

# Positive POST



Greenwich University

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



## Pakistan's standing in the global rankings

### Overview

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

### DEMOCRACY INDEX

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

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

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

### HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

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

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

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

### PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

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

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

### TERRORISM INDEX

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

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

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

### ECONOMIC FREEDOM INDEX

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

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

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

## May in History

**May 18, 1950:**

*The Peshawar University comes into being.*

**May 11, 1951:**

*University of Karachi is established.*

**May 1, 1972:**

*Labour Day is celebrated for the first time in Pakistan.*

**May 26, 1980:**

*Establishment of Federal Shariat Court is announced.*

**May 16, 1991:**

*National Assembly adopts Shariat Bill.*

**May 21, 1997:**

*Saeed Anwar slams world record score of 194 runs against India.*

**May 12, 2000:**

*Supreme Court validated the October 1999 coup and granted General Pervez Musharraf executive and legislative authority for three years.*

**May 22, 2004:**

*Pakistan readmitted to Commonwealth.*

**May 14, 2006:**

*Charter of democracy (CoD) is signed by two former prime ministers of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto in London.*

**23 May-15 July 2009:**

*Pakistan Army launched Operation Rah-e-Rast and cleared Swat Valley of all Taliban elements. It is regarded as one of the most successful counter-insurgency operation in modern age.*

**May 19, 2015:**

*Zimbabwe cricket team toured Pakistan to play International Cricket Series for the first time since 2009 attack on the Sri Lanka national cricket team.*

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.

## First digital census set to be hit by fresh controversy

The ongoing census faces a fresh controversy as both the federal and Sindh governments went public with their differences over the issue.

The PPP-led Sindh government expressed concerns for excluding those parts of the province where “population growth rate has been recorded higher than a certain benchmark” and warned that the province would reject the result if its reservations were not addressed.

The Sindh government’s concern came soon after Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal directed all the provincial governments to complete the field verification/coverage of the population and housing census till May 15 in “areas where population growth is not in line with normal demographic trends” and “close the field operation in all areas exhibiting natural trends”.

On the other hand, both a federal government ally and the opposition PTI expressed their reservations over the census results.

Murad says result won’t be accepted if reservations not addressed

In a strongly-worded letter to Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah made it clear that his government would reject the census result if its reservations were not addressed. The letter, a copy of which is avail-



able with Dawn, stated that following a meeting held on Sunday to review the progress of the field operations of the census it was conveyed to the provincial government that the “census activity will immediately be closed in those talukas/tehsils where population growth rate higher than a certain benchmark has been recorded”.

“We have a strong reservation on this decision as this benchmarking is totally arbitrary,” he said.

“Citing reasons for his objections, the CM stated: “It is wrong to judge the population growth of all the districts/talukas against a single universal benchmark. If such a benchmark was universally applicable, [then] there would have been no need to conduct the census at all, as the population growth could have easily been calculated based on that benchmark.”

He further said that there are many blocks in almost all the districts of

Sindh, which have still not been fully counted.

The CM urged the federal government to continue the census process in all the districts of Sindh “till each and every household and individual is accurately counted”.

In Islamabad, the planning minister while chairing a meeting said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had taken strict notice of the repeated extensions of field enumeration activities, APP added. Therefore, the meeting was informed, targeted verification and enumeration operations should be carried out in areas with abnormal population growth, where gaps have already been highlighted using the digital systems architected by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics for the first-ever digital census.

Mr Iqbal stressed that special efforts should be made in urban areas of Punjab, Sindh and Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa and ICT to counter issues of under coverage and low coverage.

A uniform data-driven policy must be adopted to conclude the field enumeration in all the provinces.

He stressed on the completion of the exercise by May 15 for timely handing over of data to the Election Commission of Pakistan.

On the other hand, MQM-P, an ally of the PDM government in the Centre, alleged that the population of urban Sindh had been shown in the census less not because of any mistake but under a particular plan.

“Through the media and government institutions sources, it has been proved that population of urban Sindh is being shown less under a well-thought-out plan,” claimed MQM-P convener Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqi at a presser.

In Lahore, PTI Senator Ejaz Chaudhry termed the ongoing census a “fraud” and said his party had already rejected the census.

