

Positive Post



Greenwich University
Pakistan - Mauritius

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

September in History

September 30, 1947:

Pakistan becomes member of United Nations (UN) by a unanimous vote of the Security Council.

September 11, 1948:

Founding father of nation Quaid-e-Azam dies in Karachi due to stroke.

September 14, 1948:

Khawaja Nazimuddin becomes Governor General of Pakistan.

September 6, 1950:

General Mohammad Ayub Khan, the first Pakistani, is appointed C-in-C of Pakistan Army.

September 12, 1956:

Huseyn Shaheed Suharwardy assumes office of appointed Prime Minister.

September 16 1959:

Government establishes Islamic Research Institute.

September 9, 1960:

Pakistan achieved its first Gold Medal in Olympics, defeating India in hockey by 1-0 at Rome.

September 17, 1964:

Fatima Jinnah filed her paper as candidate for the Presidential election.

September 23, 1990:

Sandak project signed between Pakistan and China at Beijing.

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.

PM launches Ehsaas Education Stipends programme

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday said the government was committed to sending all children to schools by giving incentives to them.

“Over 20 million children in the country are out of schools. Efforts are under way to ensure their inclusion in the educational mainstream,” the prime minister said while launching the Ehsaas Education Stipends programme.

The programme is aimed at providing financial assistance to deserving households for the education of their children at primary, secondary and higher secondary levels.

Rolled out in 160 districts across the country, the programme has been structured to give higher amount of stipend to girls as compared to boys.

The prime minister said ensuring education for all was a priority of the government, adding that stipends as incentives would be a step to encourage parents to send their children, particularly girls, to schools.

He said an educated woman could contribute more positively to society and lauded the policy of Ehsaas Education Stipends programme to give higher amount to the girls.

Deserving students in 160 districts will benefit from initiative

Terming educated human resources a great asset for a nation, he said it was important to provide educational opportunities to both boys and girls.

He dismissed the impression in western world that Pakistanis did not want to educate the girls. He recalled that during his visits to different parts of the country, he found no parents opposing the right of education for their daughters.

However, he said the factors including distant schools or unavailability of female teachers



could be a reason.

Imran Khan said it was mainly the responsibility of the government to provide facilities of education to all.

He appreciated that by use of information technology, the stipends would be disbursed transparently after checking of fake entries and ghost schools, adds APP.

The prime minister also announced a one-time Ehsaas graduation bonus of Rs3,000 to encourage girls to complete primary education. This award is being given to girl students from Ehsaas eligible families completing Grade 5. The graduation bonus has been designed to encourage girls' education till secondary level.

Special Assistant to the PM on Social Welfare Dr Sania Nishtar said under the Ehsaas Education Stipends programme, primary schoolgoing boys would get a quarterly stipend of Rs1,500 and girls Rs2,000; secondary school boys would receive Rs2,500 and girls Rs3,000; and at higher secondary level, boys will get Rs3,500 and girls Rs4,000.

She said stipends would be paid

biometrically to mothers on attainment of 70 per cent attendance of their children.

She said as part of 'Post-Covid Ehsaas Strategy', Ehsaas Education Stipends would empower the deserving families to remove financial barriers in accessing higher education.

Poverty is one of the most persistent barriers to acquiring education. Presently, there are 18.7 million children in the age group of 6 to 16 who remain out of school in the country and the fallout of Covid-19 has accentuated it.

The education conditional cash transfers are an important pillar of Ehsaas and are included in the Ehsaas framework as Policy No. 73.

The education conditional cash transfers serve the dual purpose of socially assisting vulnerable households and at the same time reducing the number of out of school children, which is an important outcome for Pakistan.

Pakistan has been running an education conditional cash transfer for primary school going children

called Waseela-i-Taleem since 2012 in selected districts. The programme encountered a number of challenges, including high administrative cost charged by NGOs that were administering the programme, high error and fraud due to the programme being paper-based, weak compliance monitoring, limited human resources to enroll students into the programme and low stipend amount being given to children.

Also, it was limited to Grade 5 and did not include secondary education.

Studies reveal that school drop-out rate increases with age, particularly for girls in classes 5 to 8, owing to distance from the school and other reasons.

