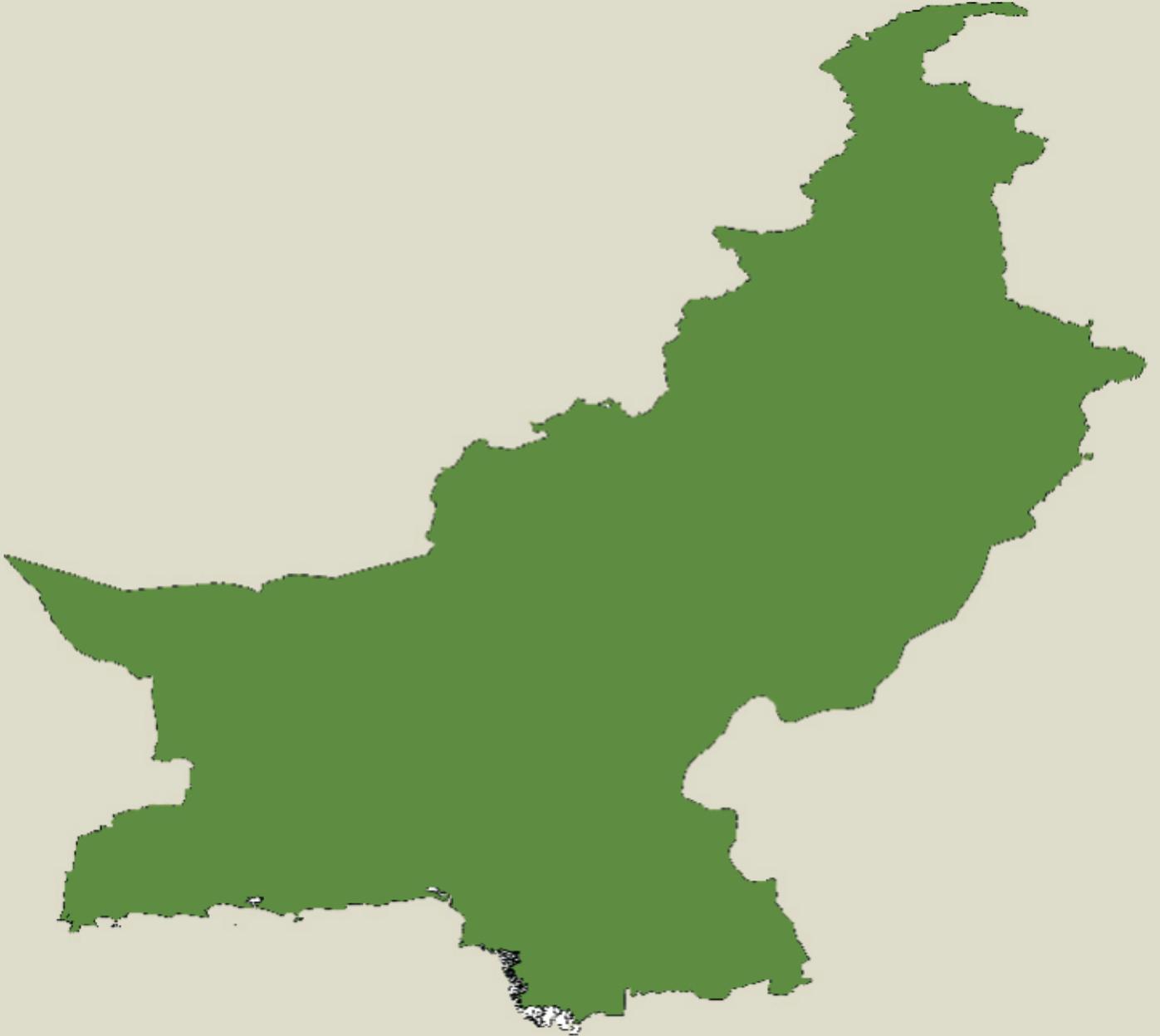


April 2024

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

*A Selected Summary of News, Views and Trends
from Pakistani Media*



Prepared by

Dr. Zainab Akhter

Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir

Mr. Afroz Khan

Dr. Ashok Behuria



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

SC's suo motu action, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 02 April¹

It looks as if the public statement issued by 300 lawyers on Sunday, laced with signs of caveat and caution, has worked thus the recusal by the retired inquiry judge and the suo motu notice by the top court. The lawyers, in their statement, had called upon the Supreme Court to take notice of the allegations of the whistle blower judges under Article 184(3) of the Constitution and expressed their “unwavering commitment and wholehearted support to the principles of rule of law, independence of judiciary and access to justice”. Anyway, things have taken the right course. *The judges' allegations of coercion and intimidation is a serious matter warranting a serious probe. Investigation under a commission headed by a retired judge was widely perceived as nothing more than a cover-up exercise, given the fate of similar commissions in the past formed to probe matters of national importance, including the break-up of the country.* As the independence of the judiciary stands compromised, a transparent probe into the alleged interference in judicial work is a must in order for the judicial institutions in the country to work with integrity, authority and full freedom. The Supreme Court, nonetheless, has a tricky job at hand, as it gears up to take up a case involving two powerful and sacred state institutions one as plaintiff and the other as respondent. It will be quite captivating to see how the seven-member bench of apex court, headed by the Chief Justice himself, deals with the issue of separation of powers in line with the writ of the constitution. The case starts tomorrow.

