



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

## Pakistan's standing in the global rankings

### Overview

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

### DEMOCRACY INDEX

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

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

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

### HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

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

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

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

### PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

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

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

### TERRORISM INDEX

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

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

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

### ECONOMIC FREEDOM INDEX

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

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

Positive Post is a strategic effort to project achievement and contributions of Pakistan.

While showcasing Greenwich University's cultural diplomacy initiatives, it also encapsulates a compilation of different developments complementing Pakistan's socio-cultural, economic & Political outcomes

### September in History

**30, September 1947:** Pakistan becomes a member of the UN by a unanimous vote of the Security Council.

**14 September 1949:** Khwaja Nazimuddin becomes 2nd Governor-General of Pakistan.

**21 September 1954:** Constituent Assembly unanimously passes the resolution in favour of Urdu and Bengali as national languages.

**23 September, 1955:** Baghdad Pact treaty among Iraq, Turkey, the U.K., Pakistan, and Iran is ratified by Pakistan.

**30 September, 1955:** One Unit Scheme is implemented, provinces in West Pakistan are abolished.

**20 September, 1956:** Treaty of Baral is signed with Sudan insurgents ending the PC Pak Search Sudan Operation.

**19 September, 1960:** Pakistan and India sign the Indus Waters Treaty, brokered by the World Bank.

**11 September, 1965:** Battle of Ichogil Bund ends in a Pakistani victory

**23 September, 1965:** A ceasefire comes into action and Indo-Pakistani war of 1965 ends.

**16 September, 1978:** General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq becomes Pakistan's sixth president.

**6 September, 2008:** Asif Zardari wins presidential election with 481 votes.

**1 September, 2009:** Khyber Pass offensive is initiated by Pakistan

**September 2009:** Orakzai and Kurram offensive initiated by Pakistan

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## Young Kh Yousaf secures Turkey trip with win in Turkish Airlines Golf Cup



The Lahore edition of the Turkish Airlines Invitational Golf Match 2024 was held at the Royal Palm Golf Course, where 23-year-old Khawaja Muhammad Yousaf emerged as the champion, earning a trip to Turkey to compete in the World Cup Amateur Golf Championship. This prestigious event features winners from similar competitions held in 94 countries. A total of 93 golfers participated in the Stableford-format tournament, showcasing their skills in pursuit of the top prize. Yousaf, recently returned from studies in the US, impressed with a composed performance, securing 46 Stableford points through 13 pars and five bogies. His accurate shots and steady approach helped him outshine notable competitors

like Hussain Hamid and Abdullah Sharif. Yousaf expressed his gratitude to Turkish Airlines for the opportunity, attributing his success to a disciplined game plan. Other top performers included Mian Ahmed, who secured second place with 43 points, and Rana Irfan Haider, who finished third with 38 points. The best gross score was achieved by Hussain Hamid with a 76. The event concluded with a prize distribution ceremony, attended by Turkish Consul General Ali Erbaz, where prizes were awarded to the winners. Saad Sultan won a free trip to Turkey through the lucky draw, while in the ladies' section, Suneyah Osama claimed the nearest-to-the-pin prize.

*Courtesy: The Nation*

## Pak Suzuki discontinues iconic Bolan 'Cary Daba', announces Suzuki Every as successor

Pak Suzuki has officially ended the production of its iconic Bolan minivan, commonly known as 'Cary Daba'. The vehicle, widely used for commercial purposes, was phased out due to its outdated design and lack of modern safety features, leading to a decline in sales. The last unit, marked with chassis number 01151691, has rolled off the production line.

Suzuki has announced that the Cary Daba will be replaced by the Suzuki Every, a more modern and feature-rich minivan. The Suzuki Every was un-



veiled at a recent auto show, and its launch is expected to take place in mid-October, pending import challenges.

At the time of discontinuation, the prices of the Suzuki Bolan variants were:

Bolan VX Euro II: Rs1,940,000  
Bolan Cargo Van Euro II: Rs1,944,000

Earlier in May, Pak Suzuki Motor Company reduced car prices by up to Rs710,000.

## 8th Silk Road Expo boosts Pakistan China energy cooperation

The 8th Silk Road International Expo, currently underway in the northwestern Chinese city of Xi'an, has become a significant platform for promoting energy sector cooperation between Pakistan and China. Participants from both nations engaged in discussions aimed at enhancing industrial collaboration and deepening practical cooperation in the energy sector.