Waseela-i-Taleem was limited in geographic scope and lacked appropriate federal-provincial partnership. Also, payments to beneficiaries were being made through the old Benazir Income Support Programme payment system which was plagued by many challenges.

On the other hand, Ehsaas Education Stipends programme has a cost-effective institutional infrastructure developed to be implemented nationwide while reliance on NGOs has been eliminated.

Thus the operational cost has been reduced from 8 to 3 per cent. The end-to-end digitisation of a number of processes has eliminated the space for abuse in terms of ineligible children being enrolled. The compliance monitors have been hired and a project monitoring unit has been established.

Also, through a memorandum of understanding signed with the National Commission on Human Development, additional 1000 staff members have been engaged to enroll students. The stipend amount has been doubled for primary school going children and further increased for girls.

Courtesy: Dawn

SpaceX to launch private, all civilian crew into Earth orbit

SpaceX is set to launch four people into space a three-day mission that is the first to orbit the Earth with exclusively private citizens on board, as Elon Musk's company enters the space tourism fray.

The "Inspiration4" mission caps a summer that saw billionaires Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos cross the final frontier, on Virgin Galactic and Blue Origin spaceships respectively, a few days apart in July.

The SpaceX flight has been chartered by American billionaire Jared Isaacman, the 38 year old founder and CEO of payment processing company Shift4 Payment. He is also a seasoned pilot.

The exact price he paid SpaceX hasn't been disclosed, but it runs into the tens of millions of dollars.

The mission itself is far more ambitious in scope than the few weightless minutes Virgin Galactic and Blue Origin customers can buy.

The SpaceX Crew Dragon will be flying further than the orbit of the International Space Station.

"The risk is not zero," said Isaacman in an episode of a Netflix documentary about the mission.

"You're riding a rocket at 17,500 miles (28,000 kilometers) per hour around the Earth. In that kind of environment there's risks."



SpaceX has already given no fewer than ten astronauts rides to the ISS on behalf of NASA but this will be the first time taking non-professional astronauts.

Lift-off is scheduled for Wednesday from 8:00 pm Eastern Time (0000 GMT) from launch pad 39A, at NASA's Kennedy Center in Florida, from where the Apollo missions to the Moon took off.

'Are we going to the Moon?' In addition to Isaacman, who is the mission commander, three non-public figures were selected for the voyage via a process that was first advertised at the Super Bowl in February.

Each crew member was picked to represent a pillar of the mission.

The youngest, Hayley Arceneaux, is a childhood bone cancer survivor, who represents "hope."

She will become the first person with a prosthetic to go to space.

"Are we going to the Moon?" she asked, when she was offered her spot.

"Apparently people haven't gone there in decades. I learned that," she laughed, in the documentary.

The 29-year-old was picked because she works as a Physician Assistant in Memphis for St. Jude's Hospital, the charitable beneficiary of Inspiration4.

One of the donors secured the seat of "generosity": Chris Sembroski, 42, is a former US Air Force veteran who now works in the aviation industry.

The last seat represents "prosperity" and was offered to Sian Proctor, a 51-year-old earth science professor who, in 2009, narrowly missed out on becoming a NASA astronaut.

She will be only the fourth African American woman to go to space.

The crew's training has lasted months and has included experiencing high G force on a centrifuge a giant arm that rotates rapidly.

They have also gone on parabolic flights to experience weightlessness for a few seconds and completed a high altitude, snowy trek on Mount Rainier in the northwestern United States.

They spent time at the SpaceX base, though the flight itself will be fully autonomous.

Over the three days of orbit, their sleep, heart rate, blood and cognitive abilities will be analyzed.

Tests will be carried out before and after the flight to study the effect of the trip on their body.

The idea is to accumulate data for future missions with private passengers.

The stated goal of the mission is to make space accessible for more people, although space travel remains for the moment only partially open to a privileged few.

"In all of human history, fewer than 600 humans have reached space," said Isaacman. "We are proud that our flight will help influence all those who will travel after us"

Courtesy: Dawn

Pakistan files record 150,000 tax returns in a day

The Federal Board of Revenue has said that it has received a record 150,000 tax returns in a day on September 28.

The deadline for filing income tax returns is September 30. The FBR has announced no further extension in the deadline for Tax Year 2021.

The FBR has urged taxpayers to file their income tax returns before the deadline to avoid legal complications.

