

Positive POST



Greenwich University
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Pakistan's standing in the global rankings

Overview

Pakistan observed a slight improvement in the overall international rankings in 2021 covering socio-economic and political outcomes of the country. Several elements complemented the prospects including successful democratic transition, efficient counter-terrorism measures leading to enhanced peace and security, and foreign direct investment inflows under CPEC, among others. Albeit, decoupling economic growth from human development suggests that the country needs to enhance its scores in health, education and standard of living by ensuring political will, equitable financing and efficient governance to ensure parallel growth for marginalized segments as well. Civil and political liberties must grow hand in hand to ensure a conducive environment for democratic dialogue and accountability which ultimately supports its nation building process.

DEMOCRACY INDEX

Pakistan was placed at the 104th spot among 167 states on the global Democracy Index 2021, compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

Index from 0 (authoritarian regime) to 10 (full democracy)

Compiled based on indicators covering: Electoral process and pluralism, Civil liberties, Functioning of government, Political participation, and Political culture.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

Pakistan ranked 161 out of 192 countries in the Human Development Index scoring 2022 0.562 out of 1.000 in 2018 compared to 0.560 out of 1.000 in 2017.

Index from 0 (low development) to 1 (very high development)

Compiled based on indicators covering: life expectancy, education, and per capita income

PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

Pakistan's press freedom rank dropped to 145 out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index, An annual ranking of countries published by Reporters Without Borders (RWB), an international non-governmental organization dedicated to safeguard the right to freedom of information.

Compiled based on indicators covering: pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and infrastructure.

TERRORISM INDEX

Terrorism Index in Pakistan decreased to 7.83 in 2021 from 7.92 in 2020.

Index from 0 (lowest impact) to 10 (highest impact)

Compiled based on indicators covering : Total number of terrorist incidents in a given year, total number of fatalities caused by terrorism in a given year, total number of injuries caused by terrorism in a given year and the approximate level of total property damage from terrorist incidents in a given year.

ECONOMIC FREEDOM INDEX

In 2021, index of economic freedom for Pakistan was 51.7 score.

Though Pakistan index of economic freedom fluctuated substantially in recent years, it tended to decrease through 2002 - 2021 period ending at 51.7 score in 2021.

Compiled based on indicators covering: Market openness, Regulatory efficiency, Government size and the rule of law.

August in History

14 August 1947: Pakistan is created.

14 August 1947: Quaid-a-Azam took oath as the first Governor General of Pakistan.

14 August 1947: Liaquat Ali Khan took oath as the first Prime minister of Pakistan.

21 August 1951: Pakistan and India agree on the boundary pact between East Bengal and West Bengal.

22 August 1951: A 24-hour telegraph telephone service is established between East Pakistan and West Pakistan.

7 August 1954: Government of Pakistan approves the National Anthem, written by Abu Al-Asar Hafeez Jalandhari and composed by Ahmed G. Chagla.

1 August 1960: Islamabad is declared as the principal seat of the Government of Pakistan.

11 August 1973: Chaudhry Fazal Ilahi is elected as president.

14 August 1973: Zulfikar Ali Bhutto becomes prime minister. Constitution of Pakistan 1973 promulgated.

14 August 2001: New Local Government system installed, after holding of elections in three phases.

24 August 2002: President General Musharraf issues the Legal Framework Order 2002.

Positive Post is a strategic effort to project achievement and contributions of Pakistan. While showcasing Greenwich University's cultural diplomacy initiatives, it also encapsulates a compilation of different developments complementing Pakistan's socio-cultural, economic and Political outcomes.

Brainstorming meeting for Finalization of concept and toRs For "Visit of Chinese experts delegation to Pakistan"

Brainstorming Meeting for finalization of Concept and ToRs for "Visit of Chinese Experts Delegation to Pakistan" was held between H.E Li Yong, Commercial Counselor, Embassy of People's Republic of China and Dr. Muhammad Nadeem Javaid, Chief Economist, Government of Pakistan.

