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January in History

January 12, 1952 :

Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), Headed by Founder Chairman Ghulam Faruque

January 1, 1955:

Pakistan International Airlines comes into being.

January 1, 1961:

Decimal coinage introduced in Pakistan.

January 5, 1963:

First trade agreement is signed between Pakistan and China.

January 10, 1966:

Tashkent Declaration signed between India and Pakistan.

January 30, 1972:

Pakistan snaps ties with Commonwealth on recognizing Bangladesh.

January 1, 1981:

Interest-free banking introduced.

January 3, 1981:

International Islamic University starts functioning.

January 3, 1982:

Pakistan defeats Argentina 12-3 in World Cup Hockey in Bombay.

January 15, 1983:

First three F-16 jets reach Pakistan.

January 25, 1983:

Wifaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) Order is promulgated. Justice Sardar Iqbal is named, WM.

January 19, 1989:

Students unions are restored in Punjab .

January 12, 1992:

Labore-Islamabad Motorway project launched.

January 15, 1994:

Pakistan Television transmission gets access to 38 countries via satellite.

January 2, 2006:

Dr. Shamsbad Akhtar assumes office of State Bank Governor having the first woman Governor of SBP.

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.

New system to replace district HQ hospitals, says PM Imran

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday announced that the government would shut down all district headquarters (DHQ) hospitals and facilitate the private sector to ensure provision of health care to people in far-off areas through the Naya Pakistan National Health Card.

Speaking at the launch of the health card at a ceremony at the Governor House, the prime minister regretted that the DHQ hospitals were lying deserted because of the absence of doctors there. "Why should the government spend money if doctors are not going to the DHQ hospitals to serve the masses?" he asked.

The prime minister said the health card would be available in Lahore division from Jan 1 (today) and all families across Punjab would be covered by March 2022. Calling it a big step towards the creation of a welfare state, the PM said the government would be spending Rs400 billion to offer health insurance to 30 million families in Punjab.

He said the huge investment in the health card scheme would help create a robust healthcare structure across the province and the government would be relieved of establishing new hospitals. "Now, the private sector will come forward and establish hospitals across the province" for which it would be incentivised in acquiring land on controlled rates and availability of duty-free imported medical equipment, he stressed.

The private sector would be able to offer quality treatment to masses even in the far-flung areas in the province through the health card.

"The government wants all the poor people to be facilitated and helped to rise as was the case in the welfare state of Madina," Mr Khan said and regretted that such a state did not exist in Muslim countries, but it did in Europe.

After covering the entire Punjab, the prime minister said, the health cards would be given to people in Balochistan, Azad Jammu and



Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan – where the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) had a government.

Meanwhile, federal Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry appealed to the Sindh chief minister to review his decision and let the people of his province avail the facility of Rs1 million health card. Regretting that the Sindh government was depriving its people of the facility, Mr Chaudhry said the PPP government in the province always played the "Sindh card" but refused to play a "positive card".

Prime Minister Imran Khan also explained the PTI government's other initiatives, including bank loans to the salaried classes to build homes. Of the Rs260bn loan applications, he said, some Rs110bn loans had been approved and Rs34bn already disbursed. This will continue to expand with time, he added. The prime minister also explained the importance of the Kamyab Pakistan and Ehsaas Ration programme.

Earlier, Chief Minister Usman

Buzdar said the health card had been launched for Lahore division and no one would now need to go to London or the US for treatment. He said the universal healthcare programme had started from Sahiwal and DG Khan divisions and the Punjab-wide coverage would help 115 million people avail free medical treatment.

The chief minister said other health projects, including the construction of 23 hospitals in various areas of the province, would be completed soon. He said 158 hospitals and health centres had been upgraded while 91 health schemes would be completed through the district development package. The health budget in 2013-18 was Rs169bn that had swelled to Rs389bn. He said more than Rs37bn would be spent to provide free medicines across Punjab, while around 35,000 jobs had been given in the health sector. The promise of 100,000 jobs would also be fulfilled, the CM claimed.

Later, PM Khan held a series of meetings in the city to review the

status of development in Punjab, including one with the chief minister that was also attended by the chief secretary and the inspector general of police. He also met the provincial minister for sports and Pakistan Cricket Board Chairman Ramiz Raja.

In a separate meeting, Punjab Finance Minister Hashim Jawan Bakht briefed the prime minister about, what he called, the largest development budget in history amounting to Rs740bn for projects of public welfare and civic facilities.

