

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.

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

March 2025

17 March, 1948: Las Bela's ruler Ghulam Qadir Khan (1920–1988) acceded to Pakistan, and Makran acceded to Pakistan.

12 March, 1949: Objectives Resolution passed by Liaquat Ali Khan.

9 March, 1951: Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan announced the foiling of the Rawalpindi conspiracy coup and the conspirators were exposed.

March 23, 1956: Iskander Mirza becomes the first President of Pakistan.

16 March, 1971: Yahya Khan starts negotiation with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

14 March, 1972: New education policy enforced. Free education in all private and public schools.

7 March, 1977: 1977 Pakistani general election.

14 March, 1978: Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan visits Islamabad.

18 March, 1984: Azeem Ahmed Tariq & Altaf Hussain founded the MQM (Muhajir Qaumi Movement) in Karachi and Hyderabad.

23 March, 2003: AAJ TV, Pakistan's premier channel inaugurated.

24 March, 2008: Yusuf Raza Gilani is elected as the new Prime Minister.

March 28, 2020: Operation Zarb-e-Ahan is initiated by Pakistan.

3 March, 2024: Shehbaz Sharif takes office as Prime Minister of Pakistan for a second term with support from a coalition of the PML-N and PPP.

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Pakistanis happier than most others in South Asia

Are Pakistanis a happy people? Maybe not when compared to the rest of the world, but they are definitely among the happiest of nations in South Asia.

This was revealed in the World Happiness Report 2025, released by the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre.

The happiness ranking is based on a three-year average of individuals' self-assessed evaluations of life satisfaction, as well as GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity and corruption.

While Finland has retained its title as the happiest country for the eighth year in a row, the new report sees the United States plunge to 24th place, its lowest rank ever. It also noted that the United States was one of few countries to see a rise of so-called "deaths of despair" from suicide or substance abuse at a time when those deaths are declining in a majority of countries.

Afghanistan, plagued by a humanitarian catastrophe since the Taliban regained control in 2020, once again ranks as the unhappiest.

The findings of the report are based on Gallup World Poll data and other sources, including the Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll, and analysed by leading ex-

perts in wellbeing science. Countries are ranked according to their self-assessed life evaluations averaged over the years 2022–2024.

Pakistan comes in at 109 among the 147 surveyed countries, and is second only to Nepal (91st) in terms of the happiness quotient in South Asian countries.

India ranks nine rungs below Pakistan at the 118th spot, Sri Lanka is at 133 while Bangladesh comes in at 134.

Costa Rica (6th) and Mexico (10th) have both entered the top 10 for the first time.

But Western industrial countries are now less happy than they were between 2005 and 2010. Fifteen of them have had significant drops, compared to four with significant increases. Like the US, the UK (23rd) also reporting its lowest average life evaluation since the 2017 report.

This year, the authors of the happiness report said new evidence indicates that engaging in acts of generosity and believing in the kindness of others are "significant predictors of happiness, even more so than earning a higher salary".

They also noted that in general "people are too pessimistic about the kindness of their communi-



ties", and that "the return rate of lost wallets is much higher than people expect".

Screengrab of figure showing rise in anti-system votes. World Happiness Report 2025

The report says the decline in life satisfaction explains an overall rise in anti-system votes, but trust in others comes into play. Among unhappy people attracted by the extremes of the political spectrum, low-trust people are more often found on the far-right, whereas high-trust people are more inclined to vote for the far-left.

Trends towards increased loneliness are most evident among young people. In 2023, 19 per cent of young adults across the world reported having no one they could count on for social support, a 39pc increase compared to 2006.

For most people in the world, family is a source of joy and support, the report noted. Couples

who live with at least one child, or couples who live with children and members of their extended family, have especially high average life satisfaction.

People living on their own often experience lower levels of happiness. People in very large households can also experience lower happiness, probably linked to diminished economic satisfaction.

According to the report, an analysis by Pew Research Centre found that the share of the US population in multi-generational households has increased from 7pc in 1971 to 18pc in 2021.

While multi-generation households are extremely common in Asia (more than half in India and Pakistan), as well as several in sub-Saharan Africa, such extended families account for around 30pc of all households in Europe and North America, but are rare in Canada and the UK.

