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## SCO Summit

### Chinese Premier Li Qiang arrives in Pakistan on Monday: FO

Chinese Premier will meet with President Zardari, parliamentary leaders & senior military officials of Pakistan



ISLAMABAD: At the invitation of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Premier of the State Council of China, Li Qiang, will undertake a bilateral visit to Pakistan starting from Monday.

According to FO, Premier Li will be accompanied by ministers and senior officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Commerce, the National Development and Reform Commission, and the China International Development Cooperation Agency.

During the visit, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Premier Li Qiang will lead their respective delegations in comprehensive discussions on all aspects of Pakistan-China relations, including economic and trade ties and cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The two sides will also address regional and global developments. Additionally, the Chinese Premier will meet with President Asif Ali Zardari, as well as hold discussions with parliamentary leaders and senior military officials of Pakistan.

The Chinese Premier is also scheduled to attend the Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, being held in Islamabad.

Premier Li's visit to Islamabad underscores the significance that Pakistan and China place on their all-weather strategic cooperative partnership.

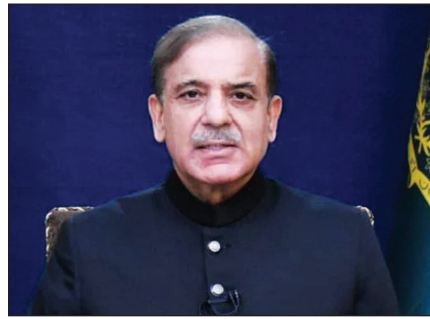
This visit will provide an opportunity to both the sides to reaffirm their mutual support on core issues, advance the high-quality development of CPEC, and strengthen regular exchanges on important regional and global developments. SABAH



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar says Pakistan is all set to host twenty-third meeting of Council of the Heads of Government of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

## 'World Standards Day'

### PM reiterates Pakistan's commitment to achievement of highest global standards



#### VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has reiterated the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to support their relevant organizations achieving adherence to highest global standards and in accelerating Pakistan's journey toward sustainable economic development.

In a message on the World Standards Day being observed on October 14, the prime minister said that Pakistan joined the international community to commemorate the World Standards Day.

The Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA), a National Standards Body, was actively engaging with the global community and making efforts to inspire their domestic manufacturers to adopt standardization and quality-focused practices, thereby fostering a culture of excellence throughout the country, he added.

The prime minister said the theme for this year as set by International Organization for Standardization (ISO), "Shared Vision for a Better World," underscored the essential role of reliability and trust in driving the success of both the manufacturing and service sectors.

"Standards are indeed the foundation that makes everyday life functions seamless.

This theme invites us to reassess the competitiveness of our products in the international market," PM Office Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the prime minister as saying. In line with the commitment to public safety, health and environment, the prime minister said that he was proud to highlight that the PSQCA had developed rigorous safety standards for automotive vehicles to protect the lives of our citizens.

"Noteworthy achievement is that it has set a

limit of 2% on industrially produced Trans Fatty Acids (TFAs) in food products, a critical step towards reducing cardiovascular diseases in Pakistan. These efforts reflect our determination to prioritize the well-being of our people through comprehensive and effective standards," he observed.

The growth of Pakistan's exports was directly linked with the compliance of our goods and services with the international standards, he said, adding this alignment helped to promote and build global consumer confidence in Pakistani products, broaden greater opportunities for their businesses worldwide and further stimulate economic growth in a sustainable manner. Conformity to such standards also bestowed a competitive advantage, enabling businesses to meet customer needs through optimized organizational and manufacturing processes, he opined.

"I am confident that this year's World Standards Day celebrations will contribute significantly to raising awareness of the importance of standardization. In an era marked by competitive challenges, such awareness is vital for the government, industry and business communities to ensure the satisfaction of consumers worldwide," he further added.

### Pakistan is ready to host 23rd SCO meeting in Islamabad: Dar

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Sunday said that Pakistan was ready to host Council of Heads of Government (CHG) of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting on October 15-16 in Islamabad in which different significant issues would be discussed under the SCO framework.

Talking to media after his visit to review arrangements for the upcoming CHG-SCO meeting, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister said that certain countries had requested for bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the CHG-SCO which were finalized. Replying to a query, he said that India had not requested for such bilateral meeting and only the matters related to SCO framework would be discussed by the SCO member states at the multilateral forum. Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar also accompanied the deputy prime minister and foreign minister during a walk with the mediapersons to provide them first-hand information about the preparations of SCO summit.

About invitation to Afghanistan, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister said that since 2021, the Observers Status of that country had been virtually suspended as Afghanistan had neither been invited to nor participated in SCO meetings.

Therefore, he said, Pakistan could not take decision alone in this regard as the decisions were taken on the SCO forum by the member states.

Dar, to another question, said Pakistan is a host to CHG-SCO and would fully meet the responsibility. About the North-South and South-South connectivity, he said the discussions with the relevant countries were in progress and continuing on the bilateral and multilateral levels.

But within the SCO framework and protocol, certain matters would be discussed under specific scope of discussions and within its contours, he further clarified. The deputy prime minister said that the entire region required integration and peace and it was the core objective of the PML-N leadership including former prime minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, besides it was also included in the PML-N manifesto. He enumerated the incumbent government's efforts to bring down inflation ahead of the target set for the next year. Dar advised those quarters who had been claiming that Pakistan was in diplomatic isolation to reassess their projections as Pakistan had become a hub of regional trade and investment and referred to the recent visits of Malaysian premier and the Saudi delegation. With the SCO member states, matters related to the trade and commerce had also been discussed continuously, he added.

About Palestine issue, he said Pakistan had been vociferously raising it at all the global fora which included the prime minister's address at the UNGA, Pakistan's efforts at the OIC and other international fora where they had effectively raised the Palestine, Gaza and Lebanon issues.