This year's expo, themed "Deepening Connectivity and Expanding Economic and Trade Cooperation," honors Pakistan as the guest country.



The Pakistani pavilion, spanning 500 square meters, showcases some of Pakistan's leading companies in petroleum, energy, and minerals, providing opportunities for B2B exchanges.

During the opening ceremony, Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi, highlighted the importance of bilateral cooperation in the energy sector. He mentioned that out of the 13 priority areas identified for Pakistan-China cooperation, two key sectors were being discussed at the expo: petroleum exploration and refining, and the utilization of Thar coal in urea production and other downstream industries.

Punjab CM stresses climate diplomacy with India, announces youth internship

stipend increase

A roundtable meeting was held on the sidelines of the expo, featuring representatives from 15 Pakistani energy companies, including Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) and Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL). Chinese counterparts from renowned energy and petroleum companies, such as Yanchang Petroleum International Limited, Xi'an Shiyou University, and Shanghai Electric Group, also participated.

Pakistan's Petroleum Minister, Musadik Malik, provided insights into Pakistan's coal and oil reserves, emphasizing the need for advanced technologies to develop these resources. He expressed Pakistan's interest in collaborating with China on modern energy technologies.

Hussainullah, a staff member at the Pakistani pavilion, noted that energy cooperation is a vital component of Pakistan-China relations. He expressed hope that Chinese investors would gain a better understanding of the current energy development opportunities in Pakistan through the expo and looked forward to further collaboration with Chinese partners.

*Courtesy: The Nation*

## Massive oil, gas reserves found in Pakistani waters: senior security official

A substantial deposit of petroleum and natural gas has been discovered in Pakistan's territorial waters, a cache so large its exploitation could change the country's destiny, DawnNewsTV quoted a senior security official saying.

According to the official, who is understood to be privy to the development, a three-year survey was undertaken in collaboration with a friendly country to verify the presence of the oil and gas reserves.

The geographic survey has allowed Pakistan to identify the location of the deposits, and the relevant departments have informed the government of the resources found in Pakistani waters.

Terming it an effort to benefit from what he called the 'blue water economy', the official said that proposals for bidding and exploration were being studied, meaning that the exploration work can be started in

the near future.

However, he said the work of digging wells and actually getting oil out could take several years.

But the 'blue water economy' can yield more than just oil and gas; there are several other valuable minerals and elements that can be mined from the ocean.

The official said that taking the initiative and acting quickly could help turn around the country's economic fortunes.

Some estimates suggest that this discovery constitutes the fourth largest oil and gas reserves in the world.

Currently, Venezuela is thought to be the leader in oil reserves with around 3.4 billion barrels, while the US has the most untapped shale oil reserves.

Saudi Arabia, Iran, Canada and



Iraq constitute the rest of the top five.

While talking to DawnNewsTV, former Ogra member Muhammad Arif said even though the country should remain optimistic, there's never 100 per cent certainty that the reserves would be discovered as expected.

When asked if these reserves are enough to meet the country's energy needs, he said it depends on the size and recovery rate of the production. "If this is a gas reserve, it can replace LNG imports and if these are oil reserves, we can substitute imported oil."

However, he cautioned that it is a "wishful thinking" until the prospects for the reserves are analysed and the drilling process begins.

He pointed out that exploration alone required hefty investment of around \$5 billion and it might take four to five years to extract reserves from an offshore location.

He said if the exploration resulted in the discovery of reserves, then further investment would be needed for wells and laying down the infrastructure to extract the reserves and produce fuel.

*Courtesy: Dawn*

## Safe guarding journalism: How cybersecurity is guarding media

In today's digital world, journalists face unprecedented cybersecurity threats, from hacking and surveillance to misinformation campaigns. These dangers can compromise their ability to report freely and safely. Leading the fight against these threats is Viraj Asher, an award-winning journalist turned cybersecurity strategist, who has made it his mission to protect media organizations through innovative cybersecurity solutions.