Separately, Planning and Development Chairman Abdullah Khan Sumbal briefed the PM about the allocation of budget and status of its utilisation for ongoing projects in education, road and health sectors.

Mr Khan directed for timely completion of public welfare projects while ensuring quality of services to the masses. He also asked the administration to run effective awareness campaigns about the government's development projects.

The prime minister also inaugurated a Panahgah (shelter home) on Ferozpur Road stressing that the PTI government was focusing on the welfare of downtrodden people. He asked the civil administration to ensure that the shelter home inmates were provided safe and comfortable stay.

The new Panahgah has the capacity to accommodate 80 men and 20 women at a time.

Courtesy: Dawn



Covid-19 vaccination target for 2021 met: minister

Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar said Pakistan had achieved its target of vaccinating 70 million people against Covid-19 set for 2021, with 46 per cent having been fully inoculated.

On the other hand, the country saw 515 people getting infected in a single day the highest number since Nov 10, 2021 when 637 had tested positive.

In his tweet, the minister said the target of vaccinating 70 million people by the end of 2021 had been achieved, adding the federal government had spent Rs250 billion on procuring vaccines, which had made the massive immunisation drive possible.

“To make this massive vaccination drive possible, the Federal Government has procured vaccines worth nearly Rs250 Billion. 100 percent of vaccine procurement done by the federal government, which has provided free vaccines to all citizens regardless of which province they live in,” he tweeted.

He further stated: “Amongst the Federating units Islamabad leads with 77 pc fully vaccinated. Punjab is at 51 pc, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) 46 pc, AJK 45 pc, Balochistan 42 pc,

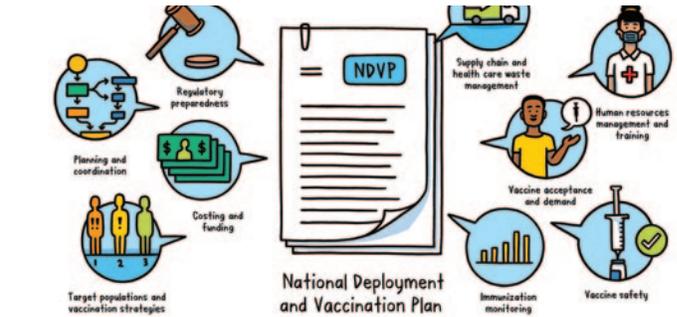
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) 41 pc, and Sindh at 37 pc. Of the total eligible population 46 pc is fully vaccinated and 63 pc has received at least one dose.”

Asad Umar, who also heads the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), praised the forum’s team, the administrations of federal and provincial governments as well as all health teams for their tireless efforts in achieving the target.

Retweeting Asad Umar’s tweet, Minister of State for Information Farrukh Habib commented: “Another milestone has been achieved in the ongoing vaccination against Covid-19. The completion of vaccination of 70 million people across the country including Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan by the end of 2021 was a good omen.”

Fake email about booster dose

The NCOC has denied sending emails to citizens in which it has asked them to get registered for availing the booster dose. In the fake email, citizens have been told to fill in a Covid-19 registration form for the booster dose after which they will receive a message informing them about the date for getting the third vaccine.



In a tweet, the NCOC said: “A fake Email is circulating, asking citizens for mandatory registration for vaccination. No such E Mail is sent from NCOC / Ministry of National Health Services. Citizens are advised not to respond to such E Mails. FIA Cyber crime wing is tracking the origin for necessary action.”

The forum had announced that all vaccination centres across the country would remain closed for two days starting from Jan 1. The campaign will resume from Jan 3, 2022. Over 500 cases reported

The last time the number of cases crossed the 500 mark was on Nov 10 when 637 people contracted the virus in a single day. However, cases started to fall from Nov 11 onwards. According to data, the positivity rate was recorded at 1.07 per cent. This too has risen over 1pc for the first time since November.

Elaborating on the details, the NCOC said 308 cases and four

deaths were recorded in Sindh while 115 people tested positive in Punjab. No death was reported in the province.

The forum further revealed that 36 patients contracted the virus and one person died in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, three got infected and one died in Balochistan, 53 patients surfaced in Islamabad while no new case was detected in Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

On the other hand, 406 people recovered from the deadly virus in the country, taking the overall recovery tally to 1,256,337, the NCOC data said, adding that 97pc recoveries had been recorded since the start of the pandemic.

