this figure was 9.8%. Is this true? Which sectors of our economy contributed to such growth?

Indeed, these figures are accurate. These are official numbers monitored and calculated by the National Statistics Committee. Additionally, the Ministry of Economy and Commerce oversees the process. All sectors contribute to the growth of our economy.

Of course, at the expense of taxpayers:

1. Kumtor
2. Alliance Alтын (Zherui)
3. Alтынken
4. Nur Telecom

5. Sky Mobile (Bitel)
  6. Alfa Telecom (MegaCom)
  7. Red Petroleum (Alfa Oil)
  8. Partner Neft
  9. Gazpromneft
  10. Top Noch
  11. Ayil Bank
  12. Optima
- These companies take leading places.

And I would like to note the significant contribution of the National Bank to economic growth and curbing inflation.

- You said that the National Bank has a great contribution to the growth of our economy. How much reserves we have if it's not a secret? What about our gold reserves?

- There is no secret. All these are public information. To-date, our total international reserves have reached 3 billion 491 million dollars. From our independence to 2020, our international reserves were only 2 billion 424 million dollars in 30 years.

Today, the team of our National Bank added 1 billion 67 million dollars in 3 years. As for gold reserves, until 2020, only 16 tons of gold had been collected in 30 years. Today, the National Bank has 51 tons of gold. 35 tons of gold was added in 3 years. You see the difference: 16 tons in 30 years, 35 tons in 3 years.

In addition, the National Bank lowered the inflation rate to 5.2 percent to-date. Compared to

other countries, today inflation is lower in our country. This is the result of the correct policy of the National Bank.

- Are there currently problems in the state budget in paying foreign debts, making payments on protected items? There are critics, who state that our external debt has increased...

In simple terms, let's forget about discussing external debt from now on. We won't entertain these questions any longer. Some of our citizens may persist in claiming that our external debt has increased, but we won't pay any attention to them anymore.

Up until 2020, our external debt was around 5 billion dollars, accumulated over 30 years. Apart from recent projects like Datka-Kemin, the North-South highway construction, and the modernization of thermal power plants, not much significant work had been undertaken.

However, these three projects have become essential for Kyrgyzstan's development, akin to air and water. It's worth noting that these projects won't justify their costs even over 40 years, as their expenses have increased by 2-3 times. Comparatively, similar construction and work in European countries are done 2-3 times cheaper than here.

For instance, even a fifth-year student in this field can calculate the required funds for building a thermal power plant

The North-South highway and the Datka-Kemin project are also overpriced. This is not the fault of the Chinese side, which issued the loan, but our authorities and officials are to blame. The money was stolen.

By 2035, we will repay our foreign debts in the amount of 5 billion dollars, which have accumulated to date. The timing of the payment coincided with the period of work of my team. God bless. It is within our power to do this. Our economy has improved. As long as there is peace and stability in the country, we will easily pay.

Remember: we will pay off previous debts at the expense of the people, from the national budget. Because before this there was not a single self-sustaining project. All the money received disappeared like water into sand.

We will direct the debts that we take on now, every dollar taken, to specific projects. We will take on self-sustaining projects. I'll give one example. About 5-6 billion dollars will be spent for the construction of the Kambar-Ata 1 hydro power plant.

This project will pay off in 13-15 years from completion and commissioning. When the time comes to repay the debt for this project, the republican budget and the people will not pay. The Kambar-Ata 1 hydro power plant will pay for itself before the debt is due. How?

For example, the World Bank



provides a loan of 500 million dollars for 50 years with a 10-year grace period without interest. Kyrgyzstan received a loan on such terms for the first time in the history of the country.

Therefore, even if our external debt reaches 10-15 billion dollars, we don't have to worry about anything. The most important thing is that by 2035 we will fully repay previously incurred debts.

In the future, no matter how much we borrow, every project will pay for itself.

There will be no burden on the republican budget and people's pockets. Of course, not taking into account the debts incurred for road construction.

I mentioned only large projects. There are projects of small and medium-sized hydro power plants that will pay for

themselves in 7-8 years. We must invest in them too. We now asked the Global Climate Fund to help. If they help, we will completely switch to green energy.

We have many projects in other areas. I won't go into all the little details. We are implementing them with private investors and, to the extent possible, at the expense of the budget.

- Thank you for answering our questions.

- I wish you good luck in your work!

Interviewed by Mederbek Shermetaliev, Director of Kabar News Agency

## Anniversary

ISLAMABAD: H. E. Mr. RIM Song Ho Charge'd Affairs Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to Pakistan, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Mohammad Abdullah Hamid Gul, Chairman Tehrik Jawanan Pakistan and others cutting the cake on the occasion of Birthday anniversary of Kim Il Sung at a local hotel.



Photo: Raja Farid

## China's top legislator meets North Korea's Kim Jong Un on goodwill visit

Report

China's top legislator Zhao Leji met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang on Saturday, expressing Beijing's willingness to work with its counterparts to deepen trust and boost cooperation, Chinese state media said, Report informs via Reuters.

Zhao, finishing a goodwill tour that began on Thursday, is the highest-ranking Chinese official to visit the North since 2018, when Li Zhanshu attended the 70th anniversary of the North's founding.

"No matter how the international situation changes, the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK, created and nurtured by the older generation of



leaders from both parties and countries, remains deep-rooted and strong over time," Zhao said in a speech, according to China's Xinhua

news agency. DPRK refers to the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In the speech at the open-

ing ceremony for China-DPRK Friendship Year, Zhao noted that the two countries' top leaders have met five times in recent years.

## Israel warns Iran of 'consequences' for escalating tensions

Xinhua

JERUSALEM: Israel Defense Forces Spokesman Daniel Hagari on Saturday warned Iran that it "will bear the consequences for choosing to escalate the situation any further."