Pakistan had sent 10 consignments of humanitarian assistance to Palestine and further steps were on anvil for the relief aid, he added.

To a query, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister urged a specific political party without naming (PTI) it to take back its call for protest on October 15 in the larger national interests.

### Tarar highlights economic progress, international ties ahead of SCO Summit

#### VOM Report



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage, and Culture, Attaullah Tarar,

stated on Sunday that Pakistan has made significant progress this year in both foreign policy and economic sectors, adopting an open approach towards trade and investment.

Speaking with foreign media correspondents about the upcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit scheduled for October 15, Tarar emphasized that "Pakistan is emerging on the international stage, and the world is beginning to recognize its true potential." He highlighted the recent successful visit of Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to Pakistan, during which key discussions on bilateral relations, investment, and cooperation took place.

During this visit, the Malaysian PM announced an increase in imports from Pakistan, including rice and Halal meat. Tarar remarked, "Exports of rice, Halal meat, and other commodities to Malaysia will further strengthen the relationship between our two countries."

Additionally, Tarar noted a high-level delegation from Saudi Arabia, led by the Saudi Minister of Investment, recently visited Pakistan and signed several memoranda of understanding (MoUs) valued at \$2.2 billion to enhance bilateral cooperation. He mentioned that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has shown interest in increasing trade with Pakistan.

Regarding the economy, Tarar reported that inflation has decreased to 6.9% from over 32% last year, and all economic indicators are showing positive trends. The trade deficit continues to shrink, while exports have increased by 14%. He expressed gratitude to overseas Pakistanis for contributing to record foreign remittances of \$8.8 billion in the first quarter of the current fiscal year.

He also highlighted the success of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Tajikistan and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to a liberal trade and investment policy. Tarar anticipated that the upcoming visit of the Chinese Prime Minister to Pakistan would be a game changer for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), further enhancing cooperation across various sectors. He reported positive progress in the second phase of CPEC. The minister expressed confidence that the SCO summit would serve as a pivotal moment for Pakistan, enhancing its positive image on the global stage.

### President, PM mourn former Chinese vice premier's passing



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have expressed condolences over death of former Vice Premier of China Wu Bangguo. In a statement, President Zardari described Wu Bangguo as a sincere friend of Pakistan, and acknowledged his commendable role in strengthening Pakistan-China relations.

Asif Ali Zardari extended heartfelt sympathies and prayers from the people of Pakistan to the Chinese government, the Chinese people, and the bereaved family. In a post on social media platform X, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Wu Bangguo was an outstanding leader of the CPC and a true friend of Pakistan, who made a profound contribution in strengthening China-Pakistan bilateral cooperation. The Prime Minister said Wu Bangguo's visit to Pakistan in 2006 remains a significant milestone. Shehbaz Sharif said our thoughts and prayers are with his family and the people of China in this difficult moment. APP

### Geoeconomic shifts demand greater economic integration: Gilani

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani said on Sunday that the fast-paced geoeconomic and geostrategic shifts at regional and global levels underscore the growing importance of economic integration.

"It is high time to harness our collective strengths and forge a path towards sustainable growth and prosperity by promoting regional connectivity and cooperation," he said while addressing participants at the launching ceremony of reports by the China Chamber of Commerce in Pakistan (CCCCP).

The Chairman lauded the reports titled "The Glorious 11 Years - How Chinese Companies Reshaped the Power Sector in Pakistan" and "Business Climate Index of Chinese Companies in Pakistan" as success stories.

"Pakistan seeks to strengthen regional cooperation by fostering economic ties with our partner nations, and China stands at the very top," Gilani said. He highlighted Pakistan's strategic location, abundant natural resources, and a sizeable workforce as factors that make it an attractive destination for foreign investment. He stressed the importance of business-to-business linkages, noting that sustainable partnerships can attract foreign direct investment, promote technology sharing, and facilitate knowledge exchange between the two nations. Commending the China Chamber of Commerce in Pakistan for organizing the event, Gilani said

that the reports offer valuable insights into the contributions, operational status, and investment confidence of Chinese companies in Pakistan.

"The reports effectively showcase CCCPK's commitment to promoting economic growth and business development in Pakistan through the efforts of 122 Chinese companies operating in the country, both state-owned and private enterprises," he added.

Gilani said that Pakistan offers immense potential for trade, investment, and joint ventures in sectors such as energy, infrastructure, agriculture, and technology. He acknowledged the government's role in providing a conducive environment for businesses to thrive. He further praised organizations like CCCPK for paving the way toward prosperity through economic cooperation and said that local entrepreneurs and companies in Pakistan can learn a great deal from their Chinese counterparts. INP



### Govt proposes selecting CJP from three top Supreme Court judges

ISLAMABAD: The successor of Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa will be picked from the three most senior judges of the Supreme Court, the government has proposed in its draft for the intended constitutional amendments, Media reported on Sunday.

The selection for the coveted post will reportedly be made by an eight-member parliamentary committee.

The coalition government has stepped up its efforts to evolve consensus on its controversial 'Constitutional Package' with all political parties regularly holding meetings of the special parliamentary committee — a body led by Pakistan

Peoples Party (PPP) MNA Syed Khurshed Shah — to discuss the proposed constitutional changes.

To pass the constitutional amendments, the government needs two-thirds majority in parliament, while it is short of 13 votes in the National Assembly (NA) and nine in the Senate.

The government and JUI-F shared their respective drafts for the constitutional amendment in Saturday's meeting, with the former proposing the structure of Federal Constitutional Court (FCC), and the latter proposing a constitutional bench of the top court for constitutional matters.

According to the government draft, the FCC will consist of seven members, including the chief justice.