In a statement, he said political parties were protesting against the veracity of the census and added that the “imported government was busy [doing] rigging in census activity too”.

Mansoor Malik in Lahore also contributed to this report

*Courtesy; Dawn*

## PM wants strict action against wheat hoarders after ‘bumper crop’

Giving credit to his government for a “bumper wheat crop” this season, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed strict action against hoarders, fearing they might create a shortage leading to panic buying in the market.

With wheat harvesting still in progress, Mr Sharif claimed in a tweet on Sunday the country had achieved the highest output this season in a decade. He attributed the production of 27.5 million tonnes of wheat crop to the government’s efforts to ensure timely decisions, provision of quality seed, uninterrupted supply of fertiliser and Kissan package.

“The government’s future goal is to make Pakistan a wheat-exporting country again after meeting domestic needs,” he said.

The prime minister also chaired a meeting to review the official wheat procurement drive. He was told that there were 2.1m tonnes of grain carryover stocks, taking the overall availability of the commodity during the year 2023-24 to 29.6m tonnes, reducing the import requirement to around 1m tonnes.

He was quoted as directing the federal and provincial wheat procurement departments to procure maximum grain directly from farmers



instead of intermediaries.

He also sought an increase in the procurement target of all the agencies concerned and availing the required financial resources from the commercial banks.

The meeting was attended by

federal minister for national food security Tariq Bashir Cheema, prime minister’s adviser Ahad Cheema, special assistant Tariq Bajwa, provincial minister for industries S.M. Tanveer and officers of relevant departments.

*Courtesy; Dawn*

## Khar in Doha as UN-led moot kicks off sans Taliban

Hina Rabbani Khar, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, arrived in Doha on Monday to represent Pakistan in the UN-led talks on Afghanistan, which are being held in the absence of Taliban authorities.

Envoys from the United States, China and Russia as well as major European aid donors and key neighbours are among representatives from about 25 countries and groups called for two days of talks by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

The incumbent Taliban rulers of the country, however, have not been invited to the meeting, which would focus on how to deal with them and press them to ease a ban on women working and girls going to school.

The minister will present Pakistan's perspective vis-à-vis Afghanistan and work on building a consensus regarding the way forward with international and regional partners. Pakistan will continue to support all efforts to advance the shared objectives of a peaceful, stable, sovereign, prosperous and connected Afghanistan, a statement issued by the Foreign Office in Islamabad said.

Kabul spox says seeking 'positive engagement' with world; diplomats say talk of recognition impossible until women ban reversed

Ms Khar will also hold bilateral



talks with leaders of other participating countries on the sidelines of the huddle.

### UN dilemma

Ahead of his arrival in Doha, Mr Guterres' office said the meeting "is intended to achieve a common understanding within the international community on how to engage with the Taliban" on women's and girls' rights, inclusive governance, countering terrorism and drug trafficking.

Despite not being invited to the talks, the head of the Taliban representative office in Doha, Sohail Shaheen, said he has met with members of the British and Chinese delegations. He said the UN meeting and "the importance of engagement" was among the topics raised.

Though divided on many disputes, the UN Security Council united on Thursday to condemn the curbs on

Afghan women and girls and urge all countries to seek "an urgent reversal" of the policies.

Diplomats and observers say, however, that the Doha meeting highlights the quandary faced by the international community in handling Afghanistan, which the UN considers its biggest humanitarian crisis with millions depending on food aid.

The Taliban government's deputy spokesman, Bilal Karimi, said on Monday Kabul "wants positive engagement with the world".

But "internal issues" such as curbs on women's rights should not factor into decisions about diplomatic engagement and formal recognition, he said.

"These should not be used as political tools," he said. "Countries should have the moral courage to independently come forward for

positive engagement."

In an open letter to the Doha meeting released on Sunday, a coalition of Afghan women's groups said they were "outraged" that any country would consider formal ties with the government that the UN calls the "de facto authorities".

The United Nations and Washington have insisted that recognition is not on the agenda.

Rights groups' fears have been fuelled by remarks made last month by UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, who said the Doha meeting could find "baby steps" that lead to a "principled recognition" of the Taliban government.