Hagari made the remarks in a statement following reports that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy had seized an Israeli-linked cargo ship earlier in the day.

Without mentioning the incident, Hagari stressed in the video statement that Israel is "on high alert," saying, "We have increased readiness to protect Israel from further Iranian aggression."

"The Israel Defense Forces is prepared for all scenarios and will take the necessary steps — together with our allies — to protect the people of Israel," he added.

Iran's official news agency IRNA reported the seizure

of the Israeli-linked container ship, MSC Aries, near the Strait of Hormuz.

It comes 12 days after Israel killed seven Iranians, including two IRGC commanders, in a missile strike on the consular section of the Iranian embassy in Syria.

Iranian authorities have pledged to retaliate against Israel for the attack, raising concerns about potential escalations in the Middle East region.

## Uzbekistan to host a CIS anti-terrorism exercise for the first time in 2024

News Desk

TASHKENT: A joint anti-terrorist exercise of the CIS countries may take place on the territory of Uzbekistan for the first time this year. This was reported by the press service of the CIS Anti-Terrorism Center (ATC) following the results of the 17th meeting of the heads (chiefs of staff) of national anti-terrorism centers of the CIS member states that took place on Wednesday in Moscow, the press service of the CIS Executive Committee reports.



"The delegates noted that anti-terrorism exercises are an important element in testing the effectiveness of the counter-terrorism system and working out the coherence of joint activities. In this regard, the issue of organiz-

ing and conducting a joint anti-terrorist exercise of the competent authorities of the CIS member states "East-Anti-Terror-2024" this year has been considered, the force stage of which will take place for the first time on the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan," the ATC stated.

In addition, at a meeting of the scientific advisory council at the CIS ATC, issues of legal regulation of the use of unmanned systems in the field of combating terrorism, the practice of countering unmanned vehicles used for

terrorist and extremist purposes were considered, and the prospects for the development and use of unmanned aircraft systems in the field of security were assessed.

Council members also reviewed problematic aspects and practices of competent authorities in countering the use of artificial intelligence in terrorist and extremist activities and innovative methods for countering cyber terrorism in the context of the use of modern digital tools by international terrorist organizations to finance terrorist and extremist activities.

## East China city's longstanding partnership with Germany paves way for deeper ties

Xinhua

HEFEI: In recent months, there have been several delegations of German enterprises visiting Hefei, a city in east China's Anhui Province, demonstrating keen interest in China's emerging industries.

Last month, Matthias Machnig, Vice President of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) Economic Forum, an independent German entrepreneurial professional association, led a delegation to the city. They visited new energy vehicle (NEV) factories there and held discus-

sions with local entrepreneurs in various fields including NEV, AI and bio-medicine.

Anhui has displayed a huge potential in the industrial and manufacturing sectors, and future exchange on industry, technology and culture between Germany and this province is expected to be further deepened, Machnig said.

Anhui's ties with Germany can be traced back to 1984, marked by a joint declaration for cooperation between the province and the German state of Lower Saxony. This partnership stands as one of the longest-running

regional collaborations between China and Germany.

In recent years, there has been a surge in visits from German entrepreneurs to Hefei, resulting in a flurry of industrial collaborations.

To advance its pace of innovation in China, Volkswagen Group China on Thursday announced that it will invest 2.5 billion euros (about 2.68 billion U. S. dollars) in the expansion of its innovation hub in Hefei.

"This additional investment in the site underlines our ambition to quickly expand our local innovative strength," said Ralf

Brandstätter, Chairman and CEO of Volkswagen Group China, adding that the innovation hub in Hefei will bring technologies to market approximately 30 percent faster in the future.

Volkswagen (China) Technology Co., Ltd., located in Hefei, is the company's implementation hub for its production localization strategy. It is Volkswagen's largest research and development center outside of Germany.

Effective communication requires mutual engagement and exchange. A Hefei delegation led by government officials



also visited Hannover, Wolfsburg, Berlin and Stuttgart in 2023. During these visits,

discussions were held with representatives from Volkswagen, Continental, Porsche and

Bosch to strengthen collaboration with China.

During his visit to Hefei last month, Jochen Leonhardt, a member of the board of the German Association for Small and Medium-sized Businesses (BVMW), said that the association has always maintained a good interactive and cooperative relationship with the city and provincial governments.

"Every time I come to Anhui, I can feel the rapid development and great changes here, which fully proves that it is a hot land for investment and development," Leonhardt said.



**Bull & Bears**  
PSX 100-Share  
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
70,314.71	69,619.98
Day's High	Day's Low
70,677.29	69,857.14
Index Value	Change
11,887,576,551	+694.73
Percentage	Time
+1%	9 Apr, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,934.79	-8.68
Percentage	Time
-0.11%	9 Apr, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
38,755.40	-137.40
Percentage	Time
-0.35%	9 Apr, 1:07 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
39,773.13	+426.09
Percentage	Time
+1.08%	9 Apr, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	182.7	184.5
Bahrain Dinar	739.38	747.38
Canadian Dollar	204	206.2
China Yuan	38.45	38.85
Danish Krone	40.45	40.85
Euro	299.95	302.9
Hong Kong Dollar	35.57	35.92
Indian Rupee	3.33	3.44
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.94
Kuwaiti Dinar	903.91	912.91
Malaysian Ringgit	58.92	59.52
New Zealand \$	167.63	169.63
Norwegians Krone	25.38	25.68
Omani Riyal	722.1	730.1
Qatari Riyal	76.35	77.05
Saudi Riyal	73.3	74.05
Singapore Dollar	206	208
Swedish Korona	25.72	26.02
Swiss Franc	307.11	309.61
Thai Bhat	7.61	7.76
U.A.E Dirham	75.45	76.2
UK Pound Sterling	349.5	353
US Dollar	277.5	280.5

**JuicyFields: Gang behind \$686 mln medicinal cannabis scam arrested**

Reuters

MADRID: Police forces led by Spain have arrested a gang which allegedly defrauded 645 million euros (\$686.41 million) from victims in 35 countries in a scam centred around cannabis plants for medicinal use.