The first chief justice of the FCC will be appointed by the president on the advice of the prime minister. The first chief justice and three senior judges of the constitutional court will be appointed on the recommendation of the committee that would include four members of the parliament, federal law minister and a representative of the Pakistan Bar Council. It has been proposed that a commission will be formed for the appointment of FCC judges, the head of which will be the FCC chief justice, and its five most

senior judges will be members of the commission. Apart from this, there will be provincial constitutional courts.

According to the proposed amendment, the prime minister will send the matter to the president after consultation on the name of a qualified judge.

The remaining members of the FCC will be appointed by the president in consultation with its chief justice, the names of chief justice and judges will be given to the prime minister through the parliamentary committee.

The age of a judge will be 40 years, three years of court experience and 10 years of legal experience will be mandatory.

An FCC will be established for the dismissal of a judge and the president will give the final approval for dismissal of any judge.

The proposed amendment states that the decision of FCC cannot be challenged in any court, while the decisions of four provincial constitutional courts can be appealed in the FCC.

Meanwhile, according to the JUI-F's draft, special benches of the Supreme Court will be formed to hear constitutional cases. The constitutional bench will consist of Chief Justice of Pakistan and four senior judges.

Fazl's party proposed to implement the

18th Amendment to the extent of appointing judges while the constitutional bench of the Supreme Court will be authorised to hear appeals against the decisions of the constitutional bench of the high courts.

Meanwhile, the cases related to interpretation of the Constitution will be heard by the constitution bench only.

The government had attempted to present the bill to amend the Constitution last month, but its allies as well as members from the opposition benches vehemently opposed the proposal, forcing the administration to begin a consultation process. Agencies

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## Where's Pakistan in the rankings?

DR JAVAID LAGHARI

The Times Higher Education (THE) released the highly anticipated World University Rankings on October 9, 2024, after evaluating approximately 2,857 universities from 115 countries. THE and QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) are widely regarded as leading global ranking platforms, with many institutions participating annually. The rankings typically assess three core aspects of university performance: research, teaching, and societal impact. Universities submit detailed profiles, including data on faculty-to-student ratios, gender distribution, and the percentage of international students. Some institutions also provide enhanced profiles to highlight unique strengths beyond the standard metrics. However, the data submitted is neither verified nor audited by THE or QS.

In the 2025 THE World University Rankings, the University of Oxford secured the top position for the ninth consecutive year, setting a new record by surpassing Harvard's eight-year reign that ended in 2011. Among the top ten institutions, Oxford distinguished itself through its strong international outlook, particularly in terms of its proportion of international students and collaborative research with global partners. Trailing Oxford are several leading American universities, with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) securing second place globally, marking its highest-ever ranking. MIT overtook Stanford University, which fell from second to sixth – its lowest position since 2010. Harvard University climbed from fourth to third, while Princeton advanced from sixth to fourth. As in most years, all institutions in the top 10 are from either the US or the UK. The 11th spot was claimed by ETH Zurich in Switzerland, while Tsinghua University and Peking University in China secured 12th and 13th positions, respectively, due to their robust research capabilities and advanced laboratory infrastructure.

The top 500 universities featured a strong presence from renowned institutions across the US, Canada, Europe, China, and the Far East, including Japan. Only five Indian institutions made it into the top 500 of this year's global rankings, with none of the prestigious IITs included – raising concerns about the credibility of the THE rankings. In contrast, twelve universities from the Gulf region secured spots in the top 500. Notable entries include King Fahd University of Science and Technology at 176th, Abu Dhabi University at 191st, and King Saud, Khalifa, and Qatar University in the 201-250 range. UAE University and Prince Mohammad bin Fahd University ranked between 251-300, followed by King Khalid and the University of Sharjah at 301-350. King Abdulaziz and Zayed University placed within the 351-400 range, while Al Ain University rounded out the group at 401-500. The list includes six institutions from the UAE, five from Saudi Arabia, and one from Qatar. Only three Turkish universities made it into the top 500: Koc University, Middle East Technical University, and Sabanci University, all ranked in the 351-400 range. Notably, several prominent institutions, such as Istanbul Technical University and Bilkent University, were absent from the top 500.

Pakistan, with 266 universities recognised by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), saw only 94 institutions participate or be listed in the rankings. Among them, only Quaid-i-Azam University secured a spot in the top 500, ranking in the 401-500 band. Eight universities were placed in the 601-800 range, including NUST, COMSATS Islamabad, Sukkur IBA, Air University, GCU Faisalabad, Capital University, UET Taxila, and the University of Malakand. Another thirteen universities were ranked between 801 and 1000, including LUMS, Arid Agriculture, Islamia, Central Punjab, UET Peshawar, Gujrat, Abdul Wali Khan University, UVAS, IIU, Khawaja Fareed, Lahore, UMT and Punjab. The absence of IBA Karachi and Aga Khan University was particularly noticeable, again raising questions on the ranking. (Those ranked beyond 1000 are not included in this article). With a population of 250 million – around 3.5 per cent of the global population – Pakistan ranks as the fifth most populous country in the world. Proportionately, at least 17 Pakistani universities should be among the top 500, yet only one made the cut. It has been 22 years since the formation of the HEC to elevate university standards to a global level, but the results indicate that we have fallen significantly short.