The NCOC once again urged people to follow the standard operating procedures to prevent the spread of Omicron variant.

Courtesy: Dawn

Milestone as 100m people get at least one dose

As Pakistan passed another milestone of administering at least one dose of Covid-19 vaccine to over 100 million people on Tuesday, as many as 1,467 persons were infected with the virus and two lost their lives.

According to a statement issued by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), the country achieved another major milestone in the vaccination campaign, covering 100m people who have received at least one dose of vaccine.

“Of these [100m people], nearly 75m are fully vaccinated, which is 33pc of total population and 49pc of eligible population. Work is not complete yet. Need to keep the momentum going,” it stated.

Minister for Planning, Develop-

ment and Special Initiatives Asad Umar announced the achievement and asked the masses to get themselves vaccinated at the earliest.

A document, available with Dawn, showed that while the national positivity rate stood at 3.37pc, Sindh reported the highest positivity of 6.83pc, followed by Punjab (2.13pc), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (1.72pc), Gilgit-Baltistan (0.61pc), Balochistan (0.55pc) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (0.46pc).

Karachi topped the list of cities with 18pc positivity, followed by Mirpur (4.92pc), Peshawar (4.19pc), Lahore (3.88pc), Gilgit (3.7pc) and Islamabad (2.78pc).

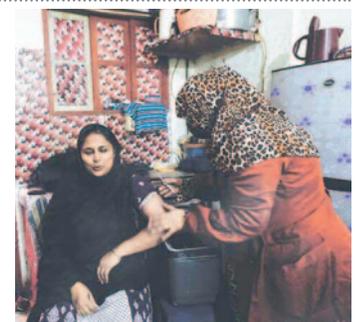
The NCOC data showed that the number of active cases, which was

less than 10,000 in December 2021, was 18,947 as of January 11, with 772 patients admitted to hospitals across the country.

Meanwhile, as Omicron is continuously spreading in Pakistan, the World Health Organisation designated B.1.1.529 as a variant of concern following the advice from its Technical Advisory Group on Virus Evolution.

Omicron is a highly divergent variant with a high number of mutations, including 26-32 mutations in the spike protein, some of which are likely to be associated with humoral immune escape potential and higher transmissibility.

According to a statement, the overall risk related to Omicron remains



very high for a number of reasons. First, the global risk of Covid-19 remains very high overall. Second, current data indicates that Omicron has a significant growth advantage over Delta, leading to rapid spread in the community. The rapid increase in cases will lead to an increase in hospitalisations, may pose overwhelming demands on health-care systems and lead to significant morbidity, particularly in vulnerable populations.

Courtesy: Dawn

Sindh asked not to hinder industrial zone launch

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday asked the Sindh government not to create hurdles in the way of launch of Dhabeji Industrial Zone (DIZ) and pursue the matter “positively” in court.

According to the Prime Minister Office (PMO), Mr Khan directed the authorities concerned to resolve issues of special economic zones on a priority basis and enforce measures for facilitating investment within the given “time frame”.

He issued the directive while chairing a high-level meeting here on Special Economic Zones (SEZs) being established under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

The participants were told that land in the SEZs had been allotted to 130 companies for construction of industries so far.

A source after attending the meeting told Dawn that the premier expressed displeasure over delay in the physical launch of the DIZ and asked the Sindh government not to create “hurdles” in the way of the much-needed project.

The meeting was informed that Rashakai, Bolan and Allama Iqbal Industrial zones were already fully functional as industries were being built there. The participants were apprised in detail about the steps being taken by the government to facilitate investment in the SEZs.

However, work on the Dhabeji industrial zone could not start due to litigation after the award of a contract to establish the zone.

PM Khan was informed that the developer for DIZ had been finalised and the Letter of Award (LoA) was issued to M/s Zahir Khan & Brothers on Oct 25, 2021. The meeting was apprised that the concession agreement was to be signed with the developer, but the project could not inch forward towards signing of the concession agreement with the developer due to ongoing litigation.

The prime minister was told that



when the contract was awarded to the firm that had won the bid, a competitor moved the Sindh High Court (SHC) challenging the award of the contract on “weak footings”.

An official of the DIZ informed the meeting that accusations levelled by the plaintiff were “false and baseless”.

“Construction work can be expedited once the stay order on the frivolous nature case is vacated by the court,” the official said.