According to the FBR, failure to submit income tax returns will



result in a daily fine of Rs1,000 and non-filers will be sentenced to two years in prison.

Individuals and associations with

more than Rs300,000 in business income per annum are required to submit tax returns. Apart from that, salaried persons earning more than Rs600,000 per annum and owners

of 500 square yards houses or flats are also required to file returns.

Vehicle owners of 1,000cc or larger and industrial consumers who pay more than Rs500,000 in electricity bills per annum are also required to file tax returns.

The FBR's aims to widen the tax base. It collected over Rs4 trillion in taxes last year and it has set a target of Rs5.8 trillion for the next year. The IMF has demanded that the target be Rs5.9 trillion, which experts have said is going to be a challenge.

Courtesy: Samaa

Karachi is Pakistan's engine of growth: Imran Khan

"Every country across the world has one city that leads its prosperity and growth. For Pakistan, it's Karachi," Prime Minister Imran Khan remarked.

The premier reached the city on Monday to lay the foundation of the Karachi Circular Railway. "In the 1980s, when Karachi started taking off, chaos ensued in the city and the problems faced by it affected the entire country."

When the Centre, along with the Sindh government, formed the Karachi Transformation Plan in September last year, we decided to counter the infrastructural issues in the city. And that requires fixing the transport system, the PM pointed out.

"The Karachi Circular Railway will touch every area of the city and reduce pressure from the roads. There's the Green Line and other projects in the pipeline too because the city is growing at a massive pace."

The prime minister was confident that the second problem of the city, water shortage, will soon be countered too.

"I talked to the WAPDA chairman before coming here and he believes



that the K-IV project is on track and will be completed in two years." The PM said that for the sake of Sindh and Pakistan, the federal and provincial governments will have to work together.

"The chief minister of Sindh is here today. I want you to reconsider the Bundal and Buddo island project. Sindh will immensely benefit from it. The profits will be yours. The jobs created will be for the people of Sindh. And this will reduce pressure from Karachi."

If Karachi keeps spreading the same way, the PM warned, it will become difficult to provide essential amenities to the people of the city.

The River Ravi project has also

been initiated to save Lahore, he said. "We need to start planning for cities or else they will become unsustainable."

The Bundle Island project is bringing in huge foreign investments. Our biggest asset, overseas Pakistanis, needs to be utilised. They will bring dollars and stabilise money in the country.

"Reconsider this and we will talk to you about it later. This is a win-win situation for Sindh and Pakistan." Prime Minister Imran Khan concluded that the biggest hurdle in the completion of big projects is the lack of government attention. "KCR is a big project. The Sindh and federal government need to exert all energy on it to ensure that

it's completed on time."

The Karachi Circular Railway. KCR's complete track will start from Drigh Road station, going through Gulistan-e-Jauhar and heading to Gulshan-e-Iqbal. From there it will turn towards Nazimabad going through Yaseenabad and Liaqatabad. The track then heads to Manghopir and SITE before going taking a turn towards Baldia and going through Lyari, Mereweather Tower, City Station and onward to PIDC and Karachi Cantt.

The KCR would then run parallel to Sharae Faisal and go through Chanesar Goth, Shaheed-e-Millat, and Karsaz before completing a round trip at the Drigh Road station.

In the first phase, the infrastructure will be fixed and then the project will formally kick off in the second phase. The government will be spending Rs250 billion on the project, which is expected to be completed by 2023.

One train will accommodate approximately 800 passengers. Twenty-five trains will be run initially.

Courtesy: Samaa

Pakistan and Turkey will produce Anka drones together

Turkey's premier arms producer Turkish Aerospace Industry (TAI) and Pakistan's missile manufacturer and civilian R&D organization National Engineering & Scientific Commission (NESCOM) have signed an agreement to produce parts of the Turkish medium-altitude, long-endurance (MALE) Anka armed drone.

TAI will share technology and resources with NESCOM as signed in the agreement to expand Turkish drone market.

Temel Kotil, TAI General Manager, was quoted in Turkey's Anadolu Agency report as saying, "This contract we made with Pakistan within the scope of our Anka UAV systems will provide significant gains to the UAV industry. This acquisition, especially with Pakistan's National Engineering



and Science Commission, will strengthen our UAVs." He also said, "This way, our UAVs will be strengthened. It is very important that we continue our historical brotherhood for the gains of both countries. We will implement the human resources cooperation we have made in the past years in this contract as well. In addition, we will develop production and especially technological developments together."