Viraj's journey began as a journalist in Dubai, where he won the prestigious Gulf News Journalist Award for his insightful reporting. His experiences in the field, especially witnessing the growing digital threats against media, inspired him to pivot his career toward cybersecurity. He recognized that journalists needed more than just

reporting skills—they needed protection from the mounting risks of cyberattacks, especially when covering sensitive issues or working in high-risk environments.

This realization led to the creation of Press Protec, an AI-driven cybersecurity framework designed specifically for journalists and media organizations. Press Protec defends against a wide range of digital threats, using AI to monitor and flag malicious activities, such as phishing and malware. Ensuring that sensitive information and sources remain confidential through secure communication and data storage. A deep dive reveals empowering reporters with the skills to navigate the digital landscape safely, identify risks, and safeguard their work.



Viraj's cybersecurity framework has already been adopted by numerous media outlets, from independent news platforms to large organizations. His work is crucial in an age where journalism is increasingly under threat, with cyberattacks being used to silence the press or disrupt critical reporting. His contribution has gained both national and international recognition, particularly for its simplicity and effectiveness.

Viraj's work, Press Protec has so far been seen as the only available cybersecurity frame-

work accessible to journalists, especially those working in frontline media. "Journalism is a pillar of democracy, and without secure channels, we risk losing the voices that hold power accountable," says Viraj. His efforts ensure that journalists can continue their critical work without fear of cyberattacks undermining their reporting. By safeguarding the press, Viraj Asher is playing a vital role in defending the freedom of information in the digital age.

*Courtesy: The Nation*

## Situationer: No friendship in sight over 'Dost' scheme

Govt's push to bring traders into tax net has met with strong resistance, with both sides refusing to budge an inch from their positions.

The government's efforts to bring the wholesale and retail sectors into the tax net are intensifying, as officials remain determined to implement the Tajir Dost Scheme (Trader-Friendly Scheme) despite ongoing protests, strikes and resistance from traders.

The situation has reached a critical juncture, with the country's tax-to-GDP ratio still languishing below 8.5 per cent. The wholesale and retail sectors, which account for around 20pc of the economy, largely remain outside the tax net, placing more and more burden on the salaried class and other sectors.

Traders, on the other hand, observed a successful nationwide strike earlier this week and are now planning to extend their protest to a three-day strike, with the possibility of an indefinite shutdown if the government does not meet their demands. They argue that their proposals could help expand the country's tax base more effectively.

For now, the tax machinery appears unfazed by the traders' tactics.

"They are trying to avoid being brought into the tax net through the Tajir Dost Scheme. But we are not backing down. There is no room for compromise, warned a senior official of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

Govt's push to bring traders into tax net has met with strong resistance, with both sides refusing to budge an inch from their positions

"How long can they keep striking? Their capacity won't last beyond five strikes. After that, the situation will become increasingly difficult for them," he added.

The FBR has offered a review



mechanism where traders or shopkeepers can prove their monthly income and move out of the advance tax bracket, the official said, regretting that the traders had yet to respond to this offer.

According to a report, the retail and wholesale sector contributes 18.1pc to the country's GDP but accounts for only 2pc of direct taxes. In contrast, the industrial sector, which makes up 18.4pc of GDP, contributes 40pc of direct taxes. The salaried class, representing just 2pc of the labour force, contributes 15pc of total direct taxes.

Most taxes in Pakistan are collected indirectly, primarily through consumption, which disproportionately affects the poor.

"As the gap between the destitute and elite increases, there is a need to increase direct taxes, which would also help expand the tax net," the report said. It described the retail and wholesale sectors as one segment which "barely pays any direct taxes and often creates the most noise whenever there is any effort to extract even a minimal amount of tax."

Naeem Mir, general secretary of Anjuman Tajiran Pakistan and a coordinator of the Tajir Dost Scheme, identified two key issues in the conflict between traders and the FBR.

The first is that the tax slabs are based on property value (including shop location and

area), ranging from Rs1,000 to Rs60,000 in monthly tax. While the scheme requires traders to pay tax according to these slabs and submit annual returns, traders argue that the FBR should impose tax based on their actual income, not indicative figures. The FBR is considering forming committees led by additional income tax commissioners to assess the traders' income and calculate taxes accordingly.

"The second issue involves traders who are already tax filers but wish to avoid paying more and resist government attempts to assess their real income," Mr Mir told Dawn.