The gang mounted a marketing system and attended international cannabis fairs to convince victims to invest in the system, the Spanish National Police said in a statement.

It led the operation with the help of Europol and police forces in five other countries.

Nine suspects, who have not been named, were detained on April 11 on suspicion of fraud in Spain, Britain, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Italy and the Dominican Republic.

"The business model offered by this organization consisted of using the capital transferred from investors to develop partnerships to finance the cultivation of cannabis plants," Silvia Garrido, Spanish police spokeswoman said.

"With this system, they promised victims profits of between 70% and 168% per year, depending on the species of cannabis in which they invested."

The British National Crime Agency (NCA), which took part in the operation, said 180,000 people invested funds in "JuicyFields" which it called "a notorious and elaborate Ponzi fraud scheme".

The NCA also said that a 42-year-old man appeared in a London court on April 11 for the start of extradition proceedings. Luxury cars, hotel parties and music videos were used in an advertising campaign to promote the scheme, police said, and victims were taken to legal cannabis plantations which were involved in the scam.

Police carried out raids in 2022 but did not say if any suspects have been charged with any offences.

Police blocked bank accounts containing 58,600,000 euros and 116,300,000 euros in crypto currencies, and 106,000 euros in cash was recovered. Properties worth 2.6 billion euros were seized.

**SIM cards of nearly two million non-filers to be blocked**

PPA

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

Sources told that FBR chairman has green-lighted the blocking of SIM cards of tax evaders dispatched instructions to relevant officials. The FBR has identified 1.8 million tax evad-



Sources claimed that the FBR also has the

authority to disconnect electricity connections, besides blocking SIM cards of non-filers.

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

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

Earlier in January, it was reported that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) 'delayed' nationwide crackdown against non-filers due to 'legal issues'.

Sources privy to the development said the action is being 'delayed' over non-completion of the Income Tax General Order because FBR may have to face courts on legal grounds.

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

**Oldest bazaar**

KARACHI: People purchasing spices from Jodia Bazaar in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

**Canada has a new plan to ease housing shortage**

Reuters

OTTAWA: Canada plans to ease a housing shortage by leasing public land to developers for construction of affordable houses under a plan unveiled by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday that aims to build nearly 3.9 million houses by 2031.

The government said the land is underutilized. The property could potentially include abandoned industrial parks, sites of defunct government companies and schools with low enrollment.

The plan still falls 1.2 million units short of what is needed from 2023 to 2030, according to national housing agency Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.

The Liberal government has announced a series of measures to address the housing crisis over the past two weeks, and the issue is expected to dominate next week's federal budget.

The flurry of activity follows a surge in housing and rental prices that has caused Trudeau's Liberals to lag the Conservatives in opinion polls before an election that must be held by October 2025.

"It is a plan that is actually going to make a difference in the lives of Canadians," Trudeau told reporters in Vaughan,



Ontario.

Housing Minister Sean Fraser said other new measures include changes to a capital-cost tax structure that will encourage institutional builders to construct more homes, proposals to extend low-cost loans and combating on mortgage fraud that artificially inflates the cost of houses.

Mike Moffatt of the Task Force for Housing and Climate, an independent think tank, said builders and other stakeholders would need to invest close to C\$2 trillion (\$1.5 trillion) to achieve the government's 3.9 million homes target.

"We are going to need to see more on the math, and we will need to see more on (the cost) in the budget. But I think overall we have seen some pretty significant reforms in today's package," he told the Canadian Broadcasting Corp.

Rapid growth in Canada's immigrant population has driven the housing shortage along with inflation and high interest rates.

Housing in Canada is largely the responsibility of the 10 provinces and major municipalities. Ottawa, which has no direct role in construction, relies on policy measures and funding.

**ZTE launches Axon 60 Ultra with dual satellite connectivity and 1.5K OLED display**

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: ZTE has unveiled its latest addition to the Axon series, the ZTE Axon 60 Ultra, in China. The new smartphone offers dual satellite connectivity, allowing users to make calls and send texts via China's Tiantong satellite system.

The ZTE Axon 60 Ultra features a 1.5K OLED display with a 120Hz refresh rate and is powered by the Snapdragon 8 Gen 2 SoC. It packs a robust 6,000mAh battery with 80W fast charging support.

Details regarding the price, variants, and availability of the ZTE Axon 60 Ultra are currently unknown.

However, based on some reports in Indian media, a few Pakistani websites have claimed that the phone will be available at around PKR200,000. But will the state, which is battling several security challenges, allow it to be sold in the country is another question.

The ZTE Axon 60 Ultra boasts a 6.78-inch OLED display with a resolution of 1.5K and a



120Hz refresh rate. The display incorporates a hole punch cutout at the top center to accommodate the front-facing camera. Under the hood, the device is equipped with an octa-core Snapdragon 8 Gen 2 SoC, LPDDR5X RAM, and UFS 4.0 storage.

One of the standout features of the ZTE Axon 60 Ultra is its dual satellite connectivity. This enables users to make live voice calls and send two-way text messages using China's Tiantong satellite system, even in areas without network connectivity. The smartphone also employs a dual-system architecture.

In terms of photography, the ZTE Axon 60 Ultra houses a triple rear camera setup, consisting of a 50-megapixel main sensor with optical image stabilization (OIS), a 50-megapixel secondary sensor, and a macro shooter. For selfies and video chats, there is a 32-megapixel front-facing camera. Connectivity options include 5G, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and a USB Type-C port.