TAI opened its first office in

Pakistan in 2019 at the National Science & Technology Park, Islamabad.

What are Anka Drones?
Here is a brief description of the Anka drone:

- Project Type: Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
 - Manufacturer: Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI)
 - Operator: Turkish Air Force Command
 - First Flight: September 2016
- Anka drones are an unmanned air-

craft that can perform a range of military activities in real-time such as: intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), communication relay, target acquisition and tracking.

Anka has a capacity to carry 200 kg of payload which can include a camera, an enemy identification system, a guided missile and the missile launcher.

It can maintain a flight at 30,000 feet for more than 24 hours and can be operated in both fully autonomous and remote control modes.

Performance in the battlefield
Anka drones have earned high-profile successes in battlefields in Syria, Libya and Azerbaijan. They have been termed by experts to be a tactical game-changer.

Courtesy: Samaa

Pakistan Could See 2021 Economic Recovery if COVID-19 Subsidies, Structural Reforms Resume

Pakistan is projected to experience a broad economic recovery in fiscal year (FY) 2021 (which ends 30 June 2021) as the economic sentiment improves with the expected subsiding of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the resumption of structural reforms, says an Asian Development Bank.

The Asian Development Outlook (ADO) Update released today revised the 2020 growth forecast for Pakistan to -0.4% and the growth forecast for 2021 to 2.0%. In April, ADB had forecast Pakistan to grow 2.6% this year and 3.2% next year. COVID-19 severely impacted economic activity in 2020, erasing gains achieved in the first half of the fiscal year. The suspension of travel and the closure of nonessential businesses induced concurrent demand and supply shocks.

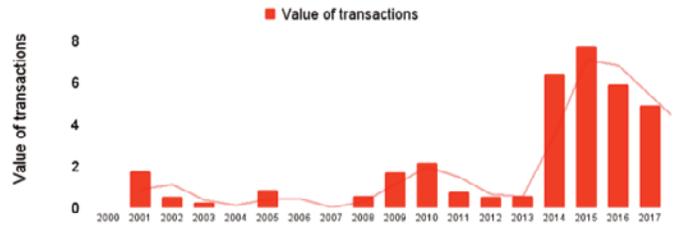
Rising food prices pushed inflation from 6.8% in FY2019 to 10.7% in FY2020, however inflation is projected to slow to 7.5% in FY2021. The current account deficit eased considerably as merchandise imports fell steeply due to contain-

ment disruptions, lower oil prices, and local currency depreciation. As inflationary pressures eased, the State Bank of Pakistan cut its policy rate by a cumulative 625 basis points from March to June 2020 to 7.0% and introduced additional measures to support the economic recovery.

"Pakistan has achieved notable success in containing the dual health and economic challenge presented by COVID-19," said ADB Country Director for Pakistan Xiaohong Yang. "As the curve flattens and business activity resumes, the economy is showing signs of resilience and recovery. The government's rapid mobilization on 24 August of 1.2 trillion rupee relief package comprising emergency financial support to daily wage earners, cash transfers to low-income families, accelerated procurement of wheat, support for health and food supplies, and financial support for small and medium enterprises helped shield the poor and most vulnerable during the pandemic. ADB remains committed to supporting Pakistan

Official Chinese development finance over time in Pakistan (\$billions)

Source: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Separating Fact from Fiction (Ammar A. Malik & Sheng Zhang @AidData)



through this difficult period and helping the country get back on the path to growth."

A silver lining on the supply side was agriculture, which remained largely unaffected as its growth accelerated from 0.6% in FY2019 to 2.7% in FY2020 despite a severe locust infestation that damaged the harvests of many crops, most notably cotton. Higher water availability enabled increased production of wheat, rice, and maize, as did government subsidies for fertilizer and an uptick in agriculture credit disbursement. However, industry contracted by 2.6% in FY2020 as shutdowns and supply chain disruptions related to COVID-19 exacerbated other adverse factors affecting the sector since FY2019. The current account deficit eased

from the equivalent of 4.8% of GDP in FY2019 to 1.1% in FY2020 as almost all imports recorded steep reductions in the wake of the pandemic. The deficit in merchandise trade narrowed by 27.9% as the global slowdown, lower oil prices, and rupee depreciation drove down merchandise imports by 18.2%. In FY2021, the current account deficit is anticipated to remain contained at the equivalent of 2.4% of GDP, unchanged from the ADO 2020 forecast.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members 49 from the region.