Courtesy: Dawn

Hania Aamir joins Diljit Dosanjh in 'Sardaar Ji 3' for Indian film debut

Pakistani actor Hania Aamir is set to debut in Indian cinema with *Sardaar Ji 3*, the latest installment of the hit Punjabi film franchise led by global music sensation Diljit Dosanjh and Neeru Bajwa.

The film, scheduled for release on June 27, 2025, was confirmed by Dosanjh on social media.

The much-anticipated collaboration between Aamir and Dosanjh first sparked speculation months ago when she made a surprise appearance at his concert in London.

Since then, behind-the-scenes photos and videos from the set have fueled excitement among fans on both sides of the border.

Earlier, Dosanjh shared images of himself in a stylish outfit black trousers, a hoodie, a red jacket, and a red-and-white capset against a picturesque backdrop of towering trees, a serene lake, and a forest.

Pak-China cooperation brings high-quality, technical education to region

Shortly after, Aamir posted a picture from a similar location on her Instagram story with the caption, "What in the evermore is this." Around the same time, she also shared a video of herself grooving to a Punjabi song, leading to speculation that it might be from the film.

While the plot of *Sardaar Ji 3* remains



undisclosed, the film is already generating massive buzz, thanks to the popularity of the franchise and the fresh pairing of Aamir and Dosanjh. The cast also includes Neeru Bajwa, Manav Vij, and Gulshan Grover.

Beyond her film debut, Aamir was recently honored with a Recognition Award at the UK Parliament for her contributions to the entertainment industry and her growing global in-

fluence.

The award ceremony, hosted by British MP Afzal Khan in the Jubilee Room of the House of Commons, saw Aamir express her gratitude, saying, "It is an absolute honour to be here and it means a lot to me. I hope we continue to entertain people through our work and make Pakistan proud."

Courtesy: Dawn

Encouraging Independent Study Culture

Students today are looking for more than just good coffee they want modern coffee shops and quiet workspaces where the Wi-Fi works, and a snack or two to keep them energized. With that in mind, I visited two coffee shops that claim to offer just that: Floc and Esquires. Then, I did some personal experiments to see what really supported students' productivity, and what added some magic to the mix.

Stop 1: Floc – Good Food, Good WiFi, Great Energy

Floc, located in the heart of downtown, welcomed me with the kind of hospitality that would fit any visit. The energy of the staff was contagious – they seemed happier to welcome me than I actually was to arrive – and that level of warmth put me at ease immediately. That welcoming attitude is essential for students carrying heavy bags and to-do lists.

Although I was here primarily to assess the friendliness of the service, I couldn't resist the thoughtful menu. I started with the lemon chicken, a robust, tasty appetizer made of popcorn-sized fried chicken topped with a strong and tangy spice blend. Since I don't usually like sour flavors, this became a fun challenge for me – one I shared with my brother, turning it into a test of sorts. The expressiveness of the cafe matched the energy of the area.

For drinks I opted for the Span-

ish latte – felt like a bad decision at first since I don't drink much coffee. But, with the help of the barista, I found a version that had a mix of sweetness and strength without being too bitter. The drink was delicate, aromatic and had a pleasant taste – a great companion for a long work session.

Then, the manager who was actively managing the floor encouraged us to try their signature brownie. It was like a molten slice of chocolate cake, dipped in hot chocolate and topped with vanilla ice cream. It wasn't just dessert; it was a motivation.

Floc is impressive as far as workspaces go. Seating is flexible and comfortable, with benches, chairs and wide tables providing enough space for laptops, notepads and beverages, so it doesn't feel crowded. Wi-Fi was fast and reliable – though it's a good idea to grab a seat early, as seats fill up quickly during busy times. The atmosphere was calm, with soft music playing in the background but it wasn't distracting. For those who like to study in a friendly, warm environment that boosts their concentration and focus, Floc is a perfect choice.

Another thing that sets this restaurant apart is the dedication of the staff friendly and genuinely helpful servers and executive staff, who make guests feel seen and supported.

What's the verdict on Floc? It's a



great combination – a coffee that provides enough flavour, warmth and boost to make work feel lighter.