Additionally, ZTE has equipped the Axon 60 Ultra with a 6,000mAh battery that supports 80W wired charging. The device also possesses IP68 water and dust resistance.

**Kenya recalls J&J children's cough syrup**

Reuters

Kenya's drug regulator is recalling a batch of Johnson & Johnson children's cough syrup, it said on Thursday, a day after Nigeria recalled the same batch of medication under the Benlyn Paediatric brand.

Nigeria's health regulator said laboratory tests on the syrup showed a high level of diethylene glycol, which has been linked to the deaths of dozens of children in Gambia, Uzbekistan and Cameroon since 2022 in one of the world's worst waves of poisoning from oral medication.

Kenya's Pharmacy and Poisons Board (PPB) said in a statement it had commenced investigations and advised that sales of certain batches of the product be halted and returned to suppliers.

Kenvue, which now owns the Benlyn brand after a spin-off from J&J last year, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

**Farmers must complete all arrangements prior to wheat harvesting**



Commerce Desk

LAHORE: The Punjab Agriculture Department has advised the wheat growers to arrange for labourers, reaper, thresher, tractor, combine harvester and plastic sheets prior to harvesting of the crop.

A spokesman for the department said on Saturday that poor management during wheat harvesting could result in 10 to 12 per

cent losses. He said that farmers should complete arrangements related to wheat harvesting keeping in view the weather predictions.

Spokesman said, "In case of rain, farmers must stop harvesting and resume it when weather gets normal."

He further said that farmers must feel free to seek guidance from agriculture department for proper management of wheat.

**Pakistan repays \$1 bln in Eurobonds**

Agencies

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has repaid \$1 billion in Eurobonds as a scheduled payment ahead of seeking a long-term bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The bond, launched in 2014 and repaid on Friday, was maturing this month.

"The payment was made to the agent bank for onward distribution to the bond holders," the State Bank of Pakistan said in a statement.

Pakistan has been struggling with a balance of payments crisis, record inflation and steep currency devaluation since an IMF standby arrangement averted a sovereign default.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb is due to leave on Sunday for Washington to attend the IMF-World Bank spring meeting, where he will start

negotiations for Pakistan's 24th long-term IMF bailout.

Aurangzeb briefed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif about the new IMF programme on Friday, the government said in a statement.

The IMF standby arrangement of \$3 billion Islamabad secured last summer expired on Thursday. Its final tranche of \$1.1 billion is expected to be released after the multilateral lender's board meets later this month.

The two sides have spoken in recent weeks about negotiating the longer-term bailout to continue with necessary policy reforms to rein in deficits, build up reserves and manage soaring debt servicing.

Pakistan is in discussions with the IMF for a potential follow-up programme, the IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said on Thursday.

**PBF expresses satisfaction over current economic situation**

Bureau Report

MULTAN: Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) has expressed satisfaction over the current economic situation of the country.

In a media briefing after a meeting of the Executive Council of PBF, President PBF Khawaja Mehboobur Rahman, Chairman PBF South Punjab Malik Talat Sohail and Vice President Chaudhry Ahmad expressed that two years ago, there was a situation of uncertainty regarding the economy. They said that anyone who had not studied the devastation of the Sri Lankan economy was also afraid of Sri Lanka's default as a sign of fear, said a press release issued here on Saturday. Such was the uncertainty of the currency that calls for a minimum dollar value of Rs 350 and as high as Rs 400 were common, they told.

"Now, at least, there was clear satisfaction that Paki-

stan is not in the dire situation of bankruptcy. The stability of the Pakistani currency is evident, its continuous high flight has stopped. Importer's barrier to open LCs is over. Dollar is Rs 278 in interbank. The stock exchange index is at an all-time high. The staff level negotiations with the IMF have already been successful and there is no obstacle for several months like in the recent past. Prime Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif's visit to Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman reiterated his goodwill towards Pakistan and five billion dollar investment in Pakistan, as well as encouraging prospects for investment from other friendly countries."

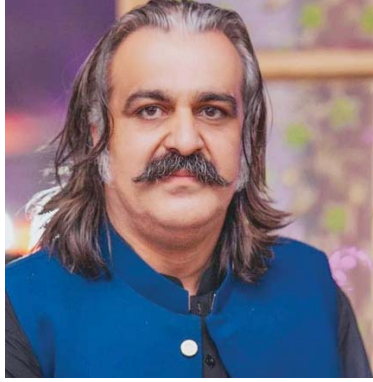
PBF will play its role on government reforms at all levels for economic recovery and in the coming days, it will present its prepared economic policy, they expressed.



# Chief Minister KP greets squash players for winning medals in Junior Australian Open

Sports Desk

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur Saturday congratulated the best performance of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa players in Australian Junior Squash Championship-2024. In a message of felicitations, the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur congratulated the players, both boys and girls from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who showed excellent performance in the Australian Junior Squash Championship-2024. Mahnoor Ali, Mehwish Ali, Fawad Khan,



Yahya Khan and Ibrahim Zeb deserve congratulations for their outstanding performance in the Championship, said the chief minister KP, who himself use to play squash as U-11, U13 and U15 levels.

These players made the name of the country and the province bright at the international level, he said and hoped that these junior players would play a role in bringing Pakistan back its lost position in the field of squash.

He said sports sector is among the main priorities of the existing provincial government. The present provincial government will take coordinated

measures for the promotion of sports in the province and would take concrete measures to get rid of those damaging the sports. Talented youth will be fully mentored in the field of sports, the chief minister said.

He said that all possible facilities would be provided to the athletes for the promotion of sports and for this good talented players would be encouraged, both financially and morally. He said that a system would be introduced to facilitate the upcoming talented players so that they could achieve name and fame at international level.