Courtesy: www.abd.org

Pakistan discussing expansion of CPEC to Afghanistan-Ambassador

Pakistan has discussed Taliban-led Afghanistan joining the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) infrastructure project, the Pakistani ambassador to the country said.

"Regional connectivity is an important element of our discussion with Afghan leadership and our way forward for our economic interaction with Afghanistan," said Mansoor Ahmad Khan, Pakistan's envoy to Kabul, in an interview with Reuters.

"This important project China Pakistan Economic Corridor provides good opportunities, good potential for providing infrastructure and energy connectivity between Afghanistan and Pakistan also connecting South Asia to the Central Asian region."

CPEC is a central part of the Belt and Road Initiative, under which Beijing has pledged over \$60 billion for infrastructure projects in Pak-

istan, much of it in the form of loans.

Khan said that discussions had been held with the Taliban-led administration on this and other ways to develop the country's economy.

In recent days representatives from Pakistan, China and Russia have held meetings with Taliban officials. Khan said security and economic development were the two main topics under discussion and that these countries expected to continue to consult as a group and meet with the Taliban going forward.

Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan on Aug. 15, the country has been plunged into economic crisis as the nation's international assistance has been largely cut off. Billions of dollars in central bank assets held abroad have also been frozen, which has put pressure on the banking system and prevented most transactions involving U.S. dollars, which Khan said was also

hampering trade.

Khan said that Pakistan was also trying to work with the international community to ease international restrictions on the banking system and several executives from Pakistani financial institutions with a presence in Afghanistan had visited Kabul in recent days to see if the situation could be improved should international limits end.

The United States and other Western nations are reluctant to provide the Taliban with funds until the Islamist militant movement provides assurances that it will uphold human rights, and in particular the rights of women.

Pakistan, which shares a border with Afghanistan and hosts millions of Afghan refugees from decades of conflict, is concerned about the economic crisis hitting its neighbour. Its prime minister, Imran Khan, and other officials have urged the international community not to isolate



the Taliban administration, saying aid should be provided to prevent economic collapse and a wave of refugees.

Pakistan has had deep ties with the Taliban and has been accused of supporting the group as it battled the U.S.-backed government in Kabul for 20 years - charges denied by Islamabad.

However, Pakistan has not yet formally recognised the Taliban led administration and Khan, the Pakistani ambassador, told Reuters that "the issues of formal recognition will come later as Pakistan is part of the international community."

Courtesy: Reuters.com

Pakistani Woman Recognized by Forbes on Next 1000 List

A Pakistani woman, Mariam Nusrat, has made it to the "Forbes Next 1000 List," which celebrates the start-ups and business with fewer than \$10 million in revenue and unlimited potential to inspire.

"An entrepreneur's journey is not linear it is filled with a series of twists and turns; defeat is a natural part of the process, but what differentiates entrepreneurs on the Forbes Next 1000 List is their resilience in the face of adversity," the leading US magazine said in a statement.

Mariam, the founder of GRID, holds a Master's degree in economics from both LUMS and George Washington University in the US and is currently residing in Virginia, USA.

Mariam induction in the Forbes Next 1000 List, puts her with entrepreneurs who are redefining what it means to build and run a business amid the new normal.

This first-of-its-kind initiative, by Forbes, celebrates bold and inspiring entrepreneurs who are redefining what it means to run a business today. Mariam's achievements were recognised by Forbes' editors plus a panel of top business minds and entrepreneurial superstars.

Over time Mariam has been celebrated across various platforms for her prestigious entrepreneurial career which began in 2015 when she formed the not-for-profit arm for GRID Gaming Revolution for Inspiring Development.



For the past 6 years, Mariam has been leading a team of Pakistan based game developers and designers to create low-cost mobile games that inspire positive behaviour change. The team created eight portfolio games, in four languages on topics including reproductive health, climate change, health pandemics, animal welfare, STEM learning and structural racism.