He said that many traders have been found filing nil returns repeatedly and are unwilling to have their accounts audited.

"The government wants these traders to pay tax based on their actual income, but they refuse," he added.

Mr Mir noted that while traders are willing to register with the FBR under the scheme, they resist paying tax based on "lame excuses" that they already pay heavy taxes.

He mentioned that some traders, particularly wholesalers and large retailers, have suggested a monthly tax of just Rs1,000. "In a light-hearted manner, I suggested they register with the Benazir Income Support Programme for financial assistance to overcome

their 'hardships'," he quipped. Mr Mir explained that when the government asks traders to show their actual income, they resist, and when asked to install point-of-sale systems in their shops, they complain about the cost. "The government has even offered to install the entire system at its own expense, yet the traders remain unwilling to pay taxes. It is very unfortunate," he lamented.

Talking to Dawn, Kashif Chaudhry, central president of Tanzeem-i-Tajiran, argued that the recent strike by traders demonstrated the sector's unified stance against the FBR's scheme, which they believe is unviable for expanding the tax base.

"We are now planning another strike for three days soon. And if the government doesn't accept our demands, we will go on strike for an indefinite period," he warned, insisting that taxes should be calculated based on actual income rather than property evaluation.

Mr Chaudhry floated four proposals to the government aimed at increasing revenue: introducing tax based on self-assessment with penalties for fraud, calculating tax on annual turnover, using average income as a basis, and implementing a fixed tax based on business volume.

The FBR estimates that only 5pc of the 3.5 million traders including 20pc wholesalers and 80pc retailers currently file tax returns. If implemented, the Tajir Dost Scheme could generate Rs250 billion to Rs300 billion in revenue.

"No country can progress without taxing its wholesale and retail sectors," the FBR official said. "For the last 75 years, traders have avoided paying taxes. Now, there is no other option."

*Courtesy: Dawn*

## Aurangzeb sets sights on stability with IMF deal

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb asserted that Pakistan was heading in the right direction towards achieving macroeconomic stability and continued to stress the importance of securing external financing necessary to secure IMF's approval for a \$7 billion bailout package, with the support of provincial governments.

In a recorded address broadcast on national television, Mr Aurangzeb said international institutions in such programmes looked at the sovereign, which he said comprises the federation and the provinces, for critical reforms to deliver apparently a veiled warning to provincial governments against populist measures like energy subsidies.

"We will move forward with their consultation and support to make this (IMF) programme successful and the last one for Pakistan. For this, we need to stand on our feet and deliver on structural reforms," the minister said while appreciating the positive role played by the chief ministers and the provincial governments in securing a staff-level agreement with IMF on July 12 this year.

The government's efforts for getting the IMF board's approval have been ongoing for the past six weeks, with meetings yet to be confirmed by the Washington-based lender pending confirmation of external financing inflows, including \$12bn worth of bilateral rollovers from Saudi Arabia, China and UAE, besides at least \$2bn in commercial loans.

The Fund has reportedly expressed displeasure over Punjab's two-month electricity subsidy for consumers using

201 to 500 units monthly and the proposed rooftop solarisation in both Sindh and Punjab instead of focusing on reforms to ensure loss reduction, better recoveries and cost-cutting measures. Besides maintaining fiscal prudence, the four provinces are required to deliver at least Rs1.2 trillion cash surplus to the Centre under the IMF programme to meet fiscal deficit and primary account targets.

Mr Aurangzeb said he was excited to report a few positive economic developments achieved over the past six



months, yielding real results in macroeconomic stability. He said inflation had dropped from a 38pc peak to single digits and foreign exchange reserves had improved beyond \$9bn to provide two months of import cover. Also, twin deficits, particularly the current account deficit, have declined despite the clearance of around two years of backlog in import control, letters of credit and dividend and profit repatriations.

The finance minister, who had been uneasy over the State Bank of Pakistan's sluggish stance on the policy rate cut, said inflation at 9.6pc in August this year was down from 23.7pc in the same month last

year and required the policy rate to gradually come down as well to benefit the industrial sector and other segments of economy. "I hope we will see the reduction in the policy rate and the interest rate as per decline in the inflation rate," he said. The SBP's upcoming monetary policy review is due on September 12.