# PCB announced match officials for Pakistan vs New Zealand T-20 Cricket Series in April 2024

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board today announced match officials for the Pakistan versus New Zealand five-match T20I series, which is set to be played from 18 April to 27 April in Rawalpindi and Lahore.

Andy Pycroft, a member of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees, will lead the playing control team that includes five umpires, namely Ahsan Raza (elite panelist), Aleem Dar, Asif Yaqoob, Faisal Afridi and Rashid Riaz (all from the ICC's international panel), who will share umpiring responsibilities.

Pycroft, a former Zimbabwe Test batter, has to date refereed in 144 T20Is. When he will stand in the second T20I on 20 April, he will move ahead of Sri Lanka's Ranjan Madugalle in second



place in the list of match referees to officiate in most T20Is. The list is headed by New Zealand's Jeff Crowe (175).

The Pindi Stadium will stage the opening three T20Is on 18, 20 and 21 April

before action will move to Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium where the last two matches will be played on 25 and 27 April.

Umpire and match referee appointments: 18 April - First T20I.

Ahsan Raza and Aleem Dar (on-field umpires), Faisal Afridi (third umpire), Rashid Riaz (fourth umpire); Andy Pycroft (match referee)

20 April - Second T20I. Asif Yaqoob and Aleem Dar (on-field umpires), Ahsan Raza (third umpire), Faisal Afridi (fourth umpire); Andy Pycroft (match referee)

21 April - Third T20I. Ahsan Raza and Asif Yaqoob (on-field umpires), Rashid Riaz (third umpire), Aleem Dar (fourth umpire); Andy Pycroft (match referee)

25 April - Fourth T20I. Faisal Afridi and Rashid Riaz (on-field umpires), Asif Yaqoob (third umpire), Ahsan Raza (fourth umpire); Andy Pycroft (match referee)

27 April - Rashid Riaz and Faisal Afridi (on-field umpires), Aleem Dar (third umpire), Asif Yaqoob (fourth umpire); Andy Pycroft (match referee)

# Two-time winner Stefanos Tsitsipas eases into Monte Carlo semis-finals



Sports Desk

Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas kept alive his hopes of a third Monte Carlo Masters title as on Friday he breezed into the semi-finals dismissing Russian opponent Karen Khachanov 6-4, 6-2.

Tsitsipas, winner in Monte Carlo in 2021 and 2022, needed just 81 minutes to record his eighth win in nine meetings with an out of sorts Khachanov.

The 25-year-old Greek will meet the winner of the quarter-final between Holger Rune and Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner.

"I was very effective from the start, I had a lot of pace and gained momentum," said Tsitsipas.

"I tried to do my part and press and it worked out really well." Khachanov had cheekily said to the umpire prior to the match "Are you going to stay focussed?" to which the official replied "Always, of course."

It was Khachanov who should have asked himself the question as he rarely seemed to be and was way off the form he had shown in Thursday's defeat of compatriot Daniil Medvedev.

Khachanov finally won a service game of his own - to make it 3-2 - displaying a fine mix of power hitting, delicate touch and agility.

However, he required medical attention at the change over at 5-4 down, but returned to the fray only for Tsitsipas to serve out the set.

Khachanov, who seemed to be troubled by a pain in an upper quad, came under pressure on his serve at 1-1 in the second set - but he saved a break point and then held.

However, it was a very unhappy Khachanov who returned to his chair at the next change over as a series of errors gave his Greek rival the break at 3-2.

The 27-year-old Russian flung his racket angrily to the ground as he took his seat.

Stefanos Tsitsipas did not ease up winning 11 points in a row to surge to a 5-2 lead and served out easily for a place in the last eight.

He admitted the tournament brought out the best in him though it is yet to lead to him winning the big one on clay, The French Open.

"I would lie if I said it did not bring out the best in me," he said grinning.

"There are many good memories and stepping out here and coming back here it revives those good memories.

"It brings me alive."

# Nepal's Dipendra Singh Airee hits six sixes in an over in T20Is

A Sports

AL AMARAT: Nepal's middle-order batter Dipendra Singh Airee bagged another dominant record in T20 cricket as he became the third male batter to hit six sixes in an over in T20Is.

Airee wreaked havoc in the final over of Nepal's innings against Qatar in the seventh match of the ACC Men's Premier Cup, being played at the Al Amerat Cricket Ground in Oman.

The right-handed batter struck Kamran Khan for 36 runs in the final over, clubbing six consecutive sixes.

His final-over blitz propelled him to an unbeaten half-century. His 64-run knock, coming off 21 deliveries, featured three boundaries and seven sixes.

Former Indian all-rounder Yuvraj Singh was the first batter to hit six sixes in an over in T20Is. The left-handed batter achieved the feat in the 2007 World T20.

Yuvraj's long-standing record was then equalled by his West Indian counterpart Kieron Pollard in 2021 when he took Sri Lanka's Akila Dhananjaya to the cleaners.



For the unversed, Dipendra Singh Airee also holds the record of scoring the fastest half-century in the history of T20 cricket in a record-breaking Asian Games match between Nepal and Mongolia.

Airee came out to bat with only 11 balls left but made the best out of available resources and struck the fastest fifty in T20 cricket, taking just nine deliveries.

The record was previously held by Yuvraj Singh in T20Is, while Chris Gayle and Hazratullah Zazai held the record in domestic franchise cricket. They all took 12 balls to score a fifty.

In his undefeated 10-ball 52, Dipendra Singh Airee scored at a strike rate of 520, marking the first instance in T20s where a batter has scored at a strike rate exceeding 500 in an innings of 10 or more balls.

# Djokovic into record 77th Masters semi-final at Monte Carlo as Sinner shines

Sports Desk

Novak Djokovic reached a record 77th Masters semi-final on Friday when he defeated Australia's Alex de Minaur in straight sets in Monte Carlo as in-form Jannik Sinner racked up his 25th victory of the year.

