

Positive Post

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



Greenwich University

April in History

April 8, 1950: Liaquat-Nehru agreement is signed in New Delhi for Inter-Dominion problems.

April 18–24, 1955: Pakistan participates in the Bandung Conference.

April 22, 1961: Government institutes Film Awards.

April 6, 1970: First ordinance factory is inaugurated at Ghazipur.

April 21, 1972: Martial Law lifted; constitutional rule is restored in the country. Hamoodur-Rehman is sworn in as Chief Justice of Pakistan.

April 10, 1973: 1973 Constitution of Pakistan enacted by the National Assembly.

April 6, 1978: First of the 13 volume exhaustive Urdu Dictionary is published by Taraqqi-i-Urdu Board.

April 8, 1982: Jahangir Khan wins British Open Squash Championship.

April 20, 1988: Jahangir Khan wins seventh Squash title in a row.

April 25, 1991: Jahangir Khan creates history by winning British Open Squash title for the record tenth consecutive time.

April 26, 1992: Pakistan's Alam Channa enters Guinness Book of World Records as the tallest man in the world.

April 15, 1999: Pakistan conducts test of a nuclear capable short range ballistic missile, Shaheen.

April 16, 1999: Pakistan won Coca-Cola Cup final at Sharjah crushing India by 8 wickets

April 26, 2006: Pervez Musharraf lays foundation stone of Diamir Bhasha Dam.

Pakistan's standing in the global rankings

Overview

Pakistan observed a slight improvement in the overall international rankings in 2018 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 ranked 112th out of 167 countries in the Democracy Index scoring 4.17 out of 10 in 2018 compared to 4.26 in 2017.

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 150th out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index scoring 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 ranked 139th out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index scoring 43.24 out of 100 in 2018 compared to 43.55 in 2017.

Index from 0 (most press freedom) to 100 (least press freedom)

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

TERRORISM INDEX

Pakistan ranked 5th out of 163 countries in the Terrorism Index scoring 8.18 out of 10 in 2018 compared to 8.40 in 2017.

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

Pakistan ranked 131st out of 180 countries in the Economic Freedom Index scoring 54.4 out of 100 in 2018 compared to 52.8 out of 100 in 2017.

Index from 0 (repressed) to 100 (free)

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 and Political outcomes.



KRC's delegate Ali Jillani's was selected as the lead discussant at the UN General Assembly's High Level Political Forum (HLPF) Review 2021. He addressed the consultation involving over 150+ Member States delegations on behalf of Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS). Mr. Jillani thanked H.E. Mr. Alexander Marschik, Permanent Representative of Austria and H.E. Mr. Cheikh Niang, Permanent Representative of Senegal, co-facilitators for the intergovernmental negotiations for the ECOSOC and HLPF review process, as per General Assembly resolutions 74/298, 67/290, 70/299 and 72/305, for enhanced civil society integration and reassured the vital contribution that MGOs could make. He emphasized that stronger, action-oriented outcomes for both HLPF and ECOSOC could be achieved through the political leadership they provide for various constituents and intergovernmental entities across UN systems. Here is an overview of his intervention:

Specific comments section 1:

Para 4: We appreciate the spirit in the language here. It would be great if the ECOSOC deliberations could actually focus on the reduction of global economic and financial risks for developing and least developed

countries by reducing debt distress, curbing illicit financial flows, and protecting state policy space to safeguard public interest. This should also emphasize the need to redress prevalent inequalities, within and among countries, affecting the most marginalized.

Para 12: We welcome the para but would emphasize the need to effectively engage MGoS in the planning, implementation and review of the processes of the Multistakeholders' forum.

Specific comments section 2:

We would also like to propose the review of goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) alongside goal 17 as a cross cutting focus every year. We would also like to emphasize concretized analysis of interlinkages to address structural impediments as well as systemic barriers to the achievement of SDGs. We appreciate the cross-cutting issues reflected in the draft, and would like to add prioritization of human wellbeing, expansion of democratic spaces, corporate accountability and redress of inequalities of wealth, power and resources.