The UN said the comments were misinterpreted.

No country has established formal ties with the Afghan administration and UN membership can only be decided by the UN General Assembly.

A UN official said it was "clear" the Taliban authorities want recognition. Formal UN ties would help the government reclaim billions of dollars of desperately needed funds seized abroad after it took power.

But diplomats from several countries involved in the talks said this would not be possible until there is a change on women's rights.

*Courtesy; Dawn*

## PCB names Bradburn new head coach

Pakistan on Saturday appointed former New Zealand player Grant Bradburn as head coach of their men's cricket team for the next two years after he served on an interim basis.

The 56-year-old, who played seven Tests and 11 ODIs for New Zealand, will be working under Mickey Arthur, who was appointed team director in March.

"Bradburn has been appointed as the head coach of the Pakistan men's team for the next two years after a robust recruitment process," the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB)



announced in a press release.

Bradburn replaces former spinner Saqlain Mushtaq, whose contract expired in February.

Pakistan had Abdur Rehman as interim coach for a Twenty20 series in Sha-rajah in March, while Bradburn oversaw the coaching during 10 limited over matches

against New Zealand in April and May.

Bradburn, who also served as Pakistan's fielding coach from 2018 to 2020, vowed to guide the team in major events.

The PCB said the team's management had unveiled a playing style with which they will approach the 2023 ODI World Cup in India.

The style, branded "The Pakistan Way", aims to see the team employ bold tactics and attacking strategies.

*Courtesy; Dawn*

## Over 246.5m people counted across Pakistan as census set to conclude

With five extensions and over 246.5 million people counted across the country, the federal government on Sunday told the provinces that field operations for the seventh national census must end on Monday (today) and that the deadline would not be extended again.

“The census field operations will not further be extended and the provincial governments must complete census enumeration/verification till the stipulated date of May 15, 2023,” Chief Census Commissioner Dr Naeemuz Zafar wrote to the governments of four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

As of May 12, Pakistan’s population excluding AJK and GB was counted at 240.6m 240,602,348, to be precise. The census of 2017 had put the country’s population at 207m.

Some 121,215,805 individuals have been counted in Punjab, 56,566,804 in Sindh, 39,651,697 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 20,865,742 in Balochistan, and 2,302,307 in the Islamabad Capital Territory

Besides, more than 5.9m people were counted in AJK and GB until last week.

Mr Zafar reminded the provincial and regional governments that it had been decided during the 13th meeting of the Census Monitoring Committee on May 10 that the census field operation would not be extended beyond May 15 as it was linked with the delimitation for the upcoming general election.



He asked the provincial census commissioners and those in AJK, GB and Islamabad to speed up the verification exercise to complete it positively on May 15.

The decision to extend the ongoing population and housing census operations for two weeks until May 15 was taken in April only for verifying and covering the leftover structures/houses in selected districts.

Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif took notice of the repeated extensions of field enumeration activities.

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) then formally announced the closure of census field operations in all areas except 66 districts, where the deadline has been extended.

It was decided that field operations in these districts should specifically focus on the verification and coverage of leftover areas. Of the districts, 33

are in Punjab, eight in Sindh, nine in KP, three in Balochistan, seven in AJK and four in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The field operations for the census began on March 1 and were initially scheduled to complete on April 4. However, the deadline has been extended five times since then.

The last extension granted at the 12th meeting of the Census Monitoring Committee on April 28 was for two weeks, i.e. until May 15.

“During the 13th meeting of the Census Monitoring Committee, it was decided that the census field operation will not be further extended beyond this date due to its linkage with delimitation for upcoming general elections,” Mr Zafar wrote.

Furthermore, during a May 12 meeting of demographers, it was recommended that census field operations might not further be extended, mainly due to continuous births, deaths and migration dynamics of society, which may badly impact the results if not prudently taken care of during the census field operations.

The census commissioner recalled that PBS had also been stressing for quite some time to complete the field operations, as the statistics bureau was required to hand over the final results to the Election Commission of Pakistan at the earliest so that constituencies could be delimited for the general election.

