



# POSITIVE



*Greenwich University*

A Publication by Department of Mass Communication & Media Studies and the Diplomatic Academy

## 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.

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 & Political outcomes

## January 2025

**1 January, 1948:** UNO cease-fire orders to operate in Kashmir. War stops accordingly.

**1 January, 1949:** United Nations Cease-fire Line established between Pakistan Administered Kashmir (GB & AJ&K) & Indian Administered Kashmir.

**17 January, 1951:** General Ayub Khan becomes the first non-British Chief of the Army Staff of Pakistan when he replaces General Sir Douglas David Gracey as the chief of army staff.

**January 26, 1952:** At the Dhaka session of the ruling Muslim League party, prime minister Khawaja Nazimuddin declares Urdu the national language of the state of Pakistan.

**2 January 1964:** Fatima Jinnah lost the presidential elections, Ayub completes the second term.

**10 January, 1966:** Pakistan and India sign the Tashkent Declaration to end hostilities.

**10 January, 1977:** Nine opposition parties form joint election forum, Pakistan National Alliance (PNA).

**5 January, 2002:** Musharraf stunned Vajpayee by a hand-shake at the last 11th SAARC summit in Kathmandu.

**1 January, 2004:** General Musharraf won a vote of confidence in the Senate, National Assembly, and provincial assemblies.

**2 January, 2006:** Dr. Shamshad Akhtar assumes office of State Bank Governor having the first woman Governor of SBP.

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## Ambitious plan for economic growth unveiled

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday launched a five-year 'transformation plan' to address chronic economic issues by focusing on 5Es exports, e-Pakistan, environment, energy, equity and empowerment.

'Uraan Pakistan', an indigenous economic plan, was unveiled at an event attended by the federal ministers and representatives of all four provinces.

While outlining his government's priorities, PM Shehbaz pledged economic growth by increasing exports.

The prime minister highlighted macroeconomic stability, adding that now there would be an "all-out focus" on boosting growth through targeted investment and reforms.

He said the success of the five-year plan which specifically focuses on the development of IT, agriculture, exports and mining and mineral sectors was linked with national unity, political harmony and collective efforts by all stakeholders, including political parties, institutions and people.

He said the government would create a conducive environment and incentivise the private sector to promote the export-oriented industry.

He regretted that the bulk of the country's resources were going to waste each year due to corruption, electricity and gas losses, and lack of reforms in various sectors.

'Transformation' plan  
According to the official document, the 'Uraan Pakistan' initiative would serve as a unifying roadmap to make Pakistan a \$1 trillion economy by 2035 and \$3tr by 2047.

The plan envisaged \$60 billion in annual exports by focusing on IT, manufacturing, agriculture, minerals, manpower and



blue economy.

The programme also focuses on the promotion of small businesses, entrepreneurship and market diversification, rebranding "Made in Pakistan" as a global standard for quality to stabilise the rupee, reduce reliance on imports and unlock economic potential for sustained growth.

The e-Pakistan would take the freelancing industry, particularly the Information and Communication Technology, to \$5 billion, producing 200,000 IT graduates annually.

It would foster a startup ecosystem capable of delivering the first Pakistani unicorn, increasing mobile connectivity to over 100 million subscribers, developing an AI framework and enhancing cyber security capabilities.

Under the environmental transformation plan, the government would address climate change and secure sustainable resource management. It would reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 50 per cent, expand water storage capacity by 10 million acre-feet, increase cultivable land by 20.3 million acres, promote reforestation, protect biodiversity and enhance disaster resilience.

The document said under the energy and infrastructure heads, the government would build modern infrastructure and ensure affordable, reliable energy to increase the share

of renewable energy to 10 per cent.

The plan also envisages boosting railways' share in passenger transport from five to 15 per cent and freight transport from 8pc cent to 25pc, promoting regional connectivity and harnessing mining potential.

Under equity, ethics and empowerment, the programme outlined a "A Just Society for All".

Some of the main targets of the programme are to raise the universal health coverage index by 12pc, increase literacy rates by 10pc, empower women by increasing their labour force participation by 17pc, reduce youth unemployment by 6pc and promote values-based governance.

Political reconciliation  
Without naming the PTI, the prime minister blamed the party's government from 2018 to 2022 for economic mismanagement.