Both sides endorsed that the "Visit of Chinese Experts Delegation to



Pakistan" is dire need of Pakistan for setting the right strategy to boost exports. This delegation of experts is visiting Pakistan in line of the Vision of President Xi regarding "Growth Corridor under CPEC".

The delegation of experts will provide technical knowledge and support for linking Pakistani products into Global Value Chains.

Courtesy:Dawn

'No basis for removing Kashmir's special status'

A five-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, started hearing a batch of petitions on Wednesday challenging the reading down of Article 370 of the Indian constitution, that bestowed special status on India-held Jammu and Kashmir.

"The Indian parliament cannot declare itself as a constituent assembly," senior counsel Kapil Sibal, who appeared on behalf of the petitioner, told the Supreme Court.

According to The Wire, Mr Sibal made his submissions on behalf of the petitioner, Mohammad Akbar Lone, on how the Modi government unilaterally unravelled India's unique federal scheme five years ago, while undermining crucial elements of the due process and the rule of law.

Tracing the history of the "accession" of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir to India, which Pakistan disputes, Mr Sibal shed light on Clause 3 of Article 370 which provided that any alteration to the relationship between the state of Jammu and Kashmir and the Indian union could only be made upon the recommendation of the constituent assembly for the state.

Indian chief justice starts hearing slew of petitions against ending Article 370 for held Kashmir

Article 370 (3) of the Indian constitution, before its reading down in 2019, said: "Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing provisions of this article, the President may, by

public notification, declare that this article shall cease to be operative or shall be operative only with such exceptions and modifications and from such date as he may specify: Provided that the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State referred to in clause (2) shall be necessary before the President issues such a notification."

On Aug 5, 2019, the newly inserted Article 367(4)(d) amended Article 370 (3) by replacing the expression "Constituent Assembly of the state" with the "Legislative Assembly of the State".

During the hearing, Mr Sibal contended that the concurrence of the state government provided by the governor did not express the will of the people.

He argued that Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir had a separate constitution, and therefore, the parliament had a limited scope to enact legislation for the state. Powers given to the state by its own constitution were read down by parliament, he submitted.

But the constitution bench interrupted Mr Sibal to question him whether a provision, intended to be temporary in 1950, could become permanent in 1957, only because the state's constituent assembly had completed its task of framing the constitution for the state, and dissolved itself.

Mr Sibal explained that the proviso in Article 370(3) was incorporated to ensure that the article could be



changed during the existence of the state's Constituent Assembly.

The use of the word "temporary" in the marginal note of Article 370 serves the purpose of indicating that when Article 370 was introduced, it could be amended/abrogated with the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir, he clarified.

Mr Sibal suggested framers of the constitution in 1950 would have included a reference to the state legislature if they had intended that it should be able to make such a recommendation.

In his view, the state's Constituent Assembly had the exclusive power to determine the state's relationship with India and to recommend the abrogation or modification of Article 370.

The petitioner submitted that the constituent assembly stands for enacting a constitution for the future, and it is essentially a political exercise to take into account the aspirations of the people.

"Constitution itself is a political document; drafting of the constitution is a political exercise. Once the constitution comes into place, all institutions are governed by the constitution, and those institutions

are limited in the exercise of their powers consistent with the provisions of the constitution," he told the bench.

"Parliament cannot convert itself as a Constituent Assembly. That's done. The Indian Parliament cannot declare itself as a Constituent Assembly. Where does parliament get that power to decide the legislature of the state?" he asked.

Mr. Sibal submitted the task before the constituent assembly was not a law-making exercise. "There was a disparity. There were 562 princely states which had to be amalgamated. Each of them had certain conditions. Jammu and Kashmir was an exception, and therefore, it was constitutionally grafted in Article 370. You can't jettison the people of J&K," he elaborated.

He pointed out that the residuary power was with the state legislature/state government throughout, unlike other states.

Mr Sibal deplored that the withdrawal of the special status for the state was a move away from representative democracy. Never in the history of the country, a state could be converted into a union territory, he said.

Courtesy:Dawn

Pakistan Independence Day – 14 August 2023

Relations with the Russian Federation are an important priority of Pakistan's foreign policy, said HE Mr Shafqat Ali Khan, Ambassador of Pakistan to Russia addressing an event to mark 76th anniversary of Pakistan's independence.