When I was appointed chairman of the HEC in 2009, no Pakistani university was listed among the top 250 Asian universities in the QS World University Rankings, let alone the world rankings. Elevating the quality of higher education in Pakistan became my top priority during my four-year tenure, aiming to place our universities on the global map. Despite a 40 per cent budget cut from previous years, we partnered with the UK government and the British Council and signed an agreement with the Quality Assurance Agency (UK) to build institutional capacity. We also secured support from the US government through USAID (thanks to the Kerry-Lugar Bill), the US Department of State, and the Fulbright programme, which became the largest in the world. All this assistance bore fruit. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of an exceptional team at the HEC, including Dr Sohail Naqvi and Zia Batool, we gradually improved university standards. By 2013, ten Pakistani universities were ranked among the top 250 Asian institutions in the QS World University Rankings. The 18th Amendment presents a significant opportunity for provinces to prioritise enhancing the quality of universities rather than simply increasing their numbers. By focusing on advanced technologies and skill development in areas like AI, cybersecurity, data science, metaverse and VR, cryptocurrency, gaming, and animation, Pakistan has the potential to accelerate economic growth and double its exports within three years. Both federal and provincial governments must prioritise improving the quality of teaching, research, and innovation at universities. Establishing incubators and technology parks is essential, along with promoting entrepreneurship by ensuring affordable, reliable internet access and providing students with modern handheld devices. With proper care and effective administration, Pakistan's universities can make substantial contributions to the education and research sectors, driving the nation's economy and progress forward.

The writer is a former senator and former chairperson of the HEC.



Syed Asad Ali Shah

## Why financial markets matter

A well-developed financial system comprising dynamic capital markets and a robust banking sector is considered a critical driver of investment, productivity, and sustainable economic growth. Here, I discuss how the developed economy of the United States (US) and the emerging market economy of India have hugely benefited from the growth of the capital market and banking system. The US, being the largest and most developed market is not comparable with us, and even India, now the fifth largest economy, is no longer comparable with our economy. That said, their financial systems can highlight the close relationship and impact of robust financial systems on economic growth.

While the financial system remains the largest and most sophisticated in the world, over the past two decades, both countries and most other fast-growing economies have harnessed their financial systems to create an environment conducive to investment, innovation, competitiveness, and long-term expansion. In stark contrast, Pakistan's financial systems, especially its capital market and banking system have remained stagnant, leading to an underperforming economy that has struggled with low productivity, a lack of innovation, and a recurring need for international bailouts from the IMF to avoid default.

The role of capital markets in fostering economic growth is well illustrated by the experiences of the US and India. The US boasts the largest and most liquid capital market in the world, with a market capitalization of over \$50 trillion as of 2023, equivalent to roughly 170 per cent of its GDP estimated at \$29 trillion. This vast market allows companies to raise funds through equity and debt offerings, driving business expansion and innovation across industries. Large corporations like Apple, Microsoft, Google and Amazon owe much of their growth to the deep pools of capital available through the US stock market. Additionally, venture capital and private equity funding, essential for startups and high-

growth enterprises, are abundant, fueling the tech and innovation boom that has propelled the American economy much faster than the EU and China in recent years. Within our region, India has seen impressive growth in its capital markets, which is one of the key factors in making India one of the fastest-growing economies. With a market capitalization of around \$5 trillion in last June, approximately 128 per cent of the country's GDP of \$3.9 trillion, India's stock market has been a critical tool for raising capital for sectors such as technology, infrastructure, manufacturing and consumer goods.

The expansion of India's capital market together with a steep rise in venture capital and private equity has been instrumental in driving growth in its large corporations as well as in building a robust startup ecosystem that has created several unicorns. There have been several success stories – large tech companies like Tata Consultancy Services and Infosys, and great startups like Flipkart, Paytm, and Ola becoming billion-dollar companies in short periods, thanks to the availability of both domestic and international investment.

In sharp contrast, Pakistan's capital market has remained underdeveloped. Despite a major upsurge in the index recently to \$3000, the market capitalization of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) currently stands at a meager \$39 billion, a minor fraction of 0.78 per cent of the Indian capital market, accounting for only around 10.5 per cent of the country's GDP. This figure is minuscule compared to India and other emerging markets, reflecting the limited role that Pakistan's capital market plays in financing the private sector.

Over the past two decades, the number of new listings has been sparse, and the stock market remains illiquid with less than 300,000 investors (one of the lowest in the world) deterring both domestic and foreign investors from deploying capital. Without access to equity or debt capital, Pakistani firms struggle to finance expansion or invest in innovation, contributing to the country's low productivity and stagnant economy. Unfortunately, the decision-makers

in Pakistan think that the capital market of Pakistan is just a casino, and have rarely made any serious attempt to understand the key role of the capital market in mobilizing investment and economic development and the major issues that are responsible for its poor performance.

The banking sector in both the US and India has played an equally important role in supporting economic growth. American banks hold total assets of over \$23 trillion, with deposits accounting for approximately 80 per cent of the GDP. The advances-to-deposit ratio (ADR), a key indicator of a bank's lending to private businesses relative to its deposit base, hovers around 70-80 per cent in the US, indicating that banks actively channel deposits into productive lending for businesses and households. This robust lending environment supports business growth, capital investment, and consumer spending, all of which drives economic activity.

India's banking sector, though not as robust as the capital markets of the US and other developed markets, has a vital contribution to its economy. With total banking assets of around \$5 per cent and deposits of about 80 per cent of GDP, India's banks have also played a crucial role in financing both public and private sector initiatives. The ADR in India typically stands at around 75-80 per cent, reflecting a healthy level of lending that supports infrastructure development, corporates, small businesses, and entrepreneurship.

In Pakistan, the banking sector tells a much bleaker story in terms of its role in economic development. The total assets of Pakistan's banks on June 30, 2024 amounted to \$186 billion (approximately 50 per cent of GDP) with deposits of \$117 billion (32 per cent of GDP). However, even out of this small deposit base, the advances-to-deposit ratio in Pakistan is alarmingly low, hovering at less than 37 per cent.

This low ADR reflects the fact that Pakistan's banks have shifted heavily toward lending to the government and public sector to finance their unproductive expenditures and deficits, with nearly 98 per cent of the deposits invested in government securities rather than being used to

finance private-sector growth. This crowding-out effect has left the private sector starved for credit, limiting its ability to invest in new technologies, expand production, or create jobs.