Second Stop: Esquires – A Blend of Focus and Flavor

Esquires is like an organized office with a kitchen that knows what to do. From the moment I joined, the staff – especially the manager – found the perfect balance between professionalism and warmth. He was attentive and generous, which set a positive tone for the rest of my visit.

I ordered their Espresso Supreme pizza, served with a Spanish latte. The pizza was exceptional. A rich mix of meat, chicken, black and green olives and cheese, balanced by red sauce and chilli oil. Since I'm always short on time, I found it well worth my time – it was so rich, substantial and delicious that I wanted to come back for this meal again.

The coffee was also great a real incentive for those planning to stay and work for hours. But what really sets Esquires apart is its student-focused design. Two separate workspaces – one for smokers and one for non-smokers – each with

individual desks and charging outlets, showing that they take a comfortable work environment seriously. It was quiet, very focused, and had a mini-library-like energy, with good lighting and espresso. Add free Wi-Fi to this, and it's easy to see why this cafe has become a regular spot.

This is my Karachi

What I discovered at these cafes was more than just coffee and WiFi it was a genuine sense of care. The goal was clear. To make students feel welcome, guided, and encouraged.

In a fast-paced world, where everyone seems to be rushing to get somewhere, these places in Karachi pause to remind you, 'You matter. Your work matters. Your education matters.' Whether it's a manager helping me choose the perfect dessert or the staff making sure my laptop is plugged in and my coffee is just right the message is clear.

So, whether you're cramming for finals, freelancing between classes, or just trying to finish a passion project know that Karachi cafes have you covered, one coffee at a time.

By: Fiza Ashfaq

Rich, but deprived

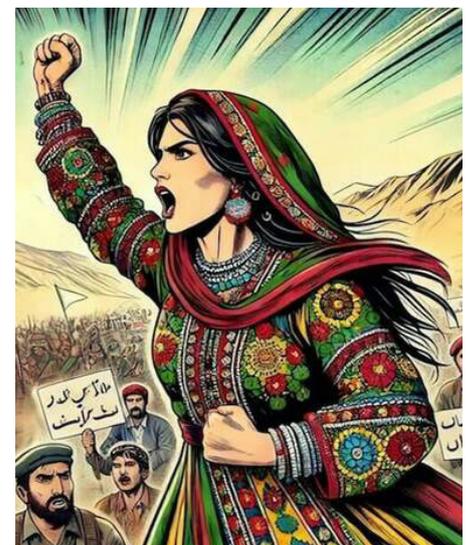
DESPITE being rich in resources, such as having a range of minerals, Balochistan stands on the margins of development. The resources extracted from the region have vastly benefited other provinces across the country, but the province itself lags far behind in terms of economic and social development.

In essence, the federal government as well as a bunch of private companies continue to hold their hegemony over resource distribution, leading to inequitable distribution of resources, and pushing the masses into further economic distress.

Balochistan's coal, iron ore, copper and gold mines play a significant role in contributing to the national economy. The Sui fields have been

supplying the country with natural gas since the 1950s, but a number of areas in Balochistan itself remain deprived of the same commodity. People have to continue with dated and harmful practices to carry out their daily chores. This approach needs a complete overhaul to ensure fairness in resource distribution.

Despite spurts of growth in the national economy, the people in Balochistan continue to suffer from poverty, unemployment and a lack of basic amenities. They only demand a greater control and fair distribution of resources. It is high time the government made sincere efforts to enact policies that may ensure equality and fairness in the distribution of resource to promote sustainable progress and durable security for one and all.



By: Fiza Ashfaq

Published in Dawn, March 12th, 2025

China to train, take Pakistani astronauts into space

PM Shehbaz Sharif witnesses the exchange of agreements between officials from Suparco and CMSA, the Chinese space agency,

Pakistan will soon send its first manned mission to China's space station, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced on Thursday.

Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) and the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) have signed a cooperation agreement in this regard.

Under the agreement, two Pakistani astronauts will undergo training at the Astronaut Centre of China.

One of the astronauts will be trained as a scientific payload specialist for specialised research aboard the China Space Station (CSS).

The astronaut selection process will be completed by 2026.

The mission will conduct cutting-edge scientific experiments in various fields, including biological and medical sciences, aerospace, applied physics, fluid mechanics, space radiation, ecology, material sciences, microgravity studies, and astronomy at CSS.