The Ambassador said that relations between Pakistan and Russia are on very positive trajectory. He expressed confidence in further strengthening relations between the two countries.

The Ambassador praised the invaluable role of the Pakistani community in Russia in enhancing cooperation and bringing the two countries closer to each other.



The Embassy of Pakistan in Moscow hosted an event to celebrate the 76th anniversary of independence of Pakistan today, on 14 August 2023.

The ceremony started with the recitation from the Holy Quran followed by a flag hoisting ceremony. The messages of the President and the Prime Minister were read out by

Third Secretary Muhammad Tayyab and Third Secretary Mr. Jetha Nand respectively.

A Russian string quartet of Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory performed classical adaptations of Pakistani songs 'Jeevay Jeevay', 'Sohni Dharti' and 'Dil Dil Pakistan'.

Pakistanis residing in Russian Federation also presented national songs and children performed on stage. The performance was greatly appreciated by the audience, which included the members of the Pakistani community in Russia, employees of the Embassy, as well as Russian friends of Pakistan.

Moscow: 14 August, 2023

Twin cities celebrate Independence Day

Like other parts of the country, the residents of Rawalpindi celebrated 76th Independence Day by taking out rallies, and organising flag-hoisting and cake cutting ceremonies.

The day began with special prayers held in mosques, churches and other places of worship for the betterment and stability of the country. The people, including young girls, boys and children, thronged stalls set up in various parts of the city to buy flags of different sizes, badges, ribbons, masks and bandanas. Many of them painted national flags on their faces to express their love for Pakistan.

Similarly, vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles, houses, buildings, plazas, markets and shopping malls were decorated with national flags and green lights. Youngsters, clad in green and white, danced on Murree Road and played songs to celebrate the day.

In most areas, business activities remained suspended. Public elected representatives also displayed huge banners along Murree Road featuring pictures of Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Fatima Jinnah, Dr Allama Mohammad Iqbal, and other prominent figures of the Pakistan Movement.

In the evening, the families

thronged parks and other resorts to enjoy the day; crowds were seen in parks and cinema houses of the city and cantonment areas.

However, the main event in Rawalpindi was held at the Commissioner's Office where caretaker minister Jamal Nasir participated along with other officials. The flag-hoisting ceremony at the office started with slogans.

Speaking on this occasion, the caretaker minister said that Pakistan was ready to face any kind of difficulty with the strength of unity. Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha said that Independence Day was being celebrated with great enthusiasm across the country. Along with organising events, foolproof security arrangements were made by the district administration to ensure the safety of life and property of the public, he added.

"So it is necessary that the citizens, realising their social responsibility on this occasion, refrain from any kind of act due to which this day full of happiness is likely to turn into a sad one," he said. He added that today there was a need to repeat the pledge that "we will take steps for the improvement and development of our land as much as possible". At the end of the ceremony, the chief guest also



distributed gifts among the children and prayed for the prosperity of the country.

Meanwhile, caretaker minister Jamal Nasir cut a cake in connection with Independence Day at Rawalpindi Arts Council. He also visited the 'Journey of Hope' photo exhibition at the Rawalpindi Arts Council.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Jamal Nasir said that people from all walks of life were participating in the celebrations and showing enthusiasm. He said that this country was the result of innumerable sacrifices of our forefathers.

Furthermore, on the eve of Independence Day, a cultural show and fireworks were performed at Liaquat Bagh at midnight. A spectacular firework display filled the sky colourful lights which could be seen from areas along Murree Road and Raja Bazaar.

Separately, ministries and their subordinate departments celebrated Independence Day with zeal and zest in the federal capital. Institute of Strategic Studies Director General Sohail Mahmood, at the Institute's web celebration of Independence Day, said that abiding commitment to the vision of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was the best path forward for Pakistan on its way to sustainable peace, progress and prosperity.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) commemorated the nation's Independence Day with enthusiasm and fervour, highlighting unity and patriotism in a series of vibrant celebrations. Similarly, a flag-hoisting ceremony was held at the Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) attended by renowned writers.