We appreciate the emphasis on inclusion of civil societies in the VLR process, and recommend that it should flow up with their inclusion



in the official delegations for the VNR process. The role of regional forums could also be enhanced for efficient follow up and review:

- 1) Submission of interim VNRs to the regional forums as well as introducing regional VNR follow up mechanism
- 2) HLPF should systematically integrate regional forum outcomes with a flowback into the regional, sub-regional and national levels.

In the MGoS section, we appreciate the clear commitment on 'meaningful participation of a diverse and inclusive range of major groups and other stakeholders' under the self-organizing principle 'in all aspects of its work'.

Para 40: We would prefer not to list each of the marginalized groups separately here as it may not be exhaustive but if that is the intention then we would like to ensure the inclusion of older persons, migrants & refugees, people with disabilities and those affected by HIV in the listing.

Finally, in **para 43**, we call for the inclusion of 'stakeholders assessment of the progress' in the reporting process as well as uploading shadow reports alongside VNRs on UN websites.

He appreciated the co-facilitators' commitment to the ECOSOC and HLPF reforms and their inclusive approach to the process.

Pakistan's Economy Shows Signs of a Nascent Recovery

Notwithstanding, the recent rise in COVID cases, Pakistan has been showing signs of a fragile economic recovery with a gradual resumption of economic dynamism, according to a new World Bank report.

Pakistan's economic growth is expected to reach 1.3 percent in FY2021 and strengthen to an average of 2.7 percent for FY2022-23, according to the Pakistan Development Update released today. The baseline economic growth forecast, however, is highly uncertain, especially given the third and more-contagious wave of the pandemic currently circulating in the country. Private consumption is estimated to have picked up over July to December 2020, in part due to the record increase in remittances inflows, social assistance support from the Ehsaas program, the government's construction package, and a return to pre-COVID mobility levels from September 2020. Investment is also estimated to be recovering, as machinery imports and cement sales both recorded double-digit growth rates during this period.

"It is crucial to sustain the positive reform momentum to continue to boost the competitiveness of Pakistan's economy and lay a strong



foundation for a more robust, inclusive and sustainable recovery," said Najy Benhassine, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan. "Increasing competitiveness and stimulating private investment and exports will require continued macroeconomic stability, maintenance of a market-determined exchange rate, and improving the business environment to enable all firms, particularly SMEs, to access markets and compete openly in a leveled playing field. The potential for a strong recovery and a growth acceleration is there. Reforms to make it happen need to be further sustained."

Given the scope and magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis, understanding how the pandemic affected

Pakistan's private sector will be key to informing the design of new policy measures or refining existing ones to prevent widespread long-term firm closures and job losses. This edition of the Pakistan Development Update also presents the findings of two waves of World Bank Business Pulse Surveys and suggests several key policy measures to further support the recovery of the private sector and the Pakistani economy.

"Despite some recovery in the private sector, many firms remain vulnerable and require support to prevent closures and further job losses. Policy measures that prevent permanent firm closures and further job losses will contribute significantly to sustaining the

recovery," said Derek H. C. Chen, World Bank Senior Economist for Pakistan.

The policy measures that can be considered include enhancing private sector access to formal finance, in particular for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, streamlining regulatory and administrative requirements to ease compliance costs, and providing support to firms in digitizing and establishing an online presence.

The Pakistan Development Update is a companion piece to the South Asia Economic Focus, a twice-a-year World Bank report that examines economic developments and prospects in the South Asia region and analyzes policy challenges faced by countries. The Spring 2021 edition titled South Asia Vaccinates, launched on March 31, 2021, shows that economic activity in South Asia is bouncing back, but growth is uneven, recovery remains fragile, and the economic outlook is precarious. The report also focuses on the different dimensions of vaccine deployment and provides a cost-benefit analysis of vaccination in the region.

Courtesy: World Bank.com

Pakistani climbers summit Nepal's 8,091m Annapurna peak

Two men, Sirbaz Khan and Muhammad Abdul Joshi, became the first Pakistani climbers to summit the 8,091-metre high Annapurna peak in Nepal on Friday.