Senate results, Editorial, *The News*, 04 April²

The controversy surrounding KP is another reminder of the reserved seats fiasco, something even PTI members admit was a mistake of their own making. Whatever the complications, what we do not need at this moment is for legislation and governance to be on hold regardless of any politics. Far too many signs point to how one party may just want all else to pause while it is not in power. There is no denying the controversial nature

¹ https://tribune.com.pk/story/2461317/scs-suo-motu-action#google_vignette

² <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1175350-senate-results>

of the 2024 elections, as was the case in 2018. There is no denying that there are matters in our courts that need to now be seen on an almost emergency level. *But there is also no denying that disruptive politics will not get us anywhere. From not holding its intraparty elections which led to the bat symbol being taken away to its decision to merge with the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) that didn't even contest the general elections and never submitted a list for reserved seats, the PTI seems to not care much for legalities.* Here is the fact: once the Senate chairman and deputy chairman are elected, the government will start to go about its legislative business as usual. Whatever the reason and however things go, it is hoped that the government and the opposition are able to sort out their differences so people can take a breather from the uncertainty that has hounded this country for over two years now. The country, its people, its economy, and its politics everyone really needs a break.

Threats to Judiciary, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 05 April³

As if economic crisis and terrorism were not enough to keep Pakistan's fragile political landscape shaken, the world has learned about another concerning turn regarding our part of the world with the news that judges of the Supreme Court, Islamabad High Court and Lahore High Court received suspicious letters containing a powdery substance. This blatant attempt to intimidate the judiciary raises serious questions about the independence of justice and the overall stability of the nation. *The letters, allegedly containing anthrax, were addressed to the judges and dispatched by different women. While the contents remain under investigation, the act itself is a chilling reminder of the tactics used to sow fear among judges and disrupt legal proceedings.* This incident comes just days after six judges wrote a letter highlighting obstacles hindering their work, further eroding public trust in the judiciary's autonomy. The Supreme Court has taken up the case under suo motu proceedings. *Pakistan can move forward but a collective effort is imperative. Political and institutional leaders must prioritize national interests over personal agendas. This requires setting aside egos and working towards a common strategy to navigate the nation out of this vortex of instability. The judiciary, the cornerstone of a healthy democracy, needs to be shielded from intimidation tactics.* A thorough investigation into the suspicious letters and a firm

³ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/1183578/threats-to-judiciary/>

stance against any attempts to influence judicial proceedings is crucial. The government cannot afford to let its political turmoil further erode its economic and social fabric. Open dialogue, respect for democratic institutions, and a commitment to upholding the law are the only pathways towards a stable and prosperous future.

Saudi investment, Editorial, Dawn, 10 April⁴

Considering the decades-old ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, it is not surprising that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chose to visit the kingdom as his first foreign destination since returning to power. Along with visiting the holy cities for pilgrimage, Mr Sharif met Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler, in Makkah on Sunday. *A variety of topics were discussed between the two leaders. Perhaps the most important points from the joint readout issued after the meeting were talk of "expediting" Saudi investment in Pakistan, and Riyadh's desire to see "peace and stability" in the subcontinent. The figure mentioned for Saudi investment, after the meeting, was \$5bn.* Earlier the Saudis had pledged to bring \$25bn to Pakistan through the military-backed Special Investment Facilitation Council. It has not been specified where Riyadh will put its money, but it is said the Saudi funds could end up in mining, specifically the Reko Diq project, while the Arab state is also reportedly interested in other sectors. *Meanwhile, "the importance of dialogue between Pakistan and India" was stressed during the meeting, indicating a possible Saudi role to facilitate de-escalation of tensions in South Asia. Also, if foreign players invest in Pakistan, they will not be looking to dole out charity.* They will come to make money, which is why profit repatriation must be smooth to ensure continued foreign investment. A few billion dollars will hardly turn around our economy. What is needed is long-term thinking by all stakeholders to help Pakistan break the shackles of dependence, and realise its economic potential. As for Saudi mediation in our dispute with India, this should also be seen in the context of geo-economics. *Riyadh is eyeing a \$100bn investment plan in India, and wants peace in the neighbourhood. It remains to be seen if the allure of Arab money can convince India's leadership to talk peace with Pakistan.*

⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1826802/saudi-investment>

Opposition's movement, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 16 April⁵