However, he invited the party to sit together, especially for a Charter of Economy aimed at stabilising and strengthening the economy.

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar also expressed a similar desire for political reconciliation.

"Petty politics has to be buried if Pakistan is to achieve progress," he added "[W]e talked about a charter of economy multiple times between 2013-

2017, but it fell on deaf ears," Mr Dar said.

He said Pakistan had to face huge losses and it "fell from the 24th to the 47th largest economy".

Homegrown solutions

In his speech, Finance Minister Muhammad Auran-gezeb recapped "the significant macroeconomic progress made" in the last 12-14 months.

"We have to move towards growth, but it has to be sustainable growth, we cannot continue to be in boom and bust cycles," he said.

"Because we've been an import-based economy, as soon as we go above four per cent, we get into a balance of payment problems, then we run back to the institution and say: 'this will be the last fund programme'."

Aurangzeb explained the three main pillars of the plan: stimulating private investment, which was key to getting more jobs, higher incomes and a low cost of living through a more competitive economy.

He emphasised that implementation of the measures was key to the plan, not just planning. The minister also noted that under Manmohan Singh as premier, India progressed but Pakistan could not do so in the comparable timeframe. He said that the journey towards long-term prosperity warranted homegrown solutions, which is why PM Shehbaz established the Homegrown Reform Economic Committee back in May.

"That committee extensively reviewed national economic plans, including the 13th five-year plan prepared by the Ministry of Planning and duly approved by National Economic Council and the economic manifestos of various political parties."

Courtesy: Dawn

## Punjab introduces automation in development projects

Punjab has become the first province in the country to automate its development system, taking a significant step towards modernising governance. In a parallel development, the provincial administration has launched a solarisation programme to transition agricultural tube wells to solar energy.

“The monitoring and review of development projects are now conducted daily using advanced technology. With the support of China, Punjab plans to expand the use of technology across governance and all sectors,” said Punjab Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb while addressing the Punjab Assembly Standing Committee on Planning and Development.

The session, chaired by PML-N MPA Shahbaz Ali Khokhar, was also attended by senior officials and committee members.

Ms Aurangzeb highlighted that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz actively monitors development-related data in real time through an online portal, enhancing transparency and operational efficiency. This data-driven governance model is designed to streamline project implementation and reduce delays.

Launches initiative to transition agricultural tube wells to solar energy

The minister announced an unprecedented budget of Rs844 billion for public development projects. “Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz is resolute in ensuring equitable development beyond political affiliations,” she emphasised.

She added that substantial reforms in the healthcare sector were already underway. These reforms include upgrading basic health units, modernising divisional and district-level hospitals and expanding healthcare facilities to underserved areas.

“For the first time, Punjab is in-

roducing a comprehensive model that integrates environmental sustainability with industrial and agricultural growth. This holistic approach is aimed at fostering long-term economic and ecological balance,” Ms Aurangzeb explained. “As part of this initiative, subsidised and instalment-based agricultural machinery is being distributed to farmers, providing them with the tools necessary to boost productivity.”

As part of the ‘Clean Punjab’ ini-



tiative, the government plans to replicate Lahore’s advanced waste management system across all districts.

“This initiative will standardise sanitation protocols, improve public health and enhance urban aesthetics,” she said. The government’s top priorities also include advancements in education, youth skill development, IT, and maternal and child healthcare.

The Planning and Development Department has implemented measures to combat Punjab’s persistent smog issue. Ms Aurangzeb said that over the past nine months, initiatives such as introducing zigzag kiln technology, banning plastic bags, prohibiting crop residue burning and controlling toxic industrial emissions have contributed to noticeable improvements in air quality.

**Solarisation of tube wells**  
In a parallel move, the Punjab government has formally launched the Punjab Solarisation for Agricultural Tube Wells

Programme.

This initiative aims to reduce farmers’ reliance on costly grid electricity by transitioning tube wells to solar power, promoting energy independence and cost efficiency.

“Approximately 8,000 agricultural tube wells across Punjab will be converted to solar energy under this programme,” Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said.

“The government has allocated a subsidy of Rs9 billion to facilitate this transition. Farmers will receive financial assistance of up to Rs500,000 for tube wells with a capacity of 10 kW, Rs750,000 for those up to 15 kW, and Rs1 million for tube wells with capacities of up to 20 kW. The programme is open to landowners with a minimum of one acre of agricultural land,” she said.