Djokovic, the 36-year-old world number one came through a rollercoaster quarter-final to win 7-5, 6-4 and make the last-four in the principality for the first time since 2015 when he went on to claim his second title at the tournament.

Djokovic, the oldest man to make the Monte Carlo semi-finals in the Open Era, will take on Casper Ruud of Norway for

a place in Sunday's championship match.

"It was tough for both of us. He is one of the quickest players on tour. He gets a lot of balls back that normally 99 percent of other players don't," said Novak Djokovic who avenged his loss to De Minaur at the United Cup in January.

"He did not surprise me with several passing shots. Particularly in the second set when I was up a break.

"But he said at the net it was ugly. The second set I think it was. We didn't play at the high level and made a lot of unforced errors, him and I, and a lot of breaks of serve. It is kind of expected on clay but maybe not

this many. But a win is a win and I am happy to be through."

Saturday's other semi-final sees Australian Open champion and world number two Jannik Sinner face two-time Monte Carlo Masters winner Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Sinner took his 2024 record to 25 wins and just one loss with a gruelling 6-4, 6-7 (6/8), 6-3 victory over 2023 runner-up Holger Rune.

Greek 12th seed Tsitsipas breezed past Karen Khachanov of Russia 6-4, 6-2.

Djokovic had appeared on course for a comfortable afternoon under the sweltering Riviera sun against 11th seeded De Minaur.

After pocketing the first set, he was quickly 2-0 ahead in the second.

However, five successive breaks of serve followed as the top seed saw leads of 3-1 and 4-2 retrieved by his opponent who clawed back to 4-4.

Novak Djokovic held for 5-4 and secured his fifth break of the match in the 10th game to claim victory in just over two hours and move two wins away from a 41st career Masters title.

Sinner kept his cool as Rune lost his in a two-hour 40-minute marathon.

Rune, who will drop out of the top 10 next week, was warned by the chair umpire for unsporting behaviour after a sarcas-

tic gesture to the crowd in the second set.

He was booed even more when he sat down and demanded the supervisor be called.

The 20-year-old Dane regained his composure, saving two match points to take the tie to a decider.

However, Sinner moved smartly into his fifth semi-final of 2024, gaining revenge for his loss to Rune in the last-four in Monte Carlo 12 months ago.

"One can try and create a little bit of chaos," said Sinner of Rune's antics.

"That is no problem. I learned from last year. That is all part of the learning process."

Tsitsipas, winner of the Monte

# NZ team to arrive in Islamabad on Sunday for T20I series

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: New Zealand team would land in Islamabad on Sunday for their five-match T20I series against Pakistan, to be played from April 14 to 28. As per schedule, Pakistan team would train at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on Monday while New Zealand has opted to rest on the day.

Pakistan and New Zealand would train at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on Tuesday and Wednesday. Both captains Babar Azam of Pakistan and New Zealand's Michael Bracewell would take part in pre-series photo-shoot followed by their pre-series media conferences on Wednesday. Both teams would play the first T20I on April 18. Pakistan and New Zealand are scheduled to train at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on April 19. The two sides would play back to back matches on April 20 and 21 and then will travel to Lahore on April 22.

# La Liga: Antoine Griezmann strikes twice as Atletico sink Girona



Sports Desk

Atletico Madrid completed a good four days as they followed their Champions League quarter-final first-leg victory over Borussia Dortmund with a 3-1 La Liga victory over third-placed Girona, courtesy of Antoine Griezmann's brace.

Antoine Griezmann scored twice as Diego Simeone's men moved to within four points of their opponents and pulled five clear of fifth-placed Athletic Bilbao in the race for Champions League qualification.

The Basques play Villarreal on Sunday. Atletico won the home leg of their European tie 2-1 on Wednesday and visit Dortmund for the second leg on Tuesday.

Girona took the lead in Madrid with a fourth-minute goal from close range by Artem Dovbyk that took him on to a league-leading 17 goals.

Antoine Griezmann responded by converting a 34th-minute penalty.

Angel Correa then gave the home side the lead six minutes into added time at the end of the first half.

Griezmann extended his lead five minutes into the second half, taking advantage of a defensive error to fire home his 13th league goal of the season.

With an eye on the game in Germany, the France attacker was then replaced shortly after the hour mark by Marcos Llorente.

Girona's fifth defeat away from home, gives Barcelona, buoyed by their midweek 3-2 Champions League win at Paris Saint-Germain, the chance to tighten their grip on second when they visit struggling Cadiz in the last game of the day.

Real Madrid, eight points clear at the top of the La Liga standings, play at Mallorca later on Saturday.

# Lionel Messi set to steal spotlight from Travis Kelce, Patrick Mahomes

Inter Miami captain

Lionel Messi will steal the spotlight from Travis Kelce and Patrick Mahomes as his side is set to meet Sporting KC at Arrowhead Stadium on Saturday night, the home of Super Bowl winners Kansas City Chiefs.

As many as 70,000 fans are expected to turn up to see one of the greatest footballers in action at the stadium, where Kelce and Mahomes are usually in the spotlight, DailyMail.com reported.

Mostly, Sporting KC go head-to-head with their opponents at the Children's Mercy Park, which can house around 18,500 fans. However, since the Argentina World Cup winner was visiting, the venue was shifted to Arrowhead Stadium.

The Miami skipper played the entire 90 minutes, his first since March 7, on Wednesday when his side cashed out of the Champions Cup after facing a defeat 3-1 from Monterrey.

"Messi finished the game in Monterrey without any discomfort," Miami assistant Javier Morales said Friday.

While it is not confirmed whether any Chiefs stars will be present, the tickets for the game are available at around \$120. Both Kelce and Mahomes seem unavailable due to their engagements. Sporting KC head coach Peter Vermes said: "It will be a great venue for a game like this."