For this work, Mariam has received several awards including the Clinton Global Initiative University Alum Award (presented on-stage by President Bill Clinton), DC Inno 50 on Fire Award, Andrew Rice Award, the GWU Best Social Venture Prize and UN PeaceApp prize.

Since its launch GRID has received extensive media attention with TV interviews on ABC News and WUSA9, and articles in Huffington Post, Global Voices, Washington Business Journal, Today, Yahoo News and other mainstream international news channels.

Mariam has also presented GRID at several high-level forums including, two sessions moderated by former US president Clinton at the CGIU Meetings and two Tedx events.

The team's current focus is on democratising content creation through video games on their platform Breshna. With Breshna, people are empowered to communicate in an interactive fashion. Whether it's a teacher making a history quiz, a not for profit leader making a brochure on animal compassion or a founder making a pitch deck, they can all leverage Breshna to create fun and interactive video games to engage their audience. "The team has already raised \$75,000 in a pre-seed round from 11 Tribes VC and is launching with a Game Jam on July 16th."

With their pre-launch traction and positioning as industry disruptors in the purposeful games industry, the team projects scaling to 2 million users and 200,000 paying customers, and an ARR of \$105 million by 2024.

When not unleashing the power of video games for social change, Mariam works as an Education Specialist at the World Bank.

Courtesy: The Express Tribune

Punjab govt says can't vaccinate school children without parents' approval

Punjab Education Minister Murad Raas said on Thursday that the government can not administer coronavirus vaccine to 12 to 15 year-old students without parents' permission.

Raas, who was addressing a ceremony in Lahore, said that before starting covid-19 vaccination drive in schools, parents will have to be taken into confidence.

We can only vaccinate students when parents agree, he said.

The minister said that no vaccination camp has been set up in schools yet. It would take us some time to take a decision, Raas said. We are consulting with the health department, he added.

This comes two days after Asad Umar, NCOC head and federal planning minister, announced that



Pakistan has decided to immunise students of and above the age of 12 years against the novel coronavirus. "Special drive will be run for vaccination at schools to make it easier for children to be vaccinated."

Students, who wish to get immunised, can also get the job at vaccination centres in their cities. All they'll have to do is carry their NADRA birth certificate.

They don't need to send an SMS to 1166 to register for the shot

Courtesy: Samaa

CAA lifts ban on inflight meals for domestic travel

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has allowed airlines to serve inflight meals to passengers on domestic flights.

A notification issued on Thursday said food and beverages have been allowed on all domestic flights from October 1, 2021.

The CAA has issued directives to all the airlines. The decision was taken after a drop in covid cases in the country.

Under the Covid-19 SOPs, serving meals and beverages onboard domestic flights had been prohibited.

However, travellers would continue to be required to wear masks. From October 1, only vaccinated people above 18 years of age will be allowed to board flights.

Coronavirus vaccination certificate



will be mandatory with the boarding pass.

NCOC chief Asad Umar had announced on Wednesday that government was planning to ease restrictions on inflight meal.

He urged citizens to get vaccinated so that the government could ease existing restrictions. "The only way out of the covid pandemic is to get a high percentage of citizens vaccinated," he said.

Courtesy: Ary.news

US, Pakistan face each other again on Afghanistan threats

The Taliban's takeover of Kabul has deepened the mutual distrust between the U.S. and Pakistan, putative allies who have tangled over Afghanistan. But both sides still need each other.

As the Biden administration looks for new ways to stop terrorist threats in Afghanistan, it probably will look again to Pakistan, which remains critical to U.S. intelligence and national security because of its proximity to Afghanistan and connections to the Taliban leaders now in charge.

Over two decades of war, American officials accused Pakistan of playing a double game by promising to fight terrorism and cooperate with Washington while cultivating the Taliban and other extremist groups that attacked U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

Islamabad pointed to what it saw as failed promises of a supportive government in Kabul after the U.S. drove the Taliban from power after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, as extremist groups took refuge in eastern Afghanistan and launched deadly attacks throughout Pakistan.

But the U.S. wants Pakistani cooperation in counterterrorism efforts and could seek permission to fly surveillance flights into Afghanistan or other intelligence cooperation. Pakistan wants U.S. military aid and good relations with Washington, even as its leaders openly celebrate the Taliban's rise to power.