While the petitioner had challenged that the rules of SEZs had not been followed in the award of the contract, the Sindh government claimed that since DIZ had not been given the SEZ status so far, the rules of SEZs did not apply to it. The CPEC Authority also had submitted an official statement before SHC, expressing satisfaction over the bidding process and claiming that no irregularity had been committed in the award of the contract. According to a document of the Sindh Economic Zones Management Company, the DIZ will be given the status of an SEZ after its completion.

The Sindh government had received bids for the project in February 2021. After a two-month evaluation, one of the bids was declared ‘technically unfit’. The provincial government then went for re-bidding in which ZKB emerged successful. Subsequently, the government issued the LoA to it.

The DIZ is located on the N-5 National Highway, close to Bin Qasim and Karachi ports as well as about 700km from Gwadar Port that connects the Central Asia Republics, the Middle East, Europe and

Africa.

In a separate development, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the United Arab Emirates Armed Forces Mohamed Bin Zayed called PM Khan and offered deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the Jan 22 blast in Lahore. The crown prince prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured and strongly condemned the terrorist attack that claimed three lives and left several injured, the PM Office said in a statement.

Reaffirming Pakistan’s firm resolve to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, Mr Khan apprised the crown prince that the perpetrators of terrorist attacks would be brought to justice.

The PM also expressed Pakistan’s desire to work with the UAE for further strengthening of bilateral ties, enhancing cooperation in the multilateral fora and continue close coordination on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

Pervez, Shehryar meet premier Defence Minister Pervez Khattak and Kashmir Committee Chairman Shehryar Afridi on Monday called on the prime minister and discussed current re-organization of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) as well as development projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Mr Khan highlighted the need for public representatives to accelerate their public interaction campaign, besides improving coordination with the district administration for the immediate resolution of the public issues.

Courtesy:Dawn

JCP approves elevation of Justice Ayesha to SC

She will be the first female Supreme Court judge in the judicial history of Pakistan



The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) approved with a vote of five to four the nomination of Justice Ayesha Malik for her elevation to the Supreme Court.

She will be the first female Supreme Court judge in the judicial history of Pakistan.

Justice Ayesha is number four on the Lahore High Court (LHC) judge seniority list. She became a judge in March 2012. In case of her elevation, she will work as a Supreme Court judge until June 2031.

She could also become the CJP after the retirement of Justice Yahya Afridi in January 2030.

A meeting of the commission was held under the chairmanship of Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed.

The meeting continued for more than three hours wherein majority members urged to set criteria for the judges’ appointment.

Regarding nomination of Justice Ayesha Malik, Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) representative in JCP Akhtar Hussain confirmed that CJ Gulzar, Justice Umar Ata Bandial, retired judge Sarmad Jalal Osmani, Attorney General for Pakistan Khalid Jawed Khan and Law Minister Dr Farogh Naseem endorsed her name for appointment as a Supreme Court judge.

Justice Qazi Faez Isa, Justice Maqbool Baqar, Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and PBC representative Akhtar Hussain opposed her

Courtesy:Express Tribune

ECC allows subsidy on five essential items for another month

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet approved the continuation of untargeted subsidy on five essential food items at Utility Stores outlets for only one month January 2022.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the ECC presided over by Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin

December 31, 2021 was the deadline for the untargeted subsidy on wheat flour, sugar, vegetable ghee, pulses and rice effective from July 1, 2021.

The ECC approved a proposal of the Naya Pakistan Housing and Development Authority (NAPHDA) for revision of customer pricing and mark-up subsidy period under Tier-I of the government scheme for low-cost housing and inclusion of housing finance companies in the scheme for housing finance. The meeting directed that there should be no direct involvement of commercial banks in the NAPHDA projects.

The meeting approved a proposal of the State Bank of Pakistan for incentives for exchange companies against surrender of foreign exchange in the interbank market.

The ECC approved Rs8 billion funds against government's share for the Sialkot (Sambrial)-Kharian Motorway project under the Public Sector Development Programme Rs4bn as upfront viability gap funding (VGF) and Rs4bn for overhead costs of the project.

The ECC approved a summary of industries ministry regarding gas rate

for operations of SNGPL based plants Fatima Fertiliser and Agritech from October 2021 to January 2022, and to keep the rate at Rs839 per unit (million British thermal unit).