The prime minister said the agreement was "another wonderful gesture" from the Chinese government to further deepen bilateral cooperation in the field of space.

The PM highlighted that Pakistan's participation in the China Space Station programme reflected deep-rooted ties between the two countries.

Pakistan and China will share knowledge for peaceful space exploration for the benefit of humanity, he added.



The PM also hailed the importance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which had "transformed the country's landscape". Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal termed the agreement "a historic milestone".

He said the collaboration with China extends beyond astronaut training, laying the groundwork for Pakistan's long-term growth in human spaceflight and exploration.

The director general of CMSA, Dr Lin Xinqiang, hailed the partnership and reaffirmed China's dedication to strengthening in-

ternational cooperation in space exploration.

He highlighted that Pakistan's participation in the China Space Station programme was a reflection of deep-rooted ties between the two countries.

Suparco Chairman Mohammad Yousaf Khan regarded the agreement as a landmark in Pakistan's space journey. He invited the youth, professionals and academia to actively participate in Pakistan's astronaut programme.

Courtesy: Dawn

PCB accuses ICC of sidelining it from Champions Trophy

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has lodged a formal protest against the International Cricket Council's (ICC) failure to include its representative in the post-match ceremony of the Champions Trophy final.

Despite the presence of PCB's Chief Operating Officer Sumair Ahmed Syed who was also the director of the tournament at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium during the decider between eventual winners India and New Zealand on Sunday, the official didn't feature among the dignitaries featured in the ceremony.

The PCB has called out what it believes to be "blatant disregard for Pakistan's role as the host nation" by the ICC.

"A formal complaint has been lodged with the ICC, demanding an explanation and a public apology," the board's spokesperson told Dawn on Monday. "We are appalled by this blatant disregard for Pakistan's role as the host nation.

Board formally complains to cricketing body over slew of 'blunders, double standards' and inci-

dents of 'selective governance'

"The ICC's decision to exclude Mr Syed who was both the Tournament Director and the PCB Chair's designated representative violates its own standard operating procedure," the board said.

"This is a matter of principle, fairness, and respect for the game's global stakeholders."

Mr Syed had attended the final in place of PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi, who was initially invited by the ICC, but was unwell and couldn't travel.

While the ICC, in its responses to media queries argued that its "protocol is for the board's president, vice president, chairman or CEO to be on the stage", it seemed to have ignored the fact that the PCB didn't have a CEO, and the COO is considered to have the same stature as second in command to the chairman.

The ICC's argument also seems weak, given that the secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Devajit Saikia was also on the stage along with

his predecessor and incumbent ICC president Jay Shah and BCCI president Roger Binny.

The PCB views the incident as one of ICC's "repeated blunders", one of which was the absence of Pakistan's name in the Champions Trophy's official logo on the live feed of the group stage match between India and Bangladesh, as well as the Indian national anthem being played in the Gaddafi Stadium ahead of the Australia-England game.

"The ICC's repeated blunders, double standards, and selective governance have cast serious doubts over its credibility," the PCB spokesperson said. "By sidelining the host nation at its own tournament, the governing body has once again shown a troubling lack of neutrality and fairness.

"We have demanded a full public clarification and an assurance that such biased and unjust treatment will not happen again.

"The PCB expects professionalism, transparency, and equal representation from cricket's governing body.



"The PCB has made its stance clear: This is not just about a presentation ceremony it is about respect, integrity, and the fundamental principles of fair governance in international cricket.

"The world is watching. Will the ICC finally uphold professionalism, or will it continue to cater to selective interests at the cost of cricket's global integrity?"

India played all their matches in Dubai with hosts Pakistan forced to compromise a semi-final and the final following the Indian government's refusal to let its team travel across the border citing security concerns.

The decision led to scheduling problems while also allowing India to have one base while other teams had to adjust their travel itineraries accordingly.

Courtesy: Dawn

PM wants sugar, other commodities sold at lower prices

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that the provision of sugar and other essential items to people at low rates is the top priority of his government.

Presiding over a meeting in Lahore on the supply of sugar and price control in the country on Sunday, the premier recalled that the government in previous months had taken strict action against sugar smuggling, which bore fruitful results.

He directed the authorities concerned to take solid steps to control the price of the commodity besides taking stern action against elements found involved in its hoarding.