The minister said home remittances in July topped an all-time high, and the rating agencies Moody's and Fitch had upgraded Pakistan's credit rating by one notch each, which was external recogni-

tion that economy was set in the right direction.

"We have a long way to go, but the journey has to start from somewhere and the direction of the travel has to be right so that we can go towards sustainable macroeconomic stability," he emphasised, adding that "this is the foundation on which the whole structure would stand because there was no path to growth without stabilisation".

Mr Aurangzeb also vowed to crack down on tax evasion. "Let it be very clear, this is not going to be taken back," he said while calling upon the wholesalers, distributors and retailers to pay their due taxes.

He said the tax collection had increased by 29pc last year and yet the tax-to-GDP ratio did not cross 8.8pc. "This is not sustainable. We have to increase it to 13pc," he asserted, adding that countries couldn't be run on donations.

The minister deplored that those with a 43pc share in the economy were paying less than 1pc of tax. "We all should jointly request them to pay their due share of taxes and contribute to the economy," he said, adding that otherwise, the burden would keep going back to the same people who are already burdened and frustrated.

He said the government was ready for engagements with traders and provided all sorts of facilitations and simplification, but there would be no exemption or retreat. The minister conceded a Rs98bn revenue shortfall in August but said this was despite payment of Rs132bn tax refunds to exporters.

The minister said the government was very clear that the "size of the federal government will come down". For this, he said, a bite-sized execution process had been adopted. In the first step, six ministries were selected and two of them would be merged, reducing positions in grades 17 to 22. This will be followed by five more ministries and so on.

However, he clarified that it required changes to the Civil Servants Rules of 1973, for which the government, with the support of the coalition partners, would take legislation to the parliament and get it approved.

Govt fulfilling IMF conditions  
Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the government was fulfilling

*Contd on..... P.g 6*

## PM Shehbaz welcomes decline in inflation, upgraded credit rating

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed satisfaction over a falling rate of inflation and improvements in other economic indicators.

In a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), he noted that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) fell to 11 per cent in July and welcomed economists' forecasts predicting a further decline.

The premier's statement came after the Ministry of Finance said in its August outlook that inflation was expected to remain in the range of 9.5-10.5pc in August and further decline to 9-10pc in September "on account of stability in economic indicators".

"After Fitch, the global rating agency, Moody's recently upgraded Pakistan's credit rating, which is an acknowledgement of the country's positive economic indicators by the international financial institutions," said PM Shehbaz.

Says govt working for economic reforms; Zardari, Shehbaz pay tribute to Kashmiri leader Geelani

He said the government was pursuing a policy of economic reforms and the implementation work was rapidly in progress over the so-called "rightsizing" policy of the government, which he himself was monitoring. He expressed the confidence that its positive impact on the economy would be visible soon.

He acknowledged that the federal and Punjab governments had provided a big relief to electricity consumers in their monthly bills, adding that prices of petroleum products were further reduced.

The prime minister said the government believed in passing on all the benefits of such

policies to the common man. The economy was moving towards stability owing to the hard work of the government's economic and financial team, he added.

He said the government was cognisant of the issues of the people and was striving day and night to resolve them.

Tribute to Ali Geelani

Earlier, PM Shehbaz paid tribute to the late iconic Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, reiterating Pakistan's continu-



ing moral, diplomatic and political support to the people of India-held Kashmir.

In a message on the third death anniversary of the late veteran Kashmiri leader, the prime minister said his name would always be remembered and respected in the movement for freedom of Kashmir.

Mr Geelani had been a great leader who had a firm faith that Kashmiri people must be given the right to self-determination. He had devoted his entire life for the achievement of

this objective, the premier said, according to a statement issued by his office.

President Asif Ali Zardari also paid tribute to the heroic struggle of Mr Geelani for the rights of the oppressed people of India-held Kashmir on his third death anniversary.

In a message, the president pointed out that Syed Ali Geelani was a beacon of hope and resistance, inspiring countless Kashmiris to stand firm in their quest for self-determina-

"Geelani Sahib remained focused on the ultimate goal and never allowed the attention of the Kashmiri people to be diverted from the pursuit of their fundamental right to self-determination.

The legacy of Mr Geelani is a "powerful driving force" that continues to inspire the people of held Kashmir, the president said.

His leadership and unwavering stance against oppression have left a lasting impression on the people of the region, the statement added.