The impact of these financial disparities is clear: while India and other emerging economies have leveraged their financial systems to drive innovation and productivity, Pakistan's underdeveloped capital market and banking sector, with a major portion of the banking sector diverted to the public sector, have stifled its economic progress. In the US, India and other emerging economies, access to capital through both equity markets and bank loans has enabled businesses to expand, invest in new technologies and create high-value jobs. This, in turn, has led to higher productivity, greater economic competitiveness, and sustained economic growth.

In contrast, Pakistan's financial stagnation has left its economy struggling to keep pace with global trends. With virtually no venture capital, private equity, or access to bank credit, Pakistan's private sector, especially SMEs and startups, is completely starved of necessary capital to enable them to develop new products or services, leading to abysmal levels of productivity and innovation.

Large and excessive governments, and their reliance on borrowing, have further deepened the country's debt burden, forcing it to seek repeated bailouts from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to avoid sovereign default. This cycle of debt and bailouts not only undermines economic stability but also discourages investment, further compounding the country's economic woes.

Without significant reforms to its banking sector and capital markets, Pakistan risks continuing down the path of stagnation and indebtedness. Robust financial infrastructure is not a luxury – it is a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth and development.

The writer is a former managing partner of a leading professional services firm and has done extensive work on governance in the public and private sectors. He tweets/posts @Asad\_Ashah

Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect The Asian Telegraph's point-of-view

## Today in History

### History of Pakistan



Religious tensions reappeared in January 2011 with the assassination of the governor of Punjab province, Salman Taseer, by a member of his own security detail. Taseer, a member of the PPP and a political ally of Zardari, had been among the most vocal critics of

Pakistan's blasphemy law, which called for the death penalty if a defendant was convicted of defaming Islam or Muhammad. Although the law, which was established in the 1980s under Zia ul-Haq's Islamization program, had not resulted in any executions for blasphemy, it had become a

point of contention between religious conservatives and secular politicians. Taseer's assassination, carried out by an elite police commando with a history of Islamic radicalism, raised fears that moderate politicians were vulnerable to intimidation by religious conservatives. The public reaction to the

assassination further highlighted the divisions in Pakistani society; while the PPP and most other political parties condemned the attack, many religious leaders and organizations denounced Taseer as an apostate and praised his killer for defending Islam.

To be continued....

## Showbiz

### Dua Lipa ignites stage with stunning performance during music festival

Dua Lipa sends fans wild during her performance at Austin City Limits Music Festival

Dua Lipa has recently ignited the stage with her impeccable performance during the Austin City Limits Music Festival. On October 12, the Grammy-winning artist stunned fans with her jaw-dropping appearance on the stage. The Albanian singer donned a stylish burgundy shorts and crop top, which she paired with leather knee-high boots. Notably, the 29-year-old musician accessorized her look with a gorgeous necklace and a double black belt. Taking to Instagram, the One Kiss hit-maker dropped a series of images from her recent trip to Austin, featuring herself and a few friends from the



event. The globally acclaimed singer captioned her post, "BACK IN AUSTIN BABY! ROUND 2 TONIGHT @aclfestival." Soon after her post went viral, several fans took to the comments section and began showcasing their excitement for the show. One fan commented, "Destroy the stage tonight girlllll." "YASSSS... @donnsdepot !!! Dua hittin' up all of our old Austin awesome hotspots," another fan wrote. Reportedly, after wrapping the show in Austin, Dua will head back to England and prepare herself for the third warmup concert in Robert Albert Hall in London which will take place on October 17, 2024.

### AI voice cloning escalates kidnapping scams in US

Recent advancements in artificial intelligence have given rise to a troubling new trend in phone scams, where scammers use AI to replicate the voices of victims' family members in fake kidnapping schemes. This tactic has been particularly effective in convincing individuals to send money for the supposed safe return of their loved ones. Highline Public Schools in Burien, Washington, alerted the community on September 25 that two individuals had been targeted by "scammers falsely claiming they kidnapped a family member." The scammers played an AI-generated audio recording of the family member and then demanded a ransom. The FBI has reported a nationwide increase in these scams, particularly affecting families who speak languages other than English. "The scammers played [AI-generated] audio recording of the family member, then demanded a ransom," the school district stated. In a harrowing testimony to Congress,

Arizona mother Jennifer DeStefano recounted her experience when scammers used AI to make her believe her daughter had been kidnapped. DeStefano described answering a call from an unknown number on a Friday afternoon, hearing her daughter Briana sobbing on the line. "At first, I thought nothing of it. ... I casually asked her what happened," DeStefano recalled. However, the call quickly escalated when a threatening man took over, demanding a \$1 million ransom. "Listen here, I have your daughter... you call the cops, I am going to pump her stomach so full of drugs," he threatened. The man continued to manipulate the situation while Briana's voice pleaded in the background. Amidst the chaos, DeStefano's husband found Briana safe at home, unaware of the scam that was unfolding. "How could she be safe with her father and yet be in the possession of kidnapers? It was not making any sense," DeStefano wrote.