*Courtesy; Dawn*

## Trading in international bonds ‘distressed’ but no harbinger of

According to data compiled by Bloomberg, the interest rate on the dollar debt issued by Pakistan is hovering between 30 and 40 percentage points above the US treasury bond of comparable duration.

For context, the gap was in single digits at the end of 2021. Any bond that offers a yield exceeding the US treasury rate of similar tenor by 10 percentage points is considered distressed debt i.e. it trades at a significant discount in the secondary market as its issuer carries a high potential for default.

Speaking to Dawn on Monday, Optimus Capital Management Ltd Executive Chairman Asif Qureshi said the widening gap between the return on Pakistani bonds with that on the comparable US debt is concerning, but “not a conclusive indicator” of Pakistan’s imminent default.

“We can avert sovereign default anytime we want. All we need is the International Monetary Fund (IMF),” he said, adding that the foot-dragging on the revival of a \$7 billion loan programme has put the economy in jeopardy. “We’ve still not reached the point of no return,” he added, emphasising the need for an immediate revival of the loan programme.

Pakistan currently has eight conventional and Islamic bonds trading in the international bond market. All of these dollar-denominated bonds trade at a steep discount, meaning their market prices are less than their face values.

Data released by Topline Securities on Monday showed the 10-year Pakistan Government International Bond, which is to mature in April 2024, traded at 52.4 cents to a dollar. In simpler words, it means the debt instrument is trading at only 52.4 per cent of its face value.

As a consequence, the bond’s yield which is inversely proportional to its price in the secondary market clocked in at 102.79pc.

However, analysts point out that the share of borrowing through international bonds and sukuk is relatively small within Pakistan’s public external debt. They constituted only 8.1pc or \$7.8bn in the total public external debt of \$96.3bn as of March.

In contrast, multilateral debt owed to international financial institutions accounted for a 38.5pc share or \$37bn. “Other bilateral” debt amounted to \$17.6bn, Paris Club \$8.7bn, IMF \$7.5bn and



commercial loans/credits \$5.8bn, according to data compiled by Arif Habib Ltd.

Another reason for why rising yields on sovereign debt cannot be taken as an indisputable indicator of impending default is the fact that many countries with worse-performing bonds are still keeping their heads above water in the international market.

For example, the spread over US treasuries offered by the Tunisian bond is larger than that of the Pakistani bond. Similarly, bonds issued by Ghana and Belarus countries that are already in default are performing better than Pakistani bonds, which implies that bond yields aren’t the sole indicator of whether a country is going to default.

*Courtesy; Dawn*

## Historic visit steals spotlight from SCO moot

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari arrived in Goa on Thursday, and the Indian press could help not but notice it — almost to the exclusion of other foreign ministers attending the two-day meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers.

Reports noted his “Salaam, from Goa” message, a former Portuguese enclave, now a BJP-ruled state, and were nearly unanimous in saying that no meeting between him and his Indian counterpart was on the cards.

The foreign ministers and their delegations are staying at the Taj Exotica in Benaulum, which is also where the SCO meetings are going to be held.

Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar hosted a dinner for the visiting dignitaries. The official engagements begin on Friday with the arrival of foreign ministers and heads of delegations at the meeting venue, followed by a group photo.

The meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers will begin in the morning and by noon, the ‘decision document’ will be signed, which will be followed by a working lunch.

The event will conclude with the signing of a memorandum with New Dialogue Partners. The leaders will then hold various bilateral



meetings with their respective counterparts from other nations.

**Meeting with Russian FM**  
After landing in India, Mr Bhutto-Zardari met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Thursday night. According to the Foreign Office in Islamabad, the two discussed bilateral, regional and international matters of mutual interest.

Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari shakes hands with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov ahead of the SCO foreign ministers’ meeting in Goa. Online

Mr Lavrov was assured that Pakistan would continue to work closely with Moscow to further deepen cooperation in the realms of food security, energy and people-to-people contacts, adding that the SCO had opened “new vistas of cooperation and coordination with Russia”.

Earlier, in a video shared on Twitter, Mr Bhutto-Zardari said he would

hold meetings with his counterparts from Russia and Uzbekistan. But would there be a chance encounter with his Indian counterpart, or a courteous handshake, perhaps? No news on that front.