They began the first push to the summit on April 13 but didn't succeed as the ropes were not fixed to the top. The second push began the next day, which again was unsuccessful as the duo ran out of ropes. Following this, a helicopter was called to bring them down to Camp IV of the peak at 6,900m.

According to the team's social media updates, Friday evening, amid "thunderstorms" and "tons of snow", Khan and Joshi left from the base camp again. At 1:17pm today, they became the first Pakistanis to stand on top of Annapurna. The climbers hail from Hunza.



The summit was dedicated to mountaineer and porter, Muhammad Ali Sadpara, who lost his life in the winter expedition to K2 in late March.

Joshi, Khan, expedition manager Saad Munawar and photographer

Kamran on Bike left for Nepal earlier this month.

In a social media post, Munawar said, "This is not the success of the climbers only but (of) the mountaineering community of Pakistan. Time has come for our Unsung

Heroes to get the respect, recognition, and appreciation that they deserve."

This summit is dedicated to our big brother and the best mountaineer Pakistan ever produced: Muhammad Ali Sadpara, he added.

Photo: Instagram/Saad Munawar Mount Annapurna is known as the 10th highest of all the 8,000m peaks in China, Nepal, and Pakistan. It is said to be one of the most treacherous mountains to climb.

The three countries are home to the 14 highest peaks in the world. The world's tallest mountain Everest (8,848m) is located in Nepal. There are five 8,000m peaks in Pakistan i.e. K2, Gasherbrum 1 and 2, Broad Peak, and Nanga Parbat.

Courtesy: Samaa

PM appoints Farrukh Habib information state minister



Prime Minister Imran Khan has appointed PTI MNA Farrukh Habib state minister of Information.

Habib will be working alongside newly - appointed Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry. The former will take his oath for the office.

In 2018, Habib was appointed federal parliamentary secretary of Pakistan Railways.

In a cabinet shuffle earlier this month, Fawad Chaudhry was given charge of the information ministry which was previously overlook by Shibli Faraz. The later was recently re-elected to the Senate from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and has been given the science and technology portfolio now.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has made multiple changes to the cabinet after the Senate elections.

Courtesy: Samaa

Steel Mills gears up to produce 50,000 cylinders of oxygen

Efforts are being made to revive the oxygen plant of Pakistan Steel Mills to meet shortages during the third wave of coronavirus.

A technical team reached PSM on the instructions of the federal government.

A meeting was chaired by PSM CEO Shuja Hassan to look into to the possibility of reviving the defunct oxygen gas plant.

“The plant will be restored soon,” the CEO said. “The machinery required in the plant will be installed. Pakistan Army engineers will assist in the process of reviving the plant.”

The Federal Industry and Production Division formed the three-member technical team: CEO Shuja Hassan, K.B. Ali of the Engineering Development Board and Saad Alam, the operations head of



the oxygen plant.

According to experts, 50,000 cylinders of oxygen can be extracted daily from the plant. The biggest problem will be the immediate availability of spare parts. The corroded parts need to be replaced.

The plant has not been in use since 2015.

Courtesy: Samaa

Introducing e-voting machines to make election process credible: PM Khan



Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Sunday that the main objective behind the formation of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was to bring powerful and corrupt people before the law.

The prime minister said this in a video message on the 25th foundation day of his party. He said he came into politics to ensure the supremacy of law in the country.

The youth played a cardinal role in PTI's rise and acceptability among the masses, according to PM Khan. The October 30, 2011 rally in Lahore took him and his party to new heights of popularity. He said it led to the party's victory in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the 2013 elections,

despite massive rigging of polls.

The prime minister said he demanded the then government open four constituencies, but these demands fell on deaf ears. Consequently, he said, his party organized a 126-day-long sit-in in Islamabad, but no attention was given to electoral reforms.

The PTI government is now working on introducing internationally recognized electronic voting machines, he said.

These machines will make the election process credible and everyone would accept the results, PM Khan added.

Courtesy: Dawn

KMC issued notice on the poor condition of Karachi roads



The Sindh High Court issued Thursday notices to the city and provincial governments over the poor condition of Karachi's flyovers and roads.