"Over the last 20 years, Pakistan has been vital for various logistics purposes for the U.S. military. What's really been troubling is that, unfortunately, there hasn't been a lot of trust," said U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, an Illinois Democrat who is on the House Intelligence Committee. "I think the question is whether we can get over that history to arrive at a new understanding."

Pakistan's prime minister, in remarks Friday to the U.N. General Assembly, made clear there is a long way to go. Imran Khan tried to portray his country as the victim of American ungratefulness for its assistance in Afghanistan over the years. Instead of a mere "word of appreciation," Pakistan has received

blame, Khan said.

Former diplomats and intelligence officers from both countries say the possibilities for cooperation are severely limited by the events of the past two decades and Pakistan's enduring competition with India.

The previous Afghan government, which was strongly backed by India, routinely accused Pakistan of harboring the Taliban. The new Taliban government includes officials that American officials have long believed are linked to Pakistan's spy agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence.

Husain Haqqani, a former Pakistani ambassador to the United States, said he understood "the temptation of officials in both countries to try and take advantage of the situation" and find common ground. But Haqqani said he expected Pakistan to give "all possible cooperation to the Taliban."

U.S. officials are trying to quickly build what President Joe Biden calls an "over the horizon" capacity to monitor and stop terrorist threats.

Without a partner country bordering Afghanistan, the U.S. has to fly surveillance drones long distances, limiting the time they can be used to watch over targets. The U.S. also lost most of its network of informants and intelligence partners in the now-deposed Afghan government, making it critical to find common ground with other governments that have more resources in the country.

Pakistan could be helpful in that effort by allowing "overflight" rights for American spy planes from the Persian Gulf or permitting the U.S. to base surveillance or counterterrorism teams along its border with Afghanistan. There are few other options among Afghanistan's neighbors. Iran is a U.S. adversary and Central Asian countries north of Afghanistan all face varying degrees of Russian influence.

CIA Director William Burns visited Islamabad this month to meet with Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, Pakistan's army chief, and Lt. Gen. Faiz Hameed, who leads the ISI, according to a Pakistani government statement. Burns and Hameed have



separately visited Kabul in recent weeks to meet with Taliban leaders. The CIA declined to comment on the visits.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi noted this past week that Islamabad had cooperated with U.S. requests to facilitate peace talks before the Taliban takeover and that it had agreed to U.S. military requests throughout the war.

Qureshi would not directly answer whether Pakistan would allow the basing of surveillance equipment or overflight of drones.

The CIA and ISI have a long history in Afghanistan, dating to their shared goal of arming bands of mujahedeen "freedom fighters" against the Soviet Union's occupation in the 1980s. The CIA sent weapons and money into Afghanistan through Pakistan.

Those fighters included Osama bin Laden. Others would become leaders of the Taliban, which emerged victorious from a civil war in 1996 and gained control of most of the country. The Taliban gave refuge to bin Laden and other leaders of al-Qaida, which launched deadly attacks on Americans abroad in 1998 and then struck the U.S. on Sept. 11, 2001.

After 9/11, the U.S. immediately sought Pakistan's cooperation in its fight against al-Qaida and other terrorist groups. Declassified cables published by George Washington University's National Security Archive show officials in President George W. Bush's administration made several demands of Pakistan, from intercepting arms shipments heading to al-Qaida to providing the U.S. with intelligence and permission to fly military and intelligence planes over its territory.

The CIA would carry out hundreds of drone strikes launched from Pakistan targeting al-Qaida leaders and

others alleged to have ties to terrorist groups. Hundreds of civilians died in the strikes, according to figures kept by outside observers, leading to widespread protests and public anger in Pakistan.

Pakistan continued to be accused of harboring the Taliban after the U.S.-backed coalition drove the group from power in Kabul. And bin Laden was killed in 2011 by U.S. special forces in a secret raid on a compound in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad, home to the country's military academy. The bin Laden operation led many in the U.S. to question whether Pakistan had harbored bin Laden and angered Pakistanis who felt the raid violated their sovereignty.

For years, CIA officials tried to confront their Pakistani counterparts after collecting more proof of Pakistani intelligence officers helping the Taliban move money and fighters into a then-growing insurgency in neighboring Afghanistan, said Douglas London, who oversaw the CIA's counterterrorism operations in South Asia until 2018.