The first Pakistani foreign minister to visit India in almost 12 years, Mr Bhutto-Zardari said he looks forward to constructive discussions with his counterparts from friendly countries.

“I am very happy that today I have arrived here leading the delegation of Pakistan,” he told reporters, adding that he hoped the SCO meeting would be “very successful”. Indian diplomat JP Singh, joint secretary of the Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran desk, received Mr Bhutto-Zardari at the airport.

**Important alliance**  
The Pakistani FM said his decision to attend the meeting underlines

Pakistan’s strong commitment to the SCO charter.

“During my visit, which is focused exclusively on the SCO, I look forward to constructive discussions with my counterparts from friendly countries,” he said.

Analysts such as Michael Kugelman of The Wilson Centre says this visit must be viewed through a “multilateral lens, not a bilateral one”.

Speaking to BBC News, the scholar of South Asian affairs said: “Mr Bilawal not going to pursue reconciliation with Delhi. He’s going to participate in a conference of regional organisation that holds considerable importance for Pakistan’s interests.”

In his view, skipping the conference would raise the risk of Pakistan being isolated from an organisation that embraces its interests strongly. This view was lent credence when Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif currently in London for the coronation of King Charles III tweeted his support of Mr Bilawal.

Pakistan was committed to playing its part to advance the shared values of peace and stability in the region, he said, adding: “We are all for win-win understandings based on connectivity, trade and mutually advantageous cooperation”.

*Courtesy; Dawn*

## Over 700 fly to S. Arabia as Haj operation begins

The pre-Haj operation began across the country on Sunday with the first flight carrying 328 intending pilgrims from Karachi to Madina early in the morning.

The Pakistan International Airlines plans to carry 65,000 people to Saudi Arabia during the month-long Haj operation, which will end on June 22. Senior government officials and those from the PIA were present at Karachi Airport to see off the pilgrims.

According to a PIA spokesperson, inaugural flights from Karachi, Islamabad and Faisalabad carried over 700 pilgrims on the first day of the operation.

Nawaf bin Saeed Al Maliki, the

Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan, was at the airport to see off the intending pilgrims who boarded the first flight from Islamabad for Madina.

Federal ministers Talha Mehmood and Shahzain Bugti, officials from PIA, the Civil Aviation Authority and the Ministry of Religious Affairs were also present.

The airlines will use Boeing 777 and Airbus 320 aircraft for the operation, the spokesperson added.

This year, PIA will carry over 65,000 Haj pilgrims to Saudi Arabia through 320 flights.

The post-Haj operation will run from July 2 to Aug 2, according to



the spokesperson.

Flights will be operated from Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Quetta, Peshawar, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Sukkur and Rahim Yar Khan.

The PIA is expected to fly 40,700 pilgrims this year, Saudi Airlines 36,000, Air Blue 2,250 and Serena 2,280.

A total of 42,811 pilgrims will land at Madina and 38,419 at Jeddah.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority, 46,249 pilgrims will fly from Karachi this year, while the figure for last year was 24,998.

The first flight from Lahore carried 279 pilgrims to Madina while 149 pilgrims boarded the flight from Faisalabad for Madina.

At Faisalabad, the pilgrims were seen off, among others, by Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah.

## Sacrificial animal price included in Haj expenses

The government has announced a major concession for intending pilgrims as it has included the amount for animal sacrifice in the original Haj package.

This was announced by Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Talha Mahmood at a press conference.

Earlier on April 29, he announced that the first Haj flight would leave for Saudi Arabia on May 20-21.

At his Sunday presser, he said the ministry would bear the expenses of qurbani and the decision has been taken to provide relief to pilgrims who are already paying for the “most expensive Haj in history”.

Accordingly, the pilgrims will not have to pay Rs57,000 extra for the animal sacrifice in Saudi Arabia.

Originally, the price of animal sacrifice was not included in the



package under the government-sponsored scheme and pilgrims were directed to pay the amount separately.

Mr Mahmood also announced that the immigration of around 26,000 pilgrims, taking flights from the Islamabad International Airport, would be completed in Pakistan.