## Health

### Over 100 children die due to Diphtheria in Karachi amid lack of facilities

More than 100 children in Karachi have died from diphtheria this year due to the unavailability of Diphtheria Anti-Toxin (DAT), despite the disease being preventable through vaccination, disclosed a Sindh health department official on Saturday. The number of diphtheria cases and children's deaths due to the disease have grown exponentially in the megapolis. All the diphtheria cases were being referred to the Sindh Infectious Diseases Hospital (SIDH). According to the provincial health official, last year, 140 cases were received by the SIDH and 52 of them could not make it. Whereas, over 10 kids were under treatment at the hospital at the moment, they added. However, following the publishing of this report, the Sindh Health Department later claimed that only 28 children, not 100, lost their lives in 2024. "This year, 166 diphtheria

cases have been reported in Sindh, out of which 28 deaths took place," it said. Meanwhile, experts of infectious diseases said the antitoxin medicine used against the disease was not available across Sindh, including Karachi. They said antitoxin worth Rs0.25 million was used for treating one child. "The only cure for diphtheria is complete vaccination and treatment with antitoxin," said experts. Diphtheria is a serious infection caused by strains of bacteria called 'Corynebacterium diphtheria' that make toxins. It can lead to breathing, heart rhythm problems, and even death. Pakistani children are given a vaccine, a combination of five vaccines that protects from five major diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), hepatitis B and Haemophilus influenzae type b (DTP-hepB-Hib), the experts added.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Director Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) Dr Muhammad Arif Khan had said last year that diphtheria was a life-threatening disease and timely vaccination was the sole way to prevent fatal ailment and its outbreaks in the community. "It primarily affects the throat and upper respiratory tract but can also lead to systemic complications. Diphtheria is known for the formation of a greyish-white membrane in the throat, which can cause difficulty in breathing and swallowing." A disease that has been eradicated in most countries around the world has lingered on in Pakistan and it is not an enviable situation for the country and its health authorities. Keeping in view the fact that diphtheria is a lethal bacterial infection, there should not be any compromise in its vaccination to all children.





## Pak embassy in Oman organizes Trade Expo

MUSCAT: Embassy of Pakistan, Muscat organized a landmark first ever multi-sectoral Pakistan-Oman Trade Expo and Business Conference which kicked off on 13th October in Muscat and will continue for two days. The event was attended by HH Sayyid Juland Bin Jaifar Al Said Chairman Pakistan Oman Investment Company, HH Sayyida Hujaija Bint Jaifar Al Said, International Ambassador for Social Responsibility, H.E. Faisal Bin Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Imran Ali, Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman, Mr. Nouman Ali, CEO Oman Investment Authority, Mr. Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, VP FPCCI and prominent Pakistani and Omani businesspersons. The event is unprecedented as Pakistani business houses from 10 categories including textiles, clothing, fashion apparel, agricultural products, surgical instruments, sports goods, pharmaceuticals, handicrafts, hotel investment are showcasing their products for the first time in Oman under one roof. 172 business delegates from top Pakistani companies are participating in the event.

The expo is providing a platform for Pakistani businesses to showcase their high-quality products to the Omani market as well as an opportunity for Pakistani investors to look for investment opportunities in the brotherly country of Oman. The expo facilitates direct interaction between Omani and Pakistani businesses which would result in future partnerships and collaborations. Separate sessions were held to apprise the Pakistani businesspersons about the legal mechanisms regarding opening and operating a company in Oman. Speakers from both sides were of the view that the cordial relations that the two sides enjoy are not reflective of the true potential of the trade volume the two countries can have. Oman seeks to diversify its economy and reduce reliance on oil, while Pakistan aims to increase its exports and access new markets. The Chairman of OCCI in his speech welcomed the exhibitors and business delegates from Pakistan and said that Pakistan and Oman can increase their trade manifold. Ambassador Imran Ali Chaudhry expressed his gratitude to the Government of Oman in providing facilitation in organizing the expo. He said this forum marks a new chapter in the economic partnership between Pakistan and Oman. Making the business and trade communities to meet each other frequently sparks new opportunities of trade and investment, he said. He expressed his resolve to make this expo a yearly feature. PR

## SCO Summit: Delegations from India, Russia

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan prepares to host the 26th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit on October 15-16, the arrival of foreign delegations continues, with official representatives from India and Russia reaching the country. According to the details, a four-member delegation from India and a 76-member delegation from Russia have landed in Pakistan. Apart from this, 15 members of China, four members of Kyrgyzstan, and two members of Iran have also reached Pakistan while seven representatives of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) have also landed in the country. INP

## Pakistan Army's Team participates in Exercise Cambrian Patrol 2024



RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Army's Team has participated in Exercise Cambrian Patrol - 2024 which was held at Wales, UK from October 04-13 and won a gold medal while presenting exceptional performance among all participating teams. This year, Exercise Cambrian Patrol celebrated

its 65th year and has retained its demanding professional standards; patrols all across from the globe had to move tactically across inhospitable terrain, covering a distance of 60 kilometers (kms) within 48 hours, completing specialist tasks in a contested environment, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

This year, 128 teams from 42 Countries participated in the Exercise and out of all these teams, Pakistan Army's Team showed Exceptional Performance in the exercise and has been awarded with the Gold Medal. "It is indeed a proud moment for the whole Nation and Pakistan Army, which is known for its professionalism and highest standards of training. Pakistan Army has always held Country's flag high, Alhamdulillah" the ISPR said. PR



MUSCAT: HH Sayyida Hujaija Bint Jaifar Al Said, International Ambassador for Social Responsibility, H.E. Faisal Bin Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Imran Ali, Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman inaugurating the First Pakistan Oman Business Forum.

## No democratic person can go against constitutional package: Ahsan

VOM Report

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives professor Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhry on Sunday said that no any democratic person could disagree with the Constitutional Amendment Package of Pakistan. He said that the coalition government had been successful to turn around the economy of the country.

He expressed these views after a meeting with MQM-Pakistan leadership including its Chairman and Federal for Education and Professional Training Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui at MQM-Pakistan's Pakistan House.

Advisor to PM on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaulah and Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar were also present on the occasion.

Ahsan Iqbal said that they provided amount of time to some parties wished to review and consider constitutional amendment. 'We built a consensus, which was a democratic process', he added.