Courtesy: Dawn

Mum's the word as govt looks for 'most suitable' caretaker PM

With the tenure of the National Assembly expected to end in less than two weeks, speculation is rife about the composition of the interim set-up, seemingly fuelled by the silence of the federal government which is set to kick-start the process for the appointment of the caretaker prime minister soon.

Though Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said the appointment of the interim premier would be carried out in line with the Constitution, she did not mention when the process would be initiated.

PM Shehbaz Sharif has not chosen or ruled out any candidate for interim prime minister, she said in a tweet, reiterating the decision will be taken after consultation with allied parties and PML-N supreme leader Nawaz Sharif.

She said the PM would consult all allied parties in the government and would obtain guidance from the elder Sharif to identify the "most suitable candidate". The minister said that after consulting with allies, the prime minister would consult with the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly to take a decision on the matter.

PM Shehbaz and Maulana Fazlur Rehman also held a meeting on Monday to take stock of the political situation in the aftermath of the deadly bombing that killed scores of JUI-F workers in Bajaur on Sunday. Sources said the premier discussed the caretaker set-up with the Maulana, who also heads the multi-party government alliance, PDM. The PM office said the premier expressed condolence over the killing of over 50 JUI-F workers and supporters.

A similar meeting was also held with Awami National Party chief Aimal Wali Khan.

The PM has already met PPP leaders Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and Asif Ali Zardari, MQM convener Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP) President Shahzain Bugti on the matter of the interim government.

A meeting between the NA opposition leader and the prime minister is expected to be held this week. "My meeting with the prime minister is expected around August 1 where we will exchange names for the caretaker prime minister," Raja Riaz had said last week.



It is also believed that the leader of the opposition will not object to the candidate finalised by the PM and the ruling alliance. Several names have been doing the rounds for several days, but there has been no official or unofficial word in this regard.

Several attempts were made to contact Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, but she was not available for comment.

PPP Central Information Secretary and Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi said that so far, the PM had not shared any name with the PPP for the slot of caretaker prime minister.

He said the PPP Central Executive Committee will decide on names to be proposed by the PPP leadership. Mr Kundi said after finalising the

names, a PPP delegation will meet the prime minister.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar was billed as the caretaker PM. However, allied parties and the opposition reacted strongly to these speculations, forcing the PM to rule out the possibility of a 'partisan' candidate for the coveted post.

"A neutral man should be made caretaker prime minister so that no one could raise fingers on the transparent election process," he said in a recent interview.

He said he had not nominated anyone for the slot of caretaker prime minister and asserted that he would consult all coalition parties and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif over the matter before meeting the NA opposition leader for a consensus.

Courtesy: Dawn

'Limited' response from Greek govt on boat tragedy

Briefing a parliamentary panel about the Greek boat tragedy, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the response from Greek authorities on human rights violations had been 'limited'.

The officials told the Standing Committee on Human Rights that 291 Pakistanis were on board when the boat capsized off the coast of Greece. Only 12 Pakistanis survived; 11 of them applied for asylum, while one had returned to Pakistan.

Lawmakers were also informed that 11 bodies had been repatriated so far, while the identity of 15 bodies had been ascertained through fingerprints.

About investigations into human trafficking networks, the officials said 193 cases were being probed and 90

suspected human traffickers were arrested while another 35 were traced abroad.

The committee meeting, which was presided over by MNA Dr Mahreen Razzaq Bhutto, was held at Parliament House.

The committee also discussed the issuance of fake identity documents to Afghan refugees, leading to misuse and resulting in tarnishing Pakistan's reputation. Besides, the lawmakers expressed concern over legal status of newborns among Afghan refugees, financial assistance and plan for their repatriation after a three-month period.

Also, the director general of the Ministry of Human Rights updated the committee on implementation of its recommendations made from time



to time. He then apprised the lawmakers about the compliance of international and national obligations related to human rights, coordination with provincial governments, and consideration of various bills under the subjects of torture, custodial death and custodial rape, senior citizen rights, child protection, the protection of journalists and media professionals, protection against harassment of women at workplace, juvenile justice system, and maintenance of welfare of old parents and senior citizen named a few.