Farmers can apply for tube well solarisation online at “cmstp.punjab.gov.pk” or download the application form from “www.agripunjab.gov.pk”.

This streamlined application process is intended to ensure broad participation and minimise bureaucratic hurdles.

The chief minister hoped that the initiative would provide relief from soaring electricity bills, alleviating one of the most pressing financial burdens faced by farmers.

Courtesy: Dawn

## Children above 10 will require new ‘biometric’ Form B

Form B the identity document issued by the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) for children will now have special biometric security features, the Interior Ministry said.

The special security features will be included in the identity documents of all children above the age of 10, including fingerprints and photographs.

The issuance of these special Form B (registration certificate) will be carried out in phases from January 15.

The interior ministry said these steps will help prevent the theft and misuse of children’s identity information and prove helpful in preventing crimes like forgery of identity documents and illegal passports as well as human trafficking.

According to a spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior, in the first phase, fingerprints and photographs of children above the age of 10 and below the age of 18 will be taken at Nadra centres from January 15.

These children must be accompanied by one of the parents or legal guardians, who must also bring their computerised national identity card and the child’s computerised birth certificate, issued by the union council or town committee.

According to the spokesperson, children above the age of 10 and below the age of 18 will have to submit a Form B with fingerprints and a photograph issued by Nadra while applying for a new passport, while the old Form B, which does not include a photograph and fingerprints, will not be acceptable for children of this age group. According to a spokesperson, parents or legal guardians should obtain a new Form B with a photograph and fingerprints of a child above the age of 10 from Nadra.

The spokesperson said that steps will be taken to integrate Nadra’s identification system with the Civil Registration Management System of the provinces.

According to the spokesperson, steps will be taken to ensure better services on Nadra’s Pak ID mobile app and digital IDs will be issued to all Pakistani citizens.

Courtesy: Dawn

## Govt launches operations for 7th digital agricultural census

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on Wednesday initiated field operations for the country's 7th Agricultural Census, employing digital tools to collect vital data for evidence-based policies aimed at sustainable farming and food security.

At a launch event in Islamabad, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal distributed tablets to trained enumerators, emphasising the role of technology in ensuring accurate and efficient data collection.

Ceremonies were also held in several other cities, including Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar.

The PBS has trained 7,686 enumerators and supervisors nationwide for this purpose. Data collection will take place over 40 days, from Jan 1 to Feb 10, 2025, which will be pivotal in shaping policies to address food insecurity and enhance agricultural resilience. The results are expected to be compiled by August.

This census, to be conducted in collaboration with federal and provincial governments, academia and related departments, aims to provide comprehensive insights into the country's agrarian landscape.

Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal described agriculture as the backbone of the economy, significantly contributing to GDP, exports and employment.

He noted that the data gathered from this census would play a vital role in shaping policies that tackle key challenges like resource management, crop patterns and food security. He further emphasised that the data would enable targeted support for the agricultural community, encouraging initiatives to increase productivity and enhance the welfare of farmers.

He reiterated the federal government's commitment to ensuring that farmers across the country receive the resources and support they need for sustainable growth. He stressed that the 7th Agricultural Census was a historic step towards economic reforms and



data-driven policymaking.

The minister also appreciated the modernised approach and centralised GIS technology for real-time monitoring. This will streamline data collection and analysis, enabling targeted interventions and effective resource allocation.

The initiative aligns Pakistan's agricultural practices with global standards and seeks to enhance productivity and food security.

PBS's focal person for the agriculture census, Sarwar Gondal, said that a decade overdue activity had been initiated by the bureau with its extensive network of 34 regional and 125 district offices.

### Regional events

In Lahore, Punjab Finance Minister Mujtaba Shujaur Rehman inaugurated field operations for the 7th Agricultural Census during a formal ceremony held at the Chief Minister House.

The minister inaugurated the census under the Integrated Digital Count initiative. Highlighting Punjab's role in national agriculture, he noted that the province contributes 24pc to the country's GDP, with 29.4 million acres of cultivated land.

The data will guide policies to support farmers and optimise resource utilisation. "This initiative is a milestone in Punjab's journey towards agricultural modernisation," he added.