This was done as part of a deal agreed with Saudi authorities under the Road to Makkah project. He added that the facility was

planned to be extended to Lahore, Karachi and Multan airports, but due to time constraints, it couldn't be done.

The number of pilgrims going for Haj on the government scheme is significantly low this year, forcing the government to shun balloting and send all the applicants on the pilgrimage.

This year's quota was divided into two parts: regular and sponsored. The regular scheme was for pil-

grims who would pay charges in rupees. The sponsorship scheme was for overseas Pakistanis or their relatives who would pay the amount in US dollars.

The ministry of religious affairs had allocated a 25 per cent quota for the sponsorship scheme which was later increased to 50pc.

Around 45,000 seats were allocated under this scheme devised in light of dwindling forex reserves. But, the scheme failed to achieve its objective as the number of applications was far lower than the quota. On the other hand, for around 44,190 seats under the regular scheme, the government received 72,869 applications. With seats available under the sponsored scheme, the government decided to accommodate regular pilgrims on the quota for the sponsored scheme.

*Courtesy; Dawn*

## PM to seek big brother's advice during London visit

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif touched down in London, just days ahead of the coronation of King Charles III, who has invited scores of world leaders to witness the historic occasion, but the visit may hold greater political significance.

PM Shehbaz was received at the airport by Pakistan's High Commissioner Moazzam Ahmad Khan and David Gordon-MacLeod, a special representative of the British foreign secretary.

The prime minister has a packed agenda for the trip, as he will participate in an event for Commonwealth leaders in London on May 5, and attend the coronation the following day.

The premier's London trip is also being viewed as significant as he is expected to consult his elder brother and PML-N supreme leader Nawaz Sharif over the political situation back home.

With the PML-N-led coalition government locked in a battle with the judiciary and the opposition PTI, and little hope for elections as ordered by the

court, the two brothers will no doubt have plenty to discuss when it comes to the party's future course of action and the possibility of the elder Sharif's long-awaited return to the country.

Since assuming office, Mr Shahbaz has visited London on three key occasions, the most recent one in November 2022, ahead of the new army chief's appointment.

Now, with the ruling coalition and PTI having exchanged proposals following talks on the timeframe of elections, PM Shehbaz's visit to London is also being seen as a consultative visit, where he is expected to apprise his elder brother of the political situation back home and seek counsel on a future course of action.

Given Nawaz's experience as a three-time prime minister and seasoned politician, observers say there is little doubt that PM Shehbaz will want to seek his brother's advice on how to respond to the Supreme Court's deadline to hold Punjab elections on May 14.

Though the final date of elections will



jointly be decided by the coalition partners in the PDM alliance, it is Nawaz who may leverage his relationship with bigwigs such as Maulana Fazlur Rahman and Asif Ali Zardari to evolve some sort of consensus.

Nawaz's opinion may also be sought on how the party should proceed in its public tussle with the judiciary. Going by the elder Sharif's public statements demanding accountability of the judiciary, and his criticism of decisions by CJP Umar Atta Bandial, it seems likely that the PML-N may double down on its policy of defiance.

For months now, the impression in Pakistan has been that the PML-N wants to delay elections till such time as the economic situation comes under control and it can regain the

political capital lost to issues such as inflation.

But many in the PML-N most notably minister without a portfolio Javed Latif feel an election date should only be set when Nawaz's return to Pakistan is certain, as his physical presence on the ground is seen as critical to battling the PTI narrative that has gained popularity in Punjab.

When asked by reporters outside Stanhope House about his upcoming meeting with his brother, Nawaz was all smiles when he confirmed the two would meet.

“Whether things work out for Imran Khan or not, things will certainly work out for Pakistan,” he said.

*Courtesy; Dawn*

## Pakistan rejects US report on religious freedom

The Foreign Office on Thursday rejected as baseless assertions made about Pakistan in the International Religious Freedom Report released by the US Department of State.

“Such ill-informed reporting exercises about internal affairs of sovereign states are pointless, irresponsible and counterproductive,” Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch told a press briefing.

She said Pakistan is proud of its religious diversity and pluralistic social fabric. She pointed out that the country’s Constitution has set a robust framework for wide-ranging legal policy and affirmative measures to safeguard and advance the rights and freedoms of all Pakistanis irrespective of their faith.