A petitioner approached the court and said that roads are deteriorating by the end and must be repaired.

The petition mentioned the

Shaheed-e-Millat Road, Shah Faisal Colony and Civic Centre flyovers, Liaquatabad flyover, Jinnah Tower, Quaidabad flyover, Nipa Chowranghi, and the University Road.

He remarked that the expansion joints need to be repaired.

The court has asked the authorities to submit their replies in the case.

Courtesy: Samaa

PM Imran Khan launches Rehmatul Lil Alameen Scholarship Programme across Pakistan



Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday launched the Rs27.93bn Rehmatul-Lil Alameen scholarship program across Pakistan.

The program will help the students of underprivileged segments of society access undergraduate education.

The premier, while addressing the inauguration ceremony of the scholarship programme, said that the federal government will spend Rs5.5 bn every year on 70,000 scholarships.

"No nation can progress without education," the premier asserted, adding that the country cannot develop unless the powerful are brought under the rule of law.

The program will be implemented in 129 public sector universities across the country.

A budget of 27.93 billion rupees has been approved for this National-level program which will be used in the next five years.

The provinces are also pursuing the Rehmatul-Lil Alameen scholarship program.

The scholarship program will be launched in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, for which the budget allocation will be Rs427 million.

In Punjab, the annual budget of one billion rupees has also been approved for this scholarship program.

Courtesy: The News

England to play Tests in Pakistan next year: Fawad Chaudhary



Federal Minister for information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhary has revealed that England will tour Pakistan again next year for a full Test series.

The Eoin Morgan-led side is already scheduled to visit the country in October for a two-match series ahead of T20I World Cup in India.

The federal minister made the announcement on Twitter after meeting with the British High Commissioner to Pakistan Christian Turner.

The news will be an exciting one for the cricket fans in the country as England have not visited Pakistan since 2005.

Courtesy: Samaa

NCOC meeting the federal minister for education and professional training



After NCOC meeting the Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Mr. Shafqat Mahmood said that no exams will take place in the country till 15th of June, 2021 decides NCOC.

A level and AS exams have been cancelled as well. Only exception is given to A2 exam that will take place under strict SOPs.

Courtesy: www.mofept.gov.pk

Karachi family launches mobile restaurant to tackle unemployment amid pandemic



While the coronavirus pandemic affected the livelihood of many people across the country, a Karachi family has turned it into a blessing by setting up a mobile restaurant to make ends meet.

Mohammad Abbas has 34 years of experience as a chef, yet he was let go of by his employer during the pandemic.

But Abbas did not shy away and instead opened a mobile restaurant with his family on Tariq Road. It has since gained the attention of many people.

"I have been working at a restaurant for some time," he told SAMAA TV. "It has been 34 years. When the lockdown was imposed, I decided to set up a soup cart and it became a hit. I started selling

Chinese food and it was well received here with customers coming from distant areas."

The business is good here, he says. The menu includes several dishes. The chef says dried chicken chilli is his most popular dish.

"This was my husband's idea. He was quite worried and decided to start his own venture," Abbas' wife said. "I told him that we will support him."

About the operations, she said her daughter issues slips while she hands parcels to women. Her son delivers food to men, Abbas' wife said.

Abbas, however, said that he faces a few problems as his mobile restaurant is parked roadside

Courtesy: Samaa

Pakistan Calls in Army to Help Contain COVID-19 Spread

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan deployed the army into cities Friday to assist in enforcing coronavirus public safety restrictions to contain the pandemic outbreak, warning the country may soon be facing a health crisis similar to that of neighboring India unless the current tide of infections is reversed.

Khan addressed the nation after chairing an emergency meeting of his top advisors as the number of COVID-19 infections soar across the country of about 220 million people.

"I have also asked the Pakistan army to now come out on the streets and help our law enforcement, our police to ensure people are strictly following (COVID-19) SOPs (standard operating procedures), including wearing masks," he said.

Officials said hospitals in major Pakistani cities, including the capital, Islamabad, are nearly filled to capacity with coronavirus patients. Pakistan has recorded more than 784,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases, including at least 17,000 deaths, since the start of the pandemic early last year. Officials said Friday 144 deaths and nearly 5,900 new cases of infection had been reported in the last 24 hours.