"I've watched (Messi) play since he was very young. I don't know any team or any coach that has ever devised a game plan that has nullified his unbelievable qualities."



Carlo title in 2021 and 2022, needed just 81 minutes to record his eighth win in nine meetings against Khachanov.

"I was very effective from the start, I had a lot of pace and gained momentum," said Tsitsipas.

"I tried to do my part and press and it worked out really well."

Tsitsipas added: "There are many good memories here and stepping out and coming back

revives those good memories. It brings me alive."

Eighth-seeded Ruud saw off 14th seed Ugo Humbert of France 6-3, 4-6, 6-1 to make the semi-finals in Monte Carlo for the second time.

Ruud will look to overturn a 5-0 losing record against Djokovic on Saturday, a dismal run which includes a straight-sets defeat to the Serb in the French Open final last year.



## Prizes distribution

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif distributes prizes among the winners of annual Quran Kareem Hifz/Qirat Competition organized by the Muslim World League on Saturday.



Photo: PID

## Seerat Museum to counter Islamophobia, spread teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): PM

## Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Saturday said the project of Seerat Museum would help counter the adverse effects of Islamophobia and would support in spreading knowledge about the teachings and life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) among people living in Pakistan and abroad. He was speaking here as the chief guest at the foundation stone laying ceremony of the Seerat Museum to be built for spreading the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) among the new generation and for creating awareness about his life and character.

The prime minister said in a heinous move, an ideological divide had been created in the world due to which some elements were making negative propaganda against Islam and the personality of Prophet

Muhammad (PBUH).

This negative attitude had created hate and divisions, he remarked adding the Seerat Museum would not only raise awareness about the life, character and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) but would also educate people how to live their lives and manage relationships with other people. The museum would familiarize people outside the world about the life and character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and nullify the negative propaganda, he noted.

He thanked His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz as well as the Crown Prince His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz for extending their cooperation for the project of Seerat Museum. He said people of Pakistan would never forget adoration of leadership of Saudi Arabia whose landmarks where spread all

over Pakistan, like the Faisal Mosque in Islamabad capital. While talking about his recent visit to the two holy mosques in Makkah and Medina and offering of prayers there, he said Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz warmly received his delegation and exhibited deep love and affection for Pakistan.

The Crown Prince, government and people of Saudi Arabia had deep feelings of affection and fondness for Pakistan and they always came to the support of Pakistan, he added. Saudi Arabia always assisted Pakistan in difficult times, he said adding the Crown Prince said they would extend cooperation to Pakistan in the fields of trade, investment, agriculture and industry. He mentioned that a high level delegation of Saudi Arabia would come to Pakistan soon saying, "this gesture showed their love for

Pakistan." He lauded Muslim World League Secretary General Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa, for his guidance and support for the project of Seerat Museum.

While welcoming the Saudi delegation led by Dr. Mohammed Al-Issa, he appreciated International Islamic Relief Organization – the charity founded by Muslim World League – for its welfare work around the world. The prime minister said the organization was giving relief to the Palestinians who were facing inhuman conditions due to barbarism and aggression of Israel. He reaffirmed Pakistan's support for Palestinians and said his country would send more humanitarian aid to the oppressed people of Gaza. The prime minister distributed prizes among young Huffaz who memorized the holy Quran and had a complete

command on the sequence of the verses of Quran and their references. He also gave away prizes to the Qaris who recited the Quran in their unique and beautiful accents. He congratulated the children for the best recitation of the Quran at events in different countries. "These children give message that with hard work the teachings of Quran can be spread to hearts of the people." He commended the youngsters for lighting their hearts with the knowledge of holy Quran and said the young generation should also comprehend the real message of Quran. Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Al-Issa also spoke on the occasion. In the Seerat Museum, the different periods of life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and various aspects of his character and teachings would be observed with the aid of modern technology.

## Ambassador Hashmi stresses upon commitments to reduce carbon emission

## News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Pakistan to Nepal Abrar Hashmi said that developing nations like Pakistan and Nepal bore the brunt of carbon emissions largely produced elsewhere in the world and urged the developed countries to fulfil emission reduction commitments. "Pakistan has been active in international negotiations, advocating for measures like

the Loss and Damage Fund. Collaboration with Nepal is crucial in leveraging scientific knowledge to mitigate these impacts," the ambassador said during an interview with Radio Nepal on Saturday.

The ambassador said that melting of glaciers in the Himalayan and Karakoram ranges presented serious risks like floods, droughts, and water shortages for both the nations and beyond. Pakistan, with its diverse zones and

seasonal changes, faced these challenges and had experienced devastating floods due to rapid glacier melt in recent years, he added. "Pakistan and Nepal, with negligible emissions compared to our populations, need collective action from major emitters. We must highlight this injustice on global platforms for effective climate policy," the ambassador stressed. To a question, Ambassador Hashmi said that improved connectivity

was key to realizing the full potential of their relations, adding initiatives like reviving direct flights via national flag carriers and facilitating private airlines could enhance trade and tourism. He further said that South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation's (SAARC) progress had been significant, yet more needed to be done. "Addressing developmental disparities and resolving internal issues are critical. Our

shared history and civilizations provide a strong basis for revitalizing SAARC's role in regional cooperation," Radio Nepal quoted the ambassador as saying. Ambassador Hashmi, to another query, replied that cricket offered a great avenue for cooperation. Bilateral series, exchanges at all levels, and collaborative programmes between their cricket boards could benefit Nepal's cricketing journey, he opined.

## 25 injured as bus turns turtle near Margalla hills

## City Desk

WAH CANTT: At least 25 people were injured when a Peshawar-bound passenger bus from Lahore flipped turtle on GT road near Margalla hills in the jurisdiction of Taxila Police station on Saturday. Five of them were critically injured.