“These rights and constitutional guarantees are protected, upheld and reinforced by an independent judiciary. We strongly believe that each state itself has the primary responsibility to promote and protect religious rights and freedoms of its nationals,” she emphasised.

FO says country is proud of its religious diversity, pluralistic social fabric; killing of Palestinians condemned

The spokesperson said Pakistan had always engaged constructively with the international community in promoting mutual understanding on the important question of religious freedom and minority rights. In its



interactions, including with the United States, Pakistan has raised serious concerns about the steady surge in anti-Muslim hatred, racism and Islamophobia.

“We hope to work with international partners to counter these pernicious forms of religious intolerance, discrimination and Islamophobia,” she said.

### Unrest in Gaza

Ms Baloch said Pakistan had been closely following developments in Gaza and other occupied Palestinian territories and it was concerned about the impact of violence on civilians.

She condemned the loss of precious lives of 33 Palestinians, including women and children, over the last several days. She called on Israel to adhere to its international obligations and respect the recent ceasefire agreement, ending days of bloodshed and indiscriminate use of force in Gaza by Israeli occupation forces.

“Pakistan reaffirms its unstinted sup-

port for the Palestinian cause and renews its call for a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian state, with pre-1967 borders and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital as the only just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the Palestinian question, in accordance with the relevant United Nations and OIC resolutions,” she said.

### Situation in India-held Kashmir

The spokesperson welcomed the important statement made by the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Affairs, Dr Fernand de Varennes, on the situation in India-held Kashmir. In his statement, the Special Rapporteur warned against Indian plans to hold the G-20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar.

“He has rightly said that India is providing a ‘vener of support to a façade of normalcy’ at a time when massive human rights violations, illegal and arbitrary arrests, political persecution, restrictions and even suppression of free media and human rights defenders continue to escalate,” she said.

“We agree with the special rapporteur that the situation in occupied Jammu and Kashmir should be decried and condemned, not pushed under the rug and ignored with the holding of the G-20 meeting. Members of G20 should pay due attention to these observations and sage advice,” she added.

Answering a question about the US Congressmen’s letter to US Secretary of State, expressing concern over trial of political workers in Pakistan under the Army Act, she reiterated that Pakistan had the full ability to deal with all domestic challenges in accordance with law and Constitution.

In reply to a question about Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, she said Pakistan considers it an important project that symbolizes friendship between the two countries. “We remain committed to this project there are some issues regarding its completion for which both countries are engaged in talks. We will continue to discuss with Iran all aspects of the completion of Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline.”

When asked to comment on ethnic cleansing in the Indian state of Manipur, she said: “As a principle, we do not comment on the internal affairs of other countries. In the past, however, Pakistan has expressed concerns about the treatment of minorities by India and we hope that India will make efforts to protect its minorities.”

*Courtesy: Dawn*

## Instigators to be held accountable, says COAS

Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir has warned that armed forces will not tolerate any more attacks on security installations, according to a statement by the military’s media wing.

The army chief, during his visit to the provincial capital on Saturday, said that any further attempt to violate the sanctity and security of military properties will be severely dealt with, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

Calling May 9 “a Black Day”, the

COAS resolved to hold to account the “planners, abettors, instigators and executors” of the acts of vandalism.

“A concerted effort is being made maliciously by inimical elements to target the armed forces,” ISPR said while quoting Gen Munir.

He claimed that information warfare was ongoing to create misconceptions about the army.

“Such nefarious attempts will be foiled with the support of the people of Pakistan,” Gen Munir vowed.

The COAS also visited the corps headquarters where he was given a briefing on the security situation and ongoing counter-terrorism efforts.

In his address to the officers and soldiers, the COAS emphasised the importance of efforts to restore peace and stability.

“We shall continue with our endeavours of peace and stability and there will be no room for spoilers of the process,” he said.

The army chief appreciated the pro-



fessional competence of the force and hailed the performance and achievements of law enforcement agencies in the ongoing fight against terrorism.