In Karachi, Sindh's Planning Minister Syed Nasir Hussain

Shah and Livestock Minister Muhammad Ali Malkani launched the operations at the Sindh Secretariat.

Sindh, with 8.2m acres of cultivated land, is a major contributor to crops like cotton, rice and sugarcane.

Chief Statistician Dr Naeemuz Zafar highlighted the extensive training of 1,695 enumerators and supervisors across 30 venues in Sindh to ensure the quality of data collection.

In Dadu, Deputy Commissioner Mukhtiar Ali Abro kicked off operations by marking structures as part of the census process.

Covering 111 of the district's 351 villages, the census aims to document agricultural land, livestock, and machinery.

A total of 62 enumerators and nine supervisors would carry out the exercise, for which police officials had been deployed to ensure the security of census teams. Citizens were urged to cooperate with enumerators to ensure the initiative's success.

In Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Agriculture Minister Sajjad Barakwal inaugurated the census. Speaking at the ceremony, Mr Barakwal, a retired army major, highlighted that 80pc of KP's population is rural, relying heavily on agriculture for their livelihood. With agriculture accounting for 22pc of the province's GDP and employing 44pc of its workforce, the census aims to address challenges such as resource allocation

and productivity enhancement. Tablets were distributed to crop reporting staff to support digital data collection.

In Bajaur, officials launched the district's first-ever agricultural census at a ceremony in Khar. Additional Deputy Commissioner Ali Raza underscored the activity's significance in determining land size, crop patterns and livestock numbers. Teams will visit households across all seven tehsils to collect data digitally.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Raza said the activity would not only determine the accurate size of agriculture land, fruit and vegetable farms and cattle heads but would also help develop the agriculture sector in the district.

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Agriculture Minister Sardar Mir Akbar launched the census at the Agriculture Complex in Muzaffarabad.

In a detailed briefing, PBS Director Mohammad Sohaib highlighted the objectives of the census, the use of digital tools, GIS technology, and monitoring systems employed for field operations.

He informed attendees that 297 enumerators and supervisors had been trained to collect data digitally.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Sardar Mir Akbar highlighted the significance of precise agricultural and livestock data for effective government planning and expressed hope that the digital agricultural census would provide accurate and timely information to strengthen AJK's agricultural sector and contribute to economic progress.

Mubarak Zeb Khan in Islamabad, Amjad Mahmood in Lahore, Tahir Siddiqui in Karachi, Qurban Ali Khushik in Dadu, Manzoor Ali in Peshawar, Anwarullah Khan in Bajaur and Tariq Naqash in Muzaffarabad contributed to this report

Courtesy: Dawn

## In talks with PM, UAE president hints at more investment

The United Arab Emirates expressed keen interest in collaboration with Pakistan in the minerals and agriculture sectors during a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Rahim Yar Khan.

During the meeting, both leaders expressed their shared commitment to deepening economic, political, and cultural ties, said a statement. They discussed a wide range of issues, including economic collaboration, regional stability, climate change, and promotion of mutual interests on the global stage.

Earlier, President Nahyan drove the vehicle and the prime minister accompanied him. The premier welcomed the UAE president, saying Pakistan was his second home. He also praised the UAE's leadership and its role as a key partner



of Pakistan in development and investment. He underscored Pakistan's readiness to expand cooperation in sectors, such as renewable energy, technology, trade, infrastructure, and skill development.

President Nahyan highlighted the UAE's keen interest in collaborating with Pakistan in the mining, minerals, and agriculture sectors. He said the economy was moving

in the right direction under the leadership of PM Shehbaz.

He emphasised that this renewed economic vigour had created prospects for enhanced bilateral investment and collaboration. In his remarks, the president reiterated the UAE's commitment to enhancing its longstanding partnership with Pakistan, emphasising the importance of people-to-people connec-

tions and shared prosperity.

PM Shehbaz extended his gratitude to the president for the UAE's unwavering support during critical times, particularly in humanitarian assistance and development aid. Both leaders reaffirmed their dedication to peace and progress in the region, vowing to work closely on matters of mutual interest.

In a subsequent post on 'X', the premier said, "Delighted to meet with my dear brother, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of UAE, today in Rahimyar Khan. Reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to further strengthen Pak-UAE cooperation and elevate our ties to a mutually beneficial strategic partnership. Matters of mutual interest including investments in Pakistan were discussed with a resolve to move forward together."