He said that the leadership of MQM-Pakistan had continuously assisted with its suggestions on different issues including IPPs and along with them they successfully resolved IPPs issue. Minister said that they worked very hard to save Pakistan from economic default. It's coalition partners including MQM-Pakistan also played role in the formation of government after general elections. Recalling the events of past, he said that the



democratic process of the country was derailed in the past through Article 58-2B and later a political consensus was developed and constitutional 58-2B was revoked but another way of 58-2B was paved way through courts and a series of disqualifying elected Prime Minister continued. Iqbal said that the former elected prime minister Nawaz Sharif suffered illegal sentence, which was not a sentence pronounced against us but it was also against the people and development of the country including CPEC.

He said that there was only darkness and damages during the four years from 2018 to 2022 and it was suffered by the nation and the country including Karachi because no development programme was initiated. Hamza Shabaz's government was removed in Punjab by a few judges on political grounds. Iqbal was of the view that politically motivated decisions had been cause of damage to the country. He said that they wanted to keep the courts

beyond any political issue and did not want anyone could point finger at them.

Replying to a question, he said that MQM-Pakistan had always emphasized on article 140 A and they would collectively work to give constitutional protection to local government bodies.

He further said that they had assured them that soon after the approval of constitutional amendment they could work to build a consensus over the matter.

He said that the a broad-based meeting would be convened over the issue of missing persons raised by MQM-Pakistan. Answering a question, Iqbal said that the federal government would work with consultation of MQM-Pakistan over the budget for urban areas of Karachi and Hyderabad for development projects.

He said that the Prime Minister had directed WAPDA regarding K-VI project and issued education funds.

The federal government was working as per its limits. After 18th amendment, 60 percent resources had been devolved to the provincial governments.

Earlier, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) delegation led by its Secretary General and Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiative Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhry, Advisor to PM on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaulah and Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar met with MQM-Pakistan leadership including its Chairman and Federal Education Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui at MQM-Pakistan's Pakistan House.

## Govt focusing to electric vehicles to reduce consumption of imported fuel: Tanvir

LAHORE: Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain says the government is paying special attention on electric and hybrid vehicles to reduce consumption of imported expensive fuel. Speaking at an event in Lahore today, he said that solarization is a priority for the government to increase share of alternate energy. He said that demand for electric vehicles has increased and the government will announce a policy in this regard by next month. Rana Tanveer Hussain said that the government has planned to give free electric motorbikes to students with out-standing performance.

## Electricity tariffs to drop 8-10% per unit soon: Leghari

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Sardar Awaiz Leghari on Sunday issued warning to electricity thieves and corrupt officials for termination from their assignments who involved in corrupt practices. He said that all those who involved will face the music from next month.

The minister vowed that the consumers can expect significant relief as power tariffs drop by 8-10% per unit in the near future.

an exclusive interview with a private news channel, minister expressed hope that power sector reforms are expected to bring good news for the public in the coming months, with anti-theft measures being implemented to increase transparency in the power system. goal is to provide reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity to citizens, he added.

Minister for Power warned to take stringent action against officers involved in power theft, stating that those found guilty of corrupt practices will be terminated from service starting next month.

directed for stern action against the corrupt officers within the power sector and decided to take a zero-tolerance policy in this regard.

minister emphasized that the government will adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards officers engaged in power theft, whether involvement proved today or during past. has outlined key steps to address pressing power sector issues, ensuring reliable electricity supply and resolving long-standing problems, adding, we are upgrading, repairing feeders to reduce power losses and faults.

We are also strengthening transmission infrastructure to improve power evacuation, he mentioned, adding, minimizing line losses through efficient transmission systems is also in our priority areas.

Awaiz Leghari has also revealed that the government is diligently addressing the financing issues plaguing the power sector, focusing on revenue generation, growth enhancement and taxation system overhaul. "The government is committed to resolving the power sector's financial woes and ensuring its growth," Leghari emphasized.

By addressing financing issues and implementing reforms, the government aims to create a robust power sector that benefits both the economy and the public, he reassured. APP

## Gwadar free Zones on cards

ISLAMABAD: " Government has shown readiness to allow import of custom-free vehicles in Gwadar Free Zone North and Gwadar Free Zone South under regulatory frameworks laid down by Federal Board of Revenue, Custom and Excise & Taxation department, Balochistan. This will give profuse impetus to Gwadar Free Zone and investors. Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. Ministry of Maritime Affairs has prepared the draft for regulatory mechanism for the import of vehicles by Gwadar Free Zone and its operating companies. The regulatory framework has been formulated with the notification of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) with the purpose to facilitate the operationalization of Gwadar Free Zone and expedite the industrialization process. As per the amended regulatory mechanism, Free Zone investors will be authorized to import custom duty-free vehicles for their construction and operation. This will subsequently provide an impetus to new investors to bring in more investment to the Free Zone. Previously, the exemptions were enjoyed by Gwadar Port and Gwadar Free Zone operator- China Overseas Ports Holding Company, in accordance with the Concession Agreement signed the government of Pakistan in 2007. DNA

## Govt will not tolerate any actions compromise Pakistan's respect, dignity: Talal

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Senator Talal Chaudhry Sunday issued a strong warning regarding PTI's protest call and said that the government will not tolerate any actions that compromise Pakistan's respect and dignity.

In an interview with a private news channel, Talal said that the government will not tolerate any attempts to create chaos and called Imran Khan as "history's VIP prisoner" who enjoys all facilities while still making excuses and attempting to disrupt the SCO conference.