The Pemra director general apprised the committee of an awareness drive regarding child protection. The committee recommended that collaboration with Pakistan Telecommunication Authority for caller tunes, better utilisation of social media platforms and employing regional languages to expand the reach of the messages.

Also, the committee directed Pemra to furnish a list of TV channels broadcasting the public service messages.

Courtesy: Dawn

CPEC moves into second phase with 'simple' celebration

China and Pakistan decided to accelerate the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, hailing the progress on development initiatives in the decade since the project's launch in 2013.

In a special ceremony held to commemorate 10 years of CPEC on Monday, six new documents were signed for joint cooperation. The celebrations, however, were kept simple out of respect for the victims of the Bajaur terrorist attack.

Earlier in the day, Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, who is on an official visit to attend the celebrations as a special representative of President Xi Jinping, was conferred with the Hilal-i-Pakistan award. He also met President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

In the ceremony held at the Prime Minister House, officials from both countries signed an agreement on the Joint Cooperation Committee on CPEC, an MoU on establishing an export exchange mechanism within the framework of CPEC, a protocol of phytosanitary requirements for the export of dry chillies from Pakistan to China and a document on the final report on the feasibility study of the Karakoram Highway Phase-II realignment.

Chinese VP He Lifeng, PM Shehbaz witness signing of six new documents; cultural show cancelled out of respect for Bajaur victims

PM Shehbaz and Chinese Vice-Premier Lifeng witnessed the signing ceremony.

An MoU on the industrial workers exchange programme as well as minutes of the 21st conference of the ML-1 project's technical committee were also signed.

In his remarks at the ceremony, the prime minister recalled that 10 years ago, CPEC was started after then prime minister Nawaz and President Xi Jinping signed the agreements and its implementation started swiftly.

"We can claim that under CPEC, over \$25 billion were invested in power, road, hydel and public transport. Now we are entering the second phase," said Mr Sharif.

"We signed certain important documents which will further enhance cooperation and undertake the second phase of CPEC under a new model."

The second phase would include B2B investment in agriculture and information technology to enable Pakistan to export its products according to Chinese standards and requirements.

Highlighting the importance of ML-1 the main railway track connecting Karachi to Peshawar

and Karachi Circular Railway, the PM hoped both projects would be successfully executed to help Pakistan "stand on its own feet through the hard work and untiring efforts of both countries".

PM meets Chinese vice premier

In their meeting before the ceremony, the prime minister and the Chinese vice premier expressed satisfaction with the steady development of CPEC projects and agreed on its centrality for Pakistan's socio-economic development, according to a PM Office statement.

The meeting discussed bilateral ties, including CPEC, as both sides expressed firm commitment to continue working together for realising the shared objectives of CPEC.

It was agreed that the 10th anniversary of CPEC was a fresh starting point to further expand the project as envisaged by the leadership of the two countries.

The two leaders exchanged views on several aspects of the bilateral relationship including CPEC and bilateral economic and financial cooperation.

PM Shehbaz Sharif and State Council of China VP He Lifeng witness the signing ceremony of MoUs regarding cooperation between the two countries, in Islamabad.

The prime minister said China and Pakistan were strategic partners and trusted friends who have always stood by each other in difficult times, as evidenced by Chinese support to Pakistan in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and the devastating floods last year.

In his remarks, Mr Lifeng conveyed President Jinping's message of China's firm support for Pakistan's prosperity and development.

Mr Lifeng underlined that the Pakistan-China friendship was unique and had withstood the test of time. He reiterated that as an iron brother and strategic partner, China would continue its economic and financial support to Pakistan. President confers Hilal-i-Pakistan

President Alvi conferred the Hilal-i-Pakistan award upon Mr Lifeng in recognition of his contribution to the Pakistan-China friendship and the promotion of CPEC.