Tighter restrictions

Pakistan's prime minister said people are still violating social distancing rules, noting that so far, he has resisted calls from health care



workers to impose a nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of the virus. But Khan added the government may not resist those calls for long.

"If our circumstances become the same as India, then we will have to close down cities. We really don't want to do that because we know that the poor suffer the most when lockdowns are imposed," Khan said.

Federal Minister Asad Umar, who heads the national response to the outbreak, said authorities were struggling to maintain the much-needed supply of oxygen to hospitals across Pakistan for COVID-19 patients, as the number of cases soars.

"We have reached 90% capacity of oxygen supplies and a big chunk of it is being used to treat patients with coronavirus infection," Umar said while speaking alongside Khan.

The Pakistani government has

imposed partial lockdowns in virus hotspots, closing all educational institutions in areas with a five percent positivity rate, banning public gatherings, sports events and wedding ceremonies.

The restrictions were further tightened Friday, restaurant dining was banned after 6 p.m., and only essential trade allowed after those hours.

Help offered to India

Meanwhile, Pakistan's prominent Edhi charity has offered to send its ambulances and medical staff to help Indian authorities deal with the devastating health crisis.

Faisal Edhi, the head of the Edhi Foundation, said he had conveyed his offer through a letter to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"We sympathize with you greatly and during this strenuous time, we would like to extend our help in the form of a fleet of 50 ambulances along with our services to

assist you in addressing, and further circumventing, the current health conditions," Edhi wrote.

Health workers attend to a patient at the Jumbo COVID-19 hospital in Mumbai, India, April 22, 2021. India reported the world's highest daily tally of COVID-19 cases for the second day Friday, surpassing 330,000 new infections amid an alarming shortage of oxygen for patients and beds in hospitals across the world's second most populous country.

"Pakistan's Edhi Foundation, founded by the late great Abdul Sattar Edhi, has done what most of the world's richest governments have declined to do: Extend an offer of assistance to an Indian nation deeply in need," tweeted Michael Kugelman, deputy Asia program director at Washington-based Wilson Center. "This is the example that must be set, and that the world must see.

The devastating health crisis in the neighboring country, prompted people in Pakistan to take to Twitter expressing sympathy and solidarity with Indians, and urging the Khan government to offer help to India, Pakistan's arch-rival. The hashtag #IndiaNeedsOxygen becoming a top trend Friday.

Tensions between India and Pakistan, the two nuclear-armed rivals, have gradually eased since February when their militaries agreed to restore a mutual truce in the disputed Kashmir region.

Courtesy: www.voanews.com

Mohammad Rizwan moves into top 10 of ICC T20I rankings

In-form Pakistan wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Rizwan has made his maiden entry into the top 10 of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Men's T20I Players Rankings.

The 28-year-old achieved this feat after unbeaten knocks of 82 and 91 in the first and third fixtures of the three-match T20I series against Zimbabwe.



In the latest ICC T20I batsman rankings, Rizwan gained five slots to reach the 10th position, overtaking the likes of England captain Eoin Morgan and India opener Rohit Sharma.

Rizwan is the second-highest ranked Pakistan batsman in the list, only behind captain Babar Azam who is now in third place.

Courtesy: Samaa

PM Khan to launch low-cost housing project in Sargodha

Prime Minister Imran Khan will lay the foundation stone of a low-cost housing project in Sargodha. It will be a part of the Naya Pakistan Housing Scheme.

Under the scheme, the Frontier Works Organization will construct 1,175 houses at six locations. The government has so far received 33,528 applications for the scheme. The PM has inaugurated new housing schemes in different cities as part of the government's plan of providing housing to all.

On April 8, the PM broke ground on a new residential building in Islamabad. Farash Town Apartments will be completed in two years, he said while addressing the inauguration ceremony. "We want to provide subsidised houses to those who can't afford it. Banks are not willing to give loans to poor people." The project will help us provide houses to 2,000 people who never thought they could afford a house.