According to Talal Chaudhry, PTI's actions are a threat to Pakistan's economic stability and national security. He reiterated the government's commitment to protecting Pakistan's respect and dignity, making it clear that no compromises will be made. He said Imran Khan leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has been receiving special treatment while in jail, including separate kitchen facilities and opportunities to hold political meetings, adding, despite this, he continues to criticize the government and allegedly wants to disrupt the SCO summit and CPEC phase 2. The SCO summit and CPEC phase 2 are crucial for Pakistan's economic development and any disruptions could have significant consequences, he added. The government is focusing on addressing the country's economic woes and fulfilling its governing responsibilities instead of targeting the opposition, he added. INP

## Islamabad Police make foolproof security arrangements for SCO 2024 Summit

ISLAMABAD: According to details, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) 2024 summit is being held in the federal capital, Islamabad. In this regard, Islamabad Police have issued a comprehensive and integrated security plan to ensure foolproof security for the SCO Summit 2024.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, said that security arrangements have been finalized at all venues, airports, routes, funnel areas, hotels, and residences of delegations, including Noor Khan Air Base. Search operations and intelligence-based operations are ongoing in Islamabad.

He further said that foolproof security has been ensured for all foreign leaders, delegations, and guests. In addition to the police, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, District Administration, Pakistan Army, Rangers, FC, provincial police, intelligence agencies, traffic police, and the Special Branch are performing their duties to ensure foolproof security. More than 9,000 officers and officials of Islamabad Police are on duty to secure the SCO Summit 2024.



## Israeli strikes kill 29 people in Gaza, thousands trapped

GAZA: Israeli military strikes on Gaza killed at least 29 Palestinians, medics said, and forces kept pushing deeper into the Jabalia area, where international relief agencies say thousands of people are trapped. Residents said Israeli forces continued to pound Jabalia, in the north of the enclave, the largest of its historic refugee camps, from the air and ground.

Nineteen people were killed in Gaza overnight, and 10 more died on Saturday evening after Israel struck two houses in Jabalia and the Nuseirat camp in central Gaza. The death toll could rise as many of the wounded are in critical condition, medics said. The Israeli military published new evacuation orders on Saturday to two neighbourhoods on the northern edge of Gaza City, which also lies in the north of the enclave, saying the area was a "dangerous combat zone". In a statement, Gaza's Hamas-run interior ministry urged residents not to relocate within northern areas of the enclave and also to avoid heading south "where the occupation is conducting continued bombing and killing every day in the areas it claims to be safe".

The Israeli military said it had been operating against Hamas fighters who had been using civilian buildings and said clear evacuation instructions its fighters deliberately use civilian



had been issued over recent days to areas including the Kamal Adwan Hospital.

It said an evacuation convoy to take patients from the hospital to Gaza City had arrived on Saturday with a supply of fuel for the facility.

In recent days, the military had said that forces operating in Jabalia and nearby areas killed dozens of militants, located weapons and dismantled military infrastructure.

On Saturday, it said more than 20 fighters had been killed by tank fire, close range gunfire and airstrikes as forces continued operations throughout the Gaza Strip.

The operation in this area began a week ago and the military said then it aimed to fight against militants waging attacks and to prevent Hamas from regrouping. Hamas denies that said clear evacuation instructions its fighters deliberately use civilian

areas as bases.

Palestinian health officials put the number of people killed in Jabalia over the past week at around 150.

Palestinian and United Nations officials say there are no safe areas in Gaza. They have also voiced concerns over severe shortages of food, fuel, and medical supplies in northern Gaza, and said there is a risk of famine there.

Israel's military campaign in Gaza, aimed at eliminating the militant group Hamas, has killed more than 42,000 Palestinians since it began a year ago, according to Gaza's health ministry, and has laid waste to the enclave.

The war began after a Hamas-led assault on Oct. 7, 2023, on southern Israeli communities in which 1,200 people were killed and about 250 were taken hostage, according to

Israeli tallies.

In a statement on Saturday, Hamas said Israel's "massacre against the civilians" aimed to punish the residents of Jabalia for refusing to leave their homes. It also said it was a sign of Israel's military failure to defeat the group.

The armed wings of Hamas, the Islamic Jihad, and smaller other factions said their fighters attacked Israeli forces in Jabalia and nearby areas with anti-tank rockets, and mortar fire.

United Nations officials said on Friday an Israeli offensive and evacuation orders in northern Gaza might affect the second phase of its polio vaccination campaign set to start next week.

The territory's health ministry announced on Saturday that the campaign would begin on Monday in central Gaza Strip areas and would last three days before moving to other territories.

Aid groups carried out an initial round of vaccinations last month after a baby was partially paralysed by the type 2 poliovirus in August, the first such case in the territory in 25 years.

As in the first phase, humanitarian pauses in the fighting in Gaza are planned, in order to reach hundreds of thousands of children. INP

## Pakistan's participation in GITEX Global: Tirmizi



Abu Dhabi: As GITEX Global 2024, the world's largest technology exhibition, approaches its opening from October 14 to 18, Pakistan will be significantly represented at this prestigious event. With a contingent of 24 leading exhibitors from the country, Pakistan aims to showcase its growing capabilities in the IT sector. H.E. Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan's Ambassador to the UAE, emphasized the importance of Pakistan's participation in GITEX Global. He said that Pakistan is proud to be recognized as the "Tech Destination of the Year 2024" by GITEX Global, which is a testament to our

country's progress in the IT and tech industries. Ambassador Tirmizi said that this recognition reinforces Pakistan's status as an emerging hub for digital innovation and entrepreneurship. Mr. Tirmizi emphasized that GITEX Global offers an ideal platform for companies to connect with global tech leaders, investors, and potential partners. He further said that it is a unique opportunity for our exhibitors to showcase their capabilities and explore collaborations. The Government of Pakistan is facilitating a 156-square-meter exhibition space at the Dubai World Trade Centre where Pakistani companies are poised to make a lasting impression. This year's participation underscores Pakistan's growing influence in the global digital economy and reaffirms the country's potential as a leading IT destination. GITEX Global is known for bringing together global tech giants, governments, start-ups, and investors, offering a platform for transformative innovations. Pakistan's involvement in the event demonstrates its commitment to advancing its digital economy and enhancing its global footprint in the tech industry. PR