The opposition has kicked off a countrywide 'Movement to Protect the Constitution'. *The first salvos of what is primarily a campaign against the establishment-backed ruling dispensation have been fired from Pishin town in Balochistan. Led by PTI, the movement also features BNP-M, PkMAP, MWM and SIC.* While Jamaat-e-Islami's Liaqat Baloch did appear at the Pishin rally on Saturday, the party is still weighing its options on whether or not to join the opposition ranks. The anti-government coalition is also trying to woo JUI-F whose chief, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, has earlier hinted at going solo against the government. If the opposition succeeds in winning over JUI-F and JI – the two parties with formidable street power – it will indeed turn into a force to reckon with. *And once the movement picks up momentum, there is a strong likelihood of other political parties as well as bar councils and university students to jump on to the bandwagon. What should the government do to douse the anger brewing in the opposition ranks?* Is it an option for the government to succumb to the opposition's demands which all boil down to one thing: the audit of the 2024 election results? *Can the government afford to, say, set up a commission to investigate the allegations of rigging in the election?* Certainly not! Because that would be akin to the government signing its own death warrant. In fact, the possibility of a probe commission only exists if that happens under a partisan fact-finder just meant to fulfil the formality. Would that quiet down the opposition? No, not at all! The opposition is not going to settle for anything less than a transparent inquiry into the "mandate theft" through what they call pre-poll, post-poll and poll day rigging.

The Saudi touch, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 18 April⁶

The landmark visit of Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan has laid the genesis of a long-term economic cooperation. *The two-day visit of a high-powered delegation will surely reap dividends, as it was also a prelude to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's proposed sojourn in Pakistan.* While investment and buoying of trade topped the agenda, what made this interaction resounding was the chairing of a special briefing of the Special Investment

⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2462732/oppositions-movement>

⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2462977/the-saudi-touch>

Facilitation Council by the Royal guest. *At a time when chips are down in Pakistan, the Saudi involvement and their generosity to pick up the threads for knitting the fabric is duly appreciated.* The Saudi initiative to proactively engage the business communities on either side and to push the envelope of big-ticket projects is likely to see expanded investments, thereby harnessing an era of renewed bilateralism. Pakistan has always been in a win-win situation owing to the benevolence of the Saudi leadership, and their coming to aid at this critical juncture is a case in point. *A new deal with the IMF and a rejuvenated roadmap for minerals, industrial and petro-oil projects promise to put Pakistan on the path of prosperity. This new semblance necessitates continuity and profound transparency, as well as political stability.* Such a theme is indispensable to solicit the confidence of mega businesses and also to ensure their profitability. The Saudi healing touch is a guarantee to success.

Raisi's visit, Editorial, *The News*, 24 April⁷

Given the historic ties between the two countries not just because we share a border but also due to a vibrant Shia population in Pakistan, Raisi's visit is being looked at as a diplomatic success. *It is important for Pakistan that we should always look at our economic ties with our neighbours first as we all have mutual and important reasons to collaborate. Unfortunately, the US is playing the role of a bully again with Pakistan receiving an understated warning from Washington over its growing closeness with Tehran. The Iranian president's visit was important.* Pakistan needs more such high-level solidarity visits as our diplomatic and strategic importance has shrunk over the years globally. After the Saudi delegation visit, the Iranian president's visit also shows how Pakistan has tried to balance its relations in Middle-East politics. The tensions between Iran and Pakistan after the border skirmishes earlier this year seemed to have been resolved. Pakistan has tried to maintain better ties with all its neighbours. *We have even tried to extend an olive branch to India under Narendra Modi but the Indian premier is not just someone who targets Muslims in his own country; he also makes it a point to target Pakistan to target the Muslim minority in India. As for Afghanistan, Pakistan knows that it has to work with whatever regime is in place there.* This is why Pakistan asked that we work together to fight terrorism but the Afghan Taliban would rather harbour terrorists

⁷ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1181561-raisi-s-visit>

than listen to their neighbour. We have excellent ties with China, which doesn't mean that Pakistan will overlook its relations with the US. We need a fine balance between good relations with our neighbours and also balancing ties with Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar as well as with Iran, China and the US. This is what mature diplomacy looks like. It is time for Pakistan to focus on its economy and diplomacy. Let domestic dramatics take a backseat. For this, we need political stability. Nothing else will work.

Afghan repatriation, Editorial, Dawn, 29 April⁸

While it is still early days, it appears that the policy of returning aliens who have called Pakistan home in recent years will stay in place. Ideally, a country should be open to all, to live in and be free as long as they agree to respect its customs and laws and promise to contribute to its social, cultural and economic development. *However, considering the challenges being faced by Pakistan and its depleting resources, those who make our national policies believe it is time the country excused itself from hosting anyone not entitled to its citizenship.* Those championing this line of reasoning believe Pakistan is well within its rights and international laws to demand all refugees to leave. If this is the consensus, then so be it. *However, the new government would send a much more positive message if it shows itself to be accommodative of those with Afghan ancestry but who were born in Pakistan, as well as the men and women who have married here.* The two countries share a deep social bond which cannot be aborted through a sudden policy change. The process must play out, but it must be completed with due consideration for the human rights of those affected.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

Pessimistic view, Editorial, Dawn, 04 April⁹

The World Bank has given a pessimistic prognosis of Pakistan's moribund economy. On Tuesday, it said the country's economic growth is expected to pick up slightly from the current

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1830279/afghan-repatriation>

⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1825610/pessimistic-view>

fiscal year (after contracting 0.2pc last year) but would remain below 3pc for the next two years as “policy constraints to sustainable economic growth remain unaddressed”. Unless a major structural reform programme is durably implemented, growth will remain muted amid continued low investment, persistent external imbalances, distortionary fiscal policies, and a large state presence in the economy, the bank warned in the biannual Pakistan Development Update. Even the latest growth estimates for Pakistan hinge on “continuous fiscal consolidation and a new bailout programme from the IMF”. Neither the prognosis nor the warning is new. The lender had explicitly stated a few months back that debt-ridden Pakistan’s current economic model was not working since it had fallen behind its peers, with progress in poverty reduction now starting to reverse, and the benefits of growth being accrued to a narrow elite. Although the current government has repeatedly pledged to implement reforms for sustainable economic revival, a definitive policy direction is missing. Some progress has been made to privatize loss-making PIA, for instance, but the government is yet to spell out a holistic policy for scores of other SOEs. *Economic policy confusion is a major concern for creditors and investors. The prime minister must understand that his plans to boost productivity and exports will not work without the articulation of an unambiguous policy direction for the economy and deep structural reforms.*

Sky-high circular debt, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 08 April¹⁰

Pakistan’s surging energy sector circular debt is a pressing issue that demands swift action. The debt, which has now reached over Rs5.5 trillion, stems from a variety of factors, including inefficient power generation, poor distribution infrastructure and inadequate tariff policies. *The circular debt alone amounts to over 5% of GDP and is rising at a rate of over Rs135 billion per month. This is despite the massive energy tariff hikes during the past year, which have significantly raised revenue collection while breaking the backs of poor and middle-class families. Unfortunately, unresolved inefficiencies in the system and poor planning mean that despite the price increases, the government still sells gas and electricity at a net loss.* The failure of price hikes to resolve the problem is another illustration of the need for the government to work on more holistic solutions that include measures such as new

¹⁰ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2462027/sky-high-circular-debt>

investment in plants to increase overall efficiency, improving transmission and distribution infrastructure, and reforms to the tariff policy. The government must also come up with a more effective power theft and 'line-loss' policy, while encouraging better usage practices among consumers. And while new green energy projects still look expensive, the government must seriously examine their lifetime potential and be willing to invest today to save tomorrow.

Tough talks, Editorial, *Dawn*, 16 April¹¹

However, the key to unlocking fresh IMF funds lies in convincing the lender that Pakistan is now ready to undertake real reforms. *Seeking a bailout of \$6bn-\$8bn before the current fiscal year ends, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb is set to hold discussions with the Fund for new lending on the margins of the IMF and World Bank spring meetings in Washington, as well as muster the support of 'friendly' nations for its request. Negotiations for the new loan will not be easy even though the Fund is, according to the minister, "very receptive" to Pakistan's request for a new programme.* Indeed, it has expressed its willingness to help Islamabad navigate through its crisis ever since Pakistani authorities broached the subject of a follow-up programme with its mission last month during the final review of the just-concluded \$3bn Stand-by Arrangement. *Yet it has made it clear that the new bailout hinges on Pakistan's readiness to implement tough, unpopular reforms the country had earlier circumvented.* In its April 2024 Asian Development Outlook report, the ADB describes Pakistan's economic prospects as uncertain, with high risks on account of the impact of political uncertainty on the sustainability of stabilisation and reform efforts. Noting that potential supply chain disruptions from the escalation of the Middle East war would weigh on the economy, it says: "*With Pakistan's large external financing requirements and weak external buffers, disbursement from multilateral and bilateral partners remains crucial.*" It points out that the IMF support for the reform agenda would improve market sentiment and catalyse affordable external financing from other sources, but warns that "these inflows could be hampered by lapses in policy implementation".

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1827755/tough-talks>

IMF's projections, Editorial, Dawn, 18 April¹²

In its flagship World Economic Outlook 2024, released on the eve of the spring meetings of the World Bank Group, the IMF has predicted Pakistan's economy will grow by 2pc this year and 3.5pc in the next. *The estimates are based on the Fund's recently concluded review of Pakistan's macroeconomic position under the \$3bn Stand-by Arrangement. Even these projections hinge on continued fiscal consolidation and a new IMF bailout.* No wonder Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb is in Washington to lobby for a larger, three-year Fund programme of \$6bn-8bn to support planned economic reforms. As stated by him, the country will request a three-year programme "to help execute the structural reform agenda". Referring to reduced market volatility and economic stabilisation achieved under the SBA, he said that market sentiment was more positive in the current fiscal year. "It's really for that purpose that we have initiated the discussion with the Fund to get into a larger and an extended programme," he explained. If approved, it will be Pakistan's 24th engagement with the IMF since 1958. Will this new programme break what the minister was reported to have referred to as the "chain of financial struggles and bailouts"? *The fact is that Pakistan has never been able to complete a longer programme with the Fund because of a breach in policy goals thanks to political reasons. What will be different this time around?* So far, the minister has shown an understanding of the issues that have dragged the economy down and his commitment to implementing long-delayed structural reforms without any proviso.