The next day he laid the foundation stone of a housing project in Lahore. At least 35,000 apartments will be built by the Lahore Development Authority under the project.

Housing loans

On March 26, the government announced that people borrow up to Rs10 million to finance a house of 125 to 250 square yards (5 to 10 marla) or an apartment with a covered area of 2,000 square feet.

The government has doubled the

amount people can borrow under the central bank's markup subsidy for the housing finance scheme. The government has also doubled the limit for smaller houses, 125 square yards or apartments with a covered area of 1,250 square feet, to Rs6 million and removed price caps in both these categories.

It even slashed the markup rate to 3% for housing units that fall in projects approved by the Naya Pakistan Housing Development Authority, making it the most

affordable among all categories.

Pakistan allots houses to 1,500 labourers, widows

On March 18, the PM inaugurated Labour Colony Phase-I and Phase-II in Islamabad on Thursday. The government allotted houses to 1,518 labourers and widows under the scheme.

People earning less than Rs500,000 were given ownership rights of these homes. Around 3,000 individuals registered themselves under the Workers Welfare Fund. Of them, 1,500 were handed over these houses and flats through a draw.

The project spreads over 2,560 acres of land and comprises 1,008 apartments and 500 houses. This project was launched before but was abandoned due to a lack of funds. The government collaborated with the Workers Welfare Fund and completed the project under the Naya Pakistan Housing Programme.

Courtesy: Samaa

Bajwa, Blinken discuss peace process as US readies to quit Afghanistan

Hours after Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a telephonic conversation on Wednesday, the top Washington diplomat announced a coalition of NATO-led troops in Afghanistan will leave the country in coordination with a planned withdrawal by September 11.

Blinken's announcement comes ahead of a formal announcement of the end of two decades of fighting. Around 7,000 non-US forces from mainly NATO countries, but also from Australia, New Zealand, and Georgia, outnumber the 2,500 US troops in Afghanistan but still rely on US air support, planning, and leadership for their training mission.

In a statement, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said, during the phone talk, Gen Bajwa and Blinken discussed the Pakistan-brokered Afghan peace process and bilateral cooperation in various fields.

Gen Bajwa said that Pakistan will always support an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process based on the mutual consensus of all stakeholders.

During the conversation, Blinken also acknowledged Pakistan's continuous efforts for peace and stability in the region and pledged to further enhance bilateral relations, the statement added.

Blinken, who according to a State Department statement is in Brussels to "reaffirm the US commitment to the Transatlantic alliance", said in Belgian capital it was time for NATO allies to make good on its mantra that allies went into Afghanistan together and would leave together.

"I am here to work closely with our allies, with the [NATO] secretary-general, on the principle that we have established from the start: In together, adapt together and out together," he said in a televised statement at NATO Headquarters.



"We will work very closely together in the months ahead on a safe, deliberate, and coordinated withdrawal of our forces from Afghanistan," Blinken said, standing alongside NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

While NATO foreign and defence ministers were scheduled discuss their plans later on Wednesday via video conference, a senior NATO diplomat told Reuters that no ally was expected to oppose US President Joe Biden's formal announcement for a complete US withdrawal of troops by September 11.

JAPAN PRAISES PAKISTAN'S ROLE FOR AFGHAN PEACE:

Japanese Ambassador to Pakistan Kuninori Matsuda, in a meeting with COAS Bajwa at the General Headquarters (GHQ) on Wednesday, praised Pakistan's role for peace and stability in the region, particularly Afghan peace process, and vowed to further enhance ties with Pakistan.

Gen Bajwa said that Pakistan values its relations with Japan and acknowledges its efforts for regional stability.

The army chief and the ambassador discussed the regional security situation and measures to enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields.