*Courtesy: Dawn*

Contd... Aurangzeb sets sights...

IMF conditions to secure its loan programme.

Speaking at a federal cabinet meeting, the premier hoped that it would be the country's last IMF programme. "The programme we have with the IMF the conditions that they have is under their supervision, and we are fully taking steps to achieve it," he added.

"The conditionalities will be fulfilled and our case will be brought forward to the (IMF's executive) board for approval. God willing, there will be a new journey," PM Shehbaz said. "We are working day and night with commitment. It is a difficult journey but not an impossible one."

The prime minister also highlighted the reduction in inflation, noting that the burden was gradually easing. "Inflation reached single digits in August compared to around 27pc in the same month last year," he said, commending the Ministry of Finance and the State Bank.

*Courtesy: Dawn*

## Cultural Day hosted by Pakistan Forum showcases rich Pakistani traditions

The Pakistan Forum Luxembourg (PFL) organised a vibrant Cultural Day in Luxembourg, showcasing Pakistan's rich traditions and promoting cultural exchange while engaging both the local Luxembourgish community and the Pakistani diaspora. The Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of Pakistan in Brussels, Faraz Zaidi, attended the event. The event aimed to promote cultural promotion and understanding. Visitors enjoyed traditional Pakistani cuisine, with food stalls offering a range of regional dishes that provided an authentic culinary experience. From savory curries to sweet delicacies, the cuisine was a high-



light, showcasing Pakistan's diverse gastronomic landscape. The event also featured stalls displaying handmade arts and crafts, including textiles, pottery, and jewellery. These creations reflected the rich artisanal traditions of Pakistan, offering attendees a chance to appreciate the craftsmanship and cultural signifi-

cance behind these works. Families and children engaged in carnival-style games and activities, creating a fun and inclusive environment. The lively atmosphere was further enriched by live music performances featuring traditional Pakistani music, which added to the festive spirit of the day. In his brief remarks, Zaidi

expressed appreciation for the Pakistan Forum Luxembourg's efforts in organizing the event. He noted, "This Cultural Day offers a valuable opportunity to share Pakistan's rich culture with the people of Luxembourg, fostering mutual understanding and community ties." UK approves £10 million aid package to support Pakistan's flood recovery efforts

The Pakistan Forum Luxembourg continues its active role in promoting Pakistani culture and heritage in the region. This event marked another meaningful initiative to build bridges between Pakistan and Luxembourg.

*Courtesy: Dawn*

## Meta unveils star-studded AI assistants

Meta launched AI chatbots voiced by Hollywood celebrities like John Cena and Judi Dench on Wednesday, betting that its billions of users are eager to embrace artificial intelligence.

"I think that voice has the potential to be one of, if not the most frequent ways, that we all interact with AI," said Meta founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg at the company's annual product presentation event. "It is just a lot better," he said.

The deployment comes months after OpenAI previewed its own ChatGPT voice feature, which drew controversy for its similarity to actress Scarlett Johansson's voice.

Meta has obtained permission from the stars featured in its new voice tool, which will be available on Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. However, Meta AI won't be accessible in Europe due to concerns about compliance

with EU data protection laws and potential fines.

Meta's AI relies on content and data from its platforms' legions of users, a practice that involves numerous obligations and safeguards in Europe.

Like ChatGPT or Google's Gemini, Meta AI is an AI assistant that answers questions, creates images, writes messages and even provides companionship. This new version builds on the initial release unveiled a year ago. Meta reports that over 400 million people already consult Meta AI at least once a month, and the company aims to make it "the most widely used AI assistant by the end of the year." Critics, however, point out that many users stumble into MetaAI inadvertently, as it has replaced the search function on apps such as WhatsApp.

Since ChatGPT's breakthrough, major tech companies have been rapidly developing AI applications capable of producing high-quality content



from simple queries.

Competition is fierce, with Google and Microsoft having a head start in productivity features, and Apple entering the market with AI-capable iPhones. However, these models require substantial technical infrastructure, energy, and skilled engineers, significantly impacting company resources. Meta believes its enhanced assistant sounds more natural, can interact verbally, and analyze images. Like other chatbots, it can suggest recipes from food photos or edit images based on simple user requests.