Pakistan's unabated economic predicament, Dr. Moonis Ahmar, The Express Tribune, 23 April¹³

With inflation rate hovering around 25% and frequent escalation in the prices of petroleum products, gas, electricity and other essential items, Pakistan's economic predicament is reaching an alarming stage. Foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan still remain meager at \$8 billion, barely enough to cover two months of imports. And no upward trend is being witnessed in exports, remittances and FDI. As a result, around 90 million people

¹² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1828148>

¹³ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2463600/pakistans-unabated-economic-predicament>

are now living below the poverty line with no respite for an early economic recovery. Growing tension at the international level following the Iran-Israel standoff and the wars in Gaza and Ukraine also tend to put pressure on Pakistan's economy. If there are best, talented and creative minds in Pakistan who can focus on pulling their country from the brink of an economic crisis with integrity, hard work and intelligence, the country can avert the looming financial breakdown. *When the cost of living is growing on a daily basis in the form of costly electricity, gas, petrol and other daily use items, the survival of an overwhelming majority of the population remains at stake.* The cushion of remittances of around 30 billion dollars a year is not enough to cover the imports; the value of the rupee versus major international currencies is declining continuously; and the economic growth rate has shrunk to 2%, as projected by IMF a matter of grave concern. *Is there a way out for the 250 million people of Pakistan from this unabated economic predicament?* Why have the successive regimes failed to manage economic crisis? Why are the civil society groups and political parties who used to raise a hue and cry during the PTI government about the rising prices of fuel, gas, electricity and other essential items mostly silent?

URDU MEDIA

Pakistan-US relations, Editorial, Roznama Dunya, 02 April¹⁴

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has written a response letter to US President Joe Biden, expressing willingness to work with the United States for the common goal of global peace and prosperity as well as the development of the region. Last week, President Biden wrote a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, conveying good wishes for the newly elected government, and it was reaffirmed that America would stand with Pakistan in facing the world's and the region's most important challenges. Pakistan-US relations are of historical significance and are essential not

¹⁴ https://e.dunya.com.pk/index.php?e_name=LHR&edate=2024-04-02&page=25

only for mutual interests but also for regional and global security. Under the strategic partnership between the two countries, cooperation continues in multiple areas, including education, health, climate change, women empowerment, and agriculture, besides energy. Although relations between the two countries have experienced ups and downs, it is gratifying that despite differences of opinion, both are keen to restore mutual trust and particularly promote mutual relations, especially in the fields of trade and investment. America is also Pakistan's largest export market. *During the last fiscal year, Pakistan's exports to America amounted to \$6.74 billion, and further economic benefits can be integrated into relations with strength. It is hoped that the exchange of letters between the two heads of state will smooth the path for further strengthening mutual trade and diplomatic relations.*

Completion of CPEC, Pak-Iran gas pipeline need of the hour! Javed Bhat, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 03 April¹⁵

The completion of CPEC of Pakistan is like it was at the time of going nuclear despite all the international pressure. No other country in the world is ready to implement the \$46 billion project except China. The completion of the CPEC project will be the foundation of a strong state and the future generations will benefit from its fruits, just like the nuclear weapon united the nation. But to complete the CPEC requires the same kind of commitment that was shown at the time of making the country a nuclear power because pressure is being put on Pakistan and some countries are also hostile to its completion. Internally, during its reign in power the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had slowed down work on CPEC. The United States (US) had pushed Pakistan into war for 30 years. Rest, the country's state missionaries also lost \$130 billion and 70 thousand people due to wrong policy and wrong decisions: Thus, the country became a haven for terrorists. 30 million Afghans had migrated to Pakistan. The biggest misfortune was that investment in Pakistan stopped for 30 years. Due to internal crisis, terrorism and sabotage were on the rise: still 30 percent insurgency remains in the country. Now, *though the war has ended*

¹⁵ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/03-Apr-2024/1778008>

in Afghanistan, estimate its implications: the economic structure of Pakistan has become hollow and the institutions and corporations have weakened and the majority have gone into losses. The industrialists who had some businesses left also took their capital to Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Singapore due to the economic situation of the country. Some even shifted their business to Bangladesh. In the economic and political uncertainty of the country, people continued to put their capital in real estate and make investments. Thus the remaining capital got invested in the productive sector, some changed it into gold to keep it at home and some converted it into dollars. Due to all these reasons, the country has reached the point of bankruptcy: In fact the people have become bankrupt. There is anxiety, nervousness, mental illness, uncertainty and chaos.