Courtesy: Dawn

## PIA returns to European skies after four years

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) resumed flights to Europe on Friday, marking the end of a four-and-a-half-year ban imposed by EU regulators following a pilot licence scandal and a deadly crash in Karachi.

PIA's inaugural flight PK749 (Boeing 777) departed Islamabad International Airport at around 12:40pm, heading to Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport, where weather conditions were clear. The flight carried 313 passengers, while 309 are scheduled to return from Paris to Islamabad.

Onboard the inaugural flight were several key officials, including the CEO, chief commercial officer, PIA spokesperson, deputy general manager (Brand and Public Affairs), chief HR officer and chief technical officer, among others.

At the airport, which was beautifully decorated, all immigration counters were activated to facilitate passengers travelling on the inaugural flight to Paris.

"This is the first time I am travelling with PIA," AFP quoted passenger Shumaila Rana, as say-

ing. "I'm nervous and I'm having a lot of anxiety, but I'm hoping it's gonna be a good flight," said the 38-year-old school teacher living in Germany.

According to aviation sources, the flight landed in Paris at 4:40pm local time.

After a long wait, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) announced in November 2024 the lifting of the ban on Pakistani airlines operating in EU countries.

However, clearance to fly in Britain and the United States remains pending. PIA has approached the UK's Department for Transport to seek approval for resuming flights to London, Manchester and Birmingham.

The EASA imposed a ban on Pakistani airlines flying to Europe in June 2020, following a tragic crash in Karachi that killed nearly 100 people, as well as statements from the then aviation minister regarding the pilot licence scandal.

PM congratulates nation  
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif



congratulated the nation on departure of PIA's first flight to Paris after the lifting of EASA ban on its flights to European countries. In a statement, he said the restoration of PIA flights to Europe will facilitate the overseas Pakistanis as they will benefit from the direct flights.

He noted that due to suspension of flights, the national flag carrier had to incur huge losses worth billions of dollars and also had to lose its reputation. "By the grace of Allah Almighty, the incumbent government has restored the identity of the national airlines," the prime minister said. After restoration of flights to Europe, PIA will move towards news development and progress, he added.

In this regard, he said Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Min-

ister Ishaq Dar, Aviation Minister Khawaja Asif, the relevant departments and their officers and staff deserved appreciation.

Mr Asif, who inaugurated the departure of PIA's flight to Paris, called restoration of flights to Europe a "major value addition" that would make PIA more attractive to potential buyers.

This significant milestone marks PIA's renewed presence in one of the most important international aviation markets, he added.

Addressing the gathering at the airport, Mr Asif commended PIA's management for their efforts in achieving this milestone and highlighted the strategic importance of restoring operations to Paris and the EU.

Courtesy: Dawn

## LCCI VP Inaugurates Pakistan International Culinary Championship 2025

The Vice President of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry Shahid Nazir Chaudhry on Tuesday inaugurated the Pakistan International Culinary Championship 2025, which saw participation not only from Pakistani chefs but also from young chefs representing 12 other countries. The event also attracted the President of the Chef Association of Pakistan, Ahmad Shafiq, along with a large number of business community members. In his address, Vice President Shahid Nazir Chaudhry congratulated the Chef Association of Pakistan team for successfully organising the seventh annual championship. He highlighted that this event is unique, not just in Pakistan but

internationally and has garnered global recognition. The championship provides both local and international chefs an opportunity to showcase their skills and learn from experts in the field. The four-day event saw the participation of nearly 5,000 young chefs, with those reaching the final stages set to win prizes worth Rs5 million. The competition featured various categories, including professional cooking, food art and the demonstration of modern culinary techniques. Shahid Nazir Chaudhry emphasized the importance of organising such events and stated that the Pakistan International Culinary Championship 2025 is not only an important platform for skill development for young



people, but also promotes women empowerment, enhances Pakistan's positive image globally and helps prepare food industry professionals to meet international standards. He further noted that this championship is not just a competition but also a fantastic learning opportunity. He urged the youth to fully utilize this plat-

form to showcase their skills and take their expertise to the international level. He expressed hope that this championship would not only mark a milestone for young chefs but would also play a pivotal role in promoting Pakistan's culinary sector on the global stage.