The meeting approved issuance of government's sovereign guarantee for National Engineering and Scientific Commission's (NECOP) project worth \$5.822 million for batch-IV and \$26.154m for batch-V in favour of China Electronics Technology Group, Beijing, to pay back loan in seven years, including two years' grace time.

The ECC approved a summary of the energy ministry for issuance of sovereign guarantee amounting to Rs24.188bn in favour of Habib Metropolitan Bank Ltd and a syndicate of two banks led by United Bank Limited (UBL) for the remaining tenor of the loan and letter of comfort in favour of lender banks for a new financing agreement with respect to the pipeline infrastructure development project LNG-II.

The ECC approved a summary submitted by the communication ministry for extension in the timeline given to the National Highway Authority (NHA) for preparation of a commercially viable business plan till June 2022 with the same conditions regarding cash development loan as decided by the federal cabinet.

NHA's debt restructuring will be linked with the outcome of the business plan. The ECC directed the ministry to submit monthly progress report regularly and prepare the busi-



ness plan well before the deadline. The Aviation Division submitted a summary about the financial challenges of Roosevelt Hotel (RHC), New York, and request of PIA Investment Limited (PIA-IL) for rerolling of principal amount of \$142m along with mark-up payments by National Bank of Pakistan for a further period of two years ending on December 31, 2024.

The meeting was informed that PIA-IL is unable to pay the principal amount of the loan and mark-up payments on behalf of RHC due its closing/suspension. The ECC discussed and approved the proposal with a directive for the Aviation Division to prepare a road map for a permanent solution to the issue.

The ECC approved, in principle, a summary of the economic affairs ministry on global transition from Libor to alternate reference rates with a directive that the reference rates to be adopted in future be submitted to the ECC for approval.

The meeting approved a technical supplementary grant (TSG) worth Rs90m (Chinese grant) for a 1.2MGD reverse Osmosis desalination plant at Gwadar. It also approved a TSG worth Rs14.621m for purchase of spare parts for the helicopter

maintained by Sindh Rangers, and another TSG for release of Rs 431.880m funds to project implementation letter of HQ Frontier Corps (south), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dera Ismail Khan, funded by the Bureau of International Narcotics & Law Enforcement Pakistan.

The meeting advised the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination to review its budget and demand should be met by re-appropriation of funds within the budget for life-saving drugs to the Afghan people.

The ECC considered and approved a summary submitted by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs for grant of relaxation to PNSC's 19 subsidiary companies from the applicability of the Public Sector Companies (Corporate Governance Rules).

The ECC meeting was attended by Minister for National Food Security Fakhar Imam, Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar, Minister for Industries Khusró Bakhtiar, Minister for Energy Hammad Azhar, Minister for Privatisation Muhammedmian Soomro, Minister for Railways Azam Swati, Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Zaidi and federal secretaries.

Courtesy: Dawn

Pakistan to resume Europe flights by March: minister

A day after the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) validated the country's aviation safety standards, Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan said that Pakistan hopes to resume flight operations to Europe in February and March

Addressing a news conference, he said that the 10-member validation committee of the ICAO visited Pakistan from November 29 to December 10 and thoroughly inspected the entire system of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), airlines and air traffic control (ATC).

Pakistan cleared the safety audit, he said, adding that the CAA had addressed all

reservations put forth by ICAO regarding aviation safety.

He also said that a follow-up inquiry into pilot certifications was part of the clean-up process.

Some 262 licences were found to be "dubious", he said, most of which have now been cleared after further training and testing.

He added that Pakistan had signed an agreement with British civil aviation authorities for its pilots to be tested and certified in the UK.

Until the 1970s PIA was considered a top regional carrier, but its reputation

plummeted amid chronic mismanagement, frequent cancellations and financial woes.

It still operates some domestic and regional routes, but Khan said the airline now hoped to resume intercontinental flights and add new destinations.

While the government appears determined, the national flag carrier still needs authorities in Europe and the United States to lift a ban before it can resume flights to major Western destinations.

Pakistan has a chequered military and civilian aviation safety record, with frequent plane and helicopter crashes over the years.

PIA was decertified by the world's civil aviation authority in 2020 after one of its

Airbus A-320s crashed while landing at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport, killing all but two of the 99 passengers and crew.

Flight 8303 damaged its engines when the pilots attempted to land without the undercarriage lowered, and crashed into a crowded neighbourhood while circling for a second attempt.

The accident was attributed to pilot error as a result of the crew being out of action for months, having been grounded by the coronavirus epidemic.