Courtesy: Pakistan Today

Qibla Ayaz Reappointed as CII Chairman

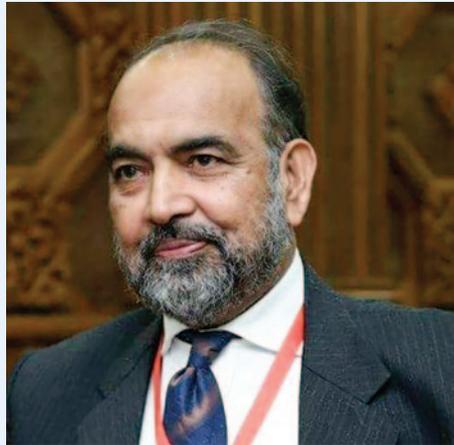
With the nomination of 11 new members on Friday, the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) reached its maximum strength, paving the way for Dr Qibla Ayaz, one of those appointed, to be its chairman.

President Dr Arif Alvi approved the reappointment of Dr Ayaz as chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII).

Ayaz had served as the chairman of the CII from 2017 till 2020. The president approved the appointments on 12 vacant seats of the CII under Article 228 of the Constitution, according to a press release issued by the President House.

The president also appointed Dr Umair Mahmood Siddiqui of Karachi University, Pir Abul Hassan Muhammad Shah of Bhera Sharif, Hassan Haseebur Rehman, Maulana Hameedul Haq Haqqani as members of the Council.

Other Council members appointed by the president included Allama Muhammad Hussain Akbar, Syed Ziaullah Shah Bukhari, Pirzada



Junaid Amin, Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Mufti Muhamamd Zubair, Syed Habib Irfani and Maulana Nasim Ali Shah.

The Council of Islamic Ideology is a constitutional body that advises the legislature whether or not a certain law is repugnant to Islam, namely to the Qur'an and Sunna.

Dr Qibla has held several important positions in

the University of Peshawar, including the Dean of Faculty of Islamic and Oriental Studies.

He has been lauded for bridging the gap between religious scholars and modern researchers.

As per the law, the CII should have a minimum of eight and maximum of 20 members, including its chairman.

The basic criterion for the appointment of CII members is that they should represent various schools of thought, having knowledge of the principles and philosophy of Islam as enunciated in the Holy Quran and Sunnah or having an understanding of the economic, political, legal or administrative problems of Pakistan.

It is considered that at least two of the members of the council have to be sitting or retired judges of the Supreme Court or high court and one member should be a woman, while at least four members should be scholars who have remained engaged in Islamic research or instruction for at least 15 years.

Courtesy: Express Tribune

Pakistan's exports reach decade-high of \$2.3b in March

Exports for March in Pakistan reached a decade-high of \$2.3 billion, with monthly figures showing growth year-on-year and over the previous month, Adviser to Prime Minister for Commerce and Investment Razak Dawood said Thursday.

"[The] ministry of commerce is glad to share that according to provisional figures, in March 2021 our exports increased to \$2.345 billion. This is an increase of 13.4% over February 2021. It is the monthly highest in last 10 years," Dawood wrote on Twitter.

"This is also the first time since 2011 that exports have crossed the \$2 billion mark for six consecutive months," she said.

The commerce adviser, however, termed the annual growth as misleading because last year's lockdown kept the industrial wheel extremely slow

."The export growth of 29.3% over March, 2020 should not be considered as it is misleading since there was a lockdown last year," Dawood said.

For the nine-month period of July-March of the current fiscal year, exports increased 7% to \$18.6 billion as compared to \$17.4 billion in the corresponding period last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce's data.

Due to a shortage in cotton, exports are expected to get an upset. Cotton is the main industrial input of textile industry that accounts for more than 60% of total exports.

The government is uncertain about giving a go-ahead to cotton and yarn import from India, the world's largest cotton producer. Analysts said textile industry's growth is tied with cotton import from India to keep up momentum of textile exports from the country.



"It's extremely important as there is significant shortfall in cotton production this year. Lack of cotton will result in reduced textile output and hence exports," Saad Hashemy, an executive of Karachi-based BMA Capital said.

Although some analysts said banning Indian cotton would not deprive Pakistan's textile industry of the raw material, they still believe cross-border trade is more cost-effective.

"Eventually we will be importing from China and Europe as we are doing it right now," said Tahir Abbas, head of Research at Arif Habib Limited.

Courtesy: GEO.TV

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