Courtesy: The Nation

## Govt notifies pension reforms to cut expenses

The government on Wednesday notified major reforms to the country's pension system, abolishing multiple pensions and shifting future pensionable benefit calculations to an average of the salaries drawn over the last two years of service, instead of the last pay drawn before retirement.

In a series of notifications issued on the first day of 2025, the Ministry of Finance said these changes had been approved on the recommendations of the Pay and Pension Commission-2020 (PPC) and come into force with immediate effect.

These were announced as part of the 2024-25 federal budget and approved by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet in June last year for implementation with effect from July 1, 2024, but were notified after six months.

According to the first notification, henceforth "pension shall be calculated on the basis of average of pensionable emoluments drawn during last 24 months of service prior to retirement". This puts new pensioners at a disadvantage, who were earlier entitled to such benefits on the basis of the last pay drawn on retirement.

In the second order, the finance ministry said that "in the event

where a person becomes entitled to more than one pension, such [a] person shall only be authorised to opt to draw one of the pensions". This is subject to the provision that "where a federal government employee becomes entitled to a pension, such federal government employee shall be not eligible to receive such pensions".

In addition, "the in-service/pensioner spouse shall be eligible for pension of his/her spouse in addition to his/her own pay/pension". This decision was announced in parliament by then-finance minister Ishaq Dar as part of the 2023-24 budget, but remained unimplemented due to resistance from powerful "pensioners drawing double and multiple pensions", an official said.

In yet another notification, the government also slightly curtailed the future benefits for an increase in pensions. It said "the net pension (gross pension minus commuted portion of pension) calculated at the time of retirement will be termed as baseline pension" and "any increase in pension shall be granted on baseline pension".

Also, "each increase in pension shall be maintained as a separate amount until the time the federal government decides to review and authorise any additional pensionary benefits" and the baseline pen-



sion would be reviewed by the pay and pension committee after every three years. However, the current pension of existing pensioners as of January 1, 2025 shall be treated as a baseline pension. Moreover, baseline pension is deemed to include restored commuted portion of the pension, as and when restored.

It may be noted that the government has already notified a contributory pension scheme for future employees with effect from July 1, 2024 for civilians and exactly a year later for armed forces personnel. For this, the government has already established a Rs10bn pension fund through a budgetary allocation.

According to the Ministry of Finance, all pension reforms were in line with recommendations of the PPC-2020 for existing pensioners/employees to curtail a future increase in pension costs without compromising on the government's pension philosophy.

It claimed that under civil service regulations, the federal government had the powers and the "right of changing the provisions in these regulations regarding pay, allowance, leave and pension, from time to time at its discretion, and of interpreting in case of dispute".

The ministry is also seeking penalties for voluntary retirement. "A federal government employee may opt for retirement after putting in 25 years of service; however, the employee shall be liable to a flat reduction rate of 3pc per year in gross pension based on the number of completed months from the date of retirement to the date of superannuation," draft rules suggested.

Such flat reduction in gross pension shall be capped at 20pc. However, this penalty would apply in cases of armed forces and civil armed forces voluntary retirement only if retirement is sought or granted prior to the prescribed rank service.

Courtesy: Dawn

## Pakistan, China commit to top-notch CPEC 2.0

Pakistan and China have reaffirmed their commitment to high-quality development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) 2.0, with emphasis on industrialisation, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), clean energy, agriculture and livelihood projects.

This was agreed between the two sides in the 5th meeting of the CPEC Joint Working Group on International Cooperation and Coordination (JWG-ICC) held in Beijing, the Foreign Office spokesperson said in a statement.

The meeting was co-chaired by Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong. They acknowledged the pivotal role of CPEC in promoting regional connectivity, cooperation and common prosperity.

Foreign secretary, Chinese vice minister discuss bilateral ties; ambassador sees more strategic cooperation in future

The two sides reviewed the progress made since the fourth meeting of the JWG-ICC in Islamabad on Jan 21, 2024.

The foreign secretary described CPEC as the cornerstone of economic cooperation between the two countries and a “shining symbol of the enduring friendship”.

The Chinese vice foreign minister highlighted the new avenues introduced under CPEC 2.0 growth, livelihood, innovation, open and green corridor and their integration with Pakistan’s national development framework centred on five Es: exports, e-Pakistan, energy, environment and equity.