The government investigation that followed discovered dozens of Pakistani pilots had faked their certifications or flying hours, prompting the ICAO suspension.

Courtesy: AFP

PM Imran stresses steps to create affordable housing

While admitting that price hike has hit the salaried class the most, Prime Minister Imran Khan has said Pakistan is heading in the right direction, something that has been acknowledged by international financial data providers.

“The future of the country has been set in the right direction as indicated by Bloomberg, which acknowledged that Pakistan’s economy has been put on the high trajectory,” said PM Khan while addressing the inauguration ceremony of a housing project on Kurri Road on Tuesday.

The project, the Pakistan Housing Authority (PHA) Officers’ Residencia, was conceived in 2008 on 90 acres of land provided by the Capital Development Authority, Islamabad. While referring to the global price hike caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the prime minister said the World Bank’s report had confirmed Pakistan’s growth rate at 5.37 per cent. He said due to boom in the construction industry about 40 to 60pc increase was witnessed in the income of labour class. Due to five record bumper crops, he said, farmers earned Rs1,400 billion last year.

The prime minister also mentioned increase in exports, record remittances and tax collection in the country. The World Bank report on four indicators showed that poverty had been reduced in the country, he claimed, reiterating that the construction industry had not been shut down despite the pandemic.

He said the government was facilitating construction of affordable housing units for the salaried and low-income groups through provision of subsidies and waiver of interest rates on house financing.

He praised the ministry of housing for completing the decades-old stalled housing projects for government employees within a short period of three years. He also highlighted the need to ensure timely completion of 88,000 more housing units.

With the total cost of Rs6.5bn, the project launched for the federal government employees comprises 588 grey-structure housing units in three categories besides 88 commercial units and community centre.

Mr Khan said the construction industry was the driving force of the country’s economy. When it thrived, about 30 more allied industries would also make progress, he explained, adding that Pakistan’s construction industry boomed with record cement and steel sales during the last two years.

The prime minister said completion of housing projects for government servants had great significance, as they could not afford to purchase or build houses. He said there was shortage of housing units in Pakistan. In the past, people did not have the option to seek loans from private banks for the construction of homes on easy installments due to the pending foreclosure law before



courts. He said the court decision facilitated the procedure for seeking bank credits.

For the first time in country’s history, housing projects worth Rs124bn through bank loans had been approved and a loan of Rs40bn had already been released by banks, he said. The banking mortgage law would enable the people to divert the rent of their rented houses to pay easy installments for the construction of their residences, he added.

Unlike mortgage financing in the US and Europe that stood at about 80pc, the prime minister said it was less than 1pc of the GDP in Pakistan. He admitted that price hike had hit the salaried class hard. It was his cherished dream to enable the low-income groups and salaried class to get their houses on affordable prices, he said.

In a separate development, Minister of Trade of Sri Lanka Dr Bandula Gunawardhana and State Minister for Regional Cooperation Tharaka Balasuriya paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khan, reported APP. The two ministers along with a business delegation from Sri Lanka are currently visiting Pakistan, according

to PM Office.

Mr Khan reaffirmed the strong fraternal relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and highlighted the importance of regular high-level exchanges in strengthening bilateral cooperation. He emphasised all-out efforts must be made to increase bilateral trade relations through making optimal use of the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement.

Referring to the strong cultural bond between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the prime minister invited the attention of the visiting delegation to the rich Buddhist heritage of Pakistan, and expressed the hope that more Sri Lankans would come to the country for religious tourism.

Dr Gunawardhana thanked the premier for extending warm hospitality and goodwill towards Sri Lanka. He expressed keen desire to expand cooperation with Pakistan in diverse areas of trade, information communication and technology, pharmaceuticals, minerals, textiles, education, defence, tourism, human resource development through B2B contacts, joint ventures, investments in high potential sectors and technology transfers etc.

Courtesy: Dawn

Made in Pakistan smartphones, TV sets now a reality

Korean smartphone giant Samsung has rolled out smartphones fully manufactured in Pakistan. 1 second of 31 seconds Volume 0%

Samsung has partnered with Pakistan’s Lucky Motor Corporation for the venture.

According to Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, ten companies, including Q Mobile, G Five, Infinix, itel, VGO TEL have already been assembling smartphones in Pakistan. However, Samsung is the first company to manufacture them here.

In the past three years, 40.3 million smartphones have been assembled locally.