Despite concerns about heavy spending on AI and virtual reality, Meta's profits have soared, with its share price up

60 per cent since the beginning of the year. The company's success rides on strong advertising results.

But the social media giant's heavy spending on AI and virtual reality technology has always been a concern for investors and observers.

"When I think about AI, Meta is not necessarily the first brand that comes to mind," Creative Strategies analyst Carolina Milanesi said.

"And their biggest hurdle is going to be privacy and trust: a lot of consumers will have issues with trusting that the data is not being used for other reasons."

*Courtesy: Dawn*

## Reliance Inter-Club Team Championship 2024 kicks off in Karachi

The Reliance Inter-Club Team Championship 2024, hosted at the PN Roshan Khan Jahangir Khan Squash Complex in Karachi, commenced on September 25, marking the beginning of four days of intense squash competition.

The tournament, which runs from September 25 to 28, features eight teams split into two pools, vying for supremacy in a series of thrilling matchups. Participating Teams

The participating teams, divided into Pool A and Pool B, include top clubs and players from across Karachi, representing renowned institutions



such as D.A. Club, Creek Club, NBP Sports Club, Karachi Club, and various teams from the RKJK Squash Complex.

Pool A Teams include D.A. Club Team A, Creek Club,

N.B.P. Sports Club and PN RKJK Squash Complex (C) while Pool B Teams comprise Karachi Club, RKJK Squash Club Team A, D.A. Team B and RKJK Team C.

The day one witnessed a series

of fiercely contested matches as the teams faced off in round-robin format at the PN RKJK Squash Complex. Karachi Club emerged victorious against RKJK Team B, clinching a narrow 3-2 win, with Aiman Zahid and Talha delivering critical victories for their team. Creek Club also secured a hard-fought 3-2 victory over D.A. Club Team A, led by Saad and Fahad Aziz's commanding performances. RKJK Team C overcame NBP Sports Club with a 3-2 scoreline, while D.A. Team B triumphed over RKJK Team A, thanks to standout displays from Shahab and Mudasir.

*Courtesy: The Nation*

## Zahid Mahmood added to Pakistan squad for 1st Test against England

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has made one addition to the squad for the upcoming three-match Test series against England, with leg-spinner Zahid Mahmood joining the team for the first Test.

The Pakistan-England Test series opener is scheduled to be held in Multan from October 7 to 11, while the training camp kicks off on October 1. Zahid Mahmood will join the camp in Multan, but the squad will be trimmed to 15 players before the start of the first Test.

Kamran Ghulam and Mohammad Ali have been named as reserve players and will continue participating in domestic matches to stay match-ready. "Kamran



Ghulam and Mohammad Ali will remain on reserve duty but will keep playing domestic cricket to ensure they're match-fit," the PCB confirmed in a statement.

The PCB explained that all three players Zahid, Kamran, and Mohammad are part of the Test team setup, but a 15-

player squad is sufficient for the home series due to cricketing and logistical considerations.

Head coach Jason Gillespie recommended that the selected players be withdrawn from the Champions One-Day Cup playoffs to give them rest ahead of the series.

"Given the hectic domestic and international schedule, it's important our players get the rest they need before the Test series against England," said Gillespie. "We're excited to face England in Pakistan and look forward to playing in front of our fantastic supporters," he added.

Shan Masood (captain), Saud Shakeel (vice-captain), Aamir Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Hurraira, Mohammad Rizwan (wicketkeeper), Naseem Shah, Noman Ali, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Sarfaraz Ahmed (wicketkeeper), Shaheen Shah Afridi, Zahid Mahmood.

*Courtesy: The Nation*

### Paton

Ms Seema Mughal  
Vice Chancellor

### Editor

Dr Sabir Ahmed  
Assistant Professor

### Graphics & Layout

Shazia Anwar  
Senior Graphic Designer

Greenwichians interested  
in contributions!

Stood an email to the editor,  
including your name, roll  
number and your work at  
drsabir@greenwich.edu.pk



Greenwich University, DK-10, 38<sup>th</sup>, Street,  
Darakshan, Phase VI, Defence Housing Authority,  
Karachi-75500, Pakistan

UAN: (021) 111-202-303; Tel: (021) 35840397-98  
Email: gu@greenwich.edu.pk; URL: www.greenwich.edu.pk