The award given to Pakistanis and foreign nationals to recognise their contribution towards Pakistan's national interests was conferred in a special investiture ceremony held at the Aiwan-i-Sadr. It was attended by PM Shehbaz, services chiefs, the National Assembly speaker, the Senate chairman, federal ministers and parliamentarians. Following the ceremony, Mr Lifeng held delega-



tion-level talks with President Alvi.

The two leaders agreed that CPEC significantly transformed Pakistan's socio-economic and infrastructural landscape. Mr Lifeng said the project was now poised to further increase Pakistan's economic connectivity in the entire region and beyond.

President Alvi said the occasion called for enhanced Chinese investment in various sectors, particularly in the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to further strengthen bilateral economic cooperation. The president also thanked China for "its principled stance" on the India-held Kashmir and also for Beijing's financial support to Pakistan in difficult times.

Simple celebrations

The celebrations on Monday were kept simple to mourn those who lost their lives in the terrorist attack in Bajaur on Sunday.

An official statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said a cultural show, scheduled to take place as part of the celebrations, has been cancelled on the prime minister's directions.

PM Sharif said the entire nation was in a state of mourning, hence, the cultural show should not be held, the statement added.

Renminbi to become parallel currency

The Bank of China (BOC) also opened its second branch in Islamabad.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Ishar Dar said the renminbi would soon become an internationally adopted parallel currency.

The renminbi was going to be internationalised as five countries have already formalised the currency and more countries were planning to do so, the finance minister added. He said it would become a parallel internationally acceptable currency.

With input from agencies and Syed Irfan Raza in Islamabad

Courtesy: Dawn

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"Jeddah Shines with 'Colors of Friendship'"

The Consulate General of Pakistan in Jeddah organized a cultural event titled "Colors of Friendship: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia" to foster friendship and enhance cultural ties between the two countries. This event took place at the Pakistan International School Jeddah English Section (PISJES) and featured a lively exhibition of artistic creations that highlighted the values of peace and friendship.

Graced by distinguished guests, including Mr. Abdul Khaliq Al-Zahrani, Director General of the Ministry of Media in the Jeddah region, who was the Chief Guest, the event highlighted the significance of cultural art in fostering peace and harmony.

In his welcome remarks, Consul General Khalid Majid expressed his admiration for the dedication of the Saudi leadership, HM King Salman

bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and HRH Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, towards promoting cultural exchange. Mr. Abdul Khaliq Zahrani emphasized the deep-rooted friendship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, highlighting the genuine warmth and mutual respect that exists between the two nations.

As a symbol of unity, the cultural celebration commenced with the national anthems of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The event encompassed a range of activities aimed at nurturing an atmosphere of harmony and friendship.

The evening's highlight was an exquisite exhibition showcasing paintings by talented artists from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The Saudi artists represented Art Harmony, an art group led by renowned curator Khalid Aql.

The event's grandeur was elevated by



the exclusive presence of two renowned Pakistani artists, Mohamad Arif Khan and Mohamad Zubair, who had travelled all the way from Pakistan. They had the opportunity to showcase their artistic talents and share their creative visions with the audience.

Music played a pivotal role in fostering cultural connections throughout the event. Singing artists from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, including Farhan Tabassum, who travelled especially from Pakistan for this event, Naem Sindhi, local Pakistani expat, mesmerized the audience with their enchant-

ing performances, complemented by skilled musicians. The guitar was expertly played by Farhan Amin

This successful cultural celebration brought together individuals from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, creating a sense of harmony and friendship that transcended boundaries. Through art and culture.

Distinguished diplomats, members of the Pakistani diaspora, and representatives from various ethnic and Saudi media outlets gathered to witness and participate in this significant occasion.

Courtesy: parepjeddah.org/

Dar blames fuel price hike on global trend

After a delay of about 11 hours, the government on Tuesday announced an increase of up to Rs20 per litre in fuel prices for the next fortnight in line with the international market.

The hike in the prices of petroleum products came as official data showed consumer inflation was 28.3 per cent in July, which would also have a lag effect on general prices in the country during August. The government has already increased the price of liquefied petroleum gas and the electricity tariff by up to 17pc and 26pc, respectively.