PM Shehbaz issued directive for the preparation of a strategy to ensure the provision of commodity and other essential items at reasonable rates.



“The federal and provincial governments should make joint efforts to ensure the provision of essential items to the common man at low rates,” he added.

He said that during the holy month of Ramazan, negligence would not be tolerated regarding control of prices of essential items. The meeting was briefed about sugar production. It was informed that there was sufficient stock available in the country, fair price

shops had been set up to sell the commodity at low rates at the provincial level and all possible steps would be taken to overcome its smuggling.

The chief secretaries informed the meeting that action would be ensured against illegal hoarding of sugar and work at the district administration level would be taken vibrantly in this regard.

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar,

Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Cheema, Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik and other high-ranking officials attended the meeting. The chief secretaries of all the provinces participated in the meeting via video link.

Later, Prime Minister Shehbaz met Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari and discussed with him the demand and supply situation of electricity in the country.

It may be recalled that a few days ago the prime minister had directed the power division to reduce tariff for all consumer categories and ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity during Sehri and Iftar.

Courtesy:Dawn

Bid to divide nation will be foiled, president vows

President Asif Ali Zardari pledged terrorist elements would be defeated at all costs and every attempt to divide the nation would fail.

Presiding over a meeting on law and order here, the president emphasised that the state’s stance on terrorism is clear and that winning the war against terrorism is imperative.

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti gave a comprehensive briefing on the security situation in the province. Prominent among those who attended the meeting were PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and acting Governor of Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Achakzai.

Addressing the meeting, President Zardari said Balochistan is close to his heart and its development and sustainable peace remain his top priority.

He expressed his desire to see every child in school and stressed the need for equipping the youth with modern technology.

The president assured the provincial leadership that the Counter-Terrorism Wing would be provided with advanced weaponry to effectively combat criminal elements and terrorists.

Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, IGP Moazzam Jah Ansari and other senior officials also attended the meeting.

Separately, President Zardari met members of parliamentary parties in Balochistan. PPP Chairman Bhutto-Zardari was also present during the meeting.

Opposition leaders in the Balochistan Assembly and parliamentary leaders of various political parties presented proposals regarding public welfare and the challenges facing the province.

During the discussion, President Zardari highlighted that he had a special connection with the people of Balochistan.

He emphasised that as Pakistanis, national solidarity must be upheld to take the country forward. He



held out the assurance that all rights would be granted to people.

“We do not believe in taking away rights but in winning the hearts of the people by granting them their due.”

He expressed the confidence that the efforts being made for the welfare and prosperity of Balochistan would yield positive results.

The president announced that he would set up a special camp in Balochistan after Eid to listen to public grievances and suggestions.

During the meeting, Leader of Opposition in the Balochistan Assembly Mir Younas Aziz Zehri appreciated Chief Minister Bugti’s initiatives and assured of

his complete cooperation in this regard.

The meeting was also attended by the acting governor and the chief minister. Other prominent participants included National Party chief Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, parliamentary leader of Pakistan Muslim League-N, Mir Saleem Khan Khosa, parliamentary leader of Awami National Party, Engineer Zamrak Khan Achakzai, and Jamaat-i-Islami member, Mir Abdul Majeed Badini.

Members of the Balochistan cabinet, provincial ministers, parliamentary secretaries, and assembly members were also present on the occasion.

Courtesy:Dawn

PM Shehbaz pledges gender equality, unveils endowment fund

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed his commitment to gender equality, stressing that women's empowerment could only be achieved through equal access to education, skill development and employment opportunities.

"It's our mission and an unwavering commitment to ensure emancipation of the country's female population," he said while addressing an event in Islamabad marking International Women's Day, observed globally on March 8 to celebrate women's achievements and advocate for their rights.

Prominent women from various fields, including cabinet members, legislators, entrepreneurs and activists, attended the event at the Prime Minister's House. It was organised by the Ministry of Human Rights and the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

During the event, PM Shehbaz launched Islamabad's first-ever Gender Parity Report, prepared by the NCSW and UNFPA. The report identifies challenges and solutions in key areas such as education, health, governance, political representation and justice.