Ten companies assembled 10.05m smartphones in 2019, 10.17m in 2020 and 20.90m in 2021. So far, 19 companies have been issued manufacturing license for smartphones.

Samsung TV to be manufactured locally Samsung is not only manufacturing smartphones, but it has also operationalised a plant on December 6 to manufacture TV sets locally. Samsung has partnered with local company R&R Industries for this venture.

According to Prime Minister’s Advisor on Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood, 50,000 TV sets will be produced in the first



phase. In the next two years, the number will increase to 100,000.

He credited government’s Made in Pakistan initiative for the venture. He urged local companies to partner with international firms to produce goods in Pakistan

Courtesy: Samma

PM shares stunning photos of Skardu landscape at night



Prime Minister Imran Khan has tweeted photographs of Skardu, showing the landscape at night.

In two of the images, houses and multistorey buildings in Skardu are seen illuminated by lights while the entire valley basks in the moonlight.

The mountains provide a perfect background to the scenic beauty of the town.

The third image shared by the prime minister shows a group of young women at an ice hockey field. They wear full-body gear.

A number of women and children in local dresses are seen in the makeshift stands next to the hockey field.

Imran Khan captioned the image with the following words.

“Skardu at night & our girls playing ice hockey in GB. With an international airport now at Skardu, this area will InshaAllah become a world winter sports destination.”

The Skardu International Airport was inaugurated by the prime minister on December 16.

At the ceremony, Imran Khan had expressed hope that Pakistan would generate \$30 to \$40 from tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The prime minister had recently shared several photographs of wildlife from the Northern Areas of Pakistan.

Courtesy: Samma

Afghanistan to host Pakistan for three ODIs in 2023



Afghanistan will host Pakistan for a three-match One-day International (ODI) series in 2023, according to the Future Tour Program (FTP) issued by the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB).

The series will take place in February and March, however the exact schedule will be released later.

“A total number of 11 ODIs, four T20Is and two Test series have been included in Afghanistan schedule for the upcoming two years. These series are scheduled on home and away basis, among which Afghanistan will play 18 home and 34 away matches, apart from participating in the Asia Cup 2022, ICC T20 World Cup 2022, the Asia Cup 2023 and the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023,” a press release issued by the ACB said.

The ACB also stated that the team’s focus will be on playing limited-overs match due to the fact that major ICC events are scheduled for the next two years.

“If we bifurcate the tally into limited overs cricket and the Test format, it clearly shows that Afghanistan’s focus will be on the shorter formats of the game. Considering the fact that Afghanistan will be playing seven ODI series in the ICC Cricket World Cup Super League, as well as participate in four major limited-overs events, such as Asia Cup 2022 (T20 format), ICC T20 World Cup 2022, the Asia Cup 2023 (ODI format) and the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023,” the press release added.

Courtesy:Samma

Aisam-ul-Haq upbeat ahead of Australian Open

Pakistan’s star tennis player Aisam-ul-Haq is upbeat ahead of his first-round match in the ongoing Australian Open Men’s Doubles event.

Aisam, who will take the court with his Kazakhstani partner Aleksandr Nedovyesov, will face the number seven seeds, Nicolas Mahut and Fabrice Martin, in their opening match of the tournament.

“Preparation has been going really well,” Aisam told Samaa Digital. “I have been here [Australia] for almost two and a half weeks and played two tournaments as well. We have some good wins under our belt, including some top teams, which is why we are looking forward to playing the number seven seeds.”

“I have played against them in the

past, also, separately but not together. They have a powerful team with lots of experience. It’s going to be a tough match but we will go out there and do our level best,” he added.

Mahut will not have Pierre-Hugues Herbert by his side on the court as the latter decided to skip the tournament on account of not being vaccinated against Covid-19. The duo won five grand slams and two ATP Finals titles as a team and are considered one of the best pairings in recent times.

However, Aisam played down the impact of the split between the two players.

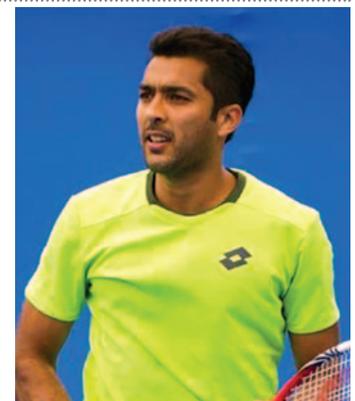
“I don’t think the absence of Pierre-Hugues Herbert matters much because I defeated him and Mahut, last year, in Miami. So, it’s about how you play on the day and handle

pressure during big points. I will try my level best to get a win for myself and obviously my country as well,” he said.