In a recorded video statement, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said the announcement for the fuel price increase was delayed because of government efforts to find a way to minimise the hike for consumers, but international prices of both petrol and high-speed diesel (HSD) had gone up significantly over the past fortnight.

He also said the HSD price in the international market had increased from \$96.26 per barrel on July 16 to \$111.46 on July 31, while petrol had gone up to \$97.39 per barrel from \$89.14, showing an increase of about 16pc and 10pc, respectively.

Announces increase of Rs20 per litre in rates of petrol, high-speed diesel

He said that because of the international commitments under the International Monetary Fund's loan programme, the government had no



other option but to pass on the impact to consumers.

Under the decision, the ex-depot price of HSD has been fixed at Rs273.40 per litre for the next fortnight compared to Rs253 previously, up by Rs19.90 or 7.85pc.

An increase in the price of high-speed diesel is considered highly inflationary, as the fuel is mostly used in heavy transport vehicles, trains and agricultural engines like trucks, buses, tractors, tube-wells and threshers. An expensive HSD particularly adds to the prices of vegetables and other eatables.

Likewise, the ex-depot price of petrol was fixed at Rs272.95 per litre for the next fortnight compared to Rs253, showing an increase of Rs19.95 or 7.9pc.

The product is mostly used in private transport, small vehicles, rickshaws and two-wheelers and has a direct bearing on the budget of middle- and lower-middle classes.

The minister did not announce any change in the prices of kerosene and light diesel oil, but the Ministry of Energy notified an increase of Rs20 per litre (11.7pc) in the price of kerosene, taking it to Rs192.38 per litre. Kerosene is mostly used by unscrupulous elements for mixing it with petrol.

He said the cost of petroleum products in Pakistan was directly linked to the international prices of these products. "Therefore, the increase in domestic prices is inevitable and beyond the control of the government of Pakistan", he said in a written statement.

At present, the GST is zero on all petroleum products, but the government is charging Rs55 per litre petroleum development levy (PDL) on petrol and Rs50 per litre each on HSD and high-octane blending component and 95 RON petrol. The government is also charging about Rs18-22 per litre customs duty on petrol and HSD.

Petrol and high-speed diesel are major revenue spinners for the government, with monthly sales of about 700,000 to 800,000 tonnes compared to just 10,000 tonnes of monthly demand for kerosene.

Courtesy: Dawn

Pakistan to play in India amid 'security concerns'

The government has decided to send the Pakistan cricket team to India to play in this year's 50-over World Cup, the Foreign Office said but expressed "deep concerns" over security.

"Pakistan has deep concerns about the security of its cricket team. We are conveying these concerns to the International Cricket Council and the Indian authorities," the Foreign Office said in a statement.

"We expect that the full safety and security of the Pakistan Cricket Team will be ensured during its visit to India," it said.

The World Cup runs from Oct 5 to Nov 19. Pakistan and India are due to clash on Oct 15 in a high-voltage game in Ahmedabad, the home city of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had earlier expressed reservations over playing in the 130,000-capacity Ahmedabad stadium and in front of a potentially hostile crowd.

The board had even threatened to boycott the

World Cup after India ruled out travelling to Pakistan for the Asia Cup, which is scheduled to be held from Aug 31 to Sept 17.

After India's refusal, the Asia Cup was rescheduled on a hybrid model with only four matches in Pakistan and the remaining nine in Sri Lanka.

Pakistan criticised India's hard-core stance on stalling cricket ties over the 2008 militant attacks on Mumbai. The two countries have not met in a bilateral series since 2012 and only play in multinational events, the last in the Twenty20 World Cup in Australia in October 2022.

"Pakistan's decision shows its constructive and responsible approach vis-a-vis India's intransigent attitude, as the latter had refused to send its team to Pakistan for the Asia Cup," the Foreign Office said.

"Pakistan has consistently maintained that sports should not be mixed with politics. It has, therefore, decided to send its cricket team to India to participate in the Cricket World Cup 2023," it said. "Pakistan believes that the state of bilateral relations with India should not stand in the way of ful-



filling its international sports-related obligations." The government decided to send the cricket team to India after the recommendation of a high-profile committee headed by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, which on Thursday linked the team's participation with security assurance from the International Cricket Council.