The prime minister pledged collaboration with provinces to enhance women's participation in economic programmes and announced the establishment of a Working Women's Endowment Fund to support women in overcoming contemporary workplace challenges.

"Our 50 per cent female population can become a productive workforce if provided a level playing field," he said.

To facilitate working women, he highlighted the establishment of daycare centres in public and private departments across Islamabad, with plans to expand these facilities further.

The premier regretted that a large number of highly qualified women in the country quit professional careers in their struggle to balance work and families, resulting in a huge loss of skilled human resources.

PM Shehbaz paid tribute to Pakistani women who have played significant roles in female empowerment, mentioning Fatima Jinnah and Begum Raana Liaquat Ali Khan, former PM Benazir Bhutto, Bilquis Edhi, Dr Ruth Pfau, Asma Jahangir and other trailblazers.

The prime minister recalled his party's past efforts for women's emancipation, including Punjab's first anti-violence centres for wom-



en, increased women's quota in government department boards, higher stipends for girl students, eradication of child labour at brick kilns, and enrolling 90,000 children into schools.

Ranking review

Minister for Law Azam Nazeer Tarar said that in line with the prime minister's directive, ministries and departments were tasked last year with ensuring women-inclusive policies, leading to increased women representation in departmental boards.

However, he acknowledged that Pakistan ranks 145th out of 146 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index, second only to Afghanistan. He called for a review of the ranking, arguing it did not reflect ground realities.

UN Resident Coordinator Mohammed Yahya reaffirmed the UN's support for Pakistan in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, particularly those related to gender equality.

He stressed that gender equality must be recognised not as a women-specific issue but as a human issue.

Chairwoman of the Special Committee on Gender Mainstreaming Dr Nafisa Shah highlighted that women's representation in government bodies remains below the targeted 33pc benchmark, stressing the need for greater inclusion in governance and policymaking.

Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) Chairman Akif Saeed highlighted the PM's Women Empowerment Package, under which private companies implementing family-friendly workplace policies were recognised as role models.

The prime minister also presented Family-Friendly Workplace Awards to the 10 best private companies, including Alpha Beta Core Solutions, Arfa Karim Technology Incubator, and Aviation MRO.

SME integration, low-cost loans

PM Shehbaz also unveiled a major initiative to integrate women in cottage industries and small businesses into the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector.

The announcement was made during a review meeting on ongoing reforms under the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA), held in Lahore.

Speaking at the meeting, the prime minister emphasised the need for women's economic empowerment and directed authorities to provide essential capital and facilities on a priority basis to businesswomen in the cottage industry.

He also announced measures to offer low-cost loans to women under the Youth Loan Scheme, enabling them to expand their businesses.

The prime minister ordered the establishment of facilitation centres and training institutes to support women engaged in small-scale businesses and ensure their easy access to these resources.

To strengthen this initiative, he announced the formation of a special committee tasked with developing a comprehensive plan for empowering women through business opportunities.

The committee will soon present its recommendations to the prime minister.

Courtesy: Dawn

PCB awaits ICC response over Champions

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Courtesy: Dawn

World Bank approves \$102m for microfinance

The World Bank has approved \$102 million in financing for a project aimed at expanding access to microcredit and strengthening the resilience of Pakistan's microfinance sector, particularly against climate-related shocks.

The funding for the Resilient and Accessible Microfinance (RAM) project was approved by the World Bank's board of directors, according to a statement issued by the bank's Resident Mission in Islamabad.

"Microfinance is a critical tool for supporting the livelihoods of vulnerable populations in Pakistan," said Najy Benhassine, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan. "This project will help strengthen the resilience of the microfinance sector, particularly in the face of growing climate risks, ensuring that the sector can continue to provide essential financial services to those

who need them most, especially in rural areas."

The project is part of the bank's broader commitment to promoting financial inclusion in Pakistan and increasing resilience to climate change, "as spelt out in our new 10-year Country Partnership Framework, Mr Benh-assine said.

The RAM project is expected to benefit nearly 1.89 million people (including more than 1m women and over 350,000 youth), especially those in vulnerable and low-income rural communities.

By providing financial resources to microfinance institutions, the project ensures that they can continue to provide services even during climate-induced financial pressures. The project will provide increased access to microcredit for individuals and small businesses, providing them with 'recovery loans' to help them gain financial stability.