*Courtesy: Dawn* 7

## All Eyes on 'Mein': Ayeza Khan and Wahaj Ali's Banter Hints at New Project

Pakistan's showbiz industry is abuzz with excitement as two of its biggest stars, Wahaj Ali and Ayeza Khan, are set to work together on a new project by Big Bang Entertainment. While the title of the series has yet to be revealed, the actors teased it with playful banter on Instagram.

Wahaj Ali started the teasing by mentioning Ayeza Khan in an Instagram story post. 'You can't always be right,' he wrote, 'yahan mein' theek hoon!' In response, Ayeza Khan teased him, stating, "Mein' har baat social media per discuss karna pasand nahi karti." Interestingly, both stars emphasized the word 'Mein' in their texts, leading fans to suspect that the new drama will



be called 'Mein'.

The two actors' lively banter has set the internet on fire, with fans

eagerly anticipating their first TV appearance together. Wahaj Ali has become a sensation in Pakistan thanks to his continuing

serial Tere Bin, in which he co-stars with Yumna Zaidi. He portrayed Murtasim Khan, which drew notice not only in Pakistan but also in India and Bangladesh.

Murtasim and Meerab's sizzling chemistry wowed fans, and they can't wait to see him in a new project with Ayeza Khan.

Both have made a name for themselves through their performances and have amassed a sizable fan base. Their performances have been widely praised, and they have established themselves as household names in Pakistan. Fans of the two stars have been waiting for them to share screen time again, and it appears like their wish may be granted shortly.

*Courtesy:thewomenjournal.com*

## Pakistan U19 in strong position as Bangladesh U19 trail by 105 runs

Bangladesh U19 still trail by 105 runs with seven wickets in hand at the close of third day's play of the solitary four-day match against Pakistan U19 at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram on Tuesday.

Beginning their second innings at the deficit of 271 runs, Bangladesh lost their opening batter Majaharul Islam for nought with only two runs on the board. Ashiqur Rehman Shibli and Adil Bin Siddik got together and added 69 runs for the second wicket before Adil fell to Wahaj Riaz for 26 off 105 deliveries, which included five fours. Ashiqur was next to return to the hut, scoring 79 off 201 balls, hitting 11 fours and two sixes.

At stumps, Bangladesh U19 were 166 for three in 70 overs. Captain



Sharear Sakib and Akanto Sheikh returned undefeated on 47 and five runs, respectively.

Earlier, resuming their first innings at the overnight score of 364 for seven, Pakistan U19 were bowled

out for 420 in 128.1 overs. Right-handed batter Obaid Shahid scored 67 off 144, smashing eight boundaries. Ali Asfand scored 40 off 79 deliveries, which included eight fours.

For Bangladesh U19, Wasi Siddiquee was the most successful bowler, taking five wickets for 86 runs from 25.1 overs. Iqbal Hussain Emon grabbed four wickets for 81 runs in 28 overs.

Scores in brief:

Bangladesh U19 149 all out, 59 overs (Sheikh Parvaiz Jibon 56, Sharear Sakib 48; Amir Hassan 4-29, Mohammad Ismail 3-41, Ali Asfand 2-37) and 166-3, 70 overs (Ashiqur Rehman Shibli 79 not out, Sharear Sakib 47 not out)

Pakistan U19 420 all out, 128.1 overs (Shahzaib Khan 174, Obaid Shahid 67, Ali Asfand 40, Azan Awais 40, Shamyul Hussain 38; Wasi Siddiquee 5-86, Iqbal Hussain Emon 4-81)

*Courtesy: www.cricketworld.com*

**Patron:**  
Ms. Seema Mughal  
*Vice Chancellor*  
**Editor:**  
Dr. Sabir Ahmed  
*Assistant Professor*  
**Graphics & Layout:**  
Shazia Anwar

Greenwichians interested  
in contributions!  
Shoot an email to the editor,  
including your name,  
roll number and your work at  
drsabir@greenwich.edu.pk

*Greenwich*  *University*

Greenwich University, DK-10, 38th Street, Darakshan, Phase VI,  
Defence Housing Authority, Karachi-75500, Pakistan  
UAN: (021)111-202-303; Tel: (021) 35840397-98; Fax: (021)35851910  
Email: gu@greenwich.edu.pk ; URL: www.greenwich.edu.pk