The Lahore-born also opened up about his partnership with Aleksandr, with whom he played the last two events in Melbourne and Sydney ahead of Australian Open.

“So far, the partnership with Aleksandr has been going really well. I really like his work ethic and he pushes himself on and off the court,” he said.

“This also motivates me to push myself little more and, at this stage of my career, I need somebody who is a hard worker and doing his level best to improve his tennis also. He is young and I’m experienced so we are matching it well and hopefully with passing time we will get even



better,” he added.

Aisam’s best result at the Australian Open came in 2018, when he qualified for the quarter-finals along with Poland’s Marcin Matkowski. The 41-year-old was eliminated in the second round last year.

On the other hand, Aleksandr will be participating in the Australian Open Men’s Doubles event for the very first time.

Courtesy:Samma

PM Imran invokes Silicon Valley as model for startups

Praising the importance of export-oriented startups and small businesses for the country's economic growth, Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Wednesday he wanted to emulate the success of Silicon Valley and make Pakistan a hub for new businesses.

Addressing the launch of the National Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Policy on Wednesday, Prime Minister Imran Khan pledged to take tough action against ministries and government officials who have created obstacles to the creation of new startups and export-oriented companies.

Stating that new incentives would be given to these businesses, which he said had been overlooked in the past, the Prime Minister said: We are giving SMEs a bank credit facility, land for their businesses on lease and [are committed to] eradicate the red carpet.

Prime Minister Khan said that the SME sector is the biggest source of employment and has a huge share in wealth creation.

Unveils incentives for export-oriented small businesses, launches policy to encourage new ideas

Giving the example of Silicon Valley, the hub of startups and global tech companies in the United States, he said young people around the world have become billionaires thanks to IT-related startups.

He said the government was helping young people get credit and other facilities and said he was happy that \$500 million in investment in Pakistani startups is coming from abroad. That, he said,



meant the country was heading in the right direction.

Speaking of exports, the Prime Minister said that small countries like Singapore, which had a much smaller population than Pakistan, had overtaken us in terms of exports. Singapore, with a population of 5 million, has more than \$300 billion in exports, while Malaysia has \$220 billion, he said.

The Prime Minister said the government was trying to reduce regulations for SMEs to make it easier. In particular, he spoke about the No Objection Certificate (NOC) regime, adding that company inspections would be simplified using the latest computerized methods.

He recalled that the government had inherited multiple economic problems, but said that despite the challenges, the country had recorded record increases in exports, remittances and tax collection figures.

He pledged to achieve his target of

generating 8 trillion rupees in tax during his five-year term, saying work was underway with the help of the national database and the authority to develop a system to identify people and entities who have not paid taxes.

The Prime Minister also announced that the government would not close businesses or impose a general lockdown during the new wave of Covid-19, adding that this wave would be countered by smart lockdowns.

He called on people to follow all standard operating procedures (SOPs), but said the economy would not be shut down.

In another meeting on major city master plans, Prime Minister Khan said the government was paying special attention to their development as real engines of growth.

The Prime Minister instructed the concerned authorities to take all possible measures to remove obstacles to the completion of

various development projects on a priority basis to provide maximum relief to their residents.

Due to the rural exodus, cities face multiple challenges and housing, job opportunities and civic amenities are scarce. It is necessary to work on special development programs for these major cities and they must be accelerated, the prime minister said during the meeting.

He also ordered the authorities to work in close coordination and launch a concerted campaign for the uprising of cities like Karachi, Lahore, Multan, Faisalsbad, Rawalpindi and Gujranwala.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Information Ch Fawad Hussain, Minister of Industry Makhdoom Khusró Bakhtiyar and Minister of Planning Asad Umar.

Education Minister Shafqat Mehmood, Punjab Governor Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar and Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar joined the meeting via video link.

In a separate session convened to discuss the shortage of urea, Prime Minister Khan said the government had worked out a comprehensive fertilizer distribution mechanism and would seek the help of the district administration to ensure availability of urea-based fertilizers to farmers at controlled rates.

The meeting was informed that the production of urea during the three-year tenure of the current government exceeded 6.1 million tons, which had never exceeded 5.5 million tons before 2018.

Courtesy: Dawn

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