"The project has been designed based on lessons learned from the devastating floods of 2022 and is a significant step to bolster financial inclusion in Pakistan," said Namoos Zaheer, Task Team Leader for the project. "It will enhance economic empowerment and resilience of those at the bottom of the economic pyramid, particularly women, small farmers and families in rural areas who are more prone to climate shocks."

The project will be implemented by the Ministry of Finance through the State Bank of Pakistan. It will be the first in a series of interventions to support the sector, to be designed and phased in close partnership with other international financial institutions.

Key components of the project include the establishment of a Climate Risk Fund, innovative use of agrotechnology solutions, capacity-building for microfinance



institutions, and the development of risk management frameworks to enhance the sector's resilience. The project is co-financed by a \$23m grant from the Global Shield Financing Facility (GSFF), which is a multi-donor trust fund hosted by the World Bank Group and financed by the governments of Canada, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom.

The GSFF supports poor and vulnerable countries and people with increased access to financial protection against climate shocks, disasters and crises.

Courtesy: Dawn

List of Pakistani films to watch this Eidul Fitr 2025

Karachi offers a range of activities for families to enjoy during the Eid holidays, from shopping and dining to visiting parks and beach spots.

However, for movie enthusiasts, this Eidul Fitr 2025 presents a special treat with a selection of new films releasing in theaters. Whether you're looking for action, drama, or comedy, there's something for everyone.

A total of 5 new Pakistani films are set to hit the big screen this Eidul Fitr, providing a fresh lineup for moviegoers.

Kabeer

Starring Meesam Ali and Adnan Shah Tipu, Kabeer is an action-packed tribute to the action films of Bollywood's 80s and 90s, along with the recent wave of South Indian action



movies. If you're intrigued by this blend of nostalgia and modern action, grab a ticket and check it out.

Ishq-e-Lahore

Following the success of Lahore Qalandar, the same team returns with Ishq-e-Lahore this Eid. The film features Javed Sheikh, Saima Noor, and Altamash Butt. The story revolves around a married couple, played by Altamash Butt and Saima Noor, who face off against Javed Sheikh, a powerful mafia leader. If you're



a fan of classic stars, this one is for you.

Qulfee

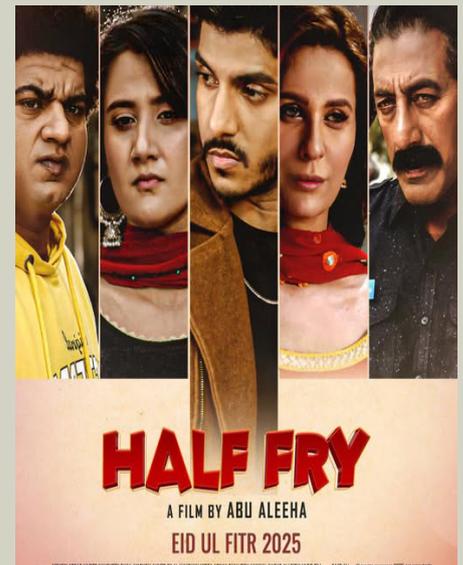
In Qulfee, Shahroze Sabzwari, Javed Sheikh, and Adnan Shah Tipu star in a film about a hacker-turned-thief. The title character, Qulfee, creates a sophisticated program that allows him to hack into any bank. With a



mix of humor and thrilling action, this movie promises a lighthearted ride.

Half Fry

Abu Aleeha's latest release, Half Fry, stars Mohsin Abbas Haider, Nausheen Shah, and Adnan Shah Tipu. This action-comedy is a re-edit of his earlier, unreleased film Once



Upon a Time in Karachi, offering a fresh take on the original story with added humor and energy.

The Martial Artist

Shaz Khan's long-awaited passion project is set to release this Eid Ul Fitr. This film follows the journey of a small-time MMA fighter who gets a life-changing opportunity to compete in a major fight. If you enjoy films like Rocky,



Southpaw, or Shah, this one will definitely appeal to you.

In addition to these fresh releases, popular films like Punjab Nahi Jaungi, Jawani Phir Nahi Ani, and Tich Button will also be screening, offering more options for those looking for popular hits.

Courtesy: /timesofkarachi.pk/

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