Suspicious letters to judges a conspiracy against democracy, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 04 April¹⁶

8 additional judges of Islamabad High Court have received suspicious letters containing powder to intimidate the judges. ... As soon as they were opened, the staff's eyes began to burn. The word "Anthrax" was written on the text of the letter. Anthrax is a deadly chemical. It seems to be an attempt to blackmail the judges by intimidating them for their own purposes. Who could be behind it? If you consider the political scenario, the faces behind the curtain become a little exposed. 8 February was the announced date for holding the elections in Pakistan. After that every possible effort was made to postpone the elections. The government and institutions were threatened. The Supreme Court had clearly announced that 8 February is the final date to hold elections. Despite that, some people tried to delay the elections. Rallies were held and processions were taken out. Some even brought a resolution in the Senate and got it passed. A caretaker governor also appeared to support those who tried to postpone the elections. However, the elections were held as per the schedule. Then efforts were made to make the elections controversial. One party even claimed to have won more than two-thirds majority of seats. Forms 47 and 45 were waved with more enthusiasm. The under arrest founder of the party once again mobilized his party workers against the results. Again it can be termed as a political statement on the dispute of form 45 and 47 by the founder PTI. A few days ago, the Supreme Judicial

¹⁶ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/04-Apr-2024/1778404>

Council was informed by six judges of the IHC through a letter that obstacles are being placed on the way for them to work freely. A seven-member bench was constituted by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa to look into the issue. Its first hearing was held on 3 April. *At the end of the hearing by Qazi Faez Isa, it was said that a full coat may be made in the future and the hearing was adjourned till 29 April.* Looking at the contents of the letter, it is a question on the judiciary of Pakistan's judiciary. What message would the letter give to the world?

A new dimension of Pak-Saudi cooperation, Editorial, Roznama Jang, 18 April¹⁷

The arrival of a high-level delegation of the brotherly Islamic country, led by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, can be said to be the beginning of a new era of warm relations between the two countries, in which economic cooperation seems to be developed on a more systematic basis and the need for mutual cooperation is also being highlighted in view of the demands of regional security. The views expressed by the Saudi Foreign Minister at a media conference after meeting with Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar at the delegation level have revealed the possibility of expanding and deepening Pakistan-Saudi relations. Appreciating Pakistan's strategy of attracting investment on a commercial basis, he expressed the expectations of significant benefits for both countries, while highlighting the need for mutual cooperation for regional security besides expanding Pak-Saudi economic cooperation. The Saudi delegation led by Prince Faisal bin Farhan had a very busy time in Islamabad. The esteemed guests held meetings with President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and during the Special Investment Facilitation Council meeting under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, they also met with the apex committee, where Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir was also present. Jointly chaired by Pakistani and Saudi foreign ministers, an investment conference was held, discussing various aspects of significant Saudi investment in Pakistan. *According to informed sources, Pakistan has offered 25 projects of possible investment of \$ 32 billion, promising to address all major concerns of Saudi Arabia, including PIA, privatization of airports, railway link from major mining sites to Gwadar and Bhasha Dam, Matiari, Moro, Rahim Yar Khan and Ghazi Brotha to Faisalabad transmission lines*

¹⁷ <https://e.jang.com.pk/karachi/18-04-2024/page4>

and semi-conductor chip manufacturing and feasibility of five-star hotel. There are 25 sectors, including a lease for corporate farming of 50,000 acres of land and a \$10 billion greenfield refinery. The implementation of these projects will open up new avenues for progress and prosperity in the country, boosting trade and increasing revenues.

Ibrahim's important visit to Pakistan, Dr. Mujahid Mansoori, Jang, 23 April¹⁸

Mr. Ebrahim Raisi, the President of our neighbouring brotherly country Iran has come to Pakistan on a 3-day visit. As the importance and necessity of the deep mutual national interests of the two long-time friendly countries are becoming increasingly clear, the visit of Mr Ebrahim Raisi is the most important in terms of the broad interests of both countries in the rapidly changing and extraordinary situation of the region. On the other hand, after the end of NATO's ten-year presence in Afghanistan and the continuation of complex political instability in Pakistan, to restore its traditional relations with Islamabad, the United States (US) made a major initial diplomatic effort in the form of "re-entry". It has been historically proven that Pakistan-US relations have been traditional and they serve wider interests for both countries. Unfortunately though Washington is responsible for this state of bilateral relations: the US considered Pakistan as his most important ally when necessary but after achieving the big goals, it adopted an indifferent approach towards Pakistan and gave a clear impression of resentment and distrust. In this history of relations, the attitude of the Pakistani people and authorities has been more realistic that they gave importance to the achievement of mutual interests. But the US never took the interests of Pakistan seriously and always took some ad-hoc and symbolic measures. *In this scenario, the current status of Pakistan-US relations will remain an important reference during the visit of Mr. President Ebrahim Raisi to Pakistan. Without discussing it the importance of the visit and the natural reality and importance of its Pakistan-Iran bilateral goals and interests cannot be understood: in the current state of Pakistan-US relations, Pakistan needs good relations with the US and also the strengthening of Pakistan-Iran relations has become necessary for it.*