The two sides expressed their resolve to deepen cooperation in the fields of Bilateral ties and expressed satisfaction over the “positive trajectory” of bilateral relations and reaffirmed their commitment to further deepening their all-weather strategic cooperative partnership.



They also exchanged views on a range of regional and international issues and agreed to further enhance their mutual coordination and consultations, including through high-level exchanges and dialogue mechanisms.

Foreign Secretary Baloch described Pakistan-China relationship as “special and unique” and noted that the government and people of Pakistan deeply cherished this enduring friendship.

The meeting reviewed the entire spectrum of practical cooperation between the two countries.

The two sides underscored the need to strengthen their mutual coordination at the multilateral forums, including at the United Nations Security Council.

The foreign secretary held a meeting with Executive Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu. They exchanged views on Pakistan-China relations as well as on regional and international issues of common interest. Strategic cooperation

Separately, the ambassador of China to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong, said the Pakistan-China strategic cooperation will continue to deepen in the future.

Addressing a ceremony regarding the Chinese New Year 2025, the ambassador said that last month, Khunjerab Pass started year-round functioning and called it a “landmark progress”.

He added that the Chashma Nuclear Power Plant Unit 5, which can create 40,000 di-

rect and indirect jobs during the construction period, has officially started. This project has huge potential for practical cooperation between the two countries, the ambassador said.

“We stand ready to continue to strengthen the development strategies with Pakistan, deepen mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation, forge an upgraded version of the CPEC construction, and accelerate the building of a closer China-Pakistan community of shared future in the new era.”

He said President Xi Jinping maintained close communication with the president and prime minister of Pakistan recently and agreed to promote China-Pakistan strategic cooperation.

He said China was ready to provide new opportunities for the world with the development of Chinese modernisation. The envoy thanked the president and prime minister for writing to President Xi on the earthquake in Xizang earlier this month.

“We firmly believe that regardless of sudden natural disasters or complex and severe external environments, we can overcome difficulties and move forward courageously, and continuously push forward the great cause of building a strong country and achieving national rejuvenation.”

He said China’s economy has continued to stabilise and improve, with the total grain output reaching a record 1.4 trillion jin for the first time.

Courtesy: Dawn

## Envoy defends media curbs at Washington gathering CPEC2.0

Concerns over new media restrictions in Pakistan took centre-stage at a diplomatic gathering in the US capital on Tuesday night, prompting Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Shaikh to reaffirm Islamabad’s commitment to freedom of expression.



Speaking at the Ambassador Insider Series dialogue, hosted by The Washington Diplomat, Mr Shaikh faced his first question on the issue when moderator Adrienne Ross raised concerns about the restrictions, asking whether the Pakistani government was attempting to muzzle the press and limit free expression.

The ambassador dismissed the notion that the amendments were designed to curb free speech, instead drawing parallels with measures implemented by other governments to regulate social media.

He acknowledged that these measures are part of a broader legal framework that also applies to print and electronic media. The move to regulate social and digital media, he explained, was driven by “the irresponsible use of digital space and the spread of fake news.”

Citing Australia’s recent efforts to protect children from online harm, Mr Shaikh said Pakistan was also working to “regulate social media to make it more responsible.”

However, the host who is also a Fox News anchor questioned how these new restrictions would affect mainstream television channels. In response, the ambassador emphasised the importance of responsible journalism, stating that the government welcomes it, even when it involves constructive criticism.

He also stressed the need for journalist training, and noted that authorities in Islamabad

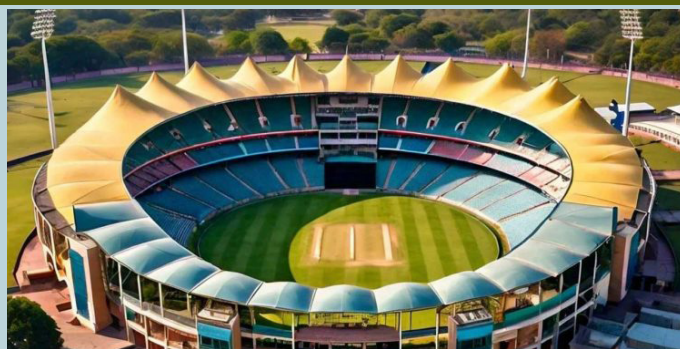
Courtesy: Dawn

## Gaddafi Stadium gets world-class makeover for Champions Trophy 2025

The iconic Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore has undergone a world-class transformation, setting the stage for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. With state-of-the-art upgrades, new VVIP enclosures, and cutting-edge infrastructure enhancements, Pakistan's premier cricket venue is primed to host at least four matches, including the second semifinal. If India does not reach the final, Lahore could also host the tournament's grand finale instead of Dubai.