"They would say, 'You just come to my office, tell me where the location is,'" he said. "They would just usually pay lip service to us and say they couldn't confirm the intel."

London, author of the forthcoming book "The Recruiter," said he expected American intelligence would consider limited partnerships with Pakistan on mutual enemies such as al-Qaida or Islamic State-Khorasan, which took responsibility for the deadly suicide attack outside the Kabul airport last month during the final days of the U.S. evacuation.

The risk, London said, is at times "your partner is as much of a threat to you as the enemy who you're pursuing."

Courtesy: abc17new.com

UK decides to remove Pakistan from 'red list' for travel after 5 months

The United Kingdom decided to take Pakistan off its "red list" for international travel after five months, British Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said.

Eight countries and territories, including Pakistan, Turkey and Maldives, will come off the travel red list at 4 am on September 22, he announced via Twitter.

In addition, testing was being made easier for travellers to the UK, Shapps said.

"From October 4, if you're fully [vaccinated] you won't need a pre-departure test before arrival into England from a non-red country and from later in October, will be able to replace the day 2 PCR test with a cheaper lateral flow," he shared.

The secretary also announced that the UK was scrapping its "traffic light" system for international travel, according to which low-risk countries were rated green for quarantine-free travel, medium risk countries were rated amber, and red countries required arrivals to spend 10 days in isolation in a hotel.

From October 4, there would be a "simplified system" for international travel, he said. Under the new proposal, there would be a single red list while the rules would be simplified for all other countries, the secretary added.

While a lot has yet to be made clear by UK authorities, an update on the British government's website said "passengers who aren't recognised as being fully vaccinated with authorised vaccines and certificates under



England's international travel rules, will still have to take a pre-departure test, a day 2 and day 8 PCR test and self-isolate for 10 days upon their return from a non-red list country under the new two-tiered travel programme."

Passengers considered unvaccinated may be able to end quarantine early if they pay for a private Covid-19 test through the Test to Release scheme, according to the update.

The news regarding the lifting of the travel restrictions was also shared by British High Commissioner to Pakistan Christian Turner.

"Pleased to confirm Pakistan is off the red list. I know how difficult the last 5 months were for so many who rely on close links between the United Kingdom & Pakistan," he tweeted.

He said he was grateful to Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Health Dr Faisal Sultan, federal minister Asad Umar and the Pakistan health ministry "for their close collaboration".

Turner said the UK "will continue

to work closely with Pakistan to ensure data sharing and safeguard public health in both countries".

"No one is safe until everyone is safe."

'Finally the right decision'
Reacting to the development, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Asad Umar, said: "Good to know finally the right decision [has been] taken to take Pakistan off red list."

Umar appreciated the UK High Commission for its support as well as British parliamentarians for "conveying facts about the Covid situation in Pakistan".

SAPM Dr Faisal Sultan termed the decision "great news" for travellers. He also appreciated the British high commissioner and UK government officials for engaging with Pakistani officials for "in-depth understanding of our epidemic response and systems as well as the ongoing sharing of data and information to enable disease security".

Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari, who had previously criticised the UK govern-

ment's "feeble excuse" for retaining Pakistan on the red list, credited Prime Minister Imran Khan's "strong stance" on the issue, UK MPs and data-based responses by the SAPM on health and the National Command and Operation Centre, for the change in travel status.

"Pak was dealt with unfairly so it was time for UK govt to put things right!" she said.

Labour MP for Manchester Gorton and Shadow Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, Afzal Khan, said he welcomed the "(untimely) step".

"It was clear that the [government] put politics ahead of science. I've spent months urging the [government] to review Pakistan's red list status & I'm pleased they finally listened."

Pakistan was placed on the red list in early April and India followed on April 19 due to surging case numbers and the emergence of the Delta variant.

The decision was criticised by UK MPs who dubbed it "consciously and knowingly discriminatory". They also blasted the government for keeping Pakistan on the red list while promoting India to amber in its updated guidelines issued on August 4.

Last month, a group of 21 British lawmakers wrote a letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson, questioning why Pakistan had not yet been removed from the red list for travel and urging that it be promoted to the amber list "as soon as possible".

Courtesy: Dawn

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