¹⁸ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/671637>

11 Pakistan Army personnel killed in Bolan, Gwadar, Turbat and Kachhi, BLA, Daily Sangar, 28 April¹⁹

Spokesman of the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Junaid Baloch said in a press release that the BLA accepted the responsibility for the death of 11 personnel in various attacks on the occupying forces in Bolan, Gwadar, Turbat and Kachhi. *The spokesperson said that the commanders of the BLA targeted the occupying Pakistani army in Bolan, Gwadar and Turbat in three separate attacks in which eleven enemy personnel were killed and two were injured while the communication tower in Kachhi was destroyed.* He said that BLA operatives targeted a vehicle of the occupying Pakistani army in an area of Bolan in an IED attack. As a result of the explosion, ten personnel in the vehicle of the enemy army were killed and the vehicle was completely destroyed. *It was said in the statement that in another operation, last night in Gwadar city, the Pakistani force Coast Guard post occupied by the Baloch Ward was targeted in a hand grenade attack. As a result of the explosion, two enemy personnel were injured. Meanwhile, BLA operatives targeted the communication tower of Ufone Company in Sunny Shoran area of Kachhi last night and disabled the machinery.* The spokesman said that the BLA operatives fired several shells from a grenade launcher at the office of the Pakistani Military Intelligence (MI) in Turbat city at sunset today in which one Pakistan army soldier was killed while the enemy might have suffered more casualties. *Junaid said that the BLA accepts responsibility for the four attacks mentioned above and reiterates its commitment that the war against the enemy will continue until the achievement of an independent Baloch homeland.*

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Who threatened the judges of IHC? Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Geo News, 02 April²⁰

The eight judges of the Islamabad High Court who wrote letter to the Supreme judicial commission got threatening letters in their names and it is claimed that the letters also had

¹⁹ <https://dailysangar.online/?p=46294>

²⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7kSNebn70s>

anthrax, a harmful chemical powder that can have damaging effects on the human body. Hamid Mir pointed out that there should be an investigation in this matter, who has done this? On the other hand CM KP Ali Amin Gandapur once again took a fierce stand and once again talked about rigging and underlined that the PTI will fight for its right. *Zartaj Gul* of the PTI on this show pointed out that there should be investigation of the case of slow poisoning of Bushra Bibi, unfortunately women of the PTI are particularly targeted and many women are still behind the jail. Imran Khan has fought for the country and the welfare of the people but he has been put behind bars and his wife is also mistreated behind the walls and no one is allowed to meet them. This is all an attempt to bring Imran Khan on knees. I have 14 terrorism cases in Pindi, in total I have 43 cases in all other provinces within the ten months. Whoever is the beneficiary of the system should be punished. *Mian Javed Latif* of the PML-N pointed out that the threatening letters to the judges should be investigated, it should be started from somewhere. The agencies should be investigated. The interference of the agencies have badly damaged the reputation of the country, both the cases of the judges and the poisoning of Bushra Bibi should be investigated. In fact all the wrong decisions of the governments should be investigated, in fact defence Minister Khawaja Asif has taken names of Bajwa and Munir and asked they must be investigated. But the truth is that still there are unholy alliances between the judiciary, establishments and politicians.

Who is the agent in PTI? Will Imran Khan come out of jail? Naya Pakistan with Shehzad Iqbal, *Geo News*, 07 April²¹

PTI is still fighting for its right but at the same time there is some visible divide within the party and some are even implying that some agents have been planted in the party. There has also been some talks of open door with the establishment but at the same time there has been no change in the 09th May incident and policy towards it. On one side there is talks about giving relief to Imran Khan but at the same time there is no change of attitude of Imran Khan. *Latif Khosa* of the PTI informed that Imran Khan will not change his stand as he is fighting to restore democracy and vote for the right of the people and to take back stolen votes. Imran Khan is giving a message that there should be no interference of

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDE29jPCx8c>

the establishment in politics. He also added that Imran Khan will come out of all the cases clean and he will come out of jail in April. He will get bail in Iddat and cypher case, there is no prove of the cypher case, and the Iddat case is a negative example of religion in Pakistan. In the Al Qadir trust case, there is nothing to be proved against Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi. This is because of the vote of the people and this support of the public is working in favour of the PTI and Imran Khan. The people who burned the core commander house where sent from outside and they were people from the agency and the people who came out on TV and accepted there crime has now accepted that they were forced to do so. *Hamid Mir*, senior Journalist on the show pointed out that the lawyers always say like that, like Latif Khosa who said he will be released soon. But Imran Khan who is in jail has no hope that he will be out, he has said that there will be no deal and no one should take a deal on his behalf. He informed that even if Imran Khan gets bail in two or three cases, he has 200 hundred cases on him and he will be kept inside on any of these cases. Now that both sides are saying that there will be no deal, Imran Khan has also no changed his views on the establishment rather it is getting stricter. In order to understand what Imran Khan is thinking it is easy, he is saying if they want to talk they should say that his government was brought down by the establishment and that he was right not otherwise. The talk about grouping in PTI is not a new thing, there has always been factions like Jahangir Tareen faction and Shah Mehmood Qureshi faction. Today Qureshi is in jail and Tareen found a new party and took part in the elections and failed to secure votes. Imran Khan cannot take out the agents out of the party, now he is playing with them too.