The renovation of Gaddafi Stadium has been nothing short of spectacular. Two VVIP enclosures, named after cricketing legends Zaheer Abbas and Majid Khan, have been added to honor their contributions to Pakistan cricket. The installation of modern LED floodlights, high-resolution SMD screens, and upgraded seating has significantly enhanced the viewing experience, ensuring that the stadium meets the highest international standards.

A unique moat with an iron grill



now encircles the playing field – an innovative feature designed for both security and drainage. This measure will prevent pitch intrusions while also serving as a rain-water reservoir, allowing for faster drainage and minimal interruptions due to weather.

Five killed in Peshawar gun attack  
To ensure uninterrupted play, a protective net will be placed over the moat to keep the ball in play. The stadium's pitches and outfield have been meticulously prepared, ensuring high-quality wickets that will produce exciting contests between bat and ball. Gaddafi Stadium's facelift comes at the

perfect time, ahead of a thrilling cricketing calendar. Apart from hosting the ICC Champions Trophy, Lahore will also welcome a high-profile Tri-Nation Series featuring Pakistan, South Africa, and New Zealand – a crucial prelude to the global event.

Adding to the excitement, the venue is gearing up for HBL PSL 10, where it will host high-octane franchise cricket. The home of Lahore Qalandars, fresh off their back-to-back PSL titles, will once again witness electrifying encounters under the newly installed energy-efficient floodlights.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has ensured that the stadium meets the highest international standards. Under the leadership of Director Infrastructure Qazi Jawwad, the pavilion and office building are fully completed, with only minor furnishing tasks remaining. Meanwhile, road relaying and landscape beautification are in their final stages.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia forge stronger tourism ties, unlocking unprecedented travel opportunities

With assistance from the Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) and Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA), the stadium has been given a fresh and picturesque look, making it an architectural spectacle. To mark this milestone, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is set to inaugurate the revamped Gaddafi Stadium, reaffirming the government's commitment to making Pakistan a premier international cricketing destination.

Courtesy: The Nation

### Premiere of film “Baap” held in Lahore

The premiere of the film Baap, directed by Nadeem Cheema and starring Moammar Rana, was held in Lahore last night. The event was attended by prominent figures from the film industry, including director Syed Noor, Moammar Rana, singer Sher Miandad, and actors Meera, Laila, Megha, Honey Shehzadi, and Saman Sheikh.

Other notable attendees included comedians Zafri Khan and Tahir Naushad, as well as artists Imran Ahmed, Nawaz Khan, Naeem Wazir, Jarrar Rizvi, Nooran Lal, Pappu Samrat, Fadi, Iman, and Saif Ali Khan.

Speaking to the media, director Nadeem Cheema shared that

Baap addresses a social issue that resonates not only in Pakistan but also in neighboring countries. He highlighted that the film portrays the deep bond between a father and daughter, carrying an important message for the audience.

Veteran director Syed Noor praised Nadeem Cheema's talent and hard work, predicting success for his efforts. He also commended Moammar Rana's versatile acting skills, expressing confidence that Baap would be among the best films of Rana's career.

Parliament joint session postponed indefinitely after rapid-fire legislation

Film star Meera referred to Moammar Rana as “Pakistan's



Salman Khan” and said she attended the premiere to support him. Filmmaker Safdar Malik and actors Nawaz Khan, Zafri Khan, Sher Miandad, Megha, and Honey Shehzadi also congratulated Nadeem Cheema and Moammar Rana on their achievement. They lauded the director for tackling a unique and sensitive subject, emphasizing the audience's ap-

preciation for such thought-provoking cinema.

Moviegoers, after watching Baap, expressed that films addressing such heartfelt and meaningful topics should be encouraged. They particularly applauded Moammar Rana's outstanding performance in the film.

Courtesy: The Nation

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