The committee asked the PCB to also request the ICC for a change of venue for the Pakistan-India clash from Ahmedabad because of security concerns.

Sources said the committee's recommendations were also shared with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who approved them and directed the Foreign Office to allow the national team to play in the World Cup.

Courtesy: Dawn

Pakistan, Iran chalk out five-year trade plan

Pakistan and Iran chalked out a five-year trade cooperation plan aimed at doubling trade volume to \$5 billion, prioritising removing trade impediments and finalising a free trade agreement.

The new plan has been devised while Iran Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian is on a two-day visit to Pakistan, having reached Islamabad on Wednesday night at Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's invitation.

"I am confident that the steps we are taking today will chart the course for a long-term durable economic partnership between our two countries in the months and years ahead," Mr Bhutto-Zardari told the media in a joint press conference with his Iranian counterpart after the two leaders met.

Mr Bhutto-Zardari said the two sides had agreed to prioritise operationalising the five remaining border markets by the end of the current year.

He said Pakistan and Iran had decided to repatriate all the prisoners as per the provisions of existing agreements between the two countries.

An agreement was also reached to set fishermen from the two countries free and waive off any fine imposed by authorities of both countries for the release of their vessels, he said. He added that the two sides would exchange the lists of prisoners to put this understanding into practice expeditiously.

He said the grave human rights situation in India-held Kashmir also came under discussion during



the meeting and thanked the Iranian leadership for its "firm and consistent support to the legitimate cause" of the people of the valley.

Referring to the joint inauguration of the Mand-Pishin border marketplace and Gabd-Polan electricity project by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the Iranian president in May, Mr Bhutto-Zardari said this was not merely a bricks-and-mortar project.

"It was an affirmation of our collective commitment to find collaborative solutions for the betterment of our two peoples," he said. "We consider this a first step towards strengthening our multidimensional cooperation, especially in the economic domain. Today, countless schools, hospitals and households in Gwadar are run on electricity provided by Iran."

He said proposals for expanding cooperation in trade and economy, energy and culture and arts were underway.

He said Pakistan and Iran enjoyed a complete convergence of views on all issues of mutual interest. "We believe that our prosperity and development is firmly intertwined with peace and stability of our

neighbourhood and the region," he said.

Regarding the situation in Afghanistan, both sides agreed to continue their active engagement to advance peace and stability in the neighbouring country to promote the well-being and prosperity of Afghan citizens.

They also agreed to continue their cooperation to counter Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred.

"There has been an unfortunate series of Islamophobic acts and events across Europe, and not just isolated events but repeated and premeditated provocations. In my view, these are not only hate speech but would endanger provoking violence," Mr Bhutto-Zardari said.

'Afghan situation to impact neighbours'

In his remarks, the Iranian foreign minister emphasised the enhanced bilateral cooperation in economy, trade and tourism.

He said both countries were committed to increasing the bilateral trade to \$5bn and agreed to set up a special economic free trade region along the common border points.

Mr Amir-Abdollahian said the two countries have decided to take immediate steps for releasing fishermen and their vessels.

Emphasising the completion of the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline, he said the project would serve the two countries' national interests. "We stand ready to see this gas pipeline completed, finalised and operationalised as soon as possible," he said.

He said both sides discussed solving existing banking and financial problems between the two countries.

Calling for support to the people of Afghanistan, he said any situation in Afghanistan would impact the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran. Therefore, under any circumstances, it was the religious and humanitarian responsibility to extend support to the people of Afghanistan.

He expressed concern about the United States and some Western countries continuing to arm Ukraine, warning that supplying arms to either side would only lead to more killings and destruction.

Prime Minister Sharif also met Mr Amir-Abdollahian and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthen relations with Iran in diverse fields, state broadcaster Radio Pakistan reported.

The report said the premier underscored the need to focus on enhancing cooperation in the economic domain, pointing out that Economic Cooperation Organisation was "uniquely placed" to play this role.

Courtesy: Dawn

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