Threat of Governor's rule in KP: Protest against Government, Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, *Geo News*, 04 April²²

The chief Minister of KP has met PM Shehbaz Sharif two times in order to smoothen issues between the centre and the province, however the host underlined things does not seems to be going in a smooth direction. There has been no senate elections for the eleven seats in KP, on top of it there is no proper functioning of the judiciary, and Hamid Mir asked why this is happening? Asad Qaiser of the PTI has informed that there will be a

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pB8edUSY3q4>

huge protest after Eid and added KP is not getting funds. *Amir Muqam* of the PML-N pointed out that if one federating unit is out of Senate, the Senate house is incomplete and it is not good for the country. There can be no different rule for one province, KP, the rules are same for all. The ECP has decided on the reserved seats and there decision is final. Talking about his win in KP he added that he has always won his seat and the claims of the PTI are baseless. PTI has won 38 seats in KPK, and the PML-N has not said anything. He added that if the PTI is going against the high court to Supreme Court, this is strange. He added that the real issue is that the PTI is dictated to create chaos by the head of PTI Imran Khan from jail. There is a proper channel to elevate the judges in the judicial commission that does not mean that one province KP is mistreated, their judges are not elevated. If we talk about healing process, we invited the CM of KP Amin Gandapur for meeting and tried to bridge the gap but things did not work. Senator *Mohammad Humayun Mohmand* of the PTI pointed out that the election act says that reserve seats will be given on the basis of proportion. The main contention of PTI is with ECP on the allotment of these reserved seats, for that we have taken the case to Supreme Court. If there is Senate elections all over the country, why not in KPK, why this attitude to this province. We have the right to go to Supreme Court and if we have a problem, that is the right way to do it. Talking about CM Gandapur's speech he added we agree and we will take this case to the conclusion. He added that all these leaders were given offers by the establishment and that is why they are on the ruling seats. He added that KPK is given step motherly treatment, there is a perception that we are mistreated. He added that right now the time is for healing process, and the government has to heal and bring the opposition on board.

Iranian President's visit to Pakistan: Why did Modi insult Muslims? Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, *Geo News*, 22 April²³

Hamid Mir underlined that this visit of Iranian President is very significant as the relations between Pakistan and Iran were getting worst when there was cross border firing between the two nations. Pakistan also tried to better the relations with other neighbour India but it is not giving any positive response and ruling elite are not in a mood to better relations. Now Modi government is not only targeting Pakistan but Muslim as a whole, they have

²³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpHTCEfE68c>

called Muslims “*guspatiya*”. On one hand Saudi welcomes Modi but on the other hand Modi is attacking Arabs and Muslims. He asked If Modi comes back to power again, how will be the relations between India and Pakistan in future? **Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry**, columnist/writer pointed out that if Modi comes back maximum he will normalize the relations with Pakistan. About the *Akand Bharat* it is a long project from the time of Mahatma Gandhi, he was murdered for the same. The bringing down of Babri Masjid was the turning point and it gave the BJP and Hindutva ideology more power. He added some sections of Indian society are of the view that improving relations with Pakistan will be good for them, but in the third time if they wins they will keep the *Hindutva* agenda alive. The opposition is also trying best, as secularism is almost dead in India. India is shifting to Maritime space from continental space and Indian Ocean is very important for India, so they will try to settle things with Pakistan and China because of the shift. **Lt. General R Abdul Qayyum** head ex-serviceman society, pointed out that at this time the most hunger people are in India and also Pakistan is not in a good shape but that does not give Modi the right to say things like this to Pakistan. The issue of Kashmir is apparently dormant but this will always be a flashpoint, for war between India and Pakistan in the future. Even Palestine was a dormant issue, but we can see how it blew up. If BJP wins the internal minority in India including Muslims, Christians and Sikhs will be targeted more. Pakistan is naïve if we think Modi will extend hands of friendship, although we are ready to defend our country but we have to fix our internal crisis. **Ahmer Bilal Soofi**, expert international law talking about *Akand Bharat* (greater India) and how the picture is put up In Indian parliament, he underlined that if we don’t agree with this concept we have to show our problem but if we don’t show any sign of dissatisfaction it is a dangerous development under international law. India is making wishes to take all over South Asia including Afghanistan, wants to claim title of all neighbouring countries. We cannot change borders except Kashmir and Palestine according to UN charter but the official representatives of India like CM of UP are talking about changing the borders and talking about *Akand Bharat*, this is problematic. The South Asian countries should come together and bring a counter narrative. To claim on the basis of history any country is against the rule of UN charter.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
Miranshah ²⁴	02/04/2024	JUI-F leader shot dead in North Waziristan	01	00
Balochistan				
Quetta ²⁵	10/04/2024	Nine labourers pulled out of bus, shot dead in Balochistan's Nushki	09	00
Karachi ²⁶	19/04/2024	5 Japanese nationals unhurt in suicide attack on vehicle in Karachi: police	05	00

²⁴ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2461399/jui-f-leader-shot-dead-in-north-waziristan>

²⁵ <https://pakobserver.net/nine-labourers-pulled-out-of-bus-shot-dead-in-balochistans-nushki/>

²⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1828383/5-japanese-nationals-unhurt-in-suicide-attack-on-vehicle-in-karachi-police>