The ill-fated bus was carrying both domestic and foreign members of Tableghi Jamaat to Tablighi Jamaat markaz in Peshawar when it was turtle on the slick road close to Margalla Hills, police and medical sources told. As result, twenty-five people were hurt. The five critically injured patients including Uzbek nationals were transferred from the Tehsil Headquarters Hospitals in Taxila to Rawalpindi. Taxila Police opened a case and started a formal inquiry.

## Iran seizes cargo ship linked to Israel after threats to close waterway

## Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Iran's Revolutionary Guards seized an Israeli-linked cargo ship in the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday, days after Tehran said it could close the crucial shipping route and warned it would retaliate for an Israeli strike on its Syria consulate.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported that a Guards helicopter had boarded and taken into Iranian waters the Portuguese flagged MSC Aries, saying it was linked to Israel.

MSC, which operates the Aries, confirmed Iran had seized the ship and said it was working "with the relevant authorities" for its safe return and the wellbeing of its 25 crew.

MSC leases the Aries from Gortal Shipping, an affiliate of Zodiac Mari-



time, Zodiac said in a statement, adding that MSC is responsible for all the vessel's activities. Zodiac is partly owned by Israeli businessman Eyal Ofer. Video on Iranian news channels purporting to show the seizure included a figure abseiling from a helicopter on to a ship. Reuters was able to verify that the ship in the video was the MSC Aries but not the date it was recorded. The incident comes amid rising regional tensions since the start of

Israel's campaign in Gaza in October, with Israel or its ally the United States clashing repeatedly with Iranian-aligned groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Iran has threatened to retaliate for suspected Israeli airstrikes on its consulate in Syria's capital Damascus on April 1 that killed seven Revolutionary Guards officers including two senior commanders. U. S. President Joe Biden said on Friday he expected Iran to attack Israel "sooner, rather than later" and warned Tehran not to do so.

Israel's military spokesperson, Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, said "Iran will bear consequences for choosing to escalate this situation any further", in response to reports of the seizure of MSC Aries. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz accused Tehran of piracy.

## Funeral prayers of Nushki terror attack victims offered



## Bureau Report

QUETTA: The funeral prayers of nine labourers, who were abducted and shot dead by unknown assailants in Balochistan's Nushki District, were offered on Saturday.

In early-hours of Saturday, about 10-12 armed assailants blockaded the Quetta-Taftan Highway N-40 in the vicinity of Sultan Charhai near Noshki.

Deputy Commissioner Habibullah Musakhel claimed that the unknown assailants checked the identity cards of passengers from the Taftan-bound bus and abducted nine of them. They were subsequently shot dead.

The bodies of the abducted passengers – who were said to be labourers – were found under a bridge nearby after an hour and a

half, Musakhel added.

In a separate incident on the same highway, a car that tried to force its way through the gunmen's cordon was fired upon, killing two passenger and injuring four.

According to the station house officer (SHO), when the car did not stop, the gunmen shot at the vehicle, bursting its tires. As a result, the vehicle overturned, killing two people.

Meanwhile, the funeral prayers of the nine victims – who were from Wazirabad, Mandi Bahauddin, and Gujranwala – were offered at Police Lines. The prayers were also attended by Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti and high-ranking police officers.

The bodies of the Nushki terror attack victims will be sent dispatched to their native cities.

## PTI-led opposition alliance holds first rally in Pashin

## City Report

ISLAMABAD: PTI-led opposition alliance is holding its first rally in Pashin under the Movement for the Protection of Constitution, or Tehreek-e-Tahfuz Ain. Addressing the gathering, Opposition leader Omar Ayub said that they are embarking on a jihad (struggle) for the sake of the country, a jihad for the preservation of the constitution and democracy.

On the other hand, the authorities had imposed Section 144 prior to the rally in Pashin.

The leaders of various parties, including Mahmood Khan Achakzai, the head of the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, and Sardar Akhtar Mengal, the chief of the Balochistan National Party, are present at the rally.

In his speech, the Secretary-General of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and opposition leader, Omar Ayub, said that the Balochistan government has imposed a ban on their activities throughout the province.

Party workers and flags are being targeted and suppressed.

He stated that if the PTI had been allowed to secure its mandate under

Form-45, it would have formed the government in the country.

He further expressed that our leaders and workers are being unlawfully detained.

Omar Ayub said that if Balochistan progresses, Pakistan will progress.

The opposition leader demanded that the CCTV footage of the events of May 9 be released, as it will reveal the truth. He emphasized that the truth will come to light through the footage.

He said that our objective is to ensure the supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law in the country.

It should be noted that prior to the opposition's rally, the authorities in Pashin imposed Section 144, restricting the gathering of more than five individuals in the city.

The administration had also issued a notification to enforce Section 144.

A meeting of the opposition alliance was held yesterday in Quetta, where they decided to launch a protest movement, beginning from Balochistan. They named their protest movement "Tehreek-e-Tahfuz-e-Ain" (Movement for the Protection of the Constitution).

## Railways constable arrested for beating woman in train



## Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistan Railways constable has been arrested for beating a poor woman in a train after a video of the incident went viral.

Constable Mir Hassan, who assaulted a woman in the Multan Express train, was arrested and suspended from duty, Railways official said.

The incident of assaulting a woman onboard the train occurred on April 7.

After a video of the incident went viral on social media, the Inspector-General of Railway Police took note of the assault.

South DIG Abdullah Sheikh confirmed the arrest of the officer and his suspension, stating that such officers are not deserving of any leniency.

He further emphasized that such disgraceful acts are unacceptable under any circumstances, and a case has been registered against the constable for his actions.

He stated that besides taking legal action against the officer, strict disciplinary measures will also be taken.

DIG South stated that a thorough investigation is being carried out from all aspects of